

University of Wisconsin System
Academic Program Suspension: Alternative to
Program Closure and Associated Guidelines
November 2009

Background

In recent years UW institutions seeking to offer new academic programs have needed to reallocate existing resources or find alternative sources of funding. One means for reallocating funds is to close existing low-enrollment programs. This has prompted discussions with a system-wide committee to consider the decision-making process and the factors considered prior to closing a program. As part of these discussions, academic leaders at the institutions expressed concerns about the finality of program closures. As a result, the UW System has developed an option to academic program closure which gives the institutions an alternative to closing a program. This alternative will be referred to as “Program Suspension.” An institution may choose to close a program without taking this step.

Definition

“Program Suspension” will allow an institution to temporarily remove an academic program from the system-wide array and, if appropriate, eventually reinstate the program when demand and resources are again present. While in suspension, the program in question will not be included in the UW System Program array or listed in MajorMania. However, continuing students will count as a part of institutional degree productivity. Information regarding degrees programs in this category will be requested and included in future Academic Program Planning Annual Reports.

Process & Criteria

1. The provost’s office should submit a written request for approval of Program Suspension to the Associate Vice President of Academic and Faculty Programs, UW System.
2. The request must be made well in advance or at least 12 weeks of the intended date of suspending admission.
3. The written request should briefly address the following factors:
 - the rationale for the program suspension;
 - the potential impact of suspension on students (e.g. where will students interested in the major go? Are there other campuses offering similar programs, etc.);
 - the potential impact on faculty and academic staff;
 - consultation with governance, as appropriately determined by campus by-laws;
 - the transition period (e.g. what steps will be taken to lessen the impact on students, faculty and academic staff during the transition? Allotted time for those finishing the major);
4. The Associate Vice President of Academic and Faculty Programs will notify the institution if the suspension is approved.

5. Officially suspended programs can be reinstated at any time during a period of seven years with a written notification to the Associate Vice President of Academic and Faculty Programs.
6. Programs that remain suspended for more than seven years will require approval by the Associate Vice President of Academic and Faculty Programs for reinstatement. The written request should address the following:
 - Resources available to support faculty, staff, labs, equipment etc.;
 - Projected enrollments and student demand;
 - Rationale for reinstatement.

Programs suspended for a period of twelve years will be permanently closed and need to go through the full Authorization process as would any other new program.