Proposed Policy
"New Academic Program Development & Discontinuation Policy"
November, 2018

Current Policy:

Attached (approved by cabinet February 10, 2016)

Proposed Policy:

A. Introduction and Definitions:

This policy is to establish guidelines for (A) new academic program development, and (B) refreshment of or discontinuation of academic programs. As a foundation on which to establish the policy, three key definitions are established based on the current *WASC Glossary*:

- **"Program:** 1. A systematic, usually sequential, grouping of courses that forma a considerable part, or all, of the requirements for a degree in a major or professional field; 2. Sometimes refers to the total educational offering of an institution."
- **"Professional Program:** an educational program designed to prepare students for a specific profession. It may apply to both undergraduate and graduate programs that prepare students for direct entry into employment. Graduate-level professional programs typically presuppose an undergraduate degree."
- **"Program Review:** a systematic process of examining the capacity, processes, and outcomes of a degree program or department in order to judge its quality and effectiveness and to support improvement. Historically, program review focused primarily on capacity and research output; more recently, educational outcomes and student success have been included. While student success and assessment of learning at the program level are an important part of program review, they should not be confused with the more encompassing process of program review."

B. New Academic Program Development:

Any new academic program proposals (including a new degree or a major within a degree or adjustments to a degree that reflects more than a 25% change in the curriculum or if 50% or more will be offered by distance will be proposed in a format consistent with a WASC Substantive Change proposal. The current format follows the basic outline below:

I.   Program and Institutional Review
           a.   Program Overview (Introduction)
           b.   Institutional Context
           c.   Accreditation History Relevant to Substantive Change
II.   Program Need and Approval
           a.   Program Need
           b.   Planning/Approval Process
III.   Program Description and Evaluation
           a.   Curriculum
           b.   Evaluating Educational Effectiveness
           c.   Schedule/Format
           d.   Admissions

IV.   Resources
    a. Faculty
    b. Student Support Services
    c. Library and Information Resources
    d. Technology
    e. Physical Resources
V.   Financial Resources
    (In addition to the questions in the WASC documents, a ROI template from the Finance Office will evaluate proposals from an initial 5 year perspective in order to help prioritize potential programs.)
VI.   Teach Out

The comprehensive nature of this proposal outline is listed in WASC documents regarding substantive change. The current edition of the detailed WASC proposal requirements is attached.

Any new program proposal that is less than the required proposal for a WASC review will follow the procedures established above, except Sections 1.b & 1.c can be eliminated. The proposal will still be written so that individuals not associated with the program can understand the logic and analysis, but some content may be abbreviated.

C. Academic Program Refreshment and/or Discontinuation:

Simpson understands that programs have a life cycle and may be reconfigured and/or discontinued in order to manage resources for the institution. Even mission-centric programs may need to be refreshed and reconfigured. The faculty, in concert with external experts in a discipline will regularly evaluate the programs in terms of quantitative and qualitative data in order to determine when a program should be refreshed or discontinued; this is called a program review. Historically speaking, from best practice data, a program should be evaluated at least every decade; some disciplines should be evaluated and refreshed every five years; some technology fields need to be refreshed yearly.

Decisions and timelines for closing a program should be made in such a way that faculty have adequate time to find alternative positions, and decisions be made in a way that appropriate teach out procedures are in place so that the last students in a program complete in a timely manner with marketing discontinued. If it is in the best interest of the student to help him/her transfer to another institution to finish a major in a positive situation, the institution may advise a student to transfer to another institution, or it may advise the student to transfer into another program at Simpson (provided it fits the student's vocational goals).

The institution has an ethical obligation to complete programs that have been marketed to students, of which students have enrolled. Sometimes, students would like to change catalog years in order to enter a refreshed program. Other times, students may want to complete the program that was originally offered to them. If the institution cannot financially complete the program, it has an ethical obligation to establish a written agreement with another institution to provide a "teach out" option.

If a student cannot continue at Simpson with his/her current financial assistance, the institution has an ethical obligation to seek a "teach out" institution with rates that protect the student from significant unanticipated increases in cost. The institution may even seek to negotiate fees and/or financial assistance.

D. Decision Making

The normal approval process at Simpson for academic programs includes review by the appropriate academic department, approval by the appropriate Academic Council, approval by the president's cabinet, and finally an internal authorization by the president to request external authorizations (when necessary). External authorizations may include accrediting agencies, governmental agencies charged with regulating professional disciplines, and/or agencies governing financial aid authorizations (i.e., U.S. Department of Education, Veterans Affairs, etc.).

No matter what program discipline is being proposed and evaluated, the decision making process should seek to evaluate the spiritual formation and Christian world-view impact on students from the Simpson University perspective. Failure to seriously consider these elements runs the risk of simply offering a secular, WASC approved program.

Assuming that multiple proposals may be considered in any academic year, the president's cabinet should establish a priority list of proposed programs based on highest 5-year "Return On Investment" (ROI) indicators. This priority list should help guide the faculty in refining new program development. New programs for consideration can be initiated by faculty members or by administrators. Once a new program is prioritized, the normal decision-making process will be followed.

If a new academic program proposal would substantively change the mission of the institution, the president and cabinet will present the proposal and its implications to the Board of Trustees to consider such a change.

Institutional Impact:

The primary impact of this policy change is to sync the university approval process with the WASC approval process. Thus, we do one planning process rather than multiple.

Student Impact:

The primary impact to students is clarification on teaching out a discontinued academic program in an ethical manner for the best interest of the student. It also provides institutional perspective for students regarding the importance of academic program development and refreshment.