

PROCEDURES

Policy 2.31: CURRICULUM AND PROGRAM APPROVAL AND PROGRAM CLOSURE

New Academic Degree Program Approval Procedures

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 to consider the potential degree program concept and demonstrate interest and support to study the possibilities. Interest and support may originate from the department itself or from institutional strategic initiatives.

Step 2. Preliminary Department Research

Does the degree program fit the mission of Blue Mountain College?

The department visit provides information, including a review of Web sites of sufficient number of institutions to answer these basic questions:

- 1) Which similar type institutions offer the proposed degree program?
- 2) What is the enrollment in the proposed degree program in these institutions?
- 3) What are preliminary costs/benefits to the institution?
- 4) Will approval (a substantive change by the Commission on Colleges, SACS) be needed? (See Steps 4, 6, and 14 below.)

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

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. 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 SACS liaison should check with COC/SACS liaison to determine if a substantive change is involved. (See Steps 2 and 4 above and Step 14 below.)

Step 5. Faculty of the College Informed

The faculty are informed of the potential program and apprized of the process which will be followed regarding the decision about the establishment of such a program.

Step 6. Letter of Intent and Letter of Notification

The department writes a Letter of Intent to the President and if the President approves, forwards it to the Board of Trustees of Blue Mountain College to gain initial approval of the program concept. Upon Board approval, the President will send a Letter of Notification to the Commission on Colleges, SACS, if a substantive change is involved.

Step 7. Gathering of Additional Support Research Data

Additional support research data, including a need analysis, are gathered by the department and the Office of Academic Affairs.

- Step 8. Appropriate Council/Committee Studies Results**
The Academic Dean's Council **and/or the Graduate Council** and other appropriate committees as needed study results and support data presented.
- Step 9. Degree Program Approval by Department School Faculty**
The faculty in the department where the program will be housed approves the program.
- Step 10. 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 11. Approval of the Degree Program by the President**
The President will approve the program, utilizing other groups/committees as needed for additional input.
- Step 12. Approval of the Program by the General Faculty**
The faculty of the College approves the program.
- Step 13. Approval of the Program by the Board of Trustees**
The Blue Mountain College Board of Trustees approves the program.
- Step 14. Approval of the Program by COC/SACS**
Inform COC/SACS that a new degree program has been added. If the program represents a substantive change, it must have COC/SACS approval before implementation. (See Steps 2, 4, and 6 above.)

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 (Commission

- on Colleges/SACS, 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, 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.