

SPECIAL REPORT
of the
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES COUNCIL
relating to
PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE REVIEW OF
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS PROPOSED FOR TERMINATION

Presented at the
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1. INTRODUCTION

This special report of the Academic Priorities Council sets out the procedures to be used when an approved academic program is proposed for termination. The contents are closely related to, but different from those of the Final Report of the ad hoc Priorities Council (Senate Document No. 80-065A, 8 May 1980), which contained a process designed to allow the identification of programs “which should (a) receive additional resources, (b) continue at the existing level, or (c) experience a reduction in resources.”

The present report was developed because the Council was asked to do so by the Rules Committee (see Appendix A) and because the Council believed that the campus community saw the method set forth in the 1980 report as too complex and as being too highly dependent upon quantitative data. The complexity of the 1980 report is such that it was not considered as useful during the Council’s review of the termination of the Department of Food Engineering (Senate Document No. 90-042, 15 March 1990).

The Council’s charge, in the present instance, was significantly narrower than was the case a decade ago. The present report does not deal with the possible reallocation of resources or positions, but instead focuses exclusively on program elimination. To put it more clearly still, the process proposed herein is not a process which is designed to identify programs that should receive additional fiscal support.

In developing the present report, the Council reviewed and freely borrowed from the aforementioned Senate Document No. 80-065A and the second version of “Criteria for Change: An Informal Listing of Potential Factors” (Provost R. D. O’Brien, 26 January 1990).

2. PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE REVIEW OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS PROPOSED FOR TERMINATION

This section of the report sets forth the procedures that are to be used on the Amherst campus when the termination of an academic program is under consideration. The timetable for the steps described in Sections 2.1 through 2.5 is outlined in Section 2.6.

2.1 Initiation

The Provost or a Dean may request a review of an academic program by developing a brief setting forth the reasons why a review is thought to be necessary. In preparing the briefs, the Provost and/or Dean shall address each of the criteria listed in the Termination document, especially those that pertain to centrality and scholarly and creative activities.

The program which is the subject of the enquiry shall be given an opportunity to provide an initial written response and to suggest any special criteria which should be considered in any subsequent review. In preparing its initial response to the Provost's or Dean's brief, an affected unit shall address each of the criteria listed in the Termination document, and label them accordingly.

2.2 Major Budgetary Unit (MBU) Review

After the brief has been developed, and the program's response has been submitted, the Dean shall make the brief and the program's initial response promptly and readily available to all MBU faculty members. The Dean shall then call an MBU faculty meeting for the purpose of discussing the brief and the response, and to ascertain the sentiments and opinions of the MBU faculty relating to the future of the program involved. A motion recommending a full review shall be the main item on the agenda of the faculty meeting. A summary of the meeting's proceedings and the result of any and all votes taken shall be forwarded to the Provost, regardless of the outcome of the vote.

2.3 Involvement of Provost

The Provost shall review the brief, the response and the summary of the faculty meeting proceedings, and shall determine whether a full review should be initiated. Should the Provost determine that a full review of the program is not desirable, he or she shall inform the Faculty Senate Secretary and the Dean. No further action to terminate the program will be taken.

If the Provost determines that a full review is desirable, he or she shall request the Faculty Senate to undertake it. Both the brief and the program's initial response shall be forwarded to the Faculty Senate Secretary.

2.4 Involvement of Faculty Senate

The Secretary shall forthwith advise the Rules Committee of the Provost's request, and shall forward the brief and the program's initial response to the Academic Priorities Council.

The Council shall conduct a full review which shall include—but not be limited to—the utilization of all the criteria listed in the initial portion of this report, and which shall also include consideration of any “special criteria” previously identified by the program. The program shall submit a written comprehensive response to the Council for consideration during its deliberations. The Dean of the MBU and representatives of the program shall be given an opportunity to meet with the Council and to submit, subsequently, a written response to the Council's special report.

The Council shall prepare a special report, which shall include an appropriate motion and a synopsis of the Dean's and the program's responses, if they have been submitted. The Council's report shall contain explicit statements of the criteria used, the way these criteria were evaluated, and the relative importance attached to each (e.g., very important, important, and unimportant). The motion shall be in the form of an appropriate recommendation to the campus Administration. Said report and motion shall be submitted to the Rules Committee, with the request that the motion be placed on the agenda of the next Faculty Senate meeting.

In the event that a program is an MBU, the Provost may request a review of said MBU, and shall prepare a brief as provided above. The MBU which is the subject of the enquiry shall be given an opportunity to provide a written initial response and to suggest any special criteria which should be considered in any subsequent review. The Provost's brief and the MBU's initial response shall be provided to the Faculty Senate Secretary. The Secretary shall advise the Rules Committee of the Provost's request and shall forward the brief and the MBU's initial response to the Academic Priorities Council; the Council shall then proceed as described above.

2.5 Disposition of Faculty Senate's Recommendation

The report of the Faculty Senate action shall be transmitted to the Provost by the Secretary. Should the Provost decide to recommend the termination of an academic program to the Board of Trustees (in accordance with Board of Trustee Statement on University Governance T73-098 (as amended)), the report of the Faculty Senate shall accompany the Provost's recommendation.

2.6 Timetable for the Review Procedure

The timetable provided in this document shall be advisory rather than prescriptive, and is intended to provide a framework for the process to be carried out, rather than a rigid time frame for completing the termination process. The timetable should be adjusted to take summer recess into account. If one phase of the process is completed in less than the allotted time, the due dates suggested for subsequent steps should be moved towards the present by a corresponding amount.

The timetable for the events detailed in Sections 2.1 through 2.5 is as follows.

- Day 1:** The Dean of the MBU sets forth his or her brief, schedules and announces the date of the MBU faculty meeting (see Day 61 below), and requests a written initial response from the affected program.
- Day 47:** The affected program will distribute its initial written response to the MBU faculty by this date. The Dean of the MBU shall provide any necessary assistance for duplicating and distributing this response.
- Day 61:** The MBU faculty meeting shall be held (in accordance with Section 2.2 above).
- Day 68:** The Dean of the MBU shall forward a summary of the MBU's faculty meeting to the Provost by this date (in accordance with Section 2.2 above).
- Day 82:** The Provost shall forward a request for a full review to the Faculty Senate Secretary by this date (in accordance with Section 2.3 above).
- Day 89:** The Secretary of the Faculty Senate shall forward the Provost's request, the Dean's brief, and the affected program's initial response to the Academic Priorities Council by this date (in accordance with Section 2.4 above).

The affected program may request additional days to complete its comprehensive response if circumstances warrant such an extension and the Academic Priorities Council approves it.

Day 149: The Academic Priorities Council shall submit its report to the Secretary of the Faculty Senate together with a request that its motion(s) be placed on the next Faculty Senate meeting (in accordance with Section 2.4 above).

Day 179: The Secretary of the Faculty Senate shall forward the Faculty Senate's recommendation to the Provost by this date (in accordance with Section 2.5 above).

2.7 Personnel Negotiations

Personnel Negotiations shall be considered an integral part of the termination process, providing that all such negotiations shall be conducted in a good faith non-adversarial atmosphere. Faculty members shall be given at least a week to respond to any final offer that would result in a major change in their status.

3. THE CONTEXT FOR THE PROPOSED CRITERIA

The charge to the Council (see Appendix A) makes explicit reference to the "reduction or elimination of academic programs." The Council addressed only the matter of "elimination" because the term "reduction" could not be satisfactorily defined. This is in the context of repaired cuts in state support for the Amherst campus. The Council recognizes that decisions to reduce the size of the academic staff may be made and assumes that every effort will be made to minimize reductions that will adversely affect the University.

The Council believes that any criteria adopted now ought to be such as to be credibly and reasonably applied within the time constraints dictated by the academic calendar and the limited response time that appears to be typical of the University's recent and continuing budget crises.

The Council also believes that quality academic programs at the Amherst campus require special attention to the recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty of high quality, and to the maintenance of a balance of tenured and non-tenure faculty. Both principles should be considered as program terminations are reviewed and decided.

Finally, the Council assumes that the criteria presented below are not designed to form the basis of a continuing ranking process for all academic programs as was the case with the criteria delineated in Senate Document No. 80-065A. They are only intended as a guide for the Administration to act should the termination of a program be considered.

4. CRITERIA

The criteria that are to be applied in the event of consideration of the elimination of academic programs are divided into five categories and are listed in Sections 4.2 through 4.6. The order in which the criteria are listed is not intended to convey or reflect any ordering of priorities among the various categories. Further, not all of the criteria are applicable to every program on the campus. Thus, it is expected that programs will be compared to similar programs within their colleges as well as with the other academic programs on the campus.

4.1 Comments on Validity

Criteria alone are not useful; there must be data from which it can be determined that the criteria have been satisfied or have not been satisfied. Thus, the data must exist, they must be *readily available*, and they must be *amenable to reasonable interpretation*. We believe that the criteria listed in Section 4.2 through 4.4 meet these conditions. However, there may be additional criteria which could be of interest in this context but for which uniform (across the University) data do not exist, often because they are simply not collected or retained. Inasmuch as programs may have or choose to assemble such data, these criteria are listed in Sections 4.5 and 4.6.

Criteria—and their underlying data—are typically not simple numerical measures. In fact, the criteria listed here can be classified according to whether they are quantifiable and measurable, on the one hand, or qualitative and subjective, on the other. And it is important to distinguish the measurable (quantifiable) from the subjective (qualitative) because there are some criteria for which the assessments can only be subjective. As a rule, we may be able to assess or judge quality, but we're not likely to be able to quantify it in any practical or useful way.

In particular, while instructional effort, demand, and productivity are quantifiable in a meaningful way, the equality of instruction is not. This is due in part to the difficulty of measuring the quality of the material taught in the classroom. Similarly, research productivity can be quantified (e.g., we can count the number of journal articles published), but the quality of research cannot. The assessments of research quality, intellectual liveliness, and centrality are more subjective and anecdotal in nature; judgements made in these dimensions are not amenable to any simple formulaic approach.

The criteria presented in this report are not weighted or ranked. However, the Council recognizes that the University's research and instructional missions require some minimum performance standards for all academic programs. That is, *there ought to be a minimum level of research or creative productivity* no matter how strong the student demand. And, *there ought to be a minimum level of student demand* no matter how high the research productivity or perceived quality.

4.2 Instructional Demand and Productivity

Measurements of instructional productivity shall be made separately for undergraduate and graduate programs. Separate measures are particularly important for graduate programs because of the time-intensive nature of graduate advising. It is also important to assess productivity with respect to both the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty and the total instructional resources (TIR) which includes teaching assistants and teaching associates. The third criterion in this section is especially important for programs whose offerings are directed to a significant degree to nonmajors.

4.2.1 The long-term trends of the *demand for the course offerings* of a program shall be determined from time series data (over a period of five years) of course enrollments/FTE and majors/FTE. Measurements of demand shall be made separately for undergraduate and graduate programs.

4.2.2 The *instructional productivity* of a program shall be determined by measuring the FTEIS/FTE and FTEIS/TIR ratios. The number of Full-Time Equivalent Instructed Students (FTEIS) is calculated by dividing total credits by a nationally accepted credit load for "full-time" students (see Note 1). Measurements of instructional productivity shall be made separately for undergraduate and graduate programs.

4.2.3 The *instructional service productivity* of a program shall be determined by measuring the FTEIS/FTE ratio for nonmajors. Measurements of instructional service productivity shall be made separately for undergraduate and graduate programs.

4.3 Research Productivity

While the number of articles, books, creative works, shows, performances or tours is not an indicator of quality, it is generally true that a large number of articles, works, etc., indicates substantial productivity. Similarly the higher the percentage of faculty who are active in these ways, the more active and productive a program can be said to be. The lack of such activity over an extended time, e.g., five years, is clearly a negative statement about a program. Finally, measurements of research funding are appropriate only for certain programs.

4.3.1 *Research productivity* shall be measured by counting the number of books and monographs, journal articles, chapters in books and proceedings papers (for national and international conferences) per FTE faculty over the most recent five year period.

- 4.3.2 *Creative and artistic productivity* shall also be measured by counting the number of artistic performances and creative works per FTE faculty over the most recent five year period.
- 4.3.3 *Absence of research and creative productivity* shall be measured by determining the fraction or percentage of faculty who are nonperformers in scholarly publication (all items in criterion 4.3.1) or creative and artistic productivity (all items in criterion 4.3.2) over the most recent five year period.
- 4.3.4 *Research productivity* can also be measured by counting the number of grant proposals submitted and the income from research grants and contracts per FTE faculty over the most recent five year period, *provided* that such a metric is appropriate to the discipline.

4.4 Reputation, Intellectual Liveliness, and Uniqueness

The reputation of an academic program is dependent in part on the individual reputations of the program's faculty. Additionally, research areas often add a special luster to a program's reputation because of excitement about new phenomena or perceptions. Recent examples of such research areas include models of chaos and the Gaia hypothesis. Additionally, it may happen that a program is the only one of its kind—or one of only a handful in the state, region or nation. For this reason, it may have a special claim on the University's resources.

- 4.4.1 The *external reputation* of a program shall be assessed on the basis of such variables as the individual reputations of its faculty, rankings done by external agencies, and program reviews conducted by the Graduate School.
- 4.4.2 The *intellectual liveliness* of a program's research program shall be considered.
- 4.4.3 The *uniqueness or rareness* of a program should be assessed as appropriate.

4.5 Outreach and Centrality

Programs vary greatly in the extent to which they have as their mission the extension of their professional expertise to entities—both political and corporate—external to the University. The variations are often due to the different missions of the various colleges, schools and departments. Examples of activity that relate to economic impact include research done to improve cranberry production, development work done on computer hardware and software, and faculty involvement in local start-up companies.

- 4.5.1 *Extensive public service* shall be measured by the extent to which programs extend their professional expertise—but not including paid personal consulting—to entities external to the University.
- 4.5.2 When possible, the *economic impact* of a program on the local, state, regional, or national economies shall also be determined.

Intellectual centrality is a criterion separate from that of providing service courses for nonmajors (cf. criterion 4.2.3). It is often reflected in statements such as, "We're not a university without . . ." Admittedly an issue of preference and judgement, and a controversial one at that, intellectual centrality is part of what defines a great university. Centrality may also be assessed within the context of the missions of the university.

- 4.5.3 A judgement shall be made as to whether a program is central to the intellectual life of the University.
- 4.5.4 A judgement shall be made as to whether a program is central to one of more of the missions of the University.
- 4.5.5 A judgement shall be made as to whether the program is central to the mission of the College or School, as defined by that unit's strategic plan.

4.6 Other and Special Criteria

The last set of criteria involve data which the University does not develop and keep in a consistent way but which departments and programs might have or assemble from data available to them. For example, there may be data available to a program that bear on the quality of the program's research and teaching.

4.6.1 Other measures of *scholarly and creative productivity* are: editing journals and anthologies, particularly on the national and international levels; extensive participation in regional, national and international meetings, especially where such participation includes presentations, performances or exhibitions; and election to professional societies that involve scholarly or artistic distinction.

4.6.2 The quality of a program's teaching might be assessed with the aid of data such as the percentage of undergraduates elected to national honor societies or going on to graduate work, the number and destinations of doctoral graduates who take academic positions, and other regional or national indicators.

As noted in Section 2.1, a program which is the subject of an enquiry is free to suggest additional, special criteria for consideration.

5. PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

The procedural safeguards set forth below are intended to be consistent with or in addition to those contained in Trustee documents and collective bargaining agreements. In no instances are these provisions intended to substitute for abridge established policy agreements.

5.1 Program Students

In all cases, arrangements will be made so that students who are majors when a program is eliminated can satisfy their program requirements in a timely manner.

5.2 Program Faculty

In all cases when a decision is made to terminate a program, vigorous efforts will be made to place faculty, tenured and non-tenured alike, on campus or elsewhere.

5.3 Academic Priorities Council Report

The report of the Academic Priorities Council to the Faculty Senate shall contain an accurate summary of all deliberations and the count for each vote taken.

5.4 Disposition of Documentation

All briefs, reports, recommendations, letters, and other documents created or used in the review process shall be submitted to and retained in the Faculty Senate Office and shall be made available to any faculty member who wishes to see them.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the foregoing discussion, the following motion is recommended by the Academic Priorities Council.

MOTION

MOVED: 82-90 That the Faculty Senate recommend the procedure for the review of academic programs proposed for termination as detailed in Sen. Doc. No. 90-064.

Note 1: Definition and application of Full-Time Equivalent Instructed Students (FTEIS).

Full-Time Equivalent Instructed Students (FTEIS) are calculated by dividing total credits by a nationally accepted credit load for “full-time” students. A full-time undergraduate is expected to carry fifteen (15) credits, and a full-time graduate student is expected to carry twelve (12) credits. The calculation of FTE Instructed Students (FTEIS) thus depends on the level of the course being taken and, in some circumstances, the level of the student taking the course. For undergraduate courses (those numbered 100-499), the divisor in the above calculation is 15 whether the student is an undergraduate or a graduate student. Similarly, for graduate courses (numbered 600-899), the divisor is always 12. For courses numbered 500-599, however, the divisor is determined by the level of the student registered for the course: the divisor is 15 for an undergraduate and it is 12 for a graduate student.

Appendix A: Letter from Faculty Senate Secretary Frank Hugus to Clive Dym, Chair, Academic Priorities, 24 January 1990

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT AMHERST
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
FACULTY SENATE

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 24, 1990
TO: Clive Dym, Chair, Academic Priorities Council
FROM: Frank Hugus, Secretary, Faculty Senate
SUBJ: Food Engineering; Criteria for Programmatic Evaluation

The Rules Committee has decided to delegate full responsibility for disposition of the proposed discontinuation of the Department of Food Engineering to the Academic Priorities Council. The Rules Committee would appreciate a special report on this issue at your earliest convenience.

Since the chairs of the other councils which have been reviewing this matter (Academic Matters, Graduate, and Program and Budget) are also members of the Academic Priorities Council, they might include brief summaries of their own groups' deliberations and recommendations as part of this special report.

The second, and perhaps thornier, issue is that of criteria for reduction or elimination of academic programs. The Rules Committee requests that the Academic Priorities Council develop a set of such criteria and submit a special report to the Rules Committee before the end of the Spring 1990 semester if at all possible.

For your information, I enclose a set of proposed criteria from Provost O'Brien as well as Sen. Doc. No. 80-064A which deals with the review of academic programs.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

xc: Professor Maria Tymoczko
Provost Richard O'Brien

Enclosures: 1. "Criteria for Change," dated January 10, 1990
2. Sen. Doc. No. 80-065A