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Policy 4J: Interim Policy and Procedures for Approving New Degree Program Proposals [1]

Introduction

By statute, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) is charged with the responsibility of reviewing and approving proposals for new degree programs offered by state colleges and universities. In June 2003, CCHE revised its policy, thereby necessitating a new University of Colorado policy. As a result of the passage of SB04-189, which alters CCHE?s responsibilities regarding approval of new degrees, further changes are anticipated. CCHE?s focus is on consistency of a proposed degree program with an institution?s statutory role and mission. The purpose of this policy is to set forth a general description of the procedures that are to be followed in developing new academic degree program proposals. Campus guidelines may vary, and persons should contact the Office of the Chancellor for more specific information.

Part I. Proposal Review Process

Proposals may be initiated by faculty members through units such as departments, programs, schools and colleges. The proposed degree program must be part of a department and/or school/college academic strategic plan. At a minimum, the proposed degree must appear in the annual academic planningreport that is sent to the Board of Regents and the CCHE. Campus planning processes may require additional steps before a proposal is developed.

A. The Campus Process

The proposal is developed by the department/program or school/college and forwarded to the Dean of the school/college for review and approval. Schools and Colleges may develop policies determining the levels of review, by faculty and administrators, that new degree proposals must undergo. Where proposals involve more than one school or college, all participating units must review and approve the proposal. In the case of graduate degree program proposals, the proposal must also be reviewed and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School and the executive committee or graduate council of the campus Graduate School. During the process of developing the proposal, the campus should work closely with the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Research (VPAAR) to insure compliance with state requirements and CCHE and board policies. The VPAAR office may recommend consultation with CCHE staff to assure that the contemplated degree is consistent with the campus role and mission.

Proposals approved by the Dean(s) are transmitted to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for review and approval. Depending upon campus policy, the Vice Chancellor may consult with faculty governance groups concerned with academic standards and budget priorities before making a decision.

Following approval by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, proposals are forwarded to the Chancellor for review and approval. The Chancellor may consult with the campus budget officer and other persons prior to making a decision. The Chancellor shall provide a letter of support for the proposal attesting to its academic rigor and quality, to adequate demand for the program, and to the availability of resources to offer the program.

At this point, the Chancellor transmits the proposal to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Research. The Vice President provides the proposal to other CU campuses for review and comment, particularly concerning duplication and quality issues. The proposal is presented to the Board of Regents at the next available Board study session. If no concerns are raised, the VPAAR will then submit the proposal to CCHE for review of its consistency with the institution?s role and mission. CCHE has 30 days to provide a written response to the President on this question. If the Commission has no concerns, the proposal may go forward to the Board of Regents for approval. If the Commission does have concerns, it will communicate its concerns in writing to the Board of Regents. University personnel may work with Commission staff to resolve these issues. If CCHE finds a proposal outside the scope of the institution?s approved role and mission, the proposal may not go forward.

Proposals for new coordinated programs shall follow the above process, including approval by the respective campus Graduate School Deans, Vice Chancellors, and Chancellors. When a coordinated program is extended from one campus to another, the campus to which the program is being extended shall have responsibility for initiating the proposal and seeking appropriate review and approval.

Every graduate and professional proposal(above the level of baccalaureate)must be evaluated by an external consultant. With the approval of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, the campus selects a highly qualified, independent evaluator to review the quality of the proposed curriculum, the qualifications of the faculty to offer the program, and the adequacy of resources to support the program.

See Part II for a detailed description of what must be included in a new degree program proposal.

B. Review by the Board of Regents

T he Vice President for Academic Affairs and Research will place the degree proposal on the agenda of the next available Board study session following CCHE approval . The proposal may then be placed on the next Board business agenda for final approval.

If the Board of Regents approves the proposed degree the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Research shall notify CCHE.

C. Program Implementation

New degree programs approved by CCHE must be initiated within two years of approval or the approval to offer the program shall expire. All new degree programs are subject to review

during their first five years of operation under CCHE's ?Review Policy and Procedures for Newly Approved Academic Degree Programs in State-Supported Institutions of Higher Education.? The enrollment and graduation rates of n ew degree programs are subject to annual monitoring by CCHE. CCHE compares actual enrollment and graduation rates to the estimates in Table 1 of the degree proposal. Programs that fail to meet their estimated targets in year 3 or year 5 of operation may be closed by CCHE. Programs that meet their target will be formally reviewed at the end of year 5 and awarded full approval. A final requirement for continued approval of a new degree is that the campus maintains accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

Part II Guidelines for Program Proposals

All proposals shall be prepared in electronic format for ease of transmission. They must cover the topics outlined below.

A. Description of Program

1. Describe the basic design of this program, including its level (baccalaureate, masters, doctoral) and the field of study. Is this an interdisciplinary program?

2. What are the student learning goals of this program? What will a graduate of this program have learned and be able to do? The goals should be sufficiently specific that they can be readily assessed; should the program be approved, the goals should be a basic component of future program review.

B. Concerns to be Addressed

1. Bona Fide Need: Student Demand and Workforce Demand

a. Student Demand: What is the target market? What evidence is there of student demand for this program?

1) Provide enrollment projections for the program for the first five years in Table 1, following the definitions and directions specified in the table. Also include explanations of the methodology and assumptions used to project enrollment and completion data. Relevant information might include national or regional enrollment trends in similar programs and projected new demand from industry in the service area.

2) Enrollment and graduation estimates should be conservative; if the program is approved and implemented, these figures will be used to determine whether the program has met its goals and should be continued. Programs that fail to meet their estimated enrollment and graduation projections in Year 3 will be thoroughly reviewed for discontinuance by CCHE.

3) For graduate and professional programs, indicate the annual pool of potential applicants. Useful information might include the number of qualified undergraduates in the institution's undergraduate program, the current percentage of undergraduates, regionally or nationally, continuing on to the graduate level, and the number and/or proportion of applicants to existing programs who are not gaining admission to existing programs.

4) Explain how the program design will address the needs of part-time, working students. What specific efforts will be made to retain under-represented groups enrolling in the program?

b. Workforce Demand: What evidence is there of need or workforce demand in Colorado for graduates of this field?

1) For programs that aim primarily to prepare students for graduate or professional school, describe the opportunities for admission to graduate or professional programs. What will ensure that graduates of the proposed program will be qualified for these openings?

2) For programs that intend to prepare graduates for specific occupations or professions, provide demand and employment information.

2. Role and Mission Criteria. Is this program congruent with the role and mission of the campus? How does it support the campus's mission? Does it fit with the campus and/or college strategic academic plan? Describe particular institutional strengths in the proposed program area.

3. Duplication. Is there duplication with other institutions? If so, are there unique characteristics or features of this program that are not duplicated elsewhere in the state that would justify this program? Duplication is particularly an issue for graduate and professional programs, most especially doctoral level programs, because of the high cost of graduate offerings. Proposals should discuss graduate/professional offerings at other institutions that may appear to duplicate and explain either (1) how the proposed program does not duplicate other offerings or (2) why a duplicate or similar program is justified. These statements should be reviewed for accuracy by the other institutions whose programs are being discussed. How will its implementation affect other institutions in the state? List all similar existing programs offered in the state and region, and explain why existing programs cannot meet the needs of the prospective students (and, if relevant, employers) in the geographic area to be served.

4. Statutory Requirements. Does the proposed program conform to statutory requirements, such as the 120 credit hour limit for undergraduate degrees and the Student?s Bill of Rights?

C. Program Quality and Institutional Capacity

1. Admission, Transfer and Graduation Standards

a . Describe the admissions requirements of this program. If they are different from general campus or college requirements, how and why are they different?

b. Describe requirements for transfer students. If specific articulation agreements are in place or being considered, these should be described.

c. If enrollments are to be limited, describe the restrictions on enrollments and the reasons for them.

d. Describe the standards for continuing in the program and the graduation requirements. If they are different from campus/college requirements, how and why are they different?

2. Curriculum Description and Assessment Process

a. Describe the program requirements, including total credit hours, credit hour distribution, methods of delivering the program, field experience, and other pertinent aspects of the curriculum. Explain how this curriculum is like and/or unlike the usual curriculum in this field.

b. List all the titles of courses that support this program and explicitly identify all new courses being created for this program.

c. Provide a sample curriculum, including all required courses. If there are several tracks or options, include s ample curricula.

d. Describe the assessment plan for this proposed degree. (This section should be related to the student goals outlined in II. A. 2.) The assessment plan should include the goals and objectives of the program for student learning and what knowledge, intellectual capacities and skills will be developed by this curriculum. Describe the assessment tools that will measure how well the program fulfills these goals and objectives. The plan must describe how the department will use student outcomes information and any feedback from employers or from licenser and other testing scores to change teaching methods and/or the curriculum.

3. Professional Requirements or Evaluations

a. Where pertinent, describe any regional or professional accrediting association or licensing requirements that have helped shape the curriculum of the proposed program. Specify the effect of these requirements on the length of the program, restrictions on program content or mode of delivery; and any budgetary requirements, such as minimal staffing levels, and equipment needs.

b. Identify timetables that have been established to meet the requirements, if needed.

c. Describe the qualifications of the proposed programs? faculty. Include in an appendix short vitae (one-page) for the faculty who will teach regularly in this program.

4. Institutional Factors

a. Describe how this program will contribute to achieving the department's and campus's diversity goals.

b. How will the implementation of this program affect other instructional, research, or service programs in the institution? How will it affect other campuses?

c. How will the implementation of this program affect existing resources, including library, computer, and laboratory resources?

d. Describe any formal relationships with other parties that are anticipated, such as inter-institutional arrangements, resource sharing, cooperative programs, clinical affiliations, etc. Describe and explain the type and extent of the relationship and the resources provided by the affiliating institution. A copy of any draft contracts or agreements should be included in the Appendices.

5. Physical Capacity and Needs

a. Provide space estimates for program space requirements in Table 2 based on existing and five-year space planning assumptions and program size data from curriculum and student load projections and projected use of special or dedicated facilities, such as laboratories. The Vice Chancellor for Administration, or other relevant campus officer, must sign this Table to certify the accuracy of the information it contains.

b. In the body of the application, describe program delivery and program space requirements, identifying additional space or equipment needs. When significant capital construction or equipment needs are anticipated, please provide additional information and explanations. c. If program space requirements mandate additional facilities or significant renovation, summarize (1) alternate solutions considered, including, where relevant, leasing or renting space and new construction, and (2) conclusions from relocation and operating cost analyses that indicate the best use of resources. Operating costs, as well as space efficiency, should be considered. Explain contingency plans for operating the program in the event that capital construction funds are delayed for implementing the Facility Program Plan.

6. Cost Description and Source of Funds

a. Report cost estimates and sources of funds for five years in Table 3, using the definitions and instructions provided with the table. All cost and revenue projections for the five years should be given in constant dollars, i.e., do not include an inflation factor.

b. Program costs include both operating and capital start-up needs. Estimates of operating costs should be based on the delivery of the courses and services defined for the program. Administrative costs must also be factored in. Program budgets should be calculated in a realistic manner. For example, additional work generated by the operation, management, and oversight of a new program should not be claimed to be absorbed into the workload of existing staff and faculty without an explanation of what other work will be reassigned or discontinued to make room for the new workload.

The proposal must include a written statement from the Dean verifying the adequacy of resources to support the new program, as outlined in the program?s budget, and confirming that projected resources are reasonable.

7. Other Relevant Information

Campuses may include any other information deemed relevant to support new program proposals. Copies of letters of support from students and community members are not usually necessary or helpful. The Board of Regents may request additional information pertinent to specific issues raised during their examination of new degree program proposals.

8. Reviewers Comments

Include a copy of the external evaluator's comments and specify any changes that were made in response to the evaluation. If the evaluator suggested changes in the program that are not being made, explain why.

TABLE 1: ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS

TABLE 2: PHYSICAL CAPACITY ESTIMATES

TABLE 3: PROJECTED EXPENSES AND REVENUE ESTIMATES

Last Amended: August 12, 2004

History:

adopted by the Board of Regents, February 20,1997, pg. 108-109, attachment 4;

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Attachments:
Video:
Images:
Groups audience:
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Regent Policies

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