



**FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**POLICY TITLE**

Suspension and Discontinuance of Academic Programs

**POLICY STATEMENT**

As institutions grow and mature it becomes necessary for them to periodically review programs to ensure that they remain central to the mission of the college or school to which they belong and that they serve to further the mission of the institution as a whole. Among the spectrum of actions that can be considered following the results of such a review are program suspension or program discontinuance. These options become necessary when the program in question exhibits some or all of the following characteristics over time:

- (a) It is out of alignment with the institution's mission,
- (b) It is out of alignment with professional accreditation standards,
- (c) Student demand is marginal,
- (d) Market demand in the service area is weak,
- (e) Program productivity is relatively low,
- (f) Program vitality is questionable, or
- (g) Cost is high relative to available institutional resources and is therefore inconsistent with the maintenance of high quality instruction either in the program in question or more generally upon other instructional offerings within the institution.

This policy articulates the circumstances under which and the process by which existing degree programs may be suspended or discontinued. In the evaluation of any academic program covered under this policy for discontinuance, the following four factors will be given key consideration: centrality to mission, quality, efficiency, need, and demand.

In this policy, the term *program* refers to all courses of study (i.e., majors) that result in the award of a degree at either the bachelor's, master's, specialist, or doctoral levels. This policy does not apply to programs that may be discontinued as a result of fiscal (financial) exigency as declared by the FGCU Board of Trustees, nor to programs that have been in operation under four years. Nor does the policy apply to the case of

elimination of individual courses or concentrations which are under the purview of the colleges offering them and subject to their policies and procedures.

*Suspension* is the cessation of the offering of a program for a finite or indefinite period of time depending upon circumstances.

*Discontinuance* is an action to completely eliminate the offering of a course of study as defined above under the definition of program. Such a decision requires action by the Board of Trustees and subsequent removal from the state's program inventory.

**RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE**

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICE**

Office of Planning and Institutional Performance

**WHO SHOULD READ THIS POLICY**

- Academic officers, deans, program directors, and department heads
- Faculty

**PROCEDURES**

Programs to be considered for suspension or discontinuance can arise from a variety of sources including:

- (a) The department or college offering the program (as proposed by the department chair or the program faculty themselves)
- (b) A college committee charged with responsibility for the college curriculum
- (c) The college dean
- (d) The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- (e) The President
- (f) A university-wide faculty committee charged with this responsibility

Evaluation

In the evaluation of any academic program covered under this policy for discontinuance, the following four factors are given key consideration: *centrality to mission, quality, efficiency, need, and demand.*

*Centrality of mission* relates to the program's significance both within the college of its offering and to the University's mission. Decision variables for making a determination of mission alignment include the following:

- (a) Community service to area industry/business or other community based agencies
- (b) Contribution to diversity
- (c) Service to other colleges
- (d) Service within the college

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*Quality* is assessed through a programmatic review focusing on a number of factors, among these:

- (a) Accreditation status (if eligible for such)
- (b) Merit and reputation (viewed by scholarly productivity, currency of curriculum, and program leadership)
- (c) The quality of students and program graduates
- (d) Success of faculty recruitment and retention efforts
- (e) Status of program support infrastructure and facilities

*Efficiency* is an assessment of the balance between the institutional resources required to operate the program at a high level of quality and the productivity of the program viewed across multiple dimensions including:

- (a) Student/faculty ratio both headcount and full-time equivalent
- (b) Program expenditures/full-time equivalent faculty
- (c) Program expenditures/degree awarded
- (d) Time to degree
- (e) Retention of majors
- (f) Additional dollars needed to enhance or expand the program
- (g) Dollars to be saved by discontinuance of the program

*Need* is defined along societal dimensions. The societal dimension reflects labor market needs that can be viewed by looking at employment rates and opportunities for program graduates, regional labor projections, and through advisory board consultation with regional employers.

*Demand* is defined along personal dimensions. The personal dimension reflects student choice or preference and can be assessed by examining enrollment trends over time and the number of students seeking admission to the program over time.

### Review Process

Following the identification of program candidates a statement is developed addressing the four key criteria with a rationale as to why the program should be suspended or discontinued supported by an analysis of the decision variables as appropriate listed under each of the four criteria. A majority of the quantitative indicators cited should be below acceptable thresholds in comparison to other programs either within the college offering the program or university-wide (e.g., lower quartile). The proposal should address why other alternatives to discontinuance are not practical. The evaluation must also include an analysis of any potential negative impact (and how it might possibly be mitigated) the proposed termination may have on the current representation of females and ethnic minorities among the program's faculty and students. If the proposal originates within the college offering the program it should state what the consequences of discontinuance are and how they are to be addressed especially with regard to students and service courses to other programs within or outside the college offering the program.

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The document is then presented to the Provost (if not originating with the Provost), the dean of the affected program, the department chair or division head if appropriate, and the full-time program faculty. A response from the program leadership to the proposal is required within forty-five (45) calendar days from its receipt explaining whether or not the program and its faculty agree with the proposal or disagrees. If it disagrees, it should provide whatever documentation it believes appropriate to support its position. Such documentation should address criteria established in guidelines developed by the Faculty Senate for this purpose. The views of students, alumni, and affected members of the community may be included in the response. The response is shared with the college dean who forwards his/her response to the Provost within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the program faculty response.

The Provost arranges to share all documentation with the appropriate curriculum committee (undergraduate or graduate) which is charged to review all the documentation, hold a public hearing and provide its findings to the Faculty Senate and Deans' Council for review and recommendation. Both bodies are expected to provide their findings to the Provost within one month of receipt of the documentation. The Director of Equity and Compliance also provides findings on the potential for adverse impact on diversity and how it might be mitigated at this time. The Provost provides a recommendation to the President's Executive Group and the President who then render a determination based on all advice received in the process and if approved, present the proposed discontinued program to the Florida Gulf Coast University Board of Trustees ("Board of Trustees") for action at the next meeting. However, throughout the review process, the Provost will be available to meet and confer with those potentially affected by the decision until such time as a decision is placed on the Board of Trustees agenda for action.

### Process for Suspension

A decision to suspend a program is an alternative to discontinuance and can be used to allow for program restructuring to occur. In such an instance, the program restricts new admissions for a period of time. A program may be suspended for an indefinite period if the proposal to suspend originates from the college authorized to offer the program. During the period of suspension, new students are not admitted to the program and suitable arrangements must be approved by the Provost for the instruction of existing students enrolled in the program. An appropriate annotation concerning the status of the program is included in the University catalog. Suspension of a program does not require the review and approval of the Board of Trustees. Nor does it invoke the detailed review procedures detailed in this policy. The consensus of the department's or division's head, the college faculty, the college dean, the Provost and President are sufficient. If such consensus is not apparent, then the review process contained in this policy must be followed. In the event problems persist, a further review with regard to discontinuance may occur.

Staff associated primarily with the program shall be treated in accordance with the rules and policies in force at the time of the decision to suspend. Faculty associated primarily

with the program shall be treated in accordance with the FGCU-UFF Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Process for Discontinuance

If a program is to be discontinued, a phase-out schedule is established by the Provost that details:

- (a) The cut-off date for the admission of any new students to the program
- (b) Those students currently enrolled in the program are given time to complete their studies and informed of the length of time they have to do so
- (c) Other related majors within the institution or the system that students might wish to consider for transfer purposes
- (d) An office or person that assists students with questions related to the discontinuance

Staff associated primarily with the discontinued program shall be treated in accordance with the rules and policies in force at the time of the decision to discontinue. Faculty associated primarily with the program shall be treated in accordance with the FGCU-UFF Collective Bargaining Agreement.

After approval by the President, discontinuance of a program requires the approval of the Board of Trustees. Notice of the discontinuance of any program is made to all appropriate authorities and agencies and actions necessary to inform the public and prospective students taken.

*History: New 04-27-2004; Amended 06-19-2007*