

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
POSITION PAPER #8
PROGRAM DISCONTINUANCE
Approved by Academic Senate, May 23, 2005
Approved by President's Cabinet, May, 24, 2005

San Diego Mesa College is committed to support programs and classes that fulfill the goals of the Mission Statement as these are elaborated in the Educational Master Plan. Only programs with low or declining enrollment, decreasing demand for service or clear obsolescence shall be considered for discontinuance, once the following criteria have been considered.

- ❖ Budget considerations should not be the primary consideration.
- ❖ Primary consideration in the decision to consider discontinuance should be given to the service the program provides to the college and the community.

Section 55000 of Title 5 defines a program as follows: "[an] Educational program is an organized sequence of courses leading to a defined objective, a degree, a certificate, a diploma, a license, or transfer to another institution of higher education." In practice, some disciplines have many individual certificate and degree options published in the catalog. In the course of ensuring that the overall program is current and meeting student and workforce needs, individual certificates or degrees within the program may be modified or even deleted. Such changes within the overall scope of a program do not require that the program discontinuance policy be implemented.

The requirement for a program discontinuance policy comes both from accreditation and from Title 5. Accreditation standard IIA6b states: "When programs are eliminated or program requirements are significantly changed, the institution makes appropriate arrangements so that enrolled students may complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption." The evaluation report of the Mesa College 2004 accreditation commented that "there appears to be no written procedure outlining the steps involved in program discontinuance, and the college would be advised to develop and make clear to the whole college community the steps involved in determining the conditions that warrant program discontinuance and the process that will be followed in effecting such discontinuance." [1]

Current regulations and statutes (i.e. Title 5:55130, Approval of Credit Programs; Title 5:51022, Instructional Programs; Education Code: 78016, Review of Program Termination) mandate that the governing board of each community college approve a program discontinuance policy by July 1, 2000. In addition, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges has developed a position paper for information and guidance. This policy is based on the guiding principles that: 1) considerations of program discontinuance are distinct from program improvement; 2) If there is a mutual agreement between the affected faculty of a program, and the administration, and any students will not be adversely affected, the processes of this policy do not need to go into effect; 3) program discontinuance is both academic and professional for local academic senates, and insofar as the policy impacts employment, it is also a matter of collective bargaining. It is important to note that the Policy on Program Discontinuance will be kept separate from development of Program Reviews.

Vital academic considerations for program discontinuance are:

1. effects on students,
2. balancing the college curriculum,
3. education and budget planning,
4. issues of regional coordination for occupational programs,
5. qualitative as well as quantitative data are used, (Qualitative data is less statistical and more value-laden)
6. quality of the breadth and depth of the curriculum,
7. the teaching and learning process,
8. student satisfaction,
9. how the program is perceived by articulating universities,
10. factors of employment in business and industry.

Quantitative data that should be considered includes:

1. weak enrollment trend (e.g., lack of demand),
2. insufficient frequency of course section offerings to assure reasonable availability for students,
3. poor retention,
4. poor term-to-term persistence for those in courses in the major,
5. poor rate for student achievement of program goals,
6. lack of demand in the workforce,
7. unavailability of transfer major.

Program Discontinuance Process:

1. Identification: An at-risk instructional program is identified, in collaboration with the Vice President of Instruction, the Vice President of Student Services, the Area Dean, a member of the discipline, or the Academic Senate based on the criteria listed below.
2. Convening: The Vice President of Instruction convenes the Discontinuance Committee: which is *ad hoc* with the following membership:
 - Vice President of Instruction
 - 2 Deans (neither of which is dean of the program in question)
 - 3 faculty appointed by the Academic Senate (none from the program in question).
 - 1 student appointed by the Associated Student Senate
 - 2 persons representing the program: Dean, and either the chair or a faculty member.

3. **Initial Review:** The Discontinuance Committee conducts an initial review to determine whether full review is warranted. The initial review will include an analysis of the primary and secondary criteria verifying which criteria are affecting the program. Full review is necessary if:
- Any two of the primary Criteria are met, *or*
 - Any three of the Secondary criteria plus one of the Primary Criteria are met

Primary Criteria (any 2)	Secondary Criteria (any 3 plus 1 primary)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Declining market/industry demand Advisory Committee recommendation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Declining university transfer trends Insufficient frequency of course offerings to assure reasonable opportunity for completion of the program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreasing numbers of students enrolled Low or decreasing WSCH/FTEF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of available resources Poor retention within courses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor rate for student achievement of program goals (e.g. completion rate, numbers of degrees and certificates, job placement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unavailability of the transfer major
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decline in importance of service to related disciplines (applies only when discipline does not offer degree or certificate). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor term-to-term persistence for students in the major

The Discontinuance Committee will issue a brief narrative report recommending to the Mesa College president whether a full review is warranted or not. The report will include qualitative and quantitative data that led to the reasoning for the decision. The report will be submitted to the President, filed with the Office of Instruction and sent to the party initiating the review, the Academic Senate, the department chair responsible for the program, and the Dean responsible for the program. At this point in the process, all parties with a vested interest in the program should have been notified of the decision to pursue a full review or not.

It is vital that satisfactory communication and proper participatory governance procedures be verified at this point. Since program discontinuance may affect other colleges in our district, communication to those colleges of pending review should be considered at this time. The Vice President, Instruction should formally notify his/her counterpart at other colleges in the district if a decision is reached to perform a full review.

4. **Full Review:** If the Discontinuance Committee determines that a full review is warranted and the president concurs, the review is conducted by the same committee. Data used should be based on trends over time (typically three to five years) and should relate to program goals as well as the mission of the college. The criteria to be examined include uniform measures that must be applied to all programs, specific measures required for different categories of program, and other measures that may also be considered.

Measures applied to all programs:

Qualitative	Quantitative (3-5 year trend)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance of college curriculum Match of program with Mesa College Mission and Goals Student Satisfaction Previous steps taken to strengthen program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enrollment Retention within course (successful course completion) Retention within major (semester-to-semester persistence) Number of degrees and certificates awarded Scheduling/course offering trends Resources available

Measures applied to Occupational Education programs:

Qualitative	Quantitative (3-5 year trend)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duplication/uniqueness of training programs Employer satisfaction Advisory committee recommendation Information about "job-outs" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labor demand Employment placement rate

Measures applied to transfer programs

Qualitative	Quantitative (3-5 year trend)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transfer Program availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of transfers (UC, CSU, private) Number of transfer ready students

Measures applied to lab/studio/shop/clinical-based programs

Qualitative	Quantitative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constraints that may limit enrollment and productivity measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enrollment as a percent of available seats Labor market trends and information

Measures that may also be considered

Qualitative	Quantitative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional needs for the program Impact of program on underrepresented and female students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry/market demand (non-vocational programs)

5. Recommendation: The committee will issue a written recommendation to the President based on the analysis of the data. The recommendation will consist of:
 - a. Recommendations for strengthening the program, including specific goals developed jointly with discipline faculty *and a schedule is set for periodic review of progress toward the goals, or*
 - b. Recommendations for program or discipline discontinuance.
With few exceptions, a recommendation for discontinuance would not be made without first recommending actions to strengthen the program. In most cases, a recommendation to discontinue would only follow failed attempts at reviving/improving the program or compelling evidence to indicate that this is not the best use of the college resources.

6. Actions:
If a recommendation is made for discontinuance, and the recommendation is accepted by the president, the chancellor and the Board will be informed. Provisions will be made for adequate notification of affected faculty, students, staff and other persons or groups that have been deemed to have a stake hold in the affected program such as advisory committees. All efforts will be made to successfully retrain and or transfer faculty to another area.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to transfer the program to another college within the district or within the region. In such case, the program will be phased out in collaboration with the phase-in of the program at the other college so as to facilitate students' completion of program requirements.

7. Impact on Students:
If a recommendation is made for discontinuance, and the recommendation is accepted by the president, the chancellor and the Board, opportunities will be provided for students to finish the program or transfer to a related program.

The discontinuance process will be reviewed and modified as necessary by the Academic Affairs Committee, a subcommittee of the Academic Senate, and the administration during the spring semester of odd numbered years in order to keep the process current.