

## **PROGRAM VIABILITY REVIEW PROCESS**

**Adopted by the LACC Academic Senate  
Spring 1997**

### **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, the goals outlined in 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 invoked only 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 Teams' 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. State Law: Title 5 55130, 51022, and Ed. Code 78016 require a process for program discontinuance;
4. The principles of shared governance: The role of the Academic Senate, as specified in AB 1725, 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.

### **Outcomes**

Viability Review Committees may make recommendations that include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The institution or adoption of a new program/ discipline/ department.
2. A plan of action to enhance the performance of an existing program/ discipline/ department.
3. The restructuring of an existing program/ discipline/department.
4. The discontinuance of an existing program/ discipline/ department.

### **Establishing a Special Viability Review Committee**

The process of Program Viability Review is carried out by a special study committee organized by the Educational Planning Committee. The process may be initiated by a request or motion on the part of the following:

1. The College President
2. The Vice President of Academic Affairs
3. The Educational Planning Committee (as the result of Educational Master Planning or Program Review).
4. The Academic Senate

The Review Committee exists until it files its recommendations. Membership on the Review Committee should include:

1. 1 Senate appointment
2. 2 EPC members
3. 2 Department Chair Council representatives
4. The Curriculum Chair or designee
5. 1 AFT representative
6. 1 ASO representative
7. The Vice President of Academic Affairs
8. 1 Academic Dean
9. At most, two additional members from other institutions

Although the Committee will solicit information from members of departments or disciplines under review, the Review Committee itself shall not include representatives from departments or disciplines directly affected by the review process.

### **Information Gathering**

Decisions made in the course of the Program Viability Process must be based on a broad and thoroughgoing investigation of all factors relating to the benefits of a program for the students and surrounding community served by LACC. They must, therefore, take into consideration information that goes far beyond simple measure of current student demand or WSCH figures. At a minimum, the following general type of information should be gathered and weighed in the process of formulation the Review Committee's recommendation:

1. Relation of the program to the College Mission
2. Relation of the program to the Educational Master Plan
3. Recent Program Review Recommendations
4. Measures of student demand
5. Measures of labor-market demand
6. Measures of demand in service area
7. Current program effectiveness
8. Outside expert opinion
9. Projected impact on overall educational program, students, faculty, college budget, community.

### **Process**

Once a Special Review Committee has been formed, it will need to elect a chair and to establish a specific plan for the study it is about to undertake. This plan should include data gathering, solicitation of position papers from faculty, staff and students involved, interviews with faculty in the affected area and in related instructional areas, interviews with students and administrators, consultations with outside experts and faculty and/or administrators from other institutions, administration of surveys, and/or the use of focus groups. At least one well-publicized open forum should be held to allow any interested member of the campus community or of the College's service area the opportunity to voice opinions and express concerns. In addition, the committee will consult when necessary, with District, regional, and State agencies and institutions overseeing specific type of programs (e.g., specific vocational programs, etc.). Within 90 days of the committee's formation, it will produce a "Program Viability Report" specifying the outcome of its deliberations and making specific recommendations for action, complete with timelines. This Viability Report must include 1) a summary of the process followed by the committee, 2) a review of all data consulted, and 3) a detailed assessment of the recommendations' impact on the College's overall program. Discontinuance should be recommended only after a serious attempt has been made to improve program effectiveness and efficiency, unless it is clear that future efforts at remediation are not warranted. When necessary in cases of program discontinuance, specific provisions must be spelled out for faculty/staff reassignment or retraining. Viability Review Committee recommendations will be forwarded to the Academic Senate for approval. The Senate's final decision will be taken to the College President in consultation.