Standard Administrative Policy and Procedure

Subject: Policy and Guidelines for Academic Program Reorganization, Consolidation, Reduction or Discontinuance

Number:

11. PURPOSE

To outline processes for reorganizing, consolidating, reducing, or discontinuing academic programs for reasons outlined in UW Regulation 2-13.

5II. DEFINITIONS

Academic Personnel: For the purposes of this SAPP, Academic Personnel include non-tenure-track academic personnel, academic personnel on fixed-term contracts, tenure-track faculty, and tenured faculty as defined in University of Wyoming Regulation 2-1.

Academic Program: Degree program, department or division of instruction, school or college, interdisciplinary program or unit, or other academic program unit. For the purposes of this SAPP, Academic Program does not include academic courses.

Stopped out student: This is a student who was a previously enrolled degree-seeking student, who suspended enrollment for one or more fall and/or spring terms, and subsequently seeks to re-enroll.

Discontinuation: To permanently close a program and discontinue program activities.

16III. Reorganization, Consolidation, or Reduction: A restructuring or combination of activities that affect the academic degree program, such as but not limited to a significant change in the curriculum or business functions of an academic unit.

20IV. III. JUSTIFICATION AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The need to reorganize, consolidate, reduce, or discontinue academic degree programs arises from a number of different circumstances. These circumstances include, but are not limited to, the following:

A. A sustained record of few graduates from the program;
B. A sustained record of low student enrollment;
C. A sustained record of low academic quality;
D. Obsolescence or duplication;
E. Lack of external need or demand for the program;
F. Loss of external accreditation;
F.G. Budget reductions according to UW Regulations 2-11 or 2-12
G.H. A change in the priorities or direction of the University, college, school, or department; or
H.I. Any other substantial reasons why the continuation of the academic program is not in the best interests of the university.

Reorganizing, consolidating, reducing, or discontinuing an academic degree program deserves an open and transparent shared-governance process, including widespread communication, and documentation of opportunities for feedback from interested and affected units.

The process of reorganization, consolidation, reduction, or discontinuance may involve the suspension of a degree program. The suspension should be managed in such a way as to mitigate adverse impacts on students currently in the program, or those who have recently been admitted.

The President, in collaboration with the Faculty Senate, shall make a final recommendation to the Board of Trustees to reorganize, consolidate, reduce or discontinue an academic program within a maximum period of 120 days after receiving the approved request and associated proposal for reorganizing, consolidating, reducing or discontinuing the program.

A. Initiation

The process for the review and analysis of an academic program for reorganization, consolidation, reduction or discontinuance of an academic program may begin initiated in one of two ways the following way.

1. Request for Review and Analysis

A department, its chair, the dean or director, the Faculty Senate, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, the President of the University, or the Board of Trustees may request an Academic Program Review (link to document here) of a program under consideration for a review and analysis regarding a program’s reorganization, consolidation, reduction or discontinuance. The request shall make explicit the reasons under Section III, with preliminary supporting evidence, that a program should be considered for reorganization, consolidation, reduction or discontinuance per University Regulation 2-13.

Requests for an Academic Program Review of a program under consideration for reorganization, consolidation, reduction or discontinuance should reflect consultation and communication with a wide range of academic, administrative, and student
support units. Those submitting requests should consult as needed with their dean's office, the Registrar’s Office, Admissions, student and faculty governance groups, the Provost’s Office, and others. Requests for an Academic Program Review of a program under consideration for reorganization, consolidation, reduction or discontinuance failing to reflect appropriate consultation and communication may be returned without approval.

The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs shall determine whether the request for an Academic Program Review of a program under consideration for reorganization, consolidation, reduction or discontinuance proceeds. The President’s final recommendation to the Board of Trustees shall be within 120 days after the approval of the request for Academic Program Review of a program under consideration for reorganization, consolidation, reduction or discontinuance.

Upon completion of an approved Academic Program Review, and if the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs agrees there is justification for reorganization, consolidation, reduction or discontinuance of the academic program, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs shall coordinate the development of a proposal for reorganization, consolidation, reduction or discontinuance of the academic program.

The President shall make a final recommendation to the Board of Trustees to reorganize, consolidate, reduce or discontinue a program within a maximum period of 120 days from the time the initial request was made.

Requests should reflect consultation and communication with a wide range of academic, administrative, and student support units. Those submitting requests should consult as needed with their dean's office, the Registrar’s Office, Admissions, student and faculty governance groups, the Provost’s Office, and others. Requests failing to reflect appropriate consultation and communication may be returned without review.

2. Annual Review Academic Degree Programs

The Office of the Provost reviews degree production for all academic programs annually. Programs determined by the Office of the Provost to reflect one or more of the circumstances identified in Part III above may be scheduled for review and analysis regarding a program’s reorganization, consolidation, reduction or discontinuance. See Standard Administrative Policy and Procedure Academic Program Review. (Link coming soon)

B. Proposal for Reorganization, Consolidation, Reduction or Discontinuance Development
The request proposal accompanying a request for a review and analysis regarding reorganizing, consolidating, reducing or discontinuing an academic program must be accompanied by a proposal. The proposal may shall include, at a minimum, the following:

1. Whether there is a demonstrated need for the program;
2. Whether the program fills a specific academic niche unique to UW;
3. Whether the program is important for the University’s strategic plan; identity and/or the fulfillment of the mission of the university;
4. The costs associated with program delivery;
5. Whether faculty time and effort are well invested in the program, as demonstrated by appropriate student enrollment;
6. Whether the program has a stable academic home; and
7. Any other compelling reasons to reorganize, consolidate, reduce, or discontinue the program, if applicable;
8. The recommended reorganization, consolidation or reduction, if applicable, and a preliminary plan for impact on currently enrolled students, prospective students, stopped-out students, and reduction in force;
9. The compelling reasons to discontinue the program, if applicable;
10. The recommendation for discontinuance, if applicable, and a preliminary plan for suspended admissions, teach-out, impact on currently enrolled students, prospective students, stopped-out students, and timing for reduction in force.

The Provost may suspend admissions to academic degree programs pending completion of the proposal development process.

The Provost may also set reasonable deadlines for the proposal review and comment processes below as needed to facilitate timely adjudication. The Provost’s Office will shall coordinate or may charge the appropriate department, program, or college with coordinating on the proposal review and comment.

The initial proposal will shall be subject to review and comment by:

1. Students currently enrolled in the academic program;
2. The academic degree program’s staff and academic personnel;
3. The academic degree program’s school/college dean;
4. The academic degree program’s school/college appropriate faculty committee;
5. The Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and/or the Associate Vice Provost for Graduate Education as appropriate given the level of degree; and
6. Other administrative or academic units as identified by the Office of the Provost.

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1 The faculty responsible for the degree program may solicit feedback from stakeholders, including current and former students and alumni, and should in that case shall provide documentation of that feedback.
After reviewing submitted comments and making any necessary revisions, the Office of the Provost will submit the revised proposal, including a recommendation and supporting materials to the Faculty Senate, ASUW, Staff Senate, Deans and Directors Council, and Executive Team for review and comment.

The Provost will review all submitted comments and provide a final proposal to the President.

The President, in collaboration with the Faculty Senate, will then make a final recommendation based on the proposal and all submitted comments to the Board of Trustees. If the appropriate academic program will be eliminated, the recommendation will include a plan for program closure—discontinuation in accordance with University Regulation 2-13 and Part V: below and, if necessary, a plan for termination of fixed-term personnel—non-tenure track or tenure—track or tenured faculty. If the academic program will be reorganized, consolidated or reduced, the recommendation will include a plan for the reorganization, consolidation or reduction. This plan shall, that including the details of impacts on current and prospective students, related units, and, if necessary, a plan for termination of fixed term personnel.

If the decision is made to continue the degree program that was considered for elimination, the Office of the Provost may require the appropriate academic unit to develop a plan to grow and revitalize the program, and to provide progress reports annually to the Associate Vice Provosts of Undergraduate and Graduate Education, the Provost, and the Faculty Senate Academic Planning Committee, as appropriate.

The Office of the Provost will promptly inform all UW offices impacted by the decision of the Board of Trustees (e.g. Office of Admissions, Office of the Registrar, Institutional Marketing and Communications, Academic Advising Committee, the Budget Office, etc.).

The Office of the Provost will promptly inform students enrolled in the academic degree program and the academic degree program’s staff and faculty of the Trustees’ decision.

**PLAN**

Before discontinuing a degree program, every reasonable effort will be made to allow students to complete their degrees. Program or campus transfers will be made if mutually acceptable to the student and the receiving department. Students will be provided advising assistance with respect to their academic program options. Students will be notified of program closure and timing for phasing out programs.

A plan outlining the process for discontinuing an academic degree program includes determining when to suspend or discontinue admissions, developing a teach-out plan to facilitate student completion of impacted degrees, communicating with students, and communicating with the
academic degree program’s staff and academic personnel, including any terminations, if applicable.

A. Admissions

1. Undergraduate level considerations

There are four milestones to keep in mind when planning the timeline for suspending an undergraduate degree program: (1) approximately 1.5-2 years prior to the fall term of enrollment, the Office of Admissions begins distributing information to prospective students about available degree programs; (2) approximately 15 months prior to the fall term of enrollment the Office of Admissions begins finalizing any print publications for distribution during the admissions cycle September through May; (3) approximately 12 months prior to the fall term of enrollment applicants begin applying, including selecting intended degree programs, and begin confirming enrollment; and (4) between 4 and 12 months prior to the fall term of enrollment new students are confirming their decision to enroll and are being assigned an academic plan for advising purposes. At this point of commitment, a student may have made a decision to attend UW based on a program advertised as available to new students. The student’s confirmation deadline is May 1 prior to the fall term of enrollment.

2. Graduate level considerations

Similarly, planning is necessary to fully consider prospective graduate students who will be making choices based on programs available at the University. Unlike many undergraduates, most graduate students choose to come to the University because of particular degree programs. Milestones that need to be kept in mind when planning the timing for suspending admissions to a graduate program: (1) prospective graduate students may make their decision to apply to the University two years prior to the fall term of enrollment, if not earlier; (2) graduate programs begin recruiting students at least 1.5 years prior to the fall term of enrollment; (3) applications for many graduate programs, especially doctoral ones, are due in the late fall or early spring of the academic year prior to the fall term of enrollment; and (3) admitted graduate students typically matriculate by April 15 prior to the fall term of enrollment.

3. Enrollment Suspension with Academic Program and Discontinuation

After the Board of Trustees approves the proposal to discontinue a degree program, the Provost may suspend enrollment in the discontinued degrees programs under consideration for reorganization, consolidation, reduction or discontinuance at any time during the process. Where possible, proposals approved by the Board of Trustees to discontinue an academic degrees program shall go into effect at least one full admissions cycle after approval.

B. Teach-out plan
In the process of discontinuing a program, every reasonable effort will/shall be made to allow students to complete their degrees. Program or campus transfers will/shall be made if mutually acceptable to the student and the receiving department. Students will/shall be provided advising assistance with respect to their academic program options.

The teach-out plan explains how students will/shall be supported through to completion of their degree. It is required to assure that there is a plan in place to meet the commitment made to students who are in the program, or who are making decisions to enter the University based on the availability of the program, or students who were at one time in the program and have stopped out. (A stopped-out student is one who was a previously enrolled degree-seeking student who suspended enrollment for one or more fall and/or spring term and who subsequently seeks to re-enroll.) The plan will/shall need to make the program available to students for a sufficient time to allow students in the pipeline to complete. This can be several years. As the program winds down, planning must be in place for alternatives to current requirements if needed.

Enough detail should/shall be provided to assure those reviewing the proposal that a plan to support students is in place, although the exact details may evolve as implementation proceeds. The plan should/shall consider the needs of currently enrolled, prospective, and stopped-out students. A key feature of the teach-out plan is that it should convey how program quality will/shall be maintained and ensured through the teach-out period for enrolled, prospective and stopped-out students.

1. Items a teach-out plan should consider include:

   a. Determination of the specific number and sequence of courses that must be taught, including a draft schedule indicating the number of semesters required.

   a.b. Designation of a primary contact for Admissions to consult with stopped out students.

   b.c. Designation of a primary contact for student service/advising support for enrolled students.

   e.d. Identification of possible alternative degree programs students are likely to consider.

2. Currently enrolled students

   Students who have declared an intention to complete the program must-shall be supported with courses, advising, and other services to complete the program. The faculty should plan to continue teaching required courses or make reasonable exceptions and course substitutions to those requirements to facilitate student
completion of the requirements. In some cases, the faculty may need to adjust program requirements to maintain quality throughout the teach-out period. Such a change in curricular requirements may require approval by the school/college curriculum committees and UW Regulations, in accordance with current processes.

3. Prospective students

The expectations of any student who has formally signaled an interest in the program should be considered. This would include students who selected the program on the application for admission (this includes undergraduate new freshman or transfer students or graduate students) or have otherwise been in a formal advising flow preceding declaration of the program. Efforts must be made by personnel in Academic Affairs to inform these students that their program of interest is not available, and to explain to them what other program options are available. Sufficient advance timing must be given for undergraduate programs to assure that prospective and current students are not making their college choice decisions based on a program that may become unavailable.

4. Stopped- out undergraduate students

Stopped- out undergraduate students will not be readmitted to an academic degree program that has been suspended or discontinued. The teach-out plan must describe how stopped-out undergraduate students will be supported to find an appropriate new academic degree program. Those planning to suspend or discontinue an undergraduate program should consult with the Director of the Advising, Career, and Exploratory Studies Center (ACES) to assist in planning advising considerations.

5. Stopped- out graduate students

Graduate students in a degree program that has been suspended/eliminated, as indicated above, must be notified of this by the AVP of Graduate Education, if contact information for the student is available, and given one semester to reapply and reenroll in their academic program. Those reapplying will be given the opportunity to complete their degree within two academic years of readmission.

C. Communication

Students will be promptly notified of program closure and timing for teach out programs.

To the maximum extent possible, decisions will be communicated as soon as possible and far enough in advance so that prospective students are not making decisions
about where to go to college or graduate school based on programs that will/shall become unavailable to them.

**D. Academic Personnel**

If termination of academic personnel is involved/required, the process outlined in UW Regulation 2-13 must-shall be followed.

**Responsible Division/Unit:** Academic Affairs  
**Source:** None  
**Links:** [http://www.uwyo.edu/acadaffairs/academics/administrative/program-review/](http://www.uwyo.edu/acadaffairs/academics/administrative/program-review/)  
**Associated Regulations, Policies, and Forms:** University Regulation 2-13  
**Approved:**