

DATE: May 17, 2018

SUBJECT: Academic Program Review Follow Up

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Information

Each year, THEC staff presents the Academic Program Review (APR) that examines activity in academic programs across the state. THE APR includes information on all new, modified, and terminated programs in the previous year. The APR also includes the Post Approval Monitoring (PAM) report. All new programs are monitored by THEC after approval to determine if program implementation is on track. Once programs are mature and exit PAM, they are continuously monitored through the Quality Assurance Funding Program.

Every three years, the APR also includes a program productivity review which examines all mature programs to determine if programs are meeting graduation benchmarks important to the programmatic and economic viability of the program. Pre-baccalaureate programs are expected to have an average of 10 graduates a year over a three-year period. Baccalaureate an average of 10 graduates and master’s an average of five graduates a year over a five-year period. Doctoral programs are expected to have an average of three graduates a year over a five-year period. In January 2018, based on these productivity benchmarks, 111 academic programs were identified; two certificate programs were removed since these programs met the benchmark requirement when the associate degree programs were included.

At the January 2018 THEC meeting, Commissioners requested additional information on the program productivity review portion of the APR. The Commission requested additional information on:

- trends in low program productivity in Tennessee;
- metrics to evaluate academic programs; and
- productivity benchmarks used by other states

Trends in Low Program Productivity in Tennessee

The Academic Program Inventory in Tennessee contains over 1,300 mature programs from the associate to doctoral degree levels. The 109 low producing programs represent less than eight percent of all mature academic programs. Forty-four percent of low producing programs have earned specialized and professional accreditation which ensures programs meet the high standards particular to individual professions. The remaining programs undergo rigorous program evaluation from external reviewers where there is not an appropriate accreditation agency. Less than a quarter of low producing programs which are not accreditable meet less than 50 percent of the productivity benchmark.

Low Producing Programs by Accountability Metric			
Accountability Metric	University	Community College	Total
Accreditation	29	19	48
Program Evaluation	38	23	61
• <i>50+ Percent</i>	22	14	36
• <i>Below 50 Percent</i>	16	9	25
Total	67	42	109

Metrics to Evaluate Academic Programs

There are three overall domains of metrics that are available to measure academic program viability. These include both quantitative and qualitative data metrics. In addition, institutions can provide program specific metrics that will provide an additional perspective in evaluating program viability.

Metrics to Evaluate Academic Programs
Quantitative Benchmarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Enrollment Trends (including number of applications, number of students admitted)▪ Persistent to Graduation▪ Graduation Trends
Quality Assurance Funding Standards <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ General Education Assessment▪ Major Field Assessment/Licensure Pass Rates▪ Accreditation▪ Student and alumni satisfaction▪ Program Evaluation<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Curriculum<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Program incorporates appropriate pedagogical and/or technological innovation that enhances student learning.▪ Curricular content of the program reflects current standards, practices and issues in the discipline.▪ Curriculum fosters analytical and critical thinking and problem solving.▪ Curriculum reflects a progressive challenge to students and that depth and rigor effectively prepares students for careers or advanced study.▪ Curriculum exposes students to discipline-specific research strategies.○ Student Experience<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Program ensures students are exposed to professional and career opportunities.▪ Program provides students with opportunities to apply what they have learned outside the classroom.▪ Program seeks to include diverse perspectives and experiences.○ Learning Resources<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Program has access to learning and information resources that are appropriate to support teaching and learning.○ Support<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Program's operating budget is consistent with the needs of the program▪ Program is responsive to local, state, regional, and national needs.
Program Specific Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Program's contribution to mission, research, and strategic plan▪ Program's contribution to other academic programs or academic units▪ Industry and Community Partnerships▪ Job Placement▪ Graduate School Admissions

Productivity Benchmarks Comparison

There is significant variation across the country as to if and how academic programs are reviewed by the state against annual productivity benchmarks. Of the states that complete a review of all mature programs, the thresholds utilized by Tennessee are higher at all degree levels.

Academic Program Annual Productivity Benchmark				
Available States	Associate	Bachelor	Master's	Doctoral
Alabama	7.5	7.5	3.75	2.25
Kentucky	12	12	7	5
Louisiana	--	8	5	2
Maryland	5	5	2	1
Nebraska	10	7	5	3
Oklahoma	5	5	3	2
Virginia	10	5	3	2
Average	8	7	4	2
Tennessee	10	10	5	3

Academic Program Review: Next Steps

Develop a New Program Viability Policy

THEC staff will work with institutions and governing board staff to develop a Program Viability Policy that will incorporate the defined benchmarks for each degree level. This policy will also include the data metrics (quantitative, qualitative and program specific) that will be used by the institutions in the review of mature academic programs. For each identified academic program that does not meet prescribed benchmarks, institutions will be required to provide a recommendation regarding the continuation, modification, or termination of the program.

Strengthen the Monitoring Process for New Academic Programs

It is critical that institutions consider the long term viability of a program before the program is mature. Currently, all new academic programs are monitored for a specified period by degree level. The monitoring period is three years for pre-baccalaureate programs, five years for baccalaureate and Master's programs, and seven years for doctoral programs. At the conclusion of the exiting period, institutions will be required to submit a summative evaluation of the goals reflected in the academic program proposal along with other data metrics. A reporting template for programs that are schedule to exit the monitoring process will be developed.

Based on this summative evaluation as reflected in the THEC A1.0 Policy (New Academic Programs: Approval Policy), if the academic program is deficient, the Commission may recommend to the President/Chancellor that the program be terminated. Copies of such recommendations will be forwarded to the Education Committees of the General Assembly.

Program Evaluation Programs below 50% of Graduation Benchmark		
Institution	Academic Program	Degree
APSU	1) Philosophy and Religion	Baccalaureate
TSU	2) Mathematical Sciences	Baccalaureate
TSU	3) Urban Studies	Baccalaureate
TTU	4) Physics	Baccalaureate
UOM	5) Physics	Baccalaureate
UTC	6) Physics	Baccalaureate
UTK	7) Natural Resources & Environmental Economics	Baccalaureate
UTK	8) Comparative/Experimental Medicine	Master's
UTK	9) Engineering Science	Master's
UTK	10) Life Sciences	Master's
UTK	11) Microbiology	Master's
UTK	12) Animal Science	Doctorate
UTK	13) Biosystems Engineering	Doctorate
UTM	14) International Studies	Baccalaureate
UTM	15) Mathematics	Baccalaureate
UTM	16) Philosophy	Baccalaureate
Chattanooga	17) Magnetic Resonance Imaging	Certificate
Dyersburg	18) Corrections And Law Enforcement	Certificate
Dyersburg	19) Computer Information Technology	Associate
Motlow	20) General Technology	Associate
Roane	21) Computer Information Technology	Certificate
Southwest	22) Teaching	Associate
Volunteer	23) Fine Arts	Associate
Walters	24) Criminal Justice	Associate
Walters	25) General Technology	Associate