

Policy on Academic Program Planning

North Carolina citizens and institutions must be prepared to compete in a rapidly changing global environment. Consistent with this mandate, the University of North Carolina Board of Governors, the University's General Administration, and the constituent universities shall be guided by the needs of the people of North Carolina in their academic degree program development, approval, and discontinuation actions. Academic program planning and procedures must be nimble, efficient, and responsive to those needs at all levels.

Campuses shall continue to have a lead role in identifying academic program needs and in formulating proposals to meet those needs. The University's General Administration shall also engage in the identification of academic program needs. General Administration shall develop procedures to regularly review workforce and societal needs and, on at least a biennial basis, identify degrees and programs beneficial to the State. General Administration shall also periodically draw on the expertise of the faculty to identify longer-term emerging trends that may have implications for new degree programs. In its analysis, General Administration shall always consider whether all regions of the State are adequately served by the University. As referenced in this policy, needs of the State and its citizens are inclusive of requirements growing out of local, regional, national, and global challenges.

Once academic program needs are identified by the campuses or by General Administration, General Administration, in consultation with the campuses, shall forward, after appropriate review, recommendations to the Board of Governors regarding how best to meet those needs. All campuses shall have an opportunity to participate in a process for recommending the best way to address those needs. Disciplinary and cross-disciplinary processes that utilize campus faculty and administrators shall be established to recommend whether expansion of a current degree program, collaboration in a joint degree program, an online degree program, or a stand-alone degree program is the best option. Campuses are urged to give high priority to collaborative or joint program development.

In these processes, faculty expertise is essential for sound academic decision making at the campus and system levels. At the campus, disciplinary, cross-disciplinary, University, and board levels, analysis and recommendation of the need for a new academic program, the place for its establishment, and the method of its delivery shall be based on:

- (1) number, location, and mode of delivery of existing programs,
- (2) the relation of the program to the distinctiveness of the campus and the mission of the campus,
- (3) the demand for the program in the locality, region, or State as a whole,
- (4) whether the program would create unnecessary duplication,
- (5) employment opportunities for program graduates,
- (6) faculty quality and number for offering the program,

- (7) the availability of campus resources (library, space, labs, equipment, external funding, and the like) to support the program,
- (8) the number and quality of lower-level and cognate programs for supporting the new program,
- (9) impact of program decision on access and affordability,
- (10) the expected quality of the proposed degree program,
- (11) feasibility of a joint or collaborative program by two or more campuses, and
- (12) any other consideration relevant to the need for the program.

General Administration shall, in collaboration with the campuses, promote the expansion and availability of online degrees and other programs which facilitate access to higher education for all citizens. As the availability of online degree offerings increases, General Administration, in collaboration with the campuses, shall incorporate consideration of online offerings into the assessments of proposals for new academic degree programs. Online program development is part of the academic planning and assessment processes, and campuses will continue to take the lead in proposing the establishment of online degree programs.

While the responsibility for quality, efficiency, and productivity of academic degree programs rests at the campus level, General Administration shall be responsible for periodic reviews to determine whether productivity and quality review processes are followed. Campuses shall regularly review the priorities of their offerings and are to be prepared to discontinue programs that no longer meet any significant need. In collaboration with the campuses, General Administration shall review and revise standards for offering degree programs at various levels and by various methodologies. The University shall balance responsiveness with due diligence and a state-wide perspective. In achieving this balance, General Administration shall develop expedited program review processes for rapid response where warranted. The campuses' faculty and administration and General Administration shall assure a continuing commitment to academic excellence.

The president, after consultation with the campuses and the Board of Governors, shall promulgate regulations to implement this Board of Governors policy and is authorized to provide guidance to the campuses in their academic program development and discontinuation.