

TCNJ GOVERNANCE MEMORANDUM

To: Committee on Strategic Planning and Priorities (CSPP)

From: Steering Committee

Date: September 20, 2023

Re: **Charge to Review: Program Closure Procedure Policy- 5-year cycle review**

Background: TCNJ strives to review policies every five years. The [Program Closure Procedure Policy](#) was last reviewed in 2018 and requires review. Steering asked CAP to review the policy last semester (March, 2023). Following its review, CAP returned the policy to Steering to reconsider the best route through governance due to the broad nature of this policy (i.e., it is inclusive of academic and non-academic programs).

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

As with all five-year reviews, CSPP may review the policy and decide that no updates are necessary; if this is the case, testimony will not be required. If CSPP finds that no significant changes to the policy are required and makes changes solely to bring the policies in line with current practice, no additional testimony is required.

If testimony is needed, the testimony tier and timeline are outlined below. In particular, at Step 2, in considering the need for changes to the Program Closure Procedure Policy, CSPP should consult extensively with CAP regarding the portions of the policy which deal with academic programs. CSPP should also gather testimony from all members of the cabinet with regard to the portions of the policy which deal with non-academic programs.

Testimony Tier: Tier I, provided no significant changes to the policies are required:

- 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.

If CSPP determines that substantive changes are needed and testimony is deemed necessary, then **Tier II:**

- The issue requires moderate testimony from the campus community.
- The assigned council or committee should consult with relevant stakeholder individuals and groups in developing a preliminary recommendation.

The completed preliminary recommendation should then be made available to the relevant stakeholder groups, and testimony should be solicited in the form of written feedback (through a survey and or e-mail).

Timeline: CSPP should make a Final Recommendation to Steering by **February 1, 2024**. If testimony is sought, in the submission of the final recommendation CSPP should note the stakeholder groups, number of persons responding, and summary of testimony collected.

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 below) 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 re-submit 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

For a complete description of all steps and of the testimony tiers, see [Governance Structures and Processes, 2019 Revision](#), pages 23–27.

Section:	II.1.33	
Title:	Program closure - procedure	
Effective Date:	July 10, 2018	
Approved By:	Board of Trustees	
Responsible Unit:	Academic Affairs (609) 771-3080; academic@tcnj.edu	
Related Documents:	N/A	
History:		
<u>Version</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Notes</u>
3.0	July 10, 2018	Revised
2.0	June, 2006	Revised
1.0	December, 2005	New Policy; initial release

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 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.

The following principles, listed in order of importance, 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).

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.

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 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.

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.

Step 1: Initial Program Closure Proposal

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. The dean makes a recommendation to the department to discontinue a program, including a rationale and pertinent statistics substantiating the need and for program closure.

Step 2: Review

The president, the provost, and CSPP review the initial proposal and consider whether program closure is consistent with the College's mission and strategic plan. The president and the provost make a preliminary recommendation, taking into account the recommendation of CSPP. Approval of the initial proposal for closure signals the dean to begin developing a fuller proposal

Step 3: Full Program Closure Proposal & Response

A) The dean develops a proposal that addresses all of the following:

- i. Level of conformity with the mission, goals and character of the college;
- ii. Level of demand for services;
- iii. Degree to which services are being provided as efficiently as possible;
- iv. Level of ability to attract qualified personnel to staff the program;
- v. Changes in external accreditation or credentialing requirements;
- vi. Impact of closure on tenured faculty and long-time employees;
- vii. Ramifications for external constituents (alumni, state decision-makers, etc.) of program closure; and
- viii. Impact of closure on the stature of the college.

B) The dean forwards the full proposal to the department to discontinue a program. Department responds to the dean.

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.

Step 4: College Governance

- A) The full proposal and departmental response are submitted to CAP for final concurrence or non-concurrence with the proposal. 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.
- B) 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.
- C) 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.
- D) 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.
- E) The provost identifies those campus constituents, such as records and registration, admissions, etc., who need to be informed in the event of program closure.
- F) 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.
- G) The Board of Trustees acts on the recommendation to discontinue.
- H) Subsequent to Board action, the NJ Commission on Higher Education is notified of the program discontinuation action.
- I) The provost informs those campus constituents identified in step eight.

B. 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.