

BOARD OF REGENTS
BRIEFING PAPER
Handbook Revision, Low Yield Programs

BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

In his initiative to improve effectiveness and efficiency across the Nevada System of Higher Education, the Chancellor is reviewing both academic and administrative areas where changes may need to be made. The Chancellor seeks approval of a policy to ensure that all institutions regularly review academic program productivity using annual data, particularly graduation numbers. While many NSHE institutions undertake such review on their own, it is recommended that a regular report on low-yield degree programs take place at the institution level at least every three years to ensure that academic programs are effectively and realistically serving the needs of students today and utilizing institutional resources wisely.

In recent years, numerous states have adopted policies that require a consistent review of academic programs in terms of program productivity, typically defined by the number of students graduating from the program, number of students served by the program, evidence of the essential state need for the program, or no unnecessary duplication of academic programs offered at other public institutions in the state. The adoption of such policies has been, in some cases, in response to budgetary concerns, but in more cases has been in an effort to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of institutions. Given the fiscal and economic challenges facing postsecondary institutions, states are becoming more aggressive in reviewing academic programs to ensure their continued relevance and in holding institutions accountable for investing in programs that produce graduates and/or serve critical educational or research needs.

If approved, this regular review of program productivity will provide institutional administrators with the opportunity to decide to strengthen or merge programs, initiate alternative strategies such as distance learning to improve productivity, identify programs that will benefit from collaboration or the consolidation of resources, or discontinue programs. Academic programs designated as low-yield must be reviewed in consultation with the Faculty Senate within three years of the program reaching the defined thresholds to determine whether there are sufficient factors to support the program's continuation or merger with other programs. The institution may recommend to the Board the elimination of the program, in which case every effort shall be taken to allow current students to graduate and faculty to be placed in other programs if feasible. A program may be exempted from the low-yield designation if the program 1) is central to the educational or research mission of the institution, 2) meets a demonstrated workforce or service need of the state or geographical region served by the institution, including and projected future needs of the state or region, 3) demonstrates an increase in student demand through a pattern of increasing enrollment of majors, 4) demonstrates productivity in the receipt of external grants and contracts related to the program, 5) supports underrepresented student or community groups, or 6) meets other criteria as defined by the institution. This policy, if adopted, will be effective Fall 2012.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

Approve a new Board policy (*Title 4, Chapter 14, new Section 5*) requiring a regular review of academic programs with respect to the number of graduates produced in the prior three years. (See attached Policy Proposal.)

IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

This proposal is brought forward in response to the Chancellor's ongoing efficiency and effectiveness initiative.

BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

If approved as recommended, the proposed policy to regularly review mature (at least 10 years old) academic programs will:

- Improve public accountability by demonstrating the institutions' monitoring of the productivity of all academic programs;
- Encourage programs to increase the number of students in the program and graduating;
- Ensure regular institutional examination of all academic programs in terms of both productivity and potential needed program changes or elimination;
- Set system-wide standards for designation of programs as low-yield; and
- Ensure consultative role for faculty at each institution in this mandated low-yield program review and process.

POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

None.

ALTERNATIVE(S) TO WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED/RECOMMENDED:

None have been brought forward.

COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:

- Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title #_____ Chapter #_____ Section #_____
- Amends Current Board Policy: *Title 4, Chapter 14, new Section 5*
- Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter #_____ Section #_____
- Other:_____
- Fiscal Impact: Yes_____ No **X**_____
Explain:_____

Table 1
Low-Productivity Academic Programs: Degree Completion Criteria In Other States

State	AA	BA/BS	MA/MS	PhD	Applicability	Source
Alabama	7.5	7.5	3.75	2.25	5-year averages at senior institutions	Code of Alabama 16-5-8
	7.5	7.5	3.75	2.25	3-year averages at two-year institutions	
Arizona	-	24	9	6	Main Campus: 3-year total	University of Arizona, Provost's Office, Academic Program Review Procedure Manual June 2010
	-	15	6	N/A	Non-main Campus: 3-year total	
Colorado	-	10	3	1	Most Recent Year total	Colorado Department of Higher Education, Academic Policy I.G
	OR					
	-	20	5	3	3-year total	
Kentucky	12	12	7	5	5-year average	Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, Academic Program Review Policy
Louisiana	-	8	5	2	Annual average	Louisiana Board of Regents, administrative memo dated April 22, 2009
	OR					
	-	40	25	10	5-year total	
Maryland	5	5	2	1	Most Recent Year Total	Maryland Higher Education Commission, Low Productivity Degree Program Report, August 2006
	OR					
	15	15	6	3	3-year total	
Nebraska	10	7	5	3	5-year average	Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, adopted June 26, 2008 meeting
North Carolina	-	19	15	5	Total for last 2 years	University of North Carolina Board of Governors, administrative memo dated February 5, 2009
	OR					
	-	10	9	2	Most Recent Year Total	

Table 1
Low-Productivity Academic Programs: Degree Completion Criteria In Other States

State	AA	BA/BS	MA/MS	PhD	Applicability	Source
Oklahoma	5	5	3	2	5-year average (alternative benchmarks for enrollments exist)	Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, Policy and Procedures Manual 3.7.7
Rhode Island	5	5	5	3	Annual total for 3 prior years	Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education, Policy A-7.0
South Carolina	-	5	3	2	5-year average (alternative benchmarks for enrollments exist)	South Carolina Commission on Higher Education Policy, Section A-12
Tennessee	10	10	5	3	5-year average	Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Academic Program Productivity Procedures
Virginia	varies	12-6	7-4	4-2	Exact number depends on specific degree program; numbers for AA/AS programs depends on number of FTEs	Virginia State Council for Higher Education (Code of Virginia §23-9.6: 1.01)

POLICY PROPOSAL – HANDBOOK
TITLE 4, CHAPTER 14, *new* SECTION 5
Low-Yield Academic Program Review – Effective Fall 2012

Additions appear in *boldface italics*; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

Section 5. Low-Yield Academic Program Review

- 1. *Each President, in consultation with the Faculty Senate, shall develop procedures for reviewing academic program productivity at least every three years in accordance with the provisions of this section.***
- 2. *Academic programs that are at least 10 years old shall be designated as low-yield if the number of degrees granted is below the following levels:***
 - a. *Associate programs must award at least twenty degrees in the last three consecutive years. Certificate programs in the same field may be considered in the evaluation of the associate program productivity.***
 - b. *Baccalaureate programs must award at least twenty degrees in the last three consecutive years.***
 - c. *Master's and Doctoral programs must jointly award at least eight degrees in the last three consecutive years.***
- 3. *Academic programs designated as low-yield shall be reviewed in consultation with the Faculty Senate within three years of the program reaching these thresholds to determine whether there are sufficient factors to support the program's continuation or merger with other programs. In accordance with the provisions of this chapter, the institution may recommend to the Board the elimination of the program, in which case every effort shall be taken to allow current students to graduate and faculty to be placed in other programs if feasible.***
- 4. *A program may be exempted from the low-yield designation if it meets any of the following criteria:***
 - a. *Central to the educational or research mission of the institution or partnering institutions vested in the program;***
 - b. *Meets a demonstrated workforce or service need of the state or geographical region served by the institution, including and projected future needs of the state or region;***
 - c. *Demonstrates an increase in student demand through a pattern of increasing enrollment of majors;***
 - d. *Productivity in the receipt of external grants and contracts related to the program,***
 - e. *Supports underrepresented student or community groups, or***
 - f. *Other criteria as defined by the institution.***
- 5. *The President shall report annually to the Chancellor all programs designated low-yield and the results of the institutional review process of such programs.***

RENUMBER SECTIONS 5 THROUGH 23 AS SECTIONS 6 THROUGH 24.
Effective Fall 2012.