

MEMORANDUM

TO: Committee on Strategic Planning and Priorities (CSPP)

FROM: Steering Committee

RE: Review of policies on Program Closure and on Principles of Prioritization for Program Closure

DATE: November 15, 2017

Background:

According to TCNJ policy (the Policy Framework), all campus policies should be reviewed every five years. The Program Closure Policy has not been reviewed since 2006, and the Principles of Prioritization for Program Closure have not been reviewed since 2010.

Charge:

Steering asks CSPP to review these policies to ensure that they are consistent with current practice and to make any other changes to the policies that CSPP deems appropriate. CSPP should bear in mind that the current program closure policy includes guidelines designed to undo the process for establishing academic programs at the college. Accordingly, if significant changes are made to the Program Closure Policy, these changes may also necessitate changes to one or more of the following policies: Degree Program Approval Process, Minors Program Approval Process, Graduate Certificate Programs, Undergraduate Certificate Programs, or Program and Curricular Change.

At Step 2, in considering the need for changes to the Program Closure Policy, CSPP should consult extensively with CAP regarding the portions of the policy which deal with Academic Programs. CSPP should also gather preliminary testimony from all members of the cabinet with regards to both policies.

If CSPP finds that no significant changes to these policies are required and makes changes solely to bring the policies in line with current practice, no additional testimony is required.

Testimony Tier: Tier I, provided no significant changes to the policies are required. If CSPP determines that changes are needed, CSPP may determine the level of testimony required or may request guidance from Steering.

Timeline:

CSPP should review and update these policies by the end of the Spring 2018 semester.

TCNJ Governance Processes

Step 1 – Steering issues a charge

Step 2 - Governance prepares a Preliminary Recommendation

Once the appropriate standing committee or council has received the charge, it should start by collecting data needed to make a preliminary recommendation. It should receive input from affected individuals and all relevant stakeholder groups prior to making a preliminary recommendation. For issues that have broad implications or that affect a large number of individuals, initial testimony should be solicited from the campus community at large. For some issues, sufficient initial testimony may come from input through committee membership or solicitation from targeted constituent groups.

When, in the best judgment of the committee, adequate clarity of the principles contributing to the problem are known, a preliminary recommendation should be drafted and disseminated to the campus community.

Step 3 – The Relevant Stakeholders provide Testimony

Once a preliminary recommendation has been completed, the standing committee or council should seek testimony from the campus community. The testimony should be gathered in accordance with the Testimony Tier (see page 24) assigned to the issue by Steering.

For issues that require public testimony from the campus community, the chair of the standing committee or council should approach the president of the appropriate representative bodies to schedule the next available time slot at a meeting of that body.

Testimony should be gathered in a way that allows stakeholders to weigh in fully on the issue. Members of the standing committee or council that wrote the preliminary recommendation should be present to hear and record the testimony.

Step 4 – Governance prepares a Final Recommendation

Once the standing committee or council has received appropriate testimony, it should revise the preliminary recommendation into a final recommendation. Once the final recommendation is complete, the standing committee or council should use sound judgment to determine whether or not more public testimony is required. If, in its feedback to the original preliminary recommendation, a stakeholder representative body requests to review an issue again, the committee or council is bound to bring it back to that body. If a full calendar year has passed since the formal announcement of the preliminary recommendation, the committee must resubmit a preliminary recommendation to the campus community.

When the committee or council has completed the final recommendation, it should forward it to the Steering Committee. The final recommendation should be accompanied by a cover memo that summarizes the initial charge, how testimony was gathered and the nature of that testimony, and how the committee responded to that testimony, including a description of how the preliminary recommendation evolved as a result of testimony.

Step 5 – Steering considers the Final Recommendation

Step 6 – The Provost and/or President and Board consider the Final Recommendation

Step 7 – Steering notifies the Campus Community

Testimony Tier I – The issue requires minimal testimony from the campus community. The assigned council or committee should consult with relevant stakeholders before preparing the final recommendation, but there is no need for surveys or open fora.

For a complete description of all steps and of the other testimony tiers, see Governance Structures and Processes, 2017 Revision, pages 21 – 24.



The College of New Jersey

Section:	II.3.34
Title:	Principles of Prioritization for Program Closure
Effective Date:	September 2010
Approved By:	Provost
Responsible Unit:	Academic Affairs (609-771-3080, academic@tcnj.edu)
History:	Approved by CPP May 12, 2010
Related Documents:	

I. INTRODUCTION

This policy details the principles of prioritization for program closure.

II. DEFINITIONS

N/A

III. POLICY

The Governance Structure and Processes Policy approved by the Board of Trustees (2005) states that the administration is “primarily responsible” for the development of institutional priorities. The same document also indicates that the Committee on Planning and Priorities has the responsibility to periodically “examine internal and external challenges and opportunities and define strategies for achieving the College’s mission.” In a speech on March 2, 2010, President Gitenstein requested that the Committee on Planning and Priorities (CPP) provide input on principles of budgetary prioritization for program closure.

The College faces an external challenge caused by declining state funding. This is not a new challenge. In 2005, CPP developed “Criteria for the Closure of Academic Programs, Academic Centers and Non-Academic Programs” (www.tcnj.edu/~academic/policy/programclosure.html). This document defines both Academic and Non-Academic Programs, and describes a rigorous deliberative procedure for making such decisions. The current CPP endorses the procedures and criteria established in this document and does not recommend any amendments or changes to these policies at the present time.

CPP has also set forth another document, “Budget Decision-Making Principles and Process” (2005, last updated April 9, 2008), which articulated principles to guide decision-making concerning the selection of academic and non-academic programs for possible closure. This document stated the following principles, listed in order of importance, which should guide such decisions:

- Preserve the health, safety and security of our students, faculty, staff, and visitors.
- Preserve the integrity and excellence of the educational programs and services through which the College realizes its mission.
- Preserve the institutional integrity of the College, including our obligations to staff, faculty, and students (e.g., scholarships).

In implementing these principles, decisions will also be guided by the institutional strategic initiatives, in particular, the need to preserve and enhance the College’s long-term financial well-being.

CPP understands its present charge from President Gitenstein to provide additional input on how budget managers should interpret and apply these principles in the current institutional context, and specifically how they should interpret the phrase “preserve the integrity and excellence of the educational programs and services through which the College realizes its mission.” After due consideration, CPP proposes the following additional points addressing how these principles are to be interpreted and implemented in identifying programs and services for possible closure. The numbering of the points is only for ease of comprehension and does not indicate an order of priority or importance.

First, in using the term “program closure,” CPP is employing the term “program” in the broad sense of any set of structured activities, and not only existing academic, administrative or support units. An academic department may offer several programs, e.g., a major degree program, one or more minors, research labs, and support for student groups. Administrative units may provide several distinct sorts of services, class audits, course registration, and so forth, each of which can be considered to be a program. Support includes tutoring and some types of advising. So when we articulate criteria for “program closure,” closure should normally be understood as restructuring or eliminating particular sets of activities or services carried out by different units, not eliminating those units as a whole, although this may be the result in some cases where the principles are applied.

Second, while CPP created somewhat different criteria for the closure of academic programs, academic centers and non-academic programs, it did not intend to rank one of these kinds of programs over others as more likely to be selected for closure. Indeed, in CPP’s view, the relationship between academic and non-academic programs is complementary. Some non-academic programs provide services that are essential to maintaining the excellence and integrity of the learning environment and without which academic units could not function, and as such should be regarded as essential to the ability of the College to realize its mission.

Third, the degree to which a particular program or service helps the College to realize its mission and core values should be the primary means of assessing the value of different academic and non-academic programs. In times of financial challenge, TCNJ's primary goal should be to maintain its excellence as a highly competitive, primarily undergraduate, residential college dedicated to the transformative power of education. Moreover, the College's commitment to offering students an integrated educational experience encompassing both academic rigor and a rich student life is crucial to the character of a TCNJ education. Each program, service or activity should then be evaluated as to how well it contributes towards achieving these primary goals.

Academically, the College's goals are chiefly attained by exceptional teacher-scholars who engage students in intensive learning experiences consisting of excellent classes that are supplemented by pedagogical practices including but not limited to small seminars, disciplinarily appropriate research and faculty-student collaborative activity, community engaged learning with structured reflection, a global focus including study abroad, interdisciplinary opportunities, and self-designed majors. A faculty-student ratio appropriate to support these activities is necessary.

Beyond the classroom, talented staff educators and practitioners offer a broad range of programs, services, and facilities that are fundamental to fostering the holistic development of students as engaged learners, responsible citizens, and leaders. This expanded curriculum seeks to provide diverse and enriching living-learning environments and experiences, as well as essential academic support services; to promote student health and wellness; to support career and personal goal achievement; and to foster a strong sense of community. A staffing level appropriate to support these activities is necessary. The College values diversity in its cultural, social, and intellectual life and should continue to enhance the academic and social integration of the overall student experience.

Fourth, in considering the mission-driven characteristics of programs and activities, CPP strongly recommends that the quality of all programs and services considered for possible program closure be evaluated by evidence-based and objective measures, where possible. Given the diversity of programs and services, reliable data that make it possible to do comparisons across programs may not always be available. Nonetheless, decisions about which programs and services to select for possible closure should take evidence-based measures of performance and excellence into account where these are available. Relevant and consistent performance indicators and other appropriate assessments should be utilized, such as the results of formal program reviews, accreditation reports, evidence of excellence in achieving or exceeding program goals, impact on students and alumni, as well as the program's external reputation. Additionally, the cumulative impact of past cuts should be considered. The faculty and/or staff connected to programs identified for possible closure should be appropriately involved in conducting such assessments. Such measures should be used according to the process defined in "Criteria for the Closure of Academic Programs, Academic Centers and Non-Academic Programs (2005)."

Fifth, because the process of closing a program or discontinuing a service is itself arduous and time-consuming, CPP wishes to emphasize that in its 2008 Budget Priorities document it recommended that “in implementing these principles, decisions will also be guided by the institutional strategic initiatives, in particular, the need to preserve and enhance the College’s long-term financial well-being.” In light of the current budgetary crisis produced by already announced cuts in state funding, as well as the possibility of further reductions in state funding during the next several years, CPP recommends that, in considering programs for possible closure, budget managers look to programs whose reduction or termination will yield net cost savings in a timely manner, as well as significant and sustainable cost savings. Other things being equal, the potential for timely and efficient program closure that will yield significant cost savings should be a pragmatic criterion for prioritizing programs for possible closure.

Sixth, maintaining the public mission of the College should also be a significant consideration. As a public institution, The College has a responsibility to offer an outstanding educational experience to all students, including state citizens of low and moderate income. TCNJ should protect programs that foster students’ intellectual and leadership development and prepare students for public service. However, this should not be understood to mean that every program that meets a public need must be preserved in the context of declining state support.

Seventh, in the near run, prioritization of programs will take place in the absence of a traditional strategic plan, though in the presence of significant strategic planning that includes campus-wide strategic initiatives. Looking to the future, CPP is determined to embrace its role in “promoting the TCNJ mission and core values as the primary guide in campus planning, decision-making, and resource allocation” (“Renewing CPP’s Role in Strategic Planning,” spring, 2010). CPP is committed to reengagement in the strategic planning process so that, as the College moves ahead in a time of likely ongoing reductions of state support, future budgetary planning takes place in the context of a strategic plan that enjoys broad campus support. Having an institutional strategic plan will allow for future budget prioritization choices to be made more strategically rather than opportunistically.

In these financially challenging times, the administration faces a difficult process of budget balancing. CPP recognizes this difficulty and advises that the primary criterion guiding choices should be an assessment of the degree to which a program or activity supports TCNJ’s Mission and Core Values, and does so in a manner that is demonstrably excellent.

IV. RELATED DOCUMENTS

N/A

V. HISTORY

Approved by CPP May 12, 2010



The College of New Jersey

Section:	II.1.33
Title:	Program closure - procedure
Effective Date:	June 2006
Approved By:	Board of Trustees
Responsible Unit:	Academic Affairs (academic@tcnj.edu , 609-771-3080)
History:	Approved by Board of Trustees: December, 2005; Recommended by Committee on Planning and Priorities and Committee on Academic Programs
Related Documents:	

I. INTRODUCTION

This policy includes the criteria for the Closure of Academic Programs, Academic Centers and Non-Academic Programs.

II. DEFINITIONS

N/A

III. POLICY

Because of the potentially serious impact of closing an academic program, academic center or a nonacademic program on employees of The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) as well as on students, the decision to take any such actions must be done in a deliberate manner. This document is intended to insure that all critical factors are considered when the process of closing a program is initiated. Librarians are considered to be faculty in this document.

A. Academic Programs

For the purpose of this document, academic programs are defined as majors, minors, course sets, interdisciplinary or disciplinary concentrations, certificate programs or college services whose expressed primary function is to deliver instruction or directly enhance or mentor student academic growth. The latter

would include library services aimed at student learning and specific academic enhancement programs such as EOF or the Honors program.

1. Closure Criteria: The following should be taken into consideration before initiating the process of closing an academic program:
 - a. Level of conformity with the mission, goals and character of the college.
 - b. Level of demand for services.
 - c. Degree to which services are being provided as efficiently as possible.
 - d. Level of ability to attract qualified personnel to staff the program.
 - e. Changes in external accreditation or credentialing requirements.
 - f. Impact of closure on tenured faculty and long-time employees.
 - g. Ramifications for external constituents (alumni, state decision-makers, etc.) of program closure.
 - h. Impact of closure on the stature of the college.

2. Guidelines for Academic Program Discontinuation: The process for academic program discontinuation should roughly parallel that which was followed for approval. To this end:
 - a. Those programs that were approved at the department or program level would be dissolved at that level. However, the closure should be communicated and justified to the campus community.
 - b. Those programs that needed initial dean's and/or school-wide approval should be discontinued with dean's or school-wide committee approval.
 - c. Those programs that initially needed central administration approval at the outset should only be discontinued with central administration approval.
 - d. For those programs that initially needed trustee approval at the outset, the procedure outlined in part I.C of this document should be followed.
 - e. In the event of a program closure the College must ensure that those students already enrolled in the program are able to complete the program in a timely fashion.
 - f. Before making an official recommendation to discontinue a board approved program, the dean or provost will meet with that department as a whole to discuss recommendation. Prior to such a meeting, the dean will identify all faculty and American Federation of Teachers (AFT) professional staff who would be affected if the academic program is closed. Only after such a meeting is held will the program closure process begin.

3. Process for Discontinuing Board Approved Programs: In what follows, it is assumed that a dean initiates the process for closure. This process might also be initiated by the provost or president.

- a. The dean makes a recommendation to the department to discontinue a program. Department responds to the dean.
- b. The department's response will include a detailed plan for the future role of all faculty or other employees currently considered to be part of that department. In addition, the department notifies these employees of the possibility that the program might be closed. The Administration recognizes the critical importance of this for all faculty/AFT professional staff and the significance of insuring that they will have the opportunity to continue contributing to the mission of TCNJ after any formal action takes place.
- c. Any faculty member or professional staff member in such a situation will have the opportunity, in accordance with relevant collective bargaining agreements, either to move to another department or academic unit with a similar function to the one being phased out or to another available position at TCNJ for which they are qualified at the same level as their current position.
- d. The dean's recommendation for discontinuation and the response of the department is sent to the Committee on Academic Programs (CAP) for review and concurrence or non-concurrence. The dean will provide CAP with a summary of the factors leading to the recommendation to discontinue the program. The dean will be present at the CAP meeting when the final recommendation is discussed. The chair of the affected department and all members of the program being reviewed for discontinuation will be invited to CAP to provide information and answer questions about the recommendation.
- e. Once CAP has responded to the recommendation, the dean will make a final recommendation. This will be sent to the provost along with the response from CAP and the departmental response.
- f. The provost will review the dean's recommendation along with the departmental response and the response from CAP. The provost then makes a recommendation to the president.
- g. Should the dean and provost recommend the discontinuation of any program, the president will review this recommendation. If the president concurs, s/he will inform the Board of Trustees of his/her intention to recommend that the program be discontinued.
- h. The provost identifies those campus constituents, such as records and registration, admissions, etc., who need to be informed in the event of program closure.
- i. Within a specified period of time, the president makes a recommendation to discontinue the program to the Board of Trustees for action. Since decisions to discontinue any program may involve personnel evaluations, the administration has a responsibility to maintain confidentiality of those aspects of its discussions.
- j. The Board of Trustees acts on the recommendation to discontinue.
- k. Subsequent to Board action, the NJ Commission on Higher Education is notified of the program discontinuation action.

1. The provost informs those campus constituents identified in step eight.

B. Academic Centers

For the purpose of this document, centers are defined as academic entities that may enhance the quality of the TCNJ educational experience through research or service, but that are not central to the delivery of the graduate or undergraduate programs of study. Examples of this would be research centers, think tanks and clinic outreach centers.

1. Closure Criteria: The following should be taken into consideration before initiating the process of closing an academic center:
 - a. Degree to which the center conforms to the stated mission of the College.
 - b. Inability to staff a high-quality center with appropriate and interested faculty.
 - c. The degree to which the reputation of the work done by the center affects (either positively or negatively) the stature of the College among its various constituencies.
 - d. The degree to which an appropriate level of external funding is maintained.
 - e. The college's responsibility to external funding sources.
2. Guidelines for Academic Center Discontinuation: As for academic programs, the process for academic center discontinuation should roughly parallel that which was followed for approval. For those centers that needed trustee or central administration approval at the outset, the following procedure should be followed.
3. Process for Discontinuing Board Approved Academic Centers: In what follows, it is assumed that initiation of the closure process begins at the dean's level. This process might also be initiated by the provost or president.
 - a. The dean meets with the faculty/staff involved in the center to discuss the intention of initiating the closure process. (In multi-school centers, all deans involved will meet with the faculty.) Prior to such a meeting, the dean will identify all employees who will be affected if the center is closed. The dean notifies those employees of that possibility.
 - b. The dean(s) recommends to the faculty/staff to close the center.
 - c. The faculty/staff respond to the dean.
 - d. The dean's recommendation for discontinuation is sent to the provost for review and concurrence or non-concurrence. The dean will provide the provost with a summary of the factors leading to the recommendation to close the center.
 - e. Any faculty member or professional staff assigned to an academic center being closed will have the opportunity, in accordance with relevant collective bargaining agreements, to either move to another

department or academic unit with a similar function to the one being phased out or to another position at TCNJ for which they are qualified at the same level as their current position.

- f. Should the dean and provost recommend the discontinuation of any center, the president will review this recommendation. If the president concurs, s/he will inform the Board of Trustees of her/his intention to recommend that the center be discontinued.
- g. In the event of closure, the provost will assure that all parties involved work to assure an orderly and equitable dissolution of activities and center assets.
- h. The provost will assure that the appropriate campus constituents are informed of the closure.

C. Non-Academic Programs

For the purpose of this document, non-academic programs are defined as those which support the functions of the college but that are not involved directly in the delivery of instruction. They might include, but are not limited to, programs involved in student services such as financial services, card and parking services, safety, health and security, campus wellness, campus and community relations, campus planning and construction, etc.

1. Closure Criteria: The following should be taken into consideration before initiating the process of closing a non-academic program:
 - a. Level of conformity with the mission, goals and character of the college.
 - b. Level of demand for services.
 - c. Degree to which services are being provided as efficiently as possible.
 - d. Level of ability to attract qualified personnel to staff the program.\
 - e. Changes in external accreditation or credentialing requirements.
 - f. Impact of closure on tenured faculty and long-time employees.
 - g. Ramifications for external constituents (alumni, state decision-makers, etc.) of program closure.
 - h. Impact of closure on the stature of the college.
2. Guidelines for Non-Academic Program Discontinuation: As for academic programs, the process for non-academic program closure should roughly parallel that which was followed for approval. For those programs that needed trustee or central administration approval at the outset, the following procedure should be followed.
3. Policy for Nonacademic Program Closure
 - a. After preliminary discussion between individual(s) advocating the recommendation and the supervisor, an agreement is reached to move toward program closure. The supervisor of a specific administrative

area, prior to making an official recommendation to the appropriate executive staff member or cabinet member to discontinue a program will meet with those members of the department responsible for promoting/providing the services found within that program to discuss the supervisor's impending recommendation.

- b. The department will be given the opportunity to respond to the supervisor and may meet with the supervisor to discuss alternatives to program closure.
- c. The supervisor's recommendation for program closure is sent to the appropriate executive staff member or cabinet member, providing a summary of factors leading to the recommendation. An executive staff member or cabinet member could make the recommendation directly to the president.
- d. Upon review, the executive staff member or cabinet member will make a final recommendation to the president.
- e. Should the executive staff member/cabinet member recommend the discontinuation of any program, the president will review this recommendation, and if she/he concurs, will inform the Board of Trustees of her/his intention to recommend the program be discontinued. At the next scheduled Board meeting, the president makes a recommendation to discontinue the program. Since decisions to discontinue any program may involve personnel evaluations, the administration has a responsibility to maintain confidentiality of those aspects of its discussions.
- f. The Board of Trustees acts on the recommendation to discontinue as appropriate.
- g. Upon Board action, the executive staff member/cabinet member will submit formal notification of the reversal of funds for the budget under which the program falls to the Office of Budget and Finance.
- h. After a program has been closed or discontinued, any budget requests submitted as an appeal for an eliminated program must be submitted through supplement reallocations with a description and justification for the request submitted to Budget and Finance by the supervisor or executive staff member/cabinet member for that budget.

IV. RELATED DOCUMENTS

N/A

V. HISTORY

Approved by Board of Trustees: December, 2005

Recommended by Committee on Planning and Priorities and Committee on Academic Programs