

## SECTION I

### PART S REVIEW POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR NEWLY-APPROVED ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAMS IN STATE-SUPPORTED INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

#### **1.00 Introduction**

This policy applies to associate of arts, science, and general studies degrees, baccalaureate, and graduate degree programs and establishes the procedures for the post-approval review of new academic degree programs at state-supported postsecondary institutions.

*CCHE=s Policy and Procedures for the Approval of New Academic Programs in State-Supported Institutions of Higher Education in Colorado* outlines the initial approval criteria and procedures for proposing a new degree program. During the first five years following their approval, the Commission monitors the implementation of all newly-approved academic programs. At the end of five years, the Commission determines whether a program has met its original objectives and supports the state priorities. If the initial five-year review deems, a newly-approved program successful, the oversight and full responsibility for the program is transferred to the governing board. Programs that have not clearly met the state, governing board, or program objectives or the special conditions initially tied to the program's approval shall follow the review process outlined in this policy.

#### **2.00 Statutory Authority for Program Review**

By statute, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education has responsibility to ensure the quality, viability, and integrity of existing academic degree programs. The statute directs the Commission to:

Establish such academic and vocational education planning as may be necessary to accomplish and sustain system wide goals of high quality, access, diversity, efficiency, and accountability (C.R.S. 23-1-108 (b)).

Establish policies and procedures for the discontinuance of academic and vocational programs. The commission may direct the respective governing boards of institutions, including the board of regents of the university of Colorado, to discontinue an academic or vocational degree program area, as program area is defined by commission policies ... The commission shall assure that each institution has an orderly process for the phase-out of programs (C.R.S. 23-1-107).

### **3.00 Goals, Principles, and Terminology**

#### **3.01 Policy Goals**

The goal of the review policy for newly-approved academic degree programs is to create a shared quality assurance system that:

- ensures that academic programs delivered by Colorado's public higher education system serve students and fulfill a bona fide market need;
- ensures that institutions have the capacity to deliver the degree program as designed; and
- strengthens the accountability role exercised by the governing boards by entrusting governing boards to take appropriate action.

#### **3.02 Principles**

*The Review Policy and Procedures for Newly-Approved Academic Degree Programs in State-Supported Institutions of Higher Education* is based on the following principles:

1. Colorado's state higher education coordinating board and institutional governing boards will work together to ensure that academic degree programs provide quality educational experiences.
2. An objective review by a qualified expert is essential to assess the academic integrity of a program that is experiencing difficulties.
3. The governing board is responsible to its constituents and the state coordinating board, which acts on behalf of these constituents, to take constructive action for any program that has not met the institutional, governing board or state goals. If a governing board chooses not to take constructive or remedial action, the program shall be terminated.
4. The coordinating board is responsible to the state and the general public to ensure wise stewardship of state resources.

#### **3.03 Definition of Terms**

Academic year is the period of time extending from July 1 of one year and ending June 30 of the succeeding year.

Enrollment is defined as the unduplicated headcount during a specific academic year of the students who have been accepted into a specific program and enrolled in at least one class for credit.

Graduation is defined as the number of students who have completed all academic degree requirements and received a diploma from the institution authorized to award the degree.

#### **4.00 Commission Responsibilities**

The Commission is responsible to the General Assembly and the taxpayers of Colorado for wise stewardship of state resources and protection of the rights of students who pursue degree programs in the public system of higher education. As specified in statute, academic degree programs at state-supported institutions should be designed and implemented to assure and emphasize that students have an opportunity to complete their programs in a reasonable amount of time and that the programs align with the current market environment in Colorado, including labor force needs and student demand.

4.01 During each of the five years following the approval of a new academic degree program, CCHE staff will report on the enrollment and graduation numbers, emphasizing those programs that are in their final two years of implementation. CCHE staff will provide an opportunity for each governing board to verify the information published in this report prior to publishing it in the January Commission agenda. While the primary intent of the information in this report is to identify programs that may benefit from early governing board intervention, it will also highlight successful degree implementation or degree programs experiencing high student enrollment.

4.02 After five years, the Commission shall decide whether to refer a particular degree program to the governing board for a comprehensive review or approve its continuation. This decision will be a formal action item at the February or March Commission meeting in that year.

4.02.01 If a program fails to meet the original student enrollment, graduation projections, or special conditions tied to the initial program approval, or appears misaligned with the current market environment in Colorado, including labor force needs and student demand, the Commission will refer this program to the governing board for intensive review.

4.02.02 Following Commission action, CCHE staff will send a letter to the governing board notifying it of the Commission's action. For programs that the Commission identified for a comprehensive review, the letter will specify Commission concerns, specific state level issues, the findings that triggered the need for an intensive analysis and review, and the governing board's responsibilities as defined in this policy. For programs that met the state goals, the letter will indicate that the program is no longer included in the Commission's annual degree review process.

- 4.03 The CCHE Office of Academic Affairs coordinates the program reviews, working with the appropriate governing board staff and program faculty. When degree programs serve students preparing to enter the teaching profession, CCHE staff will inform the Colorado Department of Education of the program's status and share information with this agency.
- 4.04 After a governing board completes the program review, the Commission will consider the governing board's action. Five affirmative votes are required for the program under review to continue. If a governing board demonstrates that it has addressed the academic and state concerns listed in the original letter, the Commission will authorize program continuation. If the review, conducted by a governing board, fails to examine substantive issues or take timely or appropriate corrective actions, the Commission, in keeping with its statutory authority, may either remand it to the governing board for additional review or discontinue the program.
- 4.05 The Commission will ensure that any action to discontinue a degree program will follow the guidelines and time parameters established in statute.

#### **5.00 Governing Board Responsibilities**

This section applies only to those degree programs that do not fulfill the program's original goals and objectives, that is, the goals and objectives proposed as part of the original request for Commission approval to offer the degree. This intent is based on the understanding that governing boards will provide oversight, support, and guidance to the degree program during the early years of implementation prior to the five-year review deadline.

- 5.01 The governing board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of new academic degree programs and making decisions whether a program should continue after five years of operation.
- 5.02 Within three months of CCHE's letter indicating that a program has triggered a comprehensive review, the governing board shall provide CCHE with a proposed time line for its review of the program. The governing board review time line shall be shared with the Commission as an agenda information item. The Commission may choose to meet with a governing board if the degree program or review plan raises special issues. Conversely, a governing board may request a meeting with members of the Commission to seek advice prior to initiating the review.
- 5.03 The governing board shall retain an external consultant to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the particular program. The consultant shall have expertise in the discipline and must be an objective reviewer of the program under study. If the review involves a graduate program, the consultant shall be from another state.

- 5.03.01 The consultant's analysis shall occur after the Commission places a program into review. No departmental or program reviews completed prior to this action will be acceptable.
- 5.03.02 To ensure that consultants conduct impartial reviews, the governing board staffs shall collaborate with CCHE staff on a list of potential consultants. The governing board shall retain a consultant of its choice from the mutually-agreed list.
- 5.03.03 To ensure that consultants understand the state issues involved, the governing boards shall provide CCHE staff an opportunity to discuss the degree program issues with the consultant as part of the review responsibilities.
- 5.04 In reviewing the programs, the consultants and institutions shall use the definitions developed in consultation with all governing boards to assess program enrollment and program graduation numbers. Course enrollments will not be considered as central information nor will accepted applicants substitute for actual enrollments. The official enrollment data that the institution submitted to CCHE in the SURDS student files shall have precedence over data from any other source.
- 5.05 Based on the analysis of the program=s strengths and weaknesses, state needs, and the status of the discipline, the consultant shall recommend one or more of the following options:
- specific corrective actions to address the problems that caused the program to fail to meet its original goals and objectives,
  - program restructuring in accordance with bona fide state needs, or
  - program termination.
- 5.06 Prior to taking action, the governing board shall consider the findings and recommendations of the external consultant. The governing board shall issue a formal response to each of the questions identified by the Commission at the onset of the review.
- 5.07 The governing board shall transmit, to the Commission, a letter indicating its action regarding the program. The actions are limited to one of the following:
- specific corrective actions taken by the governing board to address the factors that prevented the program from meeting its goals and objectives,
  - notice of an intent to restructure the program in accordance with bona fide state needs, or
  - notice of program termination.

The governing board shall also attach a copy of the consultant=s report and recommendations.

- 5.08 If the governing board opts for corrective action, the letter shall outline the impact that these actions either have had, or are intended to have on the program enrollment and graduation numbers. The letter shall also include information on the type of support and oversight that the governing board shall provide until the program meets its goals and objectives.
- 5.09 If the governing board opts to restructure the program, this action implies that the program shall cease admitting students to the program until the restructured program curriculum is approved by the Commission. The restructured program shall follow the procedures outlined in CCHE Policy I-B.
- 5.10 If the governing board opts to terminate the program, the program shall cease admitting new students or readmitting former students effective immediately. Currently enrolled students may complete the program under the statutory guidelines of no more than four years for a baccalaureate or graduate level program and no more than two years for a sub-baccalaureate degree program. Governing boards shall reimburse CCHE for the total FTE generated by students who continue to enroll past these parameters as outlined in CCHE Policy I-G.
- 5.11 The governing board shall provide a status report to the Commission on all program reviews resulting from this policy on September 1 of each year, indicating how the review is progressing and if it is on schedule with the governing board's time line (ref. 5.02). The governing board status reports will be shared with the Commission each October as a regular agenda item.

A board that does not convene during the summer months may submit the report on the Monday following its September board meeting.