University of Wisconsin – Madison
University Academic Planning Council

Recommendations Regarding Program Review and Guidelines Governing the Review of Low-Enrollment Majors

TEN-YEAR CYCLE. The UW-System Regents require periodic review of all UW-Madison’s “programs” (departments and associated majors). This guideline is generally interpreted as requiring review once every ten years. The University Academic Planning Council (UAPC) has recommended review on this cycle. (Accreditation reviews may be "counted" as program reviews if appropriate.) It is clear that there are some programs that have never been reviewed or are very much "overdue" for review.

Whether a program warrants a review, or whether merger with another program or elimination is more appropriate should be considered. Reviews require a great deal of FACULTY TIME AND EFFORT, which should be devoted to reviewing and strengthening programs that will be continued.

REPORTING PROGRAM REVIEWS. The UAPC's current policy regarding reporting program reviews is that the UAPC receives:

- a summary of the findings of the review (but not the complete review). This summary can be the same as the one prepared for reporting to the Regents.
- the Dean's letter explaining the action that he/she will take to follow up on the recommendations of the review.

This policy allows the complete review, with details of personnel and programmatic issues, to stay at the school/college level.

LOW ENROLLMENT MAJORS. 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. These majors should definitely be scheduled for review as part of the on-going review process. In general, the expectation is that unless a compelling case can be made for continuation, these majors will be phased out.

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

1. Merging the major into an appropriate larger major with a more inclusive scope.

2. Merging several low-enrollment majors into one more inclusive title. For example the Education and (subject area) Master's degrees (e.g. Education and Mathematics) might be combined into a joint program and offered under a single title.

3. Make the major available to the occasional student through the Individual Major at the Bachelor's level or the Special Committee Degree at the Master's level.
4. If the major is a combination of two existing UW-Madison majors, handle this major as most other double majors, instead of separately enumerating it. For example, "History and History of Science" is currently a separately listed major which might be handled as a double major, one in "History" and one in "History of Science". "Computer Science and Statistics" is a similar case.

If there appears to be no satisfactory alternative to continuing a particular low-enrollment major, the need to retain it should be evaluated in light of the following criteria, as well as others the school/colleges may wish to add:

1. What evidence demonstrates a genuine student need and/or community demand -- even at a low level -- for graduates with this specific degree?

2. What is the cost of the program? No program can be assumed to be "without cost". All programs incur minimal costs in terms of record keeping for the school/college, the Registrar's Office, the Graduate School, and others. In addition, faculty time is a cost -- even if special courses are not involved. Time must be devoted to review of the program, recruitment of students, curriculum development, and similar activities.

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

4. If the degree in question is a Master's degree that is associated with a corresponding Ph.D., does it make sense to evaluate the Master's in conjunction with the doctoral degree? If there is a sufficient number of doctoral degrees, there seems little reason to eliminate the Master's degree.

In addition to these special criteria, all normal program review criteria, such as program quality, uniqueness, and coherence, apply to low-enrollment majors.

*Adopted by the UW-Madison University Academic Planning Council, May 1995.*

UAPC/lowenrollguidelines.doc
UW-Madison Academic Program Review
Overview of the Program Review Process

The Dean of each school/college considers each program’s review history and decides which programs should be reviewed, keeping in mind that each program should be reviewed at least once every ten years.

The Dean appoints a review committee and outlines the charge.

The review process normally begins with a self-study conducted by the program or department. The review committee then meets and consults with faculty, staff and students, formulates a report with recommendations and submits the report to the Dean.

The Dean reviews the report, discusses the recommendations with the department or program faculty, and decides on follow-up actions, usually in consultations with the school/college APC. Recommendations from the Graduate School may also be incorporated into follow-up actions as appropriate.

The Dean of the school/college sends a summary of the review (not the full review) and a summary of planned follow-up actions to the Provost and the UAPC. The UAPC advises the Provost on any further actions required.

If graduate programs are involved, the Graduate School appoints a member of the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee to the review committee.

The Graduate School representative presents the results of the review to the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee, which may recommend actions for the graduate programs. The Dean of the Graduate School confers with school/college dean as appropriate.

The Provost's Office maintains a record of the review history of all programs, which is made available to deans to help in establishing review timetables and is used to prepare the annual report to UW System.

The Provost sends an annual report of program review activity to UW-System Administration and they prepare a summary for the UW System Regents.

The Regents review and approve an annual report of all program review activity conducted throughout the UW System.

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