

## Policy on Program Closures

The closing of a program is also a significant event in the life of a college that should be undertaken only after careful deliberation by the faculty and administration. A clear set of criteria, affirmed by the college leadership, must be available to guide the various decisions required. All potential program closures should be recommended by the appropriate instructional dean to the President. The President and Cabinet will vote to recommend program closure based on the following criteria for closure. Decisions on program closure will be sent to the Financial Aid Director and Institutional Research Office for financial aid implications and accreditation notifications or requests. The President will notify the Alabama Community College System prior to accreditation notification. The instructional dean and faculty will develop a teach-out plan to be submitted to SACSCOC. The following criteria detail the considerations and steps for each of these areas.

### Criteria for Closing Programs:

Low Student Headcount

Low Credit Hour Production

Low Graduation Rates

Demonstrated Lack of Program Viability

Low Job Placement Rates

Low Market Demand for the Graduates

Quality of the Program: In considering closing a program, consideration of program *quality* is important.

#### Questions to Consider:

- How successful has the program been in placing its students in career positions?
- For the faculty members participating in the program, what is the demonstrated level of their teaching effectiveness, including the general trend of their student course evaluations or program

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- assessments in recent years?
- To what degree has the program enhanced the college's reputation in the state, region, and nation?
- To what degree has the program been able to meet its educational goals for its students?
- Does the future look essentially similar to the past, or is there good reason to believe that the answers to the above questions five years from now will be substantially different?

Level of Conformity with the Mission(s): A program may be closed if it is no longer strategically aligns with the College's academic mission, vision, or strategic plan.

Impact on Current Students: A major concern in considering the closure of any program is retaining students and being able to "teach out" those students still in the program.

Impact on Student Recruitment: Will the closure of the program impact recruiting new students to the program?

Impact on General Education or Interdisciplinary Programs: It is important to consider whether closure of a program would impact offering its general education courses or courses needed by other programs.

Impact on Faculty/Staff: When considering program closure, a significant consideration should be the number of faculty or staff affected.

Questions to Consider:

- How many students are enrolled in this program currently? Over the past five years, how many students have been enrolled? If applicable, how many have received a certificate or degree from this program over the past five years? How many students are likely to take courses offered in the program, whether or not for a degree or other academic designation, in the coming five years?
- How many full-time faculty have been teaching in this program? How many full-time faculty have been teaching part-time in this program? How many of these faculty are tenured or tenure-

track? How many part-time or adjunct faculty have been teaching in the program?

- Over, for example, the past five years, how many class hours have been devoted to teaching in the program?

Use of Resources: In evaluating a program for closure, it is proper to take into consideration the degree to which the program constitutes an effective use of institutional resources. Important points of consideration would include evaluating the number of majors and number of students enrolled in the programs courses within the recent past, how much the program costs compared to how much income it generates, and what impact the closure would have on faculty and staff.

Questions to Consider:

- How many support staff, either full-time or part-time, have been associated with this program (administrative assistants, secretaries, lab assistants, etc.)?
- What needs for classroom, computer, or lab space would be reduced or eliminated if this program were closed?
- What needs for library or media resources would be reduced or eliminated if this program were closed?
- What proportion of the resources for this program have been supplied or funded externally rather than internally? Do we anticipate changes in the level of that support? If the program is closed, can we expect to redirect that support toward other programs?
- The need for what resources will be reduced by eliminating this program's student services load (recruiting, advising, outreach, alumni support, etc.)?

Quality of the Program: In considering closing a program, consideration of program *quality* is important.

Questions to Consider:

- How successful has the program been in placing its students in career positions?
- For the faculty members participating in the program, what is the demonstrated level of their teaching effectiveness, including the general

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trend of their student course evaluations or program assessments in recent years?

- Has the program enhanced the college's reputation in the state, region, and nation?
- To what degree has the program been able to meet its educational goals for its students?
- Does the future look essentially similar to the past, or is there good reason to believe that the answers to the above questions five years from now will be substantially different?

Changes in External Accreditation or Credentialing Requirements: Finally, should external accreditation or credentialing requirements change, the specific need for a current program may be reduced or eliminated.

### Process for Program Closure

1. The instructional dean recommends a program for closure to the President and they discuss the reasons.
2. If the President recommends moving ahead with program closure, the proposed closure is researched for its impact on current students and the college.
3. The research and idea for closure is presented to the Cabinet for discussion.
4. If the closure suggestion has merit according to the Cabinet, the instructional dean will work on a program closure and teach out plan.
5. Once the teach out plan is recommended, the program closure plan will be sent to the Program Review Committee for a vote.
6. The SACSCOC Liaison (Dean of Institutional Effectiveness, Grants and Special Projects) will review the program closure for possible notification/approval needed by SACSCOC and help prepare the correspondence to send the teach out plan to SACSCOC.
7. The plan to close the program is sent to ACCS for review before submitting to SACSCOC.
8. Once the ACCS and ACHE approves, SACSCOC will be notified.
9. Once any approvals or notifications are complete with the Alabama Community College System, ACHE, and SACSCOC, the responsible faculty member/dean will submit the Catalog Revision Request form.