PRESIDENTS COUNCIL STATE UNIVERSITIES OF MICHIGAN
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 purpose of the review is two-fold: to maximize efficiency and to ensure high quality. The primary purpose of the statewide review is to ensure that proposals account for the broader state education landscape while tailoring new programs to clearly identifiable needs. The Presidents Council delegates review of academic programs to the Academic Affairs Officers Committee of the Council. It has become standard practice that the program review allows for robust exchange regarding the nature and future of academic disciplines and programs in Michigan. Equally there is an expectation that feedback be framed in terms of program quality and improvement. All programs approved during the review process will be reported to the legislature each May.

It is important to recognize that while the Presidents Council provides a formal mechanism of this review, each of our institutions reviews all programs rigorously before they are approved. Equally, our campuses utilize a similarly rigorous review process for minors, certificate programs and other academic programs that do not fall under the auspice of a formal degree program.
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? How does the proposed program fill or address identified needs? Will the program serve a specified purpose in the local community, a particular region, the state as a whole or within a particular discipline, field, or profession? 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. Questions may include: What are the trends in the profession? Does the proposed program conform to existing accreditation standards? Do (or will) faculty have the requisite skill and experience to provide a high quality opportunity? Does the proposed curriculum reflect the best thinking on the future of the profession?

**Program Definitions**

*New Academic Programs* involve the introduction of (1) new majors, and (2) new degrees including degree changes (for example, Ed.D. to Ph.D.). A new program under this definition reflects either a completely new program or a substantial change to an existing program. A new
program in most cases will add new faculty and/or staff, may utilize existing campus resources, and reflect a new set of needs in professional practice and the local workforce. Additionally, a new program will include either a substantial proportion of new courses or some significant combination of interdisciplinary offerings that do not currently exist within an existing degree program. The key distinction for a new program is that it requires some substantial new curricular elements beyond what currently exists and is likely to require additional resources.

**Spin-off Programs** represent new options, new combinations of existing curricula, and title changes. Spin-offs may resemble new programs in a number of ways, but will differ in terms of the number of new courses and additional resources required for the offering of the program. In many cases, a spin-off will simply reflect minor changes to existing programs, which adapt to evolving needs in the field of study.

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.

Choosing between a spin-off and a new program for the purposes of review is a matter of professional judgment. Our suggestion is that if there is any question about whether or not a program is new or a spin off, it is better to submit as new. 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. Like approved programs, the phased-out programs will be reported to the legislature but are not included in the actual legislative language. Phase-out programs do not require formal approval from the group.

**Minors and certificates.** It has been established by the members of the Academic Affairs Officers (AAO) Committee that minors, concentrations, and certificates are not to be reviewed by this body. Nor will they be reported to the legislature.

**Procedures**

With the exception of program phase-outs, all new program proposals of any category must be submitted to the Presidents Council academic program review (APR) web-site at least six weeks in advance of the meeting at which they are to be considered.

For each category – New, Spin-Off, and Phase Out/Drop – there is a PCSUM cover sheet that needs to be completed, signed and included as the first sheet of the .pdf program proposal that is submitted on the APR online database.

New and Spin-Off programs can be submitted prior to Institutional Governing Body [NOTE: each institution may have different curricular approval processes so we use Institutional Governing Body to denote Boards of the institution, Faculty Senate, etc.] approval as indicated
Review of new programs must be completed 2 weeks prior to the next scheduled AAO meeting and all responses to those comments should be submitted to the APR web-site one week prior to the scheduled meeting of the Academic Affairs Officers Committee.

All universities must demonstrate that their institutional representative has reviewed the new program. **At least one week prior to the AAO meeting, all representatives must log onto the system and indicate that their institution (1) “supports” (giving consent) or “non-support” (expressing concerns, reservations, or opposition) the program, or (2) does not have the degree by stating “not applicable”.** The PCSUM staff will review all new programs in the system to make sure all 15 university representatives have provided a response or vote. If an institution has not responded, then the staff will follow up with that institutional representative.

At the AAO meeting, the Academic Affairs Officers Committee will review the votes. 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 (i.e. Presidents Council staff, proposed program faculty members) 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. Actions will include all approved programs (as defined in this document) and phase out programs.

It is encouraged that all AAO group members review and revise comments in a manner consistent with the goals and expectations of review. The focus of the review is on the quality and feasibility of the program and the comments should necessarily be constructive in nature when possible. Given that most reviews are conducted by faculty members of program chairs familiar with the content of the proposal, it is essential to follow the updated timeline so that AAO members have adequate time to edit or refine comments, review feedback, and provide responses at the time of the review (or earlier where possible).
Checklist of Elements to Address. Each program must have a PCSUM cover sheet. The Presidents Council does not require a common format for each proposal, as each campus has its own guidelines.

At minimum, each New Program proposal should address the following checklist of elements:
1. What related programs exist?
2. Rationale
3. Curriculum Design
4. New Course Descriptions
5. Projected Enrollments
6. Scheduling Plans
7. Program Costs
8. Description of Available/Needed Equipment
9. Faculty Resumes (new Masters and Doctorates only and each CV should be no longer than 2 pages)
10. Internal Status of Proposal
11. Planned Implementation Date
12. Library and Other Learning Resources
13. Space
14. Accreditation Requirements

At a minimum Spin-Off Program proposals should address the following checklist of elements:
1. Related Programs – own or other
2. Rationale
3. Curriculum Design
4. New Course Descriptions
5. Planned Implementation Date
6. Accreditation Requirements

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. Given that the primary benefit of the review process is the feedback on the content and quality of the program, it is encouraged that institutions submit their programs as early as institutional policy allows. The appeal process is described in the document entitled Presidents Council Consultation Procedure (Appendix).

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Revised June 30, 2014
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*