

Sierra College

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

AP 4021

Program Vitality

Date Adopted:	2/4/2003
Date Revised:	4/28/2023
Date Reviewed:	4/28/2023
References:	Education Code Section 78016; Title 5 Sections 51022 and 55130; ACCJC Accreditation Standard II.A.15; <i>Program Discontinuance: A Faculty Perspective</i> . ASCCC, revised Fall 2012

The District shall follow the process identified herein to decide the relevance and viability of a campus program. Relevance is defined as determining whether or not a program meets the needs of the college community utilizing the criteria outlined in AP 4023 Strategic Modification and/or Reduction of Educational Programs. Viability is defined as identifying solutions and resources to strengthen necessary yet at-risk programs. This process will also seek to identify a course of action to maintain viability of the programs.

I. Definitions

A. Program: An instructional program is defined as an established entity that meets one or more of the following criteria:

- A group of courses that results in degree(s), license(s) or certificate(s)
- A set or sequence of related courses focused on a specific discipline
- A special activity or function as decided by consensus between the Vice President of Instruction or the Vice President of Student Services, as appropriate, and the Academic Senate

For the purposes of this Administrative Procedure, a Student Services program is defined as an established entity that meets one or more of the following criteria:

- A defined service with assigned space, staff, and budget
- Entities mandated by regulation
- A special activity or function as decided by consensus between the Vice President of Student Services or the Vice President of Instruction, as appropriate, and the Academic Senate

B. Committee: When a formal discussion is initiated, the Academic Senate will form a **Program Vitality Committee** whose membership will include the following:

- **Voting Members:** Academic Senate President, Associated Students of Sierra College President or designee, Classified Senate President or designee, Program Review Committee Chair, Curriculum Committee Chair, Vice President of Instruction or Vice President of Student Services, Division Dean, an out-of-discipline faculty member, and an additional representative from the Academic Senate, who will serve as committee chair. If the program is a designated CTE program, the CTE Chair and CTE Grant Administrator will also be included.
- **Non-voting Members:** Department chair/program designee and a classified staff member (if applicable) and a representative from Research.

II. Initiating the Discussion on Program Vitality

Program vitality discussions can be initiated in college governance forums including the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee, Deans' Council, Strategic Council, and the Academic Senate, as well as within the individual divisions and/or departments, the Office of the President, Vice President of Instruction, or Vice President of Student Services. However, a Program Vitality Committee can only be convened at the request of the Academic Senate or Administration.

The Academic Senate shall have a fundamental and integral role in any discussion of program vitality, recognizing the district's policy to rely primarily on the Academic Senate's advice in academic and professional matters.

III. Formation and Charge of the Program Vitality Committee

When a formal discussion is requested, the Academic Senate will form the Committee. The Committee will be charged with:

1. Exercising discretion to expand its membership to include non-voting additional instructional or student services representatives.
2. Gathering all qualitative and quantitative evidence into a report, referencing the relevant information to support the Committee's recommendations as well as possibly listing other alternative resolutions, with the assistance of the Instruction or Student Services and Research offices.
3. Participating in all public meetings and discussions.
4. Recommending to the Academic Senate one of the three potential outcomes of the program vitality process.

Formulating a plan and timeline toward completion of the goals outlined in the Committee's recommendations.

IV. Evaluation Criteria

At the beginning of the process, programs will receive a referral form that will provide them with information regarding areas of concern the Committee would like addressed. Both qualitative and quantitative evidence, as indicated below, shall be evaluated within the discussion concerning program vitality. To assist programs as they gather evidence and prepare their presentations to the Committee, the chair, in consultation with other Committee members, will provide direction regarding particular concerns of the community.

A. Evidence

The committee shall consider qualitative and quantitative evidence to assess the program's alignment with the college's mission, values, institutional outcomes, and balance of offerings.

The qualitative evidence may include, but is not limited to:

1. The pedagogy of the discipline, (ensuring the methods, analyses, and techniques used are appropriate and current)
2. The balance of college curriculum
3. The development of the whole student
4. The effect of program discontinuance on students
5. The potential for a disproportionate impact on diversity and equity
6. The quality of the program, which may include input from program review, student evaluations, articulating universities, local businesses and/or industry, and the community
7. The ability of students to complete their degrees or certificates or to transfer (This includes maintaining rights of students as stipulated in the college catalog.)
8. The effect of program discontinuance on other programs
9. The regional effects of this program's discontinuance
10. The effects on local business and industries
11. The ability of programs to meet standards of outside accrediting agencies, licensing boards and governing bodies
12. Causal factors for low enrollment

The quantitative evidence may include, but is not limited to:

1. Enrollment trends over the past five years
2. The projected demand for the program in the future
3. The persistence of students in the program
4. Frequency of course section offerings
5. Term to term persistence of students within the program
6. Retention or success rates of students
7. Student completion rate
8. Productivity in terms of WSCH per FTE ratios
9. Success rate of students passing state and national licensing exams
10. Enrollment trends over a sustained period of time
11. Labor market demand
12. Duplicative/related programs in the area

13. Meeting current living wage standards

B. Discussion Guidelines

1. Discussion of program vitality shall include faculty, staff, administrators, and all parties potentially affected by the decision. These parties may also include students, the employing business/industry, and the community.
2. Discussion of program vitality will be conducted by the Academic Senate in public, open meetings. The dates, times, and locations of these meetings will be published using all reasonable means of college communications.
3. Discussions will include both qualitative and quantitative evidence. Sources of data for all evidence will be referenced and cited.
4. A written record of all discussions and recommendations will be kept by the Academic Senate for review and will be published.

V. Possible Recommendations of the Program Vitality Committee

The Committee can make three possible recommendations. All recommendations will be obtained through consensus unless consensus cannot be reached at which time a two-thirds majority vote of the Committee members will determine the recommendation. A program may be recommended to continue, to continue with qualifications, or to discontinue.

Central to developing this plan is the formal link to the budget process through the Program Review Committee. The community is best served when curriculum and educational needs drive the budget development process. Similarly, the budget cannot drive the program discontinuance plan.

A. Recommendation to Continue

The recommendation for a program to continue with no changes shall be based upon the aforementioned qualitative and quantitative criteria.

B. Recommendation to Continue with Qualifications

Based upon the aforementioned qualitative and quantitative criteria, a program may be recommended to continue with qualifications. These qualifications will include any requirements imposed by an external regulatory, governing, or licensing body to which the program is subject.

In addition, qualifications include steps taken to identify and then strengthen necessary yet at-risk programs and should be implemented before any other action is taken. These actions should constitute a plan developed jointly by discipline faculty and the Academic Senate with support from the Area Executive Administrator and the Vice President of Instruction or Student Services where appropriate. For CTE programs, the Advisory Committee should be intimately involved in the construction of this plan. The following actions might be considered for

Low enrollment/growth problems:

- Active recruitment of targeted populations
- Cooperative ventures with local employers, transfer institutions, and/or other community colleges
- Enhanced career and academic counseling services
- Adjustment of course scheduling: times of day, block scheduling, short courses, frequency and number of sections, open entry/open exit
- Articulation of programs/courses: K-12, Tech Prep, etc. and a 4 year sequencing of offering to ensure student ability to transition to subsequent levels

Low retention/persistence/completion problems:

- Faculty development in classroom techniques
- Analysis of the curriculum to ensure alignment of course objectives with next-course entry skills in sequences
- Enhanced student support services: tutoring, financial aid, learning/student skills, child care, etc.

Analysis of program resources:

- Adequate faculty, both in numbers of full-time faculty and in their particular expertise (use of faculty development or sabbatical resources may be appropriate)
- Sufficient physical resources including facilities, equipment, and supplies
- Appropriate levels of outside support such as classified staff, course offerings, library materials, and work place learning opportunities.

B.1. Timelines

A specific timeline will be provided during which these interventions will occur and expected outcomes will be specified in writing and made available to all concerned parties.

All interventions and timelines will be documented in writing by the Committee and maintained and published by the Academic Senate. After the specified qualification period is completed, the program will be again evaluated based upon the aforementioned qualitative and quantitative criteria by the Program Vitality Committee (see VII. Follow-up).

B.2. Role of Program Vitality in Funding and Resource Allocation

When additional resources are deemed necessary, the Committee's recommendation shall be forwarded to the Academic Senate for action. The Academic Senate's recommendation shall then be forwarded to the appropriate resource allocation committee (e.g., PARAC, faculty prioritization group, CTE) and will be given special consideration in funding decisions. Although the Academic Senate recognizes that resource allocation is beyond our purview, according to Title 5 Section 53203(d) (1), "the recommendation of the Senate [regarding educational programs] will normally be accepted, and only in exceptional circumstances and for compelling reasons will the recommendation not be accepted. If a recommendation is not accepted, [the President] shall promptly

communicate [his or her] reasons in writing to the academic senate.” If these recommendations are not applied within a 3-year period, the College President, on behalf of the appropriate resource allocation committee, will respond in writing to the Academic Senate stating reasons for non-implementation.

C. Recommendation to Discontinue

The recommendation for a program to be discontinued shall be based upon the aforementioned qualitative and quantitative criteria and will be documented in writing by the Committee and maintained by the Academic Senate. A recommendation to discontinue is mandated if so ordered by an external regulatory, governing, or licensing body to which the program is subject or if deemed a suitable course of action by the Committee as supported by the college’s mission, values, institutional outcomes, and balance of offerings.

If a program is recommended for discontinuance, the following procedures will be implemented:

- A plan and timeline for phasing out the program will be completed. The plan shall include procedures to allow currently enrolled students to complete their programs of study in accordance with the rights of students as stipulated in the college catalog.
- A plan for the implementation of all collective bargaining requirements for faculty and staff.
- The plan must include any recommendations imposed by an external regulatory, governing, or licensing body to which the program is subject.

The Committee’s recommendation to discontinue shall be forwarded to the Academic Senate for action. The Academic Senate’s recommendation will then be forwarded to the College President. As stated above pursuant to title 5 Section 53203(d) (1), “...If a recommendation is not accepted, [the President] shall promptly communicate [his or her] reasons in writing to the Academic Senate.”

VI. Follow-Up

A year after a Committee’s recommendation to either Continue with Qualifications or Discontinue is rendered, a follow-up meeting will be convened to assess the progress made toward completion of the goals outlined in the Committee’s report. The program will be responsible for providing information to the Committee as to progress made and/or obstacles encountered with regards to achieving the outlined recommendations.

Members in attendance at the follow-up meeting will be faculty and staff currently in those Committee-designated positions. The Committee can also invite past members and other relevant staff to the follow-up meeting if deemed necessary.

At this time, it will also be decided if the Committee will need to re-convene in one or two years to ensure the program’s success in meeting its goals.

Reference Bibliography

- Program Discontinuance: A Faculty Perspective. ASCCC, revised Fall 2012.
- Title 5 Section 55130
- Title 5 Section 51022 Instructional Program
- Title 5 Section 53203(d)(1)
- Education Code Section 78016 Review of program: Termination

See Board Policy 4021