

Utah Tech University Policy

610: Discontinuance of Academic Programs



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I. Purpose

- 1.1 The discontinuance of programs sometimes emerges as the alternative that does the least harm to the quality of remaining programs. This policy describes the process and the responsibilities for Utah Tech University (“the University”) administrators, faculty, staff, and students in reaching and implementing the decision to discontinue an Academic Program.

II. Scope

- 2.1 This policy covers discontinuance of Academic Programs due to Underperformance, when two or more programs are combined into one, or Financial Exigency.
- 2.2 Program discontinuance impacts students in profound ways, requiring that they change their plans, remain enrolled for a period longer than anticipated, or leave the University altogether. In recognition of these profound effects, the University shall adhere to high standards of ethics and integrity whenever it discontinues programs. The University shall ensure that students are informed, that negative impacts are minimized, and that appropriate adjustments are offered to affected students.

III. Definitions

- 3.1 **Academic Program:** A set of courses having a coherent curricular design and leading to a degree or contributing in a substantial way to a degree. Thus, Academic Programs are either degree programs (forming the basis for a certificate, associate, baccalaureate, or master’s degree) or non-degree programs (contributing to degree programs, but not constituting degrees themselves). Single courses may be discontinued through the

curriculum change process (see Policy 602).

- 3.2 ***Financial Exigency***: An imminent financial crisis which threatens the survival of the University as a whole and cannot be alleviated by less drastic means (American Association of University Professors). Financial Exigency is an important mechanism for restoring an institution's financial stability in the face of a serious, sustained crisis. But it should be avoided as a unilateral or quick-fix solution to a temporary condition (EAB).
- 3.3 ***Underperformance***: Underperformance refers to program data over time indicating persistent low enrollment, low graduation rates, low student credit hours per instructor, and other pertinent metrics as measured in the annual department reports.

IV. Policy

4.1 Authority to Discontinue Academic Programs

- 4.1.1 The President of the University with the approval of the University's Board of Trustees is authorized to discontinue Academic Programs or occupied academic positions consistent with the University's strategic plan and/or Financial Exigency (see Policy 371).
- 4.1.2 Before degree programs are discontinued, the University shall ensure that the following conditions are met:
- 4.1.2.1 All recruitment and new enrollment for the program will cease upon approval of the Board of Trustees.
 - 4.1.2.2 The program's discontinuance is adequately described in University publications and communications to the public.
 - 4.1.2.3 The University has a viable plan to provide all students currently enrolled in the program all appropriate courses and services that they need to complete the program's requirements.
 - 4.1.2.4 No student currently enrolled in the program is required to pay tuition or fees in excess of the amount that would have been charged had the program continued.
- 4.1.3 Before non-degree programs are discontinued, the University shall ensure that the following conditions are met:
- 4.1.3.1 If the program constitutes the only way to fulfill a curriculum

requirement, either the curriculum requirements will be appropriately adjusted, or other courses offerings will be provided to allow students to complete their requirements in a timely manner.

4.2 Student Responsibilities When Their Program is Discontinued

4.2.1 Under this policy, students bear certain responsibilities to communicate and coordinate with the University and its administrators.

4.2.1.1 Upon learning of a proposed program discontinuance, impacted students should immediately communicate their needs and concerns to the dean who oversees the program to facilitate the University's planning.

4.2.1.2 When the University presents a plan to provide appropriate courses, students must take those courses when they are offered.

4.3 Discontinuance Review Committee

4.3.1 In all cases where parties disagree with a proposed action, a Review Committee will be convened with the following membership that require the intervention of a committee to study the impact of program discontinuance:

4.3.1.1 A nonvoting representative from the Academic Affairs office, nominated by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost;

4.3.1.2 Two deans representing colleges not involved in the program, nominated by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost;

4.3.1.3 One student not involved in the program, nominated by the Utah Tech University Student Association President;

4.3.1.4 Two faculty representatives from colleges not involved in the program, nominated by the Faculty Senate; and

4.3.1.5 A staff representative not involved in the program, nominated by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost.

4.3.2 The Committee will be charged with generating an impact report

including a recommendation for or against discontinuance.

4.3.3 The Committee will follow the procedures outlined in Section 6 below.

4.4 Discontinuance for Underperformance

4.4.1 When a program is found to be underperforming in a significant way over time as measured by metrics in the department annual report or other sources, the Department Chair and program faculty will meet with the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost and the Curriculum Director to develop an improvement plan.

4.4.1.1 The improvement plan will have clearly defined benchmarks to be met by specific dates over at least two but not more than three academic years.

4.4.1.2 If the benchmarks are met and improvement is documented, the program will not be discontinued.

4.4.1.3 If the benchmarks are not met, a request for discontinuance may be initiated by any of the following:

4.4.1.3.1 The dean of any of the colleges involved in the program

4.4.1.3.2 The Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost

4.4.1.3.3 The President

4.4.1.4 If a request for discontinuance is initiated, the Discontinuance Review Committee will be convened.

4.4.2 Discontinuance When Combining Two or More Programs

4.4.2.1 When a proposal for combining two or more programs is submitted to the Curriculum Office, it may move forward through the curriculum approval process without convening the Discontinuance Review Committee if ALL the following conditions are met:

4.4.2.1.1 Pre-approval is granted by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost.

4.4.2.1.2 The majority of affected faculty supports the proposal.

4.4.2.1.3 All deans affected by the proposal are supportive.

4.4.2.1.4 A comprehensive plan for ensuring harm to students is mitigated and all students who desire will be able to complete their original program.

4.5 Discontinuance for Financial Exigency

4.5.1 When Financial Exigency is the cause of program discontinuance, the President will convene the Discontinuance Review Committee.

4.5.2 If more than one program is proposed to be discontinued because of Financial Exigency, different Discontinuance Review Committees may be convened for each program.

4.5.3 The President in collaboration with the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost will make a final determination of program discontinuance based on the report(s) received from the Discontinuance Review Committee(s).

V. References

5.1 University Policy 602: Undergraduate Curriculum Approval and Revision

5.2 University Policy 371: Faculty Termination

VI. Procedures

6.1 Discontinuance Review Committee

6.1.1 The Discontinuance Review Committee will be convened at the request of the President or Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost who will task the committee with the specific work to be accomplished.

6.1.1.1 Individuals selected for the Committee may vary in each instance but must follow the voting membership requirements listed in section 4.3.1.

6.1.2 Within six (6) weeks of being convened, the Discontinuance Review Committee will submit an impact report and recommendation to the President supported by a review of the applicable data such as:

6.1.2.1 The University Strategic Plan and Mission Statement

6.1.2.2 The effectiveness of the program in meeting its goals and objectives.

- 6.1.2.3 A three (3) year history of student enrollment, a projection of future student enrollment, and the existence of similar programs within the Utah Board of Higher Education.
- 6.1.2.4 A three (3) year history of the student-faculty ratio, and the total cost per FTE for the program at the University and at other benchmark institutions offering similar programs.
- 6.1.2.5 The effects of enrollment changes on other instructional areas at the University.
- 6.1.2.6 The current or expected statewide or regional demand for graduates of the program.
- 6.1.2.7 The contributions of the program to the general education of students.
- 6.1.2.8 The effects of discontinuance on facilities.
- 6.1.2.9 The financial effects of discontinuance, including an estimate of the yearly costs or savings for the three years following discontinuance.
- 6.1.2.10 The effects on faculty and staff.
- 6.1.2.11 The impact of discontinuance on student demand.
- 6.1.2.12 Note that, in all cases, the report shall specify mechanisms to permit enrolled students to earn their degrees.

6.2 Approval of Program Discontinuance

- 6.2.1 If a program discontinuance is agreed upon by the President and the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost, the proposal will be submitted to the Curriculum Office and will go through the following steps to be finalized and notifications sent to proper authorities:
 - 6.2.1.1 A vote by Academic Council.
 - 6.2.1.2 A vote by the Board of Trustees.
 - 6.2.1.3 Notifications sent to the Utah Board of Higher Education and Northwest Consortium of Colleges and Universities.

VII. Addenda—N/A

Policy Owner: Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost

Policy Steward: Associate Provost for Academic and Budget Planning; Faculty Senate

History:

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