



AGENDA ITEM

A.5. Academic Degree Program Productivity Review..... Kimberly van Noort

Situation: As mandated, academic program productivity is reviewed every two years. Following an analysis of the data and consultations with chief academic officers, this report is presented for consideration by the committee.

Background: The 2018 Academic Degree Program Productivity Review is the twelfth biennial review of programs with low enrollments conducted by the UNC System Office and UNC System constituent institutions. These reviews have been conducted since 1995, applying criteria and guidelines developed by the Board of Governors.

Assessment: Using the criteria established by the BOG, data on academic programs were reviewed to identify programs that have been producing lower numbers of graduates. Of these 170 programs, three will be discontinued and five will be consolidated with other programs. UNC System guidelines for monitoring low producing programs are among the most rigorous in the country, and the 2018 review process continues the UNC System's dedication to supporting institutions in their educational missions.

Action: This item requires a vote by the committee, with a vote by the full Board of Governors through the consent agenda.



**THE
UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH CAROLINA
SYSTEM**

REPORT: UNC SYSTEM 2018 BIENNIAL REVIEW

May 21, 2019

University of North Carolina System
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Introduction

The Board of Governors (BOG) of the University of North Carolina (UNC) has the responsibility to “determine the functions, educational activities, and academic programs of the constituent institutions” [G.S. 116-11(3)] and to review the “quality, efficiency, and productivity of academic degree offerings” (UNC Policy 400.1). The primary purpose of reviewing academic programs is to improve their quality and academic program reviews are one component of a comprehensive and ongoing process to assess institutional effectiveness. Low producing programs are reviewed biennially at both the system level and the campus level and these reviews complement institutional self-studies for accreditation, campus program portfolio management, and professional accreditation for various disciplines.

As a result of academic program review, administrators can decide to strengthen or consolidate programs, initiate alternative strategies (such as distance learning) to improve productivity, identify programs that will benefit from collaboration and the consolidation of resources, or discontinue programs that are not productive. The review of existing program quality informs the planning of new academic programs. The academic program review process is pivotal to the implementation of the strategic initiatives of the University to increase access, develop educational programs that are responsive to the needs of the State, continue to develop intellectual capital, and provide a foundation for the creation and transformation of new knowledge.

University-wide and institutional academic program reviews are designed to strengthen academic programs and improve the quality of education. On a biennial basis, the university identifies programs that are characterized by low enrollments and low numbers of degrees conferred. The first such review was completed in 1995 and has occurred every other year since. The goal of increasing productivity in the delivery of programs and services reflects both fiscal reality and the need for good management practices in higher education.

Public universities exist primarily to serve the educational needs of citizens. This purpose presupposes wide opportunity and reasonable geographic accessibility. Academic program planning within the University is designed to ensure the integrity of each institutional mission and to provide a balance and diversity of programs within UNC as a whole. The University engages in academic program reviews to make certain that the constituent institutions are responsive to genuine needs and equally responsive in identifying resources that can be used to make certain that offerings are current, consistent with priorities, and used judiciously to respond to new developments in fields of inquiry and research.

North Carolina General Assembly Mandate

The 1993 Session of the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation to implement a Government Performance Audit Committee's recommendations for a review of all UNC academic degree programs. Chapter 407, Section 1 of Senate Bill 393, 1993 Session Laws (GPAC/UNC Review Plan) mandates the following actions:

- Section 1. The Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina shall review all academic degree programs and research and public service activities to identify those programs and activities that are of low productivity or low priority, or are unnecessarily redundant. The Board shall develop specific criteria for these reviews, and shall develop a

process to review academic degree program productivity biennially. The Board's review shall emphasize identification of processes and resources to strengthen programs that are or can reasonably be made productive. With regard to those programs that are not and cannot be made productive, if any, the Board shall consider eliminating those programs in a manner that does not negatively impact upon the availability of educational opportunities for North Carolina citizens. In making its determination, the Board shall give consideration to the value of maintaining racial and geographic diversity and to assuring reasonable access for students who live off campus.

The act also amended Section 2, General Statutes 116-11(3), which outlines the Board of Governors' responsibilities with respect to academic programs and degrees awarded by adding the following provision:

- The Board shall review the productivity of academic degree programs every two years, using criteria specifically developed to determine program productivity.

Reviews of academic programs have been conducted since 1995 applying criteria and guidelines developed by the BOG's Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs Committee. Even before the enactment of the 1993 legislation calling for academic program productivity reviews, the BOG had routinely conducted biennial reviews of low productivity programs to identify candidates for discontinuation. However, in response to this legislation, the BOG formalized the process.

In the 1995 report, the BOG discussed concerns over program duplication and ways to monitor duplication of academic programs within and across institutions and when to establish or discontinue degree programs. They stated:

All but the most specialized institutions will depend on a reasonable array of courses and programs in [arts and sciences], not only because of their fundamental place in general education but also because they provide necessary training in support of professional programs or in preparing students for subsequent graduate or professional study. The size of institution and the nature of the field of study itself will be among the considerations that determine the extent of duplication.

The BOG stated that they would approve new programs "within the context of institutional academic program missions...where there were clearly defined needs" and discontinue programs, when necessary, through "system wide program reviews and biennial productivity reviews" based on their commitment to "general principles and priorities of good management."

UNC Academic Program Productivity

Currently, UNC offers 1,813 academic degree programs at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels and each are listed on the University's Academic Program Inventory. Table 2 presents the total number of degrees established or discontinued by the BOG since July 1972 by degree type and a more detailed chart of established and discontinued programs by degree level since 2001-2002 can be found in Appendix A.

Table 2: Actions on Programs by the UNC Board of Governors July 1972 - June 30, 2018

	# Established	# Discontinued
Bachelor's	386	446
Master's	351	311
Doctoral	128	42
Total	865	799

UNC Academic Program Review Criteria and Process

The productivity criteria and guidelines used to assess academic programs at UNC institutions were established by the BOG's Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs Committee in 1995 and underwent a thorough review by the Academic Planning Review Work Group in 2011 and again in 2015. Academic programs at UNC institutions are considered to be low producing if they meet all of the following criteria:

Bachelor's degree programs

- Authorized to enroll students for at least eight years
- The number of degrees awarded in the last five years is less than 35

Master's degrees

- Authorized to enroll students for at least six years
- The number of degrees awarded in the last five years is less than 35

Research Doctoral degree programs

- Authorized to enroll students for at least 10 years
- The number of degrees awarded in the last five years are less than 10

Professional Doctoral degree programs

- Authorized to enroll students for at least eight years
- The number of degrees awarded in the last five years are less than 40

2018 UNC Academic Degree Productivity Review Process

The review process consisted of four steps. First, all of the programs in the Academic Program Inventory (API) were reviewed in late 2018 against the productivity criteria previously outlined and those below the productivity threshold were flagged. Second, initial reviews of all flagged programs occurred between the chief academic officer at each UNC institution and the UNC System's Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Kimberly van Noort. These conversations highlighted programs that were close to the productivity thresholds, programs that were appearing on the review lists for a second or third time, language programs that are participating in the UNC System's Language Consortium, and programs that were flagged for the first time. This initial review highlighted areas of concern, strength, and progress for each flagged program.

After this first review, the third step in this process consisted of an in-depth review of the remaining programs involving the chief academic officers, deans, and faculty. These reviews began in January 2019 and were completed by March 2019. The universities were asked to categorize their responses to ameliorating low producing academic programs in one of four ways:

1. *Retain the program in its present configuration with low enrollments likely to continue.* This response is for programs that are central to the University’s mission but may not draw large numbers of majors and graduates or have capacity limitations (e.g., clinical sites for training). For example, highly specialized programs such as poultry science, Native American Studies, or soil sciences may fall into this category. Other examples of programs vital to the mission of the university and to its regional communities include education, fine arts, and security studies.
2. *Retain the program in its present configuration and include specific steps to increase enrollment.* Any programs that indicated they planned to increase enrollments were required to submit specific enrollment and graduation targets to serve as metrics for future reviews.
3. *Restructure the program by combining it with one or more other campus programs.* A campus may elect to discontinue low performing programs and add them as concentrations under similar programs (e.g., discontinuing a biology education program and adding a concentration to the bachelor’s of biology degree).
4. *Discontinue the program while assuring graduation for currently enrolled students.* Campuses that propose to discontinue programs do so for a variety of reasons, including consistently low enrollment and lack of student interest.

Upon completion of the institutional reviews, the fourth and final step in this process was to submit a formal response document to the UNC System Office for review and approval.

2018 UNC Academic Degree Productivity Review Results

The number of bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral programs flagged in 2018 as low productive in this biennial review was 170 (9% of all active programs in the API). The following are summaries of campus recommendations for all 170 programs after thorough reviews by faculty and administrators and a review team at the UNC System Office. Table 3 provides details for 8 programs being discontinued or combined and Table 4 provides details for 162 programs being retained.

Table 3: Number of Proposed Program Discontinuations or Consolidations

<i>Number of discontinuations or consolidations</i>	8
Total number of discontinuations	3
Total number of combinations	5

Table 4: Number of Programs to be Retained

<i>Number of programs to be retained</i>	162
Programs that were identified as currently meeting expectations and were not required to conduct a full program review	87
Retained programs with campus <u>plans to increase enrollments</u>	26
Retained programs that <u>will continue to have low enrollments</u> due to core mission of program or other campus- specific reasons	49

A summary of all programs reviewed during the 2018 biennial program productivity review is provided below.

Table 5: Summary of Programs Reviewed

	Small, niche programs	Plans to increase enrollment	Will merge with another program	Discontinue program	Programs considered under first review	Total
ASU	1	1	0	0	5	7
ECSU	0	3	0	0	3	6
ECU	5	6	2	0	12	25
FSU	0	0	0	0	5	5
NCAT	2	5	0	0	7	14
NCCU	4	4	0	0	5	13
NCSU	13	1	3	3	10	30
UNCA	0	0	0	0	4	4
UNCC	0	3	0	0	9	12
UNC-CH	10	0	0	0	0	10
UNCG	5	0	0	0	12	17
UNCP	0	1	0	0	6	7
UNCW	0	0	0	0	5	5
WCU	7	0	0	0	0	7
WSSU	2	2	0	0	4	8
Total	49	26	5	3	87	170

Conclusion

The process of reviewing programs is an ongoing process, with reviews occurring on an ongoing basis between mandated reviews. Eleven programs were discontinued by the UNC Board of Governors at the recommendation of UNC institutions between the 2016 and 2018 biennial reviews.

UNC's academic degree productivity reviews are among the strongest in the nation and the UNC System Office is committed to working closely with all institutions to improve the rigorous and responsive review process. Involving policy makers and practitioners will ensure UNC continues to provide high-quality academic programs across a variety of disciplines efficiently while complying with state statutes, UNC policies, and promising practices in the field of higher education.

Appendix A - UNC Board of Governors Program Establishments since 2001-2002

	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctoral	Total
2017-2018	6	13	4	23
2016-2017	9	5	4	15
2015-2016	7	4	5	16
2014-2015	6	5	0	11
2013-2014	3	5	3	11
2012-2013	5	7	8	20
2011-2012	9	13	3	25
2010-2011	6	9	3	18
2009-2010	13	15	5	33
2008-2009	0	1	0	1
2007-2008	14	11	5	30
2006-2007	21	13	5	39
2005-2006	33	19	4	56
2004-2005	15	11	9	35
2003-2004	19	11	5	35
2002-2003	10	16	8	34
2001-2002	12	7	2	21
Total	182	152	69	403

UNC Board of Governors Program Discontinuations since 2001-2002

	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctoral	Total
2017-2018	20	12	0	32
2016-2017	3	7	1	11
2015-2016	48	11	10	69
2014-2015	39	19	4	62
2013-2014	9	12	1	22
2012-2013	34	21	0	55
2011-2012	13	3	0	16
2010-2011	39	23	2	64
2009-2010	1	5	0	6
2008-2009	40	30	5	75
2007-2008	1	3	0	4
2006-2007	4	2	1	7
2005-2006	20	18	2	40
2004-2005	6	4	0	10
2003-2004	3	19	0	22
2002-2003	5	2	0	7
2001-2002	9	4	0	13
Total	274	183	26	483