West Los Angeles College
Academic Senate
Instructional Program Viability Review Policy

RATIONALE

Program Viability Review is a Senate-directed process meant to assure that the campus's instructional resources are used in response to the College's Mission, its Educational Master Plan, the needs of the students, and the requirements of the community it serves. Viability Review involves a "special" process, one that is only invoked under "unusual" circumstances: it is not a part of the regular Program Review process, and it is not a process that should be applied to all departments, disciplines, or programs in a regular fashion. The term "program" as it relates to this review process includes all degree and vocational certificate instructional programs; all instructional disciplines, and all departments or other campus units offering instruction. Program Viability Review is mandated by the following:

1. Accreditation: Recommendations for Standard Two of the Accreditation Team's final report direct the faculty to take an active role in educational innovation and in addressing the future of programs that appear to have outlived documented need;
2. State Senate Guidelines: State Senate models of the Program Review and Educational Planning processes make it clear that faculty must take a pro-active part in decisions affecting program creation, discontinuance, and restructuring;
3. The Principle of Collegial Consultation: The role of the Academic Senate makes it clear that the Senate must be consulted on all matters involving instruction. Playing a leading role in Program Viability Review assures that faculty and academic perspectives will guide campus-wide decision-making and that such decisions will be made through an open, publicly accessible process;
4. Board Rule 6803 in addition to procedures for program review established pursuant to Board Rule 6801, West Los Angeles College shall, in consultation with its Academic Senate, develop procedures for initiating and conducting a viability review of “educational programs,” as defined in Title 5, section 55000(b);
5. State Law: California Education Code § 78016 require a process for program discontinuance and Title 5 § 55130 & § 51022.

INITIATION OF VIABILITY REVIEW

Viability review may be recommended from a variety of sources to the Academic Senate for initiation. The recommendation must clearly state the reason and source of data for initiation. The Academic Senate will vote on the recommendation to initiate/not to initiate the process or if need be ask for more information before the vote. The following committee reports or planning documents may make a recommendation to the Academic Senate to initiate the process of viability review.

1. Master Plan and updates
   Unit Plan
Advisory Committee Minutes

2. Accreditation Report
3. Administration
4. Program Review Process
   Yearly Program Review
   Comprehensive Program Review
   Program Review Validation

CRITERIA FOR VIABILITY REVIEW

The following criteria may be used to identify at-risk programs.

Qualitative Data

Explicit attention should be given to qualitative aspects of the program. In addition to the Master Plan, these factors should be considered:

- breadth of the curriculum
- teaching: faculty development in classroom techniques such as addressing alternative learning styles, student course contracts, and classroom research
- learning outcomes
- student satisfaction
- student support services: tutoring, financial aid, learning/study skills, childcare.
- levels of outside support and recognition (e.g., articulating universities or employing business and industry)

Quantitative Data

It is important to emphasize that quantitative data should be presented with a narrative explanation. Assessment criteria should be applied programmatically to the strength and weaknesses to be evaluated.

Key factors which may be used in identifying and evaluating at-risk programs include:

- declining enrollment trends
- insufficient frequency of course section offerings to assure reasonable availability for students to complete the program within its stated duration
- low rate for student achievement of program goals (i.e., successful completion rate)
- low retention within courses
- low term-to-term persistence for those in courses in the major
- lack of demand in the workforce or cyclic nature of the workforce
- unavailability of the transfer major
- declining need for this program by other programs
- insufficient numbers of faculty, including full-time faculty and in their particular expertise (use of faculty development or sabbatical resources may be appropriate)
- insufficient physical resources including facilities, equipment, and supplies
• inadequate levels of outside support such as classified staff, course offerings, library materials, and workplace learning opportunities
• adjustment of course scheduling: times of day, block scheduling, short courses, frequency and number of sections, open entry/open exit
• analysis of demand for the program through use of labor market information which may result in curriculum modifications such as adding options for higher demand specialties
• whether course outlines have been updated in the last five years
• articulation of programs/courses: K-12, Tech Prep, etc., and a four-year sequencing of offerings to ensure student ability to transition to subsequent levels

VIABILITY REVIEW PROCESS

• The Academic Senate shall establish a special Viability Review Committee
  1. The review committee exists until it files its recommendations
  2. Membership shall include representatives from senate, faculty, AFT, curriculum chair, ASO, academic affairs, discipline representative and may include a community member is possible
  3. Committee is established when triggered in the manner described under initiation of viability review
  4. Committee will meet and select a chair and vice-chair

• Procedures and criteria for information gathering may include the following
  1. Collect data listed under qualitative and quantitative data
  2. Collect position papers from faculty and students
  3. Interview faculty and students
  4. Consult outside experts
  5. Conduct surveys
  6. Hold focus groups
  7. Consult with special accreditation agencies or other agencies offering certification

• Processes for conducting the review
  1. The committee shall report its finding within 90 days of being formed to the Academic Senate.
  2. The committee shall hold at least one public open forum.

• Possible outcomes of a viability review may include, but are not limited to, recommendations on the following:
  1. Program modification;
  2. Program improvement;
  3. Departmental reorganization;
  4. Program initiation;
  5. Program discontinuance.
In making a recommendation for program discontinuance, a viability review must consider the following:

1. The effects on students and student success if the program is discontinued;
2. Provisions that can and should be made for students in progress to complete their training;
3. The impact that discontinuance of the program will have on the comprehensiveness and balance of offerings across the college curriculum and within the district;
4. How the program’s discontinuance would impact the educational and budget-planning process used at the institution;
5. How the program’s discontinuance affects the region;
6. The effects of the program’s discontinuance on transfer to four-year colleges and universities;
7. The effects of the program’s discontinuance on local business and industries;
8. The effects of the program’s discontinuance on faculty and staff. The report shall include specific provisions for faculty and staff reassignment or retraining;
9. Discontinuance recommendation should only be done after a serious attempt has been made to improve the program effectiveness and efficiency and when it is clear those future efforts at remediation is not warranted.

The College President and College Academic Senate President shall make program discontinuance recommendations to the Board of Trustees for approval. The recommendation shall include a description of the viability review process and the reasons for the recommendation.

Approved By:

Doris Pichon Givens
College President

Eloise Crippens
Academic Senate President