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(850) 245-0466 - www.fldoe.org

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August 11, 2004

## POLICY DIRECTIVE

**TO:** Members, State University Presidents Association

**FROM:** Debra Austin, Chancellor

**SUBJECT:** Academic Program Review

**AUTHORITY:** Article IX, Section 7, of the Constitution of the State of Florida

Florida Board of Governors Resolution, October 22, 2003

Florida Administrative Code 6C-3.001 - Systemwide Uniform Procedures, as adopted by the Florida Board of Governors on January 7, 2003

**POLICY/PURPOSE:** The Florida Board of Governors shall provide for the cyclic review of all academic programs in state universities at least every 7 years. Program reviews shall document how individual academic programs are achieving stated student learning and program objectives within the context of the institution's mission. The results of the program reviews shall inform strategic planning, program development, and budgeting decisions at the institutional level.

### Introduction

Academic program review has a lengthy history in the State University System of Florida, as efforts have been made to periodically analyze how degree programs meet standards of quality, efficient management, and optimum service to students and the citizens of the State. Effective reviews have been valuable tools as university personnel have worked to continuously improve their academic offerings.

To remain effective, review processes must be continuously reviewed themselves and must be responsive to changing requirements and educational/political contexts. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the emphasis placed on the assessment of student learning outcomes in higher education. Simultaneously, under the direction of the Florida Board of Governors, more emphasis has been placed on the devolution of authority to the universities, campus-level decision making, and institutional accountability. Therefore, a streamlined and increasingly "local" approach to program review that focuses on student learning outcomes is appropriate. In the process of making this transition, due diligence is required from institutional and Division personnel to certify that:

- Institutions are in compliance with System requirements regarding academic program review and continuous improvement processes;
- Program review processes and summary reports reflect current expectations regarding the identification and assessment of student learning outcomes in higher education; and
- Program review processes and summary reports reflect the current governance structure for the State University System of Florida.

### **Seven-Year Program Review Plans**

Each institution is required to submit and maintain a proposed seven-year *University Program Review Plan* (currently operating under 2000-2007 plans) to the Office of Academic and Student Affairs in the Division of Colleges and Universities (DCU). Each *University Program Review Plan* must include a proposed schedule within the seven-year cycle for the submission of summary program review reports for every degree program, unless otherwise approved by DCU staff.<sup>1</sup> Program review designs may be configured by degree programs and/or by cross-cutting issues and themes, but DCU staff shall review each *Plan* to ensure that all programs receive sufficient review, with appropriate input from external experts, within the negotiated seven-year cycle. University personnel shall incorporate revisions to the *Plans* as needs and opportunities arise. Updated *Plans* must be submitted to DCU by January 15 each year.

### **State University System Program Review and Continuous Improvement Processes**

Each institution shall develop and publish clearly defined policies and procedures for reviewing academic degree programs and ensuring their continuous improvement. These policies and procedures should be aligned with System policies, the university's mission, and the Board of Governor's Strategic Plan. Institutional program review policies and procedures (including any changes made over time) must be reviewed and approved by staff from the Office of Academic and Student Affairs in the Division of Colleges and Universities. A current copy of university guidelines shall remain on file in the Division.

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<sup>1</sup> In some instances, exceptions to the seven-year cycle may be negotiated to align a review with a specialized accreditation cycle.

As part of the State University System program review and continuous improvement processes, institutional program personnel—with appropriate input from external expert(s) in the given discipline(s)—must do the following. (Please note the difference between the processes that must be in place at each institution versus the documentation that must be submitted to the Division of Colleges and Universities in the form of summary program review reports.)

1. Articulate the mission(s) and purpose(s) of the program(s) within the context of the institutional mission and the Florida Board of Governors' strategic plan.
2. Review responses to recommendations from previous reviews, and respond as appropriate. ***[Include a brief synopsis of actions taken in the summary program review report.]***
3. Identify teaching, research, service, and other program goals/objectives, including expected outputs and outcomes. Specifically, identify and publicize expected student learning outcomes in the areas of content knowledge and skills, communication skills, and critical thinking skills. Expected student learning outcomes for baccalaureate degree programs shall be included in Academic Learning Compacts, as mandated by the Florida Board of Governors. ***[Include a copy of the Academic Learning Compact for each reviewed baccalaureate degree program in the summary program review report.]***
4. Develop assessment systems to determine how well program goals/objectives are being met and how well students are achieving expected learning outcomes.
5. Implement and/or modify the program(s) to achieve the articulated goals/objectives.
6. Collect data and information on actual outputs and outcomes.
7. Analyze the data and information to determine how well articulated program goals/objectives have been accomplished within the context of the mission.
8. Specifically, analyze how well students are meeting expected learning outcomes, both as articulated by program personnel and as deemed appropriate in the discipline within the context of the individual institution's mission.
9. For baccalaureate programs, examine approved common prerequisites to ensure that they provide appropriate preparation for success in the specific degree program, and that the selected courses continue to be relevant to the discipline in general. Any recommended changes in prerequisites should be brought to the attention of the Articulation Coordinating Committee (Oversight Committee). For those programs that have been approved as Limited Access, examine the ongoing need for limited access status and identify what

resources would be needed to eliminate limited access (if possible), so that this information can inform budget planning for the State University System.

10. Assess the sufficiency of resources and support services to achieve the program goals/objectives.
11. Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOTs) that support or impede achievement of program goals.<sup>2</sup> *[Include in the summary program review report.]*
12. Generate recommendations based on review findings. *[Include in the summary program review report.]*
13. Use the results of the program reviews to plan for continuous program improvement, as well as to inform strategic planning, program development, and budgeting decisions at the institutional level.
14. Provide written confirmation from the president or provost that each program review included all of the processes outlined above and was conducted according to approved university policy. *[Include in the summary program review report.]*
15. Submit a *summary program review report* to the Division of Colleges and Universities by March 31 or June 30, depending on the time negotiated as part of a university's seven-year *University Program Review Plan*. Each summary program review report must include a delineation of the specific academic programs (with levels) that were included in a given review, as well as a brief description of the nature of the review (e.g., part of an accreditation review, self-study with a site visit by an external consultant, etc.). Directory information on external reviewers is requested. *Each summary program review report must include, at a minimum, a delineation of the requested items noted in 2, 3, 11, 12, and 14 listed above.*

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<sup>2</sup> It will be extremely helpful if the authors of the program review summary reports note any identified issues and opportunities that face a given discipline at the time of the review to help DCU staff understand the more global status of the discipline. Report authors also are asked to note any issues and opportunities that appear to cross over programs within the university (to help institutional and DCU staff recognize university-wide strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), as well as any issues and opportunities that appear to cross over universities within the State University System (to help DCU staff identify and understand issues that rise to a State level of interest).

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### **Format for Summary Program Review Reports**

Because program reviews are designed to address multiple needs, the format of a given summary report may be dictated by the expectations for the review. University personnel may submit existing documents to the DCU, as opposed to writing a new summary program review report, as long as all of the elements specified in item 15 above are included in the documentation and information is provided that indicates exactly where in the documentation each of the elements listed in item 15 can be found.

Contact: Office of Academic and Student Affairs  
SUNCOM 205-0467, Local 245-0467

DA/cdm

c: Carolyn Roberts, Chair, Florida Board of Governors  
Members, SUS Council of Academic Vice Presidents  
Members, SUS Program Review Committee  
Scott Kittel, Office of the Governor