PLAN FOR A PROGRAM VIABILITY REVIEW PROCESS AT UVM
May 20, 2011

Board of Trustees – Educational Policy & Institutional Resources Committee

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Background

There is need for a process by which at-risk programs can be systematically identified and reviewed for viability in a timely manner. Over the years the University has added many programs but rarely terminated any. Since 2001 the University has established 23 new degree programs, 9 new certificate programs and 14 new minors. During the same time period only three programs have been terminated. This mode of operation is not sustainable. The University cannot be all things to all people. We must make the best use of our finite resources according to our priorities.

To be sure, there are low enrollment/low completion programs that are essential to the University’s vision and mission. However, there may be other low enrollment/low completion programs that are vestigial, non essential, not aligned with the mission, vision and priorities. Those are the ones that should be considered for termination. What is needed is an effective quick response process that can distinguish the difference and enable well informed decision making.

The system of Academic Program Review (APR) reviews programs for quality on an 8-year cycle, and although some indicators of viability are considered, APR is not suitable for ongoing identification of at-risk programs and well informed, timely decision making with regard to viability. APR involves an extensive self-study by the program faculty, external evaluation as well as detailed review by the Curricular Affairs Committee and its Subcommittee on APR. It can take up to eight years for a program to come up in the queuing order and another 1-2 years for the process to be completed. APR is valuable because of the insights and ideas gained by program faculty and broad understanding of the nature of the program, its strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. To date APR has never led to a review for termination.

Program Viability Review (PVR) should be separate from APR because the purposes and processes are fundamentally different. The purpose of PVR is to be a facile, responsible, well informed process that will identify at-risk programs and allow timely decision making, including use of the established Review for Termination Procedures when indicated. The Provost has always had the authority to initiate a review for termination. The Program Viability Review process described below will ensure that we do examine the viability of programs and initiate Reviews for Termination when indicated.
The process will be fair and balanced, including consultation with the responsible program administrators and the Faculty Senate. The Program Viability Review process, including possible Review for Termination, can be completed within one academic semester.

The goal of PVR is to ensure the best use of the University’s resources in support of its academic mission. Resources garnered through the termination of non-viable programs will be reallocated to support other critical academic needs.

**Purposes**

The purposes of the Program Viability Review process are:

1) To identify at-risk programs more quickly than is possible through the 8-year cycle of Academic Program Review.

2) To allow timely actions
   a) to maintain programs that have low enrollments and low graduation rates, but which are essential to the mission, vision and priorities.
   b) to initiate reviews for termination of low enrollment/low completion programs that are not essential to the mission, vision and priorities.

3) To help ensure the efficient use of the University’s limited resources in support of its mission, vision and priorities.

**Premises**

The PVR process will

- allow rapid identification and analysis of at-risk programs
- be data-driven
- include qualitative analysis of program value
- be well informed by faculty and the responsible program administrators
- allow timely, responsible decision making regarding at-risk programs
- be transparent to all stakeholders
- work within the University’s governance structures and in accordance with current policies and procedures

**The Process**

The PVR process is outlined in the diagram on page 5.

**Screening**

Every year the Office of Institutional Research will provide a list of all academic programs that do not meet established thresholds for graduation rates (rolling three-year averages). The thresholds
will differ according to the nature of the programs. The thresholds will be established by the Provost after consultation with the Deans and the Faculty Senate Executive Council.

Decision Level I: Preliminary or Secondary Discussion

The Provost, Associate Provost for Curricular Affairs, responsible dean(s) and department chair or program director will meet to discuss the status of the identified at-risk program with respect to the following metrics, the data for which will be provided by the Office of Institutional Research:

- Provision of service courses
- Role in meeting needs of the [pending] general education system.
- Student Credit Hours Taught (SCHT) in required courses
- Cost per Student Credit Hour Taught (SCHT)
- Student:Faculty ratios

The responsible dean(s), and department chair or program director will have the opportunity to provide a perspective on the data.

The Provost will decide one of two possible outcomes:
1. Exemption. The program is returned to the regular 8-year cycle of APR.
2. Consultation with the Faculty Senate leadership regarding the need for a Review for Termination.

Decision Level II: Determination of Need for a Review for Termination

The Provost and the Associate Provost for Curricular Affairs will discuss the need for a Review for Termination with the leadership of the Faculty Senate. There are two possible outcomes:
1. A decision by the Provost not to proceed with a Review for Termination. The Program will return to the regular 8-year cycle of APR.
2. A Review for Termination will be initiated by the Provost’s Office or the responsible department, school or college.

Decision Level III: Review for Termination

The Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate will complete a Review for Termination according to the established procedures and timetable <http://www.uvm.edu/~facsen/AppendixC.pdf>.

The Provost will consider the recommendation of the Faculty Senate and decide to:
1. Not terminate the Program. The Program will return to the regular 8-year cycle of APR or a shorter cycle period per the Provost’s discretion.
2. Charge the Program to develop within a defined time period a plan to improve its viability (e.g. consolidation with another program, etc.). The principals will meet again.
Discussion) to discuss the program’s response. The outcome will be one of the two noted possibilities at Level I per decision of the Provost.

3. Recommend termination of the Program to the Board of Trustees

**Decision Level IV: Board of Trustees Approval**

The Board of Trustees will consider the Provost’s recommendation to terminate the Program.

The possible outcomes are:
1. Approval – the Program will be terminated
2. The recommendation to Terminate the Program is disapproved
Program Viability Review Process

OIR Screening per thresholds for enrollments, graduation rates (Rolling 3-year averages)

Potentially at-risk Programs identified

Preliminary or Secondary Discussion
Provost, Assoc. Provost, Dean(s) + Chair consider re:
- Service Courses
- SCHT Production
- Cost per SCHT
- Student:Faculty Ratios
- Mission Essential?

Consult Senate Leadership Re: need for Review for Termination

Exemption: Return to 8-year APR Cycle

Provost decides not to proceed

Faculty Senate Review for Termination

Provost decides not to proceed

Program charged to develop a plan to improve its viability

Provost recommends Termination

Board of Trustees considers Provost’s recommendation to Terminate Program

Recommendation to Terminate Disapproved

Program Terminated