

Section Three - Program Discontinuance

Discontinuance of Academic Programs (P.S. 95-01)

The discontinuance of an academic program means that the sequence of instruction in that academic area will no longer be offered in a form which will lead to a degree or a certificate. For purposes of this policy document, an academic program is defined as a sequence of courses leading to a bachelor's, master's or professional degree, a formal degree option, a minor, a certificate, or a credential. It does not refer to the department(s) or other administrative unit(s) that may offer the courses involved. Portions of the curriculum may be retained if they are related to other programs.

Program discontinuance may be requested for a variety of reasons. Typically, programs are discontinued when they no longer serve student or societal needs, or when the University cannot provide the resources to offer them. What is important to the process is that the reasons for the proposed action be made explicit and that affected parties have an opportunity to present alternative views and proposals. This requires a process of notification and hearing which will involve several parts of the faculty governance process.

Because program discontinuance means the elimination of instructional areas it has two important characteristics: first, it represents an educational policy judgment and, second, it represents a resource allocation decision. Although the final authority to make either of these decisions rests with the President of the University and his or her designees, traditionally faculty are more involved in the making of educational policy while administrators make resource allocation decisions. In the case of program discontinuance, both faculty and administrators must participate fully before final decisions are made by the President.

The responsibility for recommending to the President a course of action in any of those situations rests primarily with the faculty. The responsibility for carrying out any course of action decided upon rests with the administration.

As far as possible, the university shall not take any administrative action leading to the de facto or official discontinuation of an academic program before the discontinuance process is completed.

I. Initiation

1.000 A program discontinuance may be requested by the following faculty bodies: the academic area offering the program, if requested by a majority vote of the full-time probationary and tenured faculty of the academic area; the faculty council of the college offering the program, if requested by a majority of those members voting; the Planning and Educational Policies Council, if requested by a majority of those members voting; the Graduate Council, if requested by a majority of those members voting; and the Academic Senate, if requested by a majority of those members voting.

1.100 A program discontinuance may be requested by the dean of the college offering the program. Such a request may be initiated only after consultation with the appropriate academic area or areas and the faculty council of the college.

1.110 A program discontinuance may be requested by the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

1.120 If the request to discontinue a program originates with a body other than the department offering the program, all tenured and probationary faculty members in the department(s) offering the program must be notified of the action before it is forwarded to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and the Chair of the Academic Senate.

1.200. The request to discontinue an academic program shall be sent simultaneously to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and the Chair of the Academic Senate.

1.300. The request to discontinue an academic program shall be sent to the appropriate University Councils, omitting a program discontinuance study, when the initiating body presents evidence of one or more of the following conditions. Even for the situations described below, a program discontinuance study shall be carried out if requested by any three people (students, faculty members, or administrators).

There is no evidence that any students have been enrolled in the program during the previous three years.

There is so little student demand for the program that necessary courses have not been offered for the previous three years.

The program is one of several alternate programs offered within the same academic unit, and one of the alternate programs better serves student needs.

Faculty members needed to teach the courses for the program have retired or otherwise left University employment, and the academic area's long-range planning indicates that new hiring would be better done in other areas of specialization.

An agency external to the campus, such as a credentialing agency or accreditation agency, required discontinuance of a given program.

1.400. Upon receipt of a request to discontinue an academic program, the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs shall initiate a program discontinuance study, except for those situations described in Section 1.300.

II. Program Discontinuance Study

2.100 Each year, the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate, with the advice of

the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, shall select a Discontinuance Study panel of at least seven (7) full-time probationary and tenured faculty members.

2.110 No member of the directly affected department(s) or discipline(s) shall serve on the panel while it is considering possible discontinuance of that program. If this leaves fewer than five (5) members available to serve, replacement members shall be named to the panel, by the same process as was used to form the original panel. At least three (3) members of the panel (or subgroup of the panel) considering a given program shall be from outside the College primarily responsible for offering the program.

2.200 When a program discontinuance study has been officially requested as described in Section 1.400, the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs shall refer the proposal to the Discontinuance Study Panel.

2.210 The Discontinuance Study Panel shall evaluate all proposed program discontinuances referred to it according to the procedures detailed below. The Panel shall respond explicitly to the reasons given by the appropriate body or individual for requesting the program discontinuance. The panel shall make a recommendation for each program being considered, giving the reasons for the recommendation. If several programs are being considered at the same time, the panel may list relative priorities for actions.

2.220 In making its recommendations, the program discontinuance study panel shall consider previous internal and external program reviews, and shall make explicit all other criteria and evidence which it uses in arriving at its recommendation.

2.230 The study panel shall conduct its proceedings in public session except that in issues of personnel the study panel may meet in executive session. All interested parties, particularly students enrolled in the program, shall be given reasonable opportunity to present information they consider relevant to the question. The panel shall have access to the data necessary to render an informed judgment, subject to the constraints imposed by the Public Records Act*.

2.300 The study panel may recommend that the program be (a) discontinued; (b) discontinued unless specified conditions can be met; (c) suspended; (d) continued; (e) limited in size; (f) offered in whole or in part only through University College and Extension Services; (g) combined with another CSULB program; (h) offered jointly with one or more other CSU campuses. The panel may make other recommendations as appropriate.

2.310 If the panel recommends discontinuance or suspension, the report shall specify reasonable mechanisms to permit students enrolled in the program to complete their degrees.

* Government Code, Chapter 3,5, Inspection of Public Records 6254. Except as provided in Section 6254.7, nothing in this chapter shall be construed to require disclosure of

records that are any of the following . . . (c) Personnel, medical, or similar files, the disclosure of which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

2.320 If the panel recommends suspension, the report shall include a recommendation about conditions for reactivation of the program and about the maximum time to be allowed before the program must either be reactivated or discontinued.

2.400 The study panel shall forward its recommendations in writing, supported by a summary of the evidence, to the Office of the Academic Senate, with copies to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, the Dean of the college in which the program is offered, and the chair(s) of the affected department(s), within one semester of receiving its charge under section 1.400.

III. Review of Recommendations

3.100 The Chair of the Academic Senate shall have five (5) working days to transmit the recommendations of the study panel simultaneously to all appropriate University Councils and to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. The directly affected departments may forward comments and further information to the Councils within ten (10) working days.

3.200 The University Councils shall have thirty (30) working days to forward their recommendations to the Academic Senate.

3.210 The Graduate Council, Planning and Educational Policies Council, or Teacher Preparation Committee, as appropriate, shall prepare a report that includes an evaluation of the effect of each proposed action on other programs and on the overall ability of the university to fulfill its mission, as well as other relevant issues.

3.220 In addition, the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs may forward her/his recommendations to the Academic Senate.

3.300 The Executive Committee of the Academic Senate shall collect the recommendations from the Discontinuance Study Panel, the Councils, and the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, and shall prepare a summary to be distributed to the Senate along with the individual recommendations. The Executive Committee may suggest wording for appropriate motions, for action by the Academic Senate. The Academic Senate shall have twenty (20) working days to consider these materials and make its own recommendations. Thereafter, all materials bearing on the study-and-review process shall be transmitted to the President.

3.310 Any time a program discontinuance would result in the layoff of tenured or tenure track faculty, the Provost must appear before the Senate to present reasons for the discontinuance before the program is discontinued.

3.400 The President's decision shall be made known within twenty (20) working days to the directly affected departments and the Academic Senate.

IV. Safeguards for Students, Faculty and Staff

4.100 If the President's response to the Academic Senate's recommendation is a decision to discontinue or suspend an academic program, students shall be given thirty (30) days to declare their interest in completing that program. Thereafter, no additional students shall be admitted to the program except by permission of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. To give students a fair opportunity either to complete the program or to transfer to another program or university, the actual termination process should be phased over a reasonable period of time. The steps of the termination process and the schedule for its implementation shall be included in the official announcement of the intended discontinuation.

4.200 Safeguards for faculty and staff are contained within the appropriate memoranda of understanding between the Board of Trustees and the exclusive bargaining agents.

In addition to the request to discontinue an academic program, please submit the University Resources Council (URC) form "Proposal for Program, Degree or Certificate Discontinuance."

Suspension and Reinstatement of Programs

From time to time it may become necessary for new enrollment in an academic program to be temporarily suspended, either because of a lack of qualified faculty or because of a reduction in budget. Suspension of a program is proposed and approved in accordance with Policy Statement 95-01, Discontinuance of Academic Programs (see above).

Reinstatement of a suspended academic program must be proposed by the appropriate college dean. The dean's proposal should explain in detail the changes in staffing or funding that make reinstatement possible. In cases where the program has been suspended for two years or less, the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, if satisfied that sufficient faculty and budget are available to offer the program successfully, may approve the proposal for reinstatement, simply notifying the Academic Senate Office of the action that has been taken. In cases where the program has been suspended for more than two years, the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs will refer the proposal for reinstatement to the Academic Senate for review by the appropriate councils and a recommendation by the full Senate. In all cases, reinstatement requires final approval by the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs.