



The Offices of Academic Affairs & Health Affairs

Review Process for Low-Producing Programs

Background

This document outlines a recommended process a U. T. System institution of higher education might follow to prevent a degree program from becoming low-producing. It also outlines the review process at the U. T. System/Board of Regents level for any degree program recommended for closure or consolidation by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (Coordinating Board).

Following the passage of Senate Bill 215 by the 83rd Texas Legislature, Regular Session, the Coordinating Board no longer has the authority to order the closure or consolidation of degree programs at institutions of higher education. Instead, the Coordinating Board may issue a recommendation for closure or consolidation of a program to the institution or its governing board. If the governing board does not accept a recommendation, the institution must identify the program recommended for closure or consolidation on its next legislative appropriations request (LAR).

Chapter 4, Subchapter 4 of Coordinating Board rules defines low-producing programs as follows:

- For a baccalaureate program, fewer than 25 graduates in any five-year period
- For a master's program, fewer than 15 graduates in any five-year period
- For a doctoral program, fewer than 10 graduates in any five-year period

Coordinating Board rule 4.290 states that the Coordinating Board staff will recommend the closure of a program that has been on the annual list of low-producing programs for *three or more consecutive years*.

Institution-level Review

A pro-active review of degree program productivity is strongly recommended in order to avoid the need to identify a low-producing program on an institution's LAR.

- The provost, or related position at a health-related institution, has principal responsibility for pro-actively monitoring the productivity of each degree program, working with colleges and departments to predict low-producing programs candidates in advance of receiving the annual report on low-producing programs from the Coordinating Board.
- The pro-active monitoring provides a framework for action to take place before a degree

program is officially deemed low-producing and gives programs an early warning to address issues well ahead of the point where consequences are imposed.

- After a review of relevant data, e.g., the number of graduates, number of declared majors, etc., the provost identifies any degree programs at risk of approaching low-producing status. “At-risk” could be defined as any program whose annual graduation output is not on track to meet the minimum threshold of graduates for any given five-year period.
- The provost then directs each at-risk program to develop a plan to ensure that its five-year graduation output does not fall below the state threshold for a degree program at its level.
- The provost approves the plan and monitors the degree program annually to ensure it is on track to produce a sufficient number of graduates.

System-level Review

If a degree program fails to meet the five-year threshold for three consecutive years, the Coordinating Board will recommend to the U. T. System Board of Regents either closure or consolidation of the program. Upon receipt of a recommendation from the Coordinating Board, a System-level review will take place, as follows:

1. First, the institution will be asked to either accept the Coordinating Board recommendation or request continuation of the program.
2. If the institution requests continuation of the program, it must develop an action plan to recruit, retain, and/or graduate more students from the program.
3. U. T. System staff will review the action plan, relevant data related to the program, and other considerations presented by the institution and make a final recommendation to the U. T. System Board of Regents at one of its regular meetings.
 - a. Action plan review
 - *Does the action plan identify specific strategies with benchmarks and timelines?*
 - *Are the strategies on a realistic, achievable timeframe?*
 - b. Quantitative data review
 - Number of degrees conferred in most recent academic year (if not included in the five-year period reviewed by the Coordinating Board)
 - *Does the number of graduates in the most recent academic year reflect a trend upward, suggesting that the productivity issue is already being addressed, or downward, suggesting that annual production may continue to not meet the state threshold?*

- Number of declared majors in the last five years
 - *Does the number of declared majors in the last five years reflect a trend toward shrinking or growing enrollment?*
 - *Does the program have a sufficient number of declared majors to produce at least the minimum number of graduates annually?*
- Number of double majors in the last five years, if applicable
 - *Does the number of double majors represent adequate and sustained student demand for the upper-division courses in the program?*
 - *Does the number of double majors, combined with the number of declared majors, represent sufficient student demand for continuation of the program?*

c. Other considerations

The institution may present additional information in support of the request to retain a program. Other considerations may include, but are not limited to, the program being the only one of its kind offered in the state, indicators of the high quality of the program and the superior student experience, cost issues, geographic proximity to similar programs, size of the program, among others.