

POLICY ON THE SUSPENSION OR DISCONTINUANCE OF PROGRAMS, DEPARTMENTS, AND CENTERS

INTRODUCTION

The continuation and improvement of the quality, intellectual vitality and academic distinction of Rutgers depends upon the ability of the University community to make wise decisions about academic affairs. This is true under any circumstances, and academic planning should reflect it. In a period when pressures force universities to consider constricting their involvements or responding more selectively to educational demands, thoughtful and comprehensive approaches to these decisions are important.

The setting of priorities, examination of past, current and future educational endeavors, allocation of resources, and determination of areas of strength and weakness in the University are basic concerns in academic decision-making, and should involve those most affected, suitable peers, adequate criteria, appropriate external comparisons and long-range, well considered judgments.

Decisions to establish, support and develop programs, departments, and centers in the University are fully explored and carefully made. Decisions to alter significantly or to abolish programs must be equally carefully made because they also affect the considerable investments of the state, faculty and students, and the integrity of the University. The following policy, principles, criteria and procedures are to provide a rational system for reviewing programs for possible deficiencies and potential corrective action.

POLICY

In the implementation of the procedures described below, the Board of Governors or the President, as appropriate, shall consider advice received from the Administration, the University Senate, and relevant faculties of the various divisions of the University, and shall also consult with students and others (such as Trustees' Advisory Committees).

For purposes of this policy an academic program is defined as a program, department, or center, or any statutory unit established by the Board of Governors, unless otherwise specified. Discontinuance of an instructional degree program, academic department, or research unit is a permanent termination of its admissions and operation. Suspension of an instructional degree program, academic department, or research unit involves the temporary suspension of its admissions and operation. Suspension differs from discontinuance in that it is not permanent; the program, academic department, or research unit can be reconstituted at a more favorable time.

Decisions involving the review for possible suspension or discontinuance of academic programs shall rest heavily upon the recommendations of relevant faculty and academic administrative officers of the University, and shall incorporate the following principles, criteria and procedures:

PRINCIPLES

1. The suspension or discontinuance of programs shall reflect long-range judgments about the educational mission of the University and its academic divisions.
2. Criteria for evaluating programs for possible suspension or discontinuance shall place greatest emphasis on the quality of the program involved, to include assessment of the quality of faculty, need for the program, quality of students and graduates, and resources required for its further development.

3. Primary judgment about academic programs is the responsibility of the faculty or of an appropriate faculty body subject to review by the Board of Governors. Independent faculty reviews, including external peer review, and student evaluation shall be a part of all reviews of programs for possible suspension or discontinuance.
4. Judgments about specific programs shall incorporate consideration of the strength of the program compared with that of similar programs both within and external to the University.
5. The identification of a program as weak can lead to alternative courses of action; in the first instance provision for the addition of new resources shall be examined as a basis for program improvement. Subsequently, the program may be strengthened by reorganization, or by significant curricular changes, or it may be suspended or discontinued.
6. The faculty, staff and students of any program considered for review for suspension or discontinuance shall be kept fully informed about that action, policies and procedures governing suspension and discontinuance, and rights of those involved.
7. Early and meaningful consultation with affected faculty, staff and students shall take place as part of the procedures for program suspension or discontinuance.
8. The procedure for suspending and discontinuing academic programs shall include adequate safeguards for faculty, staff and students, to include, but not be limited to, adequate notice, protection of tenure, due to process, rights to a hearing and appeal, relocation within the University, assistance in retraining and placement outside the University.
9. Consideration for suspension or discontinuance should be conducted in as timely a fashion as possible, consistent with the consultative process outlined below. Normally these procedures should be completed within one calendar year.
10. Final decision on the suspension of a program rests with the President of the University. On the other hand, final decision on the discontinuance of a program rests with the University's Board of Governors, subject to the approval of the State Board of Higher Education.

CRITERIA

Judgments about the suspension or discontinuance of academic programs shall be made according to the following criteria and illustrative referents:

1. Quality of Program.

Is it of a quality and scope appropriate to Rutgers and the division in which it is located? Based on national norms for the field, are faculty in the program at or above standards of scholarship and/or creative endeavor? From evidence available through external peer review, and student, and alumni evaluation, are teaching, advisement and related program services at or above acceptable University standards? From examination of student records and alumni success, is the quality of students and graduates at or above

comparable national or University standards? Is the program relatively new and building or is it old and well established?

2. Contributions of Program.

Is the program, regardless of costs or enrollments, central to the mission of the State University? Does the program make major contributions to scholarship in the field at the national level? Does the program make major contributions in service at the national, regional or state level? Does the program provide significant service to other units within Rutgers?

3. Need for the Program.

In terms of scholarly interests and state, national or international needs, is the program justified? What is Rutgers' relative advantage in location, tradition and comparability of similar programs in nearby institutions? In the region served, or among competing institutions, does the program have distinctive features that warrant its continuance? What has been, is, and is projected to be the student and societal demand for the program?

4. Affirmative Action.

Due consideration of minority and women's concerns is of major importance during the review process.

5. Relative Costs of the Program

In terms of the criteria of program quality, contribution and need, are the costs of continuing the program justified? Compared to the costs of operating comparable programs at Rutgers and at other institutions, is the program too costly? Is the program too costly in relation to other educational and program needs of the University? In consideration of revenues and other resources available to the program from all sources, are the costs excessive?

PROCEDURES

Within the policy and principles governing the suspension and discontinuance of academic programs, and utilizing the criteria identified under that policy, the following procedures are to be used in reviewing a program for possible suspension or discontinuance:

1. Review of a program for possible suspension or discontinuance may be initiated by the unit dean, the program or school/college faculty, the Provost or the Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer or the President of the University. The Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer has the responsibility for deciding whether or not to conduct the review and whether or not programs on other campuses would be affected and should be involved. The responsibility for organizing and carrying out the policy and procedures for the review rests with the campus Provost(s).
2. The Provost forwards the recommendation to the dean of the unit in which the program is located; the dean of the unit immediately informs the director or chair in writing about the review, and involves the unit's Planning Committee and the other appropriate

consultative bodies. Written notice providing reasons for the review shall be given to faculty members of the program at the time a review is initiated. The dean requests the director or chair to provide in a timely fashion a written response to the proposal, after consultation with the faculty and students in the program.

3. If there is consensus within and among the affected parties – faculty, staff, students, and Administration – then documentation of this mutual agreement for suspension or discontinuance may be submitted by the Provost to the Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer for action without the need for a review as described in these procedures.
4. Program faculty members shall have full access to all documents related to the review, with the exception of personal, confidential letters relating to individual faculty members. Upon request of program faculty, any personal, confidential letters shall be subject to review by the unit Appointments and Promotion Committee or other appropriate governing committee which shall summarize the substance of the letters, protecting the confidentiality of the author(s) and the identified faculty member.
5. If a review is to be conducted, an independent peer assessment of the quality, contribution, need and relative costs of the program is conducted by a Program Review Committee appointed by the campus Provost and composed of faculty members who do not have full-time administrative assignments. The Program Review Committee shall consist of at least five (5) and not more than nine (9) members whose knowledge and fields of study are appropriate for assessment of the program. At least one student shall be appointed to the Committee. The Program Review Committee shall be appointed only after full consultation with the dean and faculty of the program. If the program spans more than one unit, consultation on the appropriate composition of the Committee shall involve the relevant Provosts, deans and faculties. The Program Review Committee shall not include members from the program under review. Where there is a dispute between the Provost and the program faculty and/or dean(s) over composition of the Committee, the Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer shall consult with parties to the dispute and will determine the composition of the Committee, consistent with these procedures.
6. A charge to the Program Review Committee shall be prepared by the Provost after consultation with the appropriate deans, faculty, and chairpersons. The charge shall establish requirements for early and meaningful consultation with faculty, staff and students in the program, policies, principles and criteria to be used. It shall identify deadlines which assure thoughtful proceedings and account for required action in relation to admissions, appointments and budget cycles.
7. The Committee shall be provided with full information on the program, including reports of other internal or external reviews, documented data on costs of the program, enrollment, resources provided, as well as all material submitted by the dean(s), faculty and students in the program or unit, and other related information. If financial exigency is the reason for the review, full documents demonstrating that condition must be provided to the Committee.
8. The Committee shall use the criteria established, provide adequate opportunity for evidence and viewpoints to be presented, consult the affected program faculty and students extensively, and prepare a preliminary report and recommendation, which shall

be forwarded first to the dean(s) and faculty of the affected program for their comment and response. A final Committee report and recommendation will be prepared for submission to the Provost. The report shall identify any important strengths or weaknesses found in the program.

9. The dean(s), affected program faculty and the governing faculty of the unit or units as appropriate in which the program is located shall have an opportunity to respond to the final report before action by the Provost.
10. After review of the Committee's final report, any responses, and other relevant material, the Provost shall forward his/her recommendation to the Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer. The Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer shall recommend specifically how it is to be accomplished effectively with the least disruption to faculty and students, and how existing program resources are to be reallocated.
11. The recommendation of the Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer shall be submitted to the President who shall consult with the University Senate.
12. In the case of suspension, the President shall have the final decision. In the case of discontinuance the recommendation by the President concerning the program shall be submitted to the Board of Governors.
13. The Board of Governors, in the course of deliberations, should provide ample opportunity for comments by members of the University community, including the University Senate.
14. University Board of Governors' action which discontinues a program shall be submitted to the State Board of Higher Education for concurrence.
15. In the case of centers reporting directly to the Provost, the review may be initiated by the center's director or faculty, the Provost, the Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer, or the President of the University. The Provost shall inform the director and faculty of the center in writing of the reasons for the proposed review and request a response to the proposal. After review of the response the Provost may determine not to proceed, in which case he/she shall inform the initiator of the review of his/her decision and the reasons for it, or he/she may decide to proceed, in which case he/she shall involve his/her faculty advisory bodies in the discussion and elicit from them proper advice and recommendations. He/she shall also inform the deans and heads of any unit affected by the action and ask for an assessment of the impact of any impending action on their unit. According to whether the Provost's decision is for suspension or discontinuance the process will go forward as described above.

PROTECTIONS

When a decision is made to suspend or discontinue a program, the following protections for faculty, staff and students shall be provided by the University:

1. Except in extraordinary circumstances, no equivalent program may be established at the University for a period of five (5) years, and, following that period, tenured faculty displaced from the discontinued program must be provided first opportunity for returning

to a new equivalent program. On the other hand, a suspended program can be reactivated at any time.

2. The University will make every effort to relocate all program faculty and staff to appropriate positions in the University.
3. The University will provide substantial opportunities for preparation for alternative faculty positions in the University to all tenured program faculty.
4. Affirmative action consideration in implementation of suspension or discontinuance of programs shall be of major importance. Every effort shall be made to minimize the impact of such actions on minority faculty, staff, and students.
5. Existing policies and procedures for non-reappointment shall be followed for any non-tenured faculty in a program scheduled for discontinuance who cannot be adequately relocated.
6. Termination of a faculty member because a program has been discontinued will be in accordance with the requirements of University Regulations and/or contract agreements.
7. Existing University procedures and contract provisions shall be followed for staff employed in a program scheduled for discontinuance.
8. Although completion of the degree or transfer cannot be guaranteed, the University shall make every effort to accommodate student needs in programs scheduled for discontinuance. To provide students maximum opportunity to complete their work or to transfer to another program or institution, the termination of a program will be phased over a reasonable period of time. No new admissions will be made.