Revision of 1997 Guidelines

In Fall 2009, the Board Academic Affairs Standing Committee was charged to “review and make recommendations for full Board consideration regarding the Board’s ‘program review’ process, as it relates to the state universities.” To fulfill this charge, Board staff, in consultation with the Council of Chief Academic Officers, reviewed the procedures approved September 18, 1997. This analysis led to the conclusion that the 1997 guidelines are fundamentally sound and contain all the major elements required for administering a reliable program review process. The principal areas for improvement are the implementation of those elements and the method of reporting to the Board.

To improve implementation and reporting, Board staff consulted with various individuals and groups. Based on these activities, staff have revised and updated the original 1997 document, deleting portions not directly relevant to the process. The attached document results from that process.

Academic Program Review in the Kansas Regent System

I. Introduction

Program review is inextricably bound to academic quality and the allocation of resources within the public universities governed by the Kansas Board of Regents. Its primary goal is to ensure program quality by: (1) enabling individual universities to align academic programs with their institutional missions and priorities; (2) fostering improvement in curriculum and instruction; and (3) effectively coordinating the use of faculty time and talent. Because of its focus on mission development and refinement, program review is also linked to future actions to improve faculty salaries and revenue streams for technology enhancements.

The Kansas Board of Regents’ program review policy reads as follows:

(1) In cooperation with the universities, the Board will maintain a program review cycle and a review process that will allow the universities to demonstrate that they are delivering quality programs consistent with their mission.(12-19-86; 6-23-88; 9-18-97)

(2) The review of degree programs shall encompass all levels of academic degrees from associate to doctoral. Program reviews are institutionally based and follow the departmental or unit structure of the institution. “Program” means an academic plan that is approved by
the appropriate governing board and leads to an award, for example, a degree or a career/technical certificate. (12-17-82; 1-20-84; 6-23-88; 9-18-97; 6-23-05)

*Policy and Procedures Manual, Chapter II, Section D.7.b.*

In cooperation with the Council of Chief Academic Officers and the Council of Presidents, the Board approved guidelines for implementing this policy on September 18, 1997. In Fall, 2009, the Board Academic Affairs Standing Committee (BAASC) was charged by the full Board to “review and make recommendations for full Board consideration regarding the board’s ‘program review’ process, as it relates to the state universities.” Board staff worked with campus representatives, including the Chief Academic Officers and Presidents, to review the existing guidelines. In addition, staff examined program review procedures in several other states and systems.

The key elements to the Program Review Report are as follows:

1. Institutions review programs according to the eight-year cycle developed in consultation with Board staff.

2. The data used in the Program Review Minima Table calculations is collected in the Kansas Higher Education Data System (KHEDS) data base. The Program Inventory system is the starting point for this collection. Data is also extracted for the Kansas Postsecondary Database (KSPSD) unit record student submission. Finally institutions submit aggregate department information. All information is combined by KBOR staff to produce the final institutional minima tables.

3. Board staff analyzes data and consults with Chief Academic Officers of each institution regarding possible areas of concern.

4. Staff prepares a report for the Board that includes summaries of program reviews and the results of its analysis of the Minima Tables.

In addition to the core program review report, the following two reports, both integrally related to the core report, are provided independently to the Board:

1. Academic Advising Report

2. Accreditation Report

After reviewing the 1997 guidelines, staff concluded that they are fundamentally sound and contain all the major elements required for administering a reliable program review process. The principal areas that required improvement were the implementation of those elements and the method of reporting to the Board.

**II. Purposes and Goals for Academic Program Review.**
The Board and Regents universities conceive program review as integral to the academic planning process that occurs at both the institutional and system levels. Therefore, program review contains both institutional and system goals within a set of overarching purposes. Stated generally, program review is intended to improve the quality of the academic programs offered by the Regents universities. Program review also provides an important opportunity for faculty to reflect on educational practices and review the role of their programs in the context of the totality of programs offered by the Regents universities. This is accomplished by ensuring:

1. the highest possible level of academic program quality;

2. an appropriate differentiation of institutional missions and roles within the Regents system;

3. optimal effectiveness in the use of State and student resources; and

4. maximum responsiveness to the intellectual, cultural and workforce needs of the state.

Although the overarching purposes remain the same, the goals and operation of program review vary at the campus and system levels. A differentiation of goals implies that the campuses and the system have different responsibilities in the program review process.

Goals for program review at the campus level include but are not limited to:

1. strengthening the quality and accessibility of academic programs by assessing existing program strengths and concerns;

2. augmenting institutional self-management by identifying and articulating academic program needs and campus priorities; and

3. identifying needs to reorganize academic programs, including modification, merger and discontinuance.

The Regents universities may specify or add to these campus goals for program review.

At the system level, the primary goals for program review include:

1. ensuring that program quality and priorities are consistent with institutional missions and roles;

2. refining the scope of program offerings to optimize student access and use of resources; and

3. identifying viable opportunities for minimizing unjustifiable program duplication and supporting appropriate institutional cooperation.
III. The Program Review Process

Program Review Cycle

Each Regents university is charged with the review of its academic programs and the implementation of its own process for program review. This will include reporting within a system-wide framework of expectations for the review and a shared timeline for its various phases. Each Regents university is responsible for the design and implementation of its own program review process and schedule within the context of the eight-year cycle.

The current eight year cycle is 2007 – 2014.

Program Review Process and Criteria

Although program review is ultimately focused on discrete academic programs, the larger context of institutional planning, management and budgeting of the university should be enhanced by the process. Thus, the development and implementation of a program review process should integrate the system-wide objectives for program review with the institutional environment for planning, management and budgeting. Each university will use the reviews to establish priorities for its academic programs and allocate resources among programs.

Each program will be examined by the university and adapt the following criteria:

1. centrality of the program to fulfilling the mission and role of the institution;
2. the quality of the program as assessed by the strengths, productivity and qualifications of the faculty;
3. the quality of the program as assessed by its curriculum and impact on students;
4. demonstrated student need and employer demand for the program;
5. the service the program provides to the discipline, the university, and beyond; and
6. the program’s cost-effectiveness.

Additional criteria which are consistent with institutional mission may be also be added. These criteria have relevance for all degree programs, regardless of discipline or degree level. However, the conceptualization, measurement, and application of these criteria in the review of academic programs will vary according to a variety of factors, including institutional mission and degree level. The Board is particularly concerned that the criteria are interpreted and applied appropriately to programs at different degree levels.

Institutional reviews may include student learning assessment data, evaluations, recommendations from accreditation reports, and various institutional data, e.g., data on student
post-collegiate experiences, data gathered from the core and institution-specific performance indicators, and/or information in national or disciplinary rankings of program quality. Specific and/or additional information that relate to these criteria and that are meaningful and appropriate for the institution can be developed by each Regents university.

The universities may consider and implement separate review processes for graduate and undergraduate education. Examples of appropriate indicators for graduate programs might include guidelines brought forth by the National Research Council and Council on Graduate Schools.

Recognizing that the need for program review may vary by program, the Board and universities believe that the programs that demonstrate a greater need for review should be given priority in the review process. In addition, campuses may develop multistage review processes that permit more intense reviews of certain programs.