Appendix II. Policy on Low Enrollment Academic Programs (Majors and Certificates)

http://www.apa.wisc.edu/acad_plng_ProgramReview.html
Adopted by the University Academic Planning Council, June 21, 2010
Revised from May 1995 Program Review Guidelines

Particular attention should be given to low-enrollment majors, defined as those in which enrollment is very low and very few degrees have been granted in recent years. For some programs, they may award few degrees because they serve a specialized audience. For other programs, when few degrees are awarded it may be a signal that the commitment of program faculty has waned or that the program does not serve student or societal needs.

Definition of low-enrollment¹:

- In general, the standard for triggering low-enrollment status is a program in which fewer than five (5) degrees have been awarded in five (5) years. This standard applies to all of UW-Madison’s graduate and professional programs. It also applies to all UW-Madison undergraduate programs that have counterparts at fewer than half of other UW institutions.
- For undergraduate programs that have counterpart offerings at more than half of all UW institutions, then the standard for triggering low-enrollment status is when fewer than 25 degrees are awarded in a five (5) year period. UW-Madison programs that have counterparts at more than half of other UWs typically have strong enrollments and would rarely drop below this higher threshold.

A low-enrollment program will be scheduled for review in the academic year following the program’s identification as low-enrollment. The provost will request such a focused review from the dean, and specify a schedule for a status report. The schedule may be adjusted by mutual agreement.

In general, the expectation is that either a compelling case will be made for continuation, or the low-enrollment programs will be discontinued or reorganized.

The following possibilities for handling low-enrollment programs should be considered:

- Discontinue the program.
- Merge smaller programs into an appropriate larger program with a more inclusive scope.
- Merge several low-enrollment programs into one more inclusive title.
- Make the program available to the occasional student through the Individual Major at the Bachelor’s level or the Special Committee Degree at the graduate level.

There may be excellent reasons to continue a low-enrollment program. A rationale should be developed by the program faculty based on the following criteria and others that may emerge as appropriate:

¹ Definition aligns with UW System Policy ACIS 1, “Monitoring Low-Degree-Producing Programs”, June 10, 2010 Board of Regents Agenda Item I.1.h.(2).  System Administration will conduct an audit of low-degree-producing programs every five years.
• What evidence demonstrates a genuine student need and/or community demand -- even at a low level -- for graduates with this specific credential?

• Does the program fill a specific academic niche unique to UW-Madison or in some way necessary for the University’s identity, or for the fulfillment of the mission of the program, school/college, or university?

• What is the cost of the program? No program is without cost so a clear recognition of all costs is important. All programs incur costs in terms of record-keeping and a range of monitoring activities for the school/college, the Registrar’s Office, the Graduate School, the Office of the Provost, and others.

• Is faculty time and effort best invested in such a program? Time must be devoted to review of the program, recruitment of students, curriculum development, and similar activities. Programs with few or no students that are formally offered still need to have a full curriculum available to a student who seeks to enroll in the program.

• What are the compelling reasons why none of the options outlined above (merging this major into a larger major, or offering it as an individual major) are viable alternatives?

• Is the program in question a Master's degree that is associated with a corresponding Ph.D.? If so, and if the doctoral program is robust, there is little reason to discontinue the corresponding Master's degree and such programs will not routinely be identified as low-enrollment.

Reports on the status of low-enrollment programs will be reviewed by the provost and the UAPC, who may make recommendations on the status of the program. If a low-enrollment program is continued, it will be placed in the 10 year cycle of program review.