

BLUE MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

PROCEDURES

POLICY 2.31

CURRICULUM AND PROGRAM APPROVAL AND PROGRAM CLOSURE

New Academic Degree Program Approval Procedures

All new programs require a minimum of 120 semester hours of credit for a Bachelor's degree and a minimum of 30 semester hours of credit for graduate degrees. When a new undergraduate or graduate degree program is being considered by Blue Mountain College, the following steps are taken:

Step 1. Department * Interest and Support

The departmental faculty meet to consider the potential degree program concept and demonstrate interest and support to study the possibilities. (Interest and support may also originate from institutional strategic initiatives. Data are compiled in notebook** form.

Step 2. Preliminary Department Research

Departmental faculty conduct preliminary research to answer these questions:

- 1) Does the degree program fit the minimum of BMC?
- 2) Which similar type institutions offer the proposed degree program?
- 3) What is the enrollment in the proposed degree program in these institutions?
- 4) What are preliminary costs/benefits to the institution?
- 5) Will approval (a substantive change by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges) be needed?

Step 3. Executive Summary Prepared to Inform Academic Leadership & President

After Departmental Approval, a two-page Executive Summary is prepared by the Department and submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) and the President of the College for approval. The VPAA apprizes the Academic Dean's Council of the proposal. The President's Cabinet (PC) renders an opinion as to whether to proceed to the next step.

Step 4. Letter of Intent and Support Data Presented to SPSC

The VPAA submits Letter of Intent and support data to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC). SPSC renders an opinion as to whether to proceed to the next step.

NOTE: At this point, Blue Mountain College SACSCOC liaison should check with SACSCOC liaison to determine if a substantive change is involved. If so, a letter of intent should be sent to SACSCOC.

Step 5. Approval of the Degree Program by the Academic Dean's Council or the Graduate Council

The Academic Dean's Council approves undergraduate degree programs and the Graduate Council approves graduate degree programs.

Step 6. Approval of the Program by the General Faculty

The faculty of the College approves the program.

Step 7. Approval of the Program by the Board of Trustees

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The Blue Mountain College Board of Trustees approves the program.

Step 8. Approval of the Program by SACSCOC

Inform SACSCOC that a new degree program has been added. If the program represents a substantive change, it must have SACSCOC approval before implementation.

*A notebook should be prepared with information identified above.

**If the new program does not have departmental faculty but would require a new department, the VPAA's support is required.

Program Closure Procedures

In the event that reasons lead to consideration of closing a program, the President will appoint an ad hoc committee to study this issue and make recommendations to the President. If a decision is made to close a program, all affected faculty will be considered for reassignment within the College. All currently enrolled students in the affected program will be given notification of the alternatives available to them.

What constitutes a program?

An operational definition of a program is any activity or collection of activities of the institution that consumes resources (dollars, people, space, equipment time). [*Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services*, p. 44.]

Justifiable Reasons Leading to Consideration of Closure of a Program

- A decrease in the number of degrees awarded but not as a result of temporary, cyclical trends or resource allocation;
- A continuing decrease in qualified applicants/majors in the program;
- A pattern or history of low and/or declining scores on standardized/national examining instruments;
- A conclusion based on the program review process or self-study process;
- An inability to meet standards for obtaining credentials and/or accreditation (SACSCOC, etc.);
- Prioritizing of the current academic objectives of the various schools or colleges;
- No qualified and/or affordable faculty to teach in the program; or
- No longer a market demand for the graduates of the program.

If, faculty administrators determine there is a justifiable reason leading to the consideration of closure of a program, then the following steps may be followed:

Step 1. The President will appoint an ad hoc committee composed of faculty and administrative personnel to review the situation in depth and make recommendations to the President. The ad hoc committee should be made up of one or more members representing the affected program.

Step 2. The ad hoc committee will make recommendations to the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) regarding whether any academic program(s) should be closed including the rationale for such recommendations. The report to the VPAA will include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. an examination of the course offerings, degree programs, supporting degree programs,

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- teaching specialties, and semester hour production;
2. reasoning behind the proposed closure;
 3. history of the program including what actions have been taken over the preceding five years that were supportive or non-supportive of the program;
 4. academic evaluations of the program by internal and external evaluators, as appropriate;
 5. all financial data relevant to the program and related programs including estimated costs for upgrading and retaining the program at a quality consistent with accreditation standards or other relevant standards and the impact such expenditures would have on other programs in the College.

The ad hoc committee should also allow and encourage other appropriate members of the College community to provide further information and opinions both orally or in writing.

Step 3. Faculty in a program being considered for closure will be notified and given an opportunity to contribute to the review process. If termination of faculty is involved, those faculty affected will be notified of the date for termination of their employment.

Step 4. The VPAA will review the ad hoc committee's report and make further recommendations to the President.

Step 5. The President makes the decision relative to program closure and presents the request for approval with supporting documentation to the Board of Trustees.

Step 6. The Board of Trustees approves or denies the request. The date for closing or phasing out a program will be taken into consideration the time required for anticipated completion by students currently enrolled or for facilitation of their placement in acceptable alternative programs.

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