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SUBJECT
 Program Productivity

CONTROLLING STATUTE, RULE, OR POLICY
 BOR Policy 2:23 – Program and Curriculum Processes
 AAC Guideline 4.1 – Program Productivity Review Guidelines

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

I. Background:
During the 2009 Board of Regents Planning session, the Board of Regents discussed establishing a formal program productivity review process. The Board affirmed that all students should have the opportunity to learn and to work with a group of faculty and colleagues, and that graduates from programs that are not productive clearly have fewer opportunities for these beneficial interactions. This approach also helps ensure that offering of academic programs (i.e., majors) remains financially viable for institutions and the system. The Board approved a set of guidelines to target underproductive programs, and following review during the March 2010 meeting the Board formalized an ongoing Program Productivity Review process. As set in policy, majors not producing the agreed upon number of graduates will be terminated unless the Board approves a continuation plan which must include measurable stipulations. In 2018, the Board revised this policy to increase the current thresholds required for programs (see Section II).

As the Board prepares to undertake a study of the university system in compliance with SB 55 from the 2020 legislative session, program productivity policies and enforcement will be part of those discussions. One of the nine specific items addressed in SB 55 is a "review of the academic majors with low enrollments and low numbers of graduates."

II. Current Application of Policy 2:23 / Program Productivity:
The Board reviewed the 2020 Program Productivity Report at June 2020 meeting. During that meeting, the Board agreed to delay a decision on approving continuation plans for academic programs that failed to meet program productivity thresholds pending additional information from institutions. That documentation will come to the Board for further review at the October Board meeting.

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INFORMATIONAL ITEM

BOR Policy 2:23 establishes minimum levels for the number of graduates in academic degree programs. The minimum graduate production thresholds are:

- 5 associate degrees/year or 25 during the five-year period reported
- 7 bachelor's degrees/year or 35 during the five-year period reported
- 4 master's degrees/year or 20 during the five-year period reported
- 1 professional and doctoral degree/year or 5 during the five-year period reported

By policy, academic degree programs that do not meet the established minimum number of graduates will be inactivated unless the Board of Regents approves a continuation plan. Collaborative programs between two or more institutions may combine their total number of graduates (e.g., 6 graduates at SDSU and 8 graduates at USD are considered 14 graduates in the program) provided there is detailed explanation of the collaboration (e.g., sharing of required courses, shared faculty, etc.). Programs flagged through the program productivity review process require a formal review at the institutional level. Following the review, the institution assigns one of five designations to the program for Board consideration:

1) Retain Due to Critical Need; 2) Retain with Further Review Required; 3) Consolidate with Another Program on Campus; 4) Consolidate with Another Program within the System; 5) Terminate.

Between 2010 (the first year of the program productivity process) and 2020, fall headcount enrollment in the university system has declined from 36,440 (Fall 2009) to 34,520 (Fall 2019). In that same period, the system experienced a net decrease of academic majors; however, the system has also experienced a net increase of over 70 minors and 100 certificate programs. In some cases, minors and certificates include new coursework that create additional expense. The program productivity process does not currently review minors and certificates. The level and number of new programs (i.e., majors) and terminated programs that are subject to the program productivity process represented below.

Table 1 2010-2020: New Academic Programs Approved and Programs Terminated			
Degree level	New Programs Approved	Programs Terminated	Programs Terminated Through Prog. Prod.
Associate	15	8	10
Bachelor's	51	53	32
Master's / Specialist	29	5	24
Doctoral	17	0	12
TOTAL	112	66	78

III. Current Policy Issues/Concerns:
- In recent years, the Board has not required in-depth analysis of requests for institutions to retain programs due to critical need or to retain programs with further review. Some programs perpetuate on the program productivity list for multiple years without adequate review for the need of the program.

- The current policy framework does not have an adequate or standard methodology for analyzing the cost of continuing a program (e.g., review of coursework that exists solely within this program, faculty costs, small sections offered, etc.).

- The current policy only analyzes graduate production within major fields and does not include specializations within majors, minors, or certificates. Specializations within majors, minors, and certificates can have new coursework involved when approved by the Board. The addition of new courses without the removal of other courses expands the catalog to include additional faculty workload. No regular analysis is currently done to determine graduate levels within specializations, minors, and certificates.

- Institutions use insufficient evidence and methodology in projecting enrollment and graduates from programs in new program proposals. Projected enrollments and graduate production cited in program proposals rarely match what ultimately occurs.

- The current tuition model (i.e., differentiating on-campus and off-campus tuition rates) limits the effectiveness of promoting collaborative programs as they are potentially more expensive for students.

IMPACT AND RECOMMENDATION

The following options are presented for the Board's consideration. The options are not intended to be all inclusive.

1. Maintain the current policy without changes.

2. Enforce program termination penalties for non-compliance.

3. Establish consistent methodology for determining the cost of maintaining programs that do not meet program productivity standards.

4. Reinforce that programs that do not meet program productivity thresholds are terminated unless the Board specifically authorizes an exemption.

5. Establish policies that include specializations within majors, minors, and certificates in the program productivity process.

6. Require more sophisticated analysis and evidence of enrollment projections for new program proposals.

7. Establish formal guidelines related to encouraging collaborative opportunities.

8. Charge the Board's Committee on Academic & Student Affairs and the Academic Affairs Council to review the existing policies for areas of refinement.

ATTACHMENTS

None