

**PRESIDENTS COUNCIL
POLICY STATEMENT AND PROCEDURES
FOR
REVIEWING ACADEMIC PROGRAM PROPOSALS**

Rationale For Voluntary Cooperation

American higher education is justly acclaimed for its diversity and pluralism that have fostered responsible competition reflecting the free market of the society in which colleges and universities exist. Anticipated population trends, economic realities, and a desire to be good stewards of the public trust, however, require intelligent cooperation among educational institutions, particularly among those in the public sector. Such cooperation should be achieved without sacrificing the commitment to diversity, initiative and responsibility that our heritage of freedom and competition has sustained. Furthermore, the modern phenomenon of “life long learning,” made imperative by the dynamic of our information-based, technological society, with its demand for constant professional renewal and job upgrading, has conferred new responsibilities upon colleges and universities.

The special role of public higher education is to provide quality education at a reasonable cost and to make that education accessible to all income segments and geographic sections of the state’s population. To fulfill this role in a responsible manner, the public universities of Michigan have developed a cooperative review process for all proposed new academic programs and a mechanism to report significant modifications or combinations of existing programs and the discontinuance of programs. The Presidents Council delegates review of academic programs to the Academic Affairs Officers Committee of the Council.

Considerations in the Review of Academic Programs

In presenting new program proposals, institutions are expected to address the issues of need, adequacy of resources, academic quality and consistency with institutional mission and future directions.

Institutional Mission and Future Direction. It is expected that new programs and modifications of existing programs will be aligned with the institution’s mission and plans for the future. Therefore, how the proposed program is consistent with the institution’s stated mission and plans for the future should be articulated.

Need. With respect to the need for the proposed program, questions such as the following are examined: What is the rationale for the proposed program? Will the program serve a specified purpose in the local community, a particular region, the state as a whole or within a particular field? Are there similar programs offered by other institutions in the state? If so, how does the proposed program differ? Will the new program provide access to underserved constituencies?

Resources. Faculty, information resources (e.g., library) and facilities are recognized as being essential for quality academic programs. So in addition to consideration of program need, recognition is also given to the availability and source of funds to provide adequate support for the proposed new program. How will the resources allocated to a new initiative, for example, impact funding for existing programs? Are the faculty resources adequate in size and academic preparation? Does the proposed program require extensive new expenditures for computers, laboratory equipment, and library holdings? Finally, will the addition of the proposed program represent an effective and efficient use of institutional resources?

Quality. While each institution attends to the issue of quality control in the development of academic programs, the Academic Affairs Officers Committee systematically reviews proposals noting in particular curricular design, faculty qualifications, plans for outcomes assessment and support services. The objective is to assure that new programs are not only needed and can be adequately supported, but that high standards will prevail in all such academic endeavors.

All of the above criteria and considerations apply to both undergraduate and graduate programs. Additionally, for post-baccalaureate level programs, special attention is given to such matters as faculty quality, as indicated by publications, externally funded projects, and specialized expertise.

Program Definitions

New Academic Programs involve the introduction of (1) new majors, (2) new degrees, and (3) new post-baccalaureate credit-bearing certificates.

Spin-off Programs represent new options, new combinations of existing curricula, new fields or concentrations within existing academic majors and degree programs, and title changes.

Spin-off program proposals do not require full documentation and review; however, they must be channeled through the review process, even though such programs ordinarily refer to initiatives or developments too minor to require actions by the Academic Affairs Officers Committee.

In the event that a proposed spin-off program is challenged at a meeting of the academic officers, a majority vote, as defined under "Procedures," shall determine whether the program will be considered a "new" program requiring resubmission with full documentation, discussion, and a vote.

Phase Out of Programs represent academic programs that an institution plans to eliminate from its suite of offerings. Institutions are expected to report all major program deletions and phase-outs for informational purposes only.

Procedures

With the exception of program phase-outs, all new program proposals of any category must be forwarded to the Presidents Council office at least six weeks in advance of the meeting at which they are to be considered. Review of new programs must be completed and submitted to the Presidents Council office one week prior to the scheduled meeting of the Academic Affairs Officers Committee, thereby affording the proposing institution time to prepare responses to reviewer comments. These responses should be shared with the academic affairs officers prior to the final voting process.

Review by the Academic Affairs Officers Committee includes a voting process, which is restricted to support (giving consent) or non-support (expressing concerns, reservations, or opposition). A positive vote requires a majority of the fifteen Michigan public universities (8 votes) in support of the program. Each institution has one vote, whether that vote is exercised by the designated committee member or the individual in attendance representing that institution. Resource persons at a meeting do not have the power to vote.

Actions taken by the Presidents Council in support of new program proposals will be reported each year, generally in the month of May, to appropriate legislative committees, the Department of Management and Budget, House Fiscal Agency, and Senate Fiscal Agency.

Programs at New Locations and On-line Degree Programs

As a courtesy to sister institutions, institutions are expected to report offerings of existing programs in off-campus locations or of programs with predominantly electronic delivery annually. A reproduction of the Annual Institutional Update that institutions provide to the Higher Learning Commission is sufficient for this purpose as it includes programs offered off-campus and through distance delivery.

Consultation Process for Programs Not Supported

Proposed undergraduate, graduate, or professional programs that do not receive a supporting vote by the Academic Affairs Officers Committee may be resubmitted after revision to the Academic Affairs Officers Committee or submitted without revision to the Presidents Council by the proposing institution for additional review and potential endorsement. The appeal process is described in the document entitled *Presidents Council Consultation Procedure* (Appendix).

Approved by the Presidents Council May 22, 1984

Revised May 4, 1989

Revised October/November 1993

Revised February 27, 2004

Appendix

PRESIDENTS COUNCIL CONSULTATION PROCEDURE*

1. Proposed undergraduate, graduate, or professional programs not satisfactorily resolved on the level of the Academic Officers may be submitted to the Presidential review procedure.
2. A Council member may initiate the Presidential review procedure by filing a declaration with the Chairperson of the Council (copy to the Executive Director). The declaration must contain:
 - a. A clear statement of the question or issue being submitted to this review procedure, sufficiently specific to allow clear identification of and response to the problems raised.
 - b. Evidence that the chief executive officer filing the declaration has previously discussed and attempted to resolve the matter with the chief executive officers of such other institutions as may be involved. No issue will be entertained from a Council member without such evidence.
3. The Presidential review procedure shall proceed as follows:
 - a. Upon receipt of such an inquiry, the Chairperson shall appoint a three-member panel of Council members to meet with the chief executive officers of the institutions in question. (The chief executive officers of the involved institutions may submit lists of six nominees each for the panel and may indicate an order of preference among the nominees. The Chairperson shall appoint the panel members from these lists of nominees.) Inasmuch as the special three-member panels provided for in this agreement may be required to deal with questions of program duplication in their review procedure, the following guidelines are established:
 - “Duplication” shall be considered the delivery of essentially the same instruction to comparable students at different classrooms in the same geographical area at approximately the same time.
 - The duplication defined above becomes “unnecessary duplication” when the cumulative cost of the instruction could be significantly reduced by merging instruction unless it yields an unacceptable loss of instructional quality or significantly diminishes student access to instruction.
 - b. Following the meeting between the panel and the executives of the involved institutions, the panel shall prepare draft recommendations which shall be furnished to the involved institutions.
 - c. In the event the draft recommendations resolve the issue, no further steps shall be taken.
 - d. In the event an issue remains, the panel will prepare a final report with copies to the involved institutions and other members of the Council.
 - e. Upon receipt of the panel report, the Council shall invite the involved institutions to appear before it and comment on the report.

- f. Following the above, the Council shall issue its recommendations to the involved institutions.
- g. In accord with the constitution or autonomy granted each institution, acceptance or rejection of the recommendations remains within the discretion of the involved institutions, as does the question of whether the recommendations are to be made public.
- h. It is hoped that an institution will decline to accept the judgment of the Presidents Council only for the most compelling reasons. Such reasons will be included in the minutes of the Council.

*Adopted by the Presidents October 15, 1974