

Reference Number: S14-236

Senate Approval Date: Tuesday, April 08, 2014

ACADEMIC SENATE OF

SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

[# S14-236/ Introduced by: EPC]

[Introduced: April 8, 2014]

[First reading]

Guidelines for the Seventh Cycle of Academic Program Review

Previous (Sixth) Cycle Guidelines Reference Number: F06-236

I. Introduction

The purpose of the academic program review process at San Francisco State is to assure University degree program[s]: of the highest quality in the context of the overall curriculum. The review process provides an opportunity for faculty and administrators to clarify the intellectual vision, range, coherence, and currency of each program, examine the effectiveness of its organizational structure, articulate the learning outcomes it inculcates, bring issues needing attention to the University, and assess the extent to which learning outcomes are being achieved. The review process highlights efforts by instructional units to ensure and improve program quality, demonstrate how the degree program and curriculum has been revised in response to evolving circumstances and changes in the field, discuss faculty and student resources, and indicate other resources needed to accomplish program goals. The review affords a clear and comprehensive perspective on the program's standing within its discipline, its role in its own College and in the University as a whole, and its consonance with SFSU's mission, CSU plans, and State requirements. Outcomes of each program review are among the factors considered by administrators in decisions concerning the allocation of resources.

A. The Seventh Cycle of Program Review

Over the past thirty-eight years, the University has engaged in six cycles of academic program review, each with its distinctive characteristics. In 2013, the Senior College and University Commission of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) revised its Handbook of Accreditation. The revisions continue two trends initiated in the 2001 Handbook — flexible, need-based program review frequency and focus on degree program outcomes. Campus development of on-going department assessments and student learning outcomes put us in excellent position to follow the WASC trends required for program review. The Seventh Cycle review process will be informed by extant indicators and criteria intended to determine the sustainability and quality of programs. These indicators and criteria are best construed as normative expectations originating from the degree program unit, college, and University, rather than rigidly prescriptive rules imposed from outside the University. All degree granting programs, whether nationally accredited or not, will need to demonstrate the extent to which University- and program-established standards are being met.

B. A Context of Decreased State Support and Decaying Infrastructure

The Seventh Cycle of review initiates at a time of serious fiscal crisis. Direct state funding for CSU students has declined more than a third since the beginning of the Sixth Cycle[2]. Concomitant with this decline has been an even more serious reduction in monies for the maintenance of facilities and other infrastructure. WASC has repeatedly warned of the danger posed by deteriorating facilities[3]. While the WASC report appropriately lauds SF State for its ability to weather the fiscal crises of the past five years, it also notes that these "fiscal challenges in the State of California have contributed to a deferred maintenance backlog at SF State and other CSU campuses." [4] Seventh Cycle reviews must take particular care to appraise the state of facilities and realistically assess plans for improvements. Appropriate support for graduate programs was a major theme of the Sixth Cycle, and it should likewise be a focus of departments in the Seventh Cycle. Graduate and undergraduate degree programs should describe the research opportunities and creative activities available to their students and assess what support is necessary to maintain these activities as well as their decision-making processes determining the relative share of resources going to undergraduate and graduate programs. It is important for all degree programs to contextualize resource allocation decisions within the context of unit goals with regard to degrees (graduate and/or undergraduate), minors and certificates, contributions to general education, and how they formally decide on their priorities and resource allocations for different degree programs. Quality degree programs at both undergraduate and graduate levels involve students actively in the research, creative work, and other professional development activities of their respective fields and therefore impose significant demands on faculty and departments.

Such involvement is imperative for graduate programs. At the undergraduate level, student experiences with research and creative projects distinguish a San Francisco State degree from those of our peer institutions; this aspect of our curriculum is a cornerstone of our Master Plan commitment to "be the nation's preeminent public urban university."^[5]

C. Campus Standards for Graduate and Undergraduate Programs

During implementation of the Sixth Cycle, SFSU developed general standards for graduate degree programs. These were adopted into the Sixth Cycle handbook. These standards should standards for undergraduate degree programs will be developed and included in the Seventh Cycle Handbook, and incorporated into reviews of programs. All reviews will draw on, but not be limited to, annual/biennial programmatic assessments of cumulative student learning that are already in place for all undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Such assessment, identified as a requirement by the campus, the CSU system, and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), includes: the establishment of programmatic learning objectives, the determination of where in the curriculum those objectives, practices, and experiences are being implemented, the development and use of assessment strategies to measure their attainment, and the utilization of findings from the assessment endeavor to structure curricular improvement and enhance student learning. In addition, Academic Senate policies setting out baccalaureate degree practices require that during the Seventh Cycle, APRC should also review the implementation of high impact educational practices, the development of culminating experiences to the undergraduate degree,

II. Components of Program Review

Within the context described above, academic program review in the Seventh Cycle will include the following four components:

- Instructional Unit Self-Study and Recommendations
- External Review and Recommendation
- Program and Dean Response to External Review and Recommendations
- University Review and Decision Processes

A. Instructional Unit Self-Study and Recommendations

At the start of the Seventh Cycle, representatives from the degree granting units^[6] the College, Academic Planning, and the Academic Program Review Committed^[7] (APRC) will meet to discuss the (1) review procedures, (2) substantive content of the reviews, and (3) lines of communication for procedural or content questions. Those attending should indicate, if relevant, specific areas or issues needing to be addressed so that these may receive special attention in the review process. After the initial meeting, the administration will provide the academic unit with the most current available data pertinent to the self-study. The faculty of every instructional unit offering a degree program shall prepare a self-study that will serve as a basis for all subsequent levels of review and recommendations. In the case of nationally accredited programs, the periodic accreditation review may stand for the self-study if the substance of the accreditation review coincides with the requirements of the self-study. The unit should delineate and assess each degree program offered, following the latest guidelines in the Handbook for Academic Program Review. The unit's faculty should include student, alumni, and other stakeholder input in the preparation of the self-study. The self-study should describe the history of the program or programs under review since time of last review and identify current strategies for maintenance and improvement. In most cases, the history should be contextualized in the difficult budget situation of these years as well as the overall goals of the instructional unit, which may include contributions to General Education, commitment to minors, certificate programs, and so forth; strategies for the future should be tempered by realism with regard to resources. A useful self-study cannot shy away from self-criticism nor consider the issue of resources the sole source of problems or means of improvement, but neither can a good self-study ignore deficiencies in resources necessary for a quality degree. A useful self study should also include strategies for improvement beyond those that require financial resources; these could include collaborations with other departments or units at other universities, work with the community, work driven by existing faculty or by alumni and students. The self-study should be informed by unit planning, including the identification of a mission statement, an assessment of strengths and weaknesses, and the development of goals and objectives for the degree program.^[8] Unit heads should strive for widespread faculty participation in the development of the self-study, and ensure all unit faculty members are made aware of all findings and recommendations generated by the review process. The unit forwards its completed self-study to the College Dean for review and signature indicating that the document is ready for external review. The College Dean forwards the self-study to Academic Planning, which then schedules external review

B. Self-Study and Recommendations for General

Education

General Education (GE) will prepare a self-study and be reviewed as an instructional unit. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies will serve as "unit head" and "College Dean" for purposes of the review. As this is the initial inclusion of GE within the scope of program review, there must be flexibility in creating measures for GE performance. The self-study should be guided by the principles outlined above, and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, in consultation with Academic Planning, the Baccalaureate Requirements Committee, and Academic Program Review Committee, will modify measures as needed to appropriately address these principles. Faculty participation is important in the assessment of GE as it is within degree granting units; the Dean of Undergraduate Studies will strive for participation of faculty on GE committees as well as faculty teaching GE courses.

C. External Review and Recommendations

The purpose of the external review is to provide each instructional unit with a well-informed, independent analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of its curriculum, its complement of faculty, and its organizational structure as well as an evaluation of the relationship of all of these to the quality of its degree programs. The external review should evaluate program goals and the unit's success in achieving them, and suggest strategies for implementing recommendations for program improvements. Useful external review demands area expertise, experience with assessment, and knowledge of the larger campus context. Unit faculty members are in the best position to identify appropriate reviewers and should be the first source for suggestions of reviewers. After the instructional unit completes the self-study, faculty, through the chair in consultation with the dean, make recommendations of reviewers to Academic Planning. The list needs to include a brief description of each suggested reviewer as to why they would be a suitable reviewer along with relevant information on the professional background and experience of these individuals; this can take the form of a standard curriculum vitae. Academic Planning strives, within the constraints of scheduling, to select reviewers who are recommended, qualified, and available. Typically, the external review is conducted by a team of two experts, one from within and one from outside the CSU system. For units with graduate programs, at least one reviewer should be from a program that also offers a graduate degree in the relevant area. Departments and/or nominees will report any conflicts of interest to Academic Planning; conflicts do not necessarily make an external review candidate ineligible. A conflict of interest relationship includes all relationships with actual or perceived direct benefit such as employee, former employee, applicant for employment, paid consultant, award recipient or invited lecturer. Any contracted relationships involving a written agreement and/or compensation should be reported due to the potential impact on decision making. A conflict of interest could also occur due to personal or professional relationship with the department under review. Only conflicts arising from relationships or contracts active in the last five years are relevant as conflicts for the external review process. Academic Planning will receive documents supporting any conflict of interest concerns and forward these to the APRC for their recommendation to the Provost regarding any action. Procedures for the external reviewers' visit are detailed in the Handbook for the Seventh Cycle of Academic Program Review. In brief, reviewers receive a copy of the unit's self-study and supporting documents. They are scheduled to spend parts of two days on campus jointly interviewing students, faculty, staff, and administrators and to prepare a report of findings and recommendations. Reviewers are expected to produce a single report. The reviewers' report is sent to Academic Planning within a reasonable timeframe following the campus visit. Academic Planning forwards copies of the report to the unit and College dean.

D. Unit and Dean Response to External Review and Recommendations

The unit head will distribute the reviewers' report to all unit faculty members. The unit can inform the College dean and Academic Planning of any errors of fact in the report. The College dean will review the external reviewers' report.

E. University Review and Decision-Making

In order to provide a University-wide faculty perspective and to assist in University planning, the Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) will study each unit's complete program review file. APRC will also accept additional data and recommendations from the unit and/or dean at this time. If APRC has questions at this point, it can invite the unit and/or dean to a meeting.

The unit or dean may also request a meeting with APRC. In some cases, APRC or units under review may request the unit attend an APRC meeting to discuss the report for reasons of clarifying outstanding issues in the report. In other cases, APRC may request additional questions be answered by the unit under review.

Subsequent to any meetings, APRC, in conjunction with Academic Planning, will evaluate all recommendations and develop a Concluding Action Memorandum (CAM). The CAM will contain commendations, actions to be taken and suggestions for further actions. It begins with commendations on accomplishments by the unit and then specifies actions the unit and/or college will carry out for program improvement, together with timelines for implementation. It may require updates or progress reports on specific issues that may be in flux or otherwise not have sufficient information for

evaluation; these updates are part of the self-study process and must be completed. Further, APRC can offer suggestions of further actions which are not mandatory but which the unit may want to consider. The CAM will be kept on file in Academic Planning and the Academic Senate. It is in effect until the initiation of the next self-study for the unit under review. It is used at the beginning of the next review process to assess the degree to which actions taken effectively improved degree program quality. After development, the CAM should be distributed by Academic Planning to the Provost and the relevant dean and unit to be reviewed for errors of fact. A CAM meeting will be set with Academic Planning, Provost, dean and unit head plus the chair of APRC where the CAM is discussed and signed. Two years after a unit's review and the signing of the unit's CAM, the unit will submit an update on each action step and recommendation in their CAM to Academic Planning, who will pass it on to APRC for possible further action and inquiry. Further action could include questions to the unit or movement of the unit up or down in the program review queue. Subsequent inquiries by Academic Planning and APRC into the unit's progress in implementing action steps and recommendations may take place at their discretion, within reasonable amounts of time.

III. Review of Accredited Programs

For programs that are nationally accredited and undergo periodic accreditation review involving a self-study and a campus visit by an accrediting team, the accreditation review will substitute for academic program review with the following exceptions:

A. All accredited programs, at the time of completing their accreditation self-studies, shall also be required to submit brief documentation to APRC demonstrating performance in regard to the "Indicators and Criteria of Graduate Program Sustainability and Quality". The documentation submitted to APRC shall be supplementary to the main accreditation documents and should address only indicators and criteria not considered in those documents.^[9] If standards for undergraduate programs are adopted, units will also need to submit brief documentation to APRC demonstrating performance on those standards as well.

B. Following receipt of notification from the accrediting body that a program has been accredited or re-accredited, APRC will evaluate both the accrediting body's recommendations and the degree program's performance with regard to University quality and sustainability criteria. APRC's conclusions will be incorporated into a CAM that specifies any actions the program will need to undertake, including writing progress reports on any issues that are in flux or otherwise lack information sufficient for review. It may also offer suggestions of further actions which are not mandatory but which then unit may want to consider. No action required by the CAM should contradict the accreditation report unless unit head, dean, and APRC all agree with the CAM requirement. The CAM will be kept on file in Academic Planning and the Academic Senate, It will be in effect until the completion of the Seventh Cycle. It will be used at the beginning of the next review process to assess the degree to which actions taken effectively improved degree program quality.

C. Upon special request of the unit, dean, or Vice President for Academic Affairs, an accredited program shall undergo academic program review in addition to accreditation review. Such a request must specify the ways in which the accreditation review was inadequate for the purposes of program review. The self-study prepared for accreditation may be adapted or substituted, as appropriate, for the purpose of program review, and the campus visit by the accrediting team may be substituted for the external review provided it was not identified as deficient in the request.

IV. Program Review Schedule

Degree programs are to be reviewed on a needs basis. Degree programs will generally need to undertake a self-study six years after the conclusion of the previous study. APRC, in the CAM, can shorten or lengthen this time for a variety of reasons including thoroughness of the previous review, personnel change or other structural shifts in the degree program, changes to the student body seeking the degree, and so forth. In some cases, APRC may ask for an interim report or a progress report on certain aspects of the program. These interim/progress reports will be required in a specified time frame following the signing of the CAM. The needs-based review logic described above will shift future program reviews away from College-based cycles; the collegiate initiation of reviews described in ILA of this document will give way to a process of continuous dialogue between unit, college, and Academic Planning and APRC. APRC and Academic Planning are jointly responsible for the placement of units to be reviewed on the review cycle; scheduling is guided by this document to prioritize established need and time-since-last-review in queuing self-studies specifically and reviews more generally. The overall queuing order takes into account program quality as seen in the last review, and concerns about or issues within a unit under review. Beyond the queuing order, Academic Planning is responsible for contact with external reviewers and scheduling each program review. To facilitate the academic program review process, programs are provided with support that includes clear guidelines for the preparation of documents, timely access to pertinent data, and self-studies singled out as exemplary by APRC.

V. Special Program Review

Under special circumstances where the normal cycle of continuous review is deemed inadequate, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the College Dean, or the unit head may call for a special program review.

VI. Handbook for Academic Program Review

A handbook to guide the Seventh Cycle will be prepared, based on the Handbook for the Sixth Cycle of Academic Program Review, but eschewing the focus on graduate degree programs. This handbook will incorporate the guidelines required by this policy. Additionally, the handbook will describe specific self-study and external review expectations in regard to those indicators and criteria of program sustainability and quality set forth here and concordant with WASC's Handbook on Accreditation.

[1] Throughout this document, "degree programs" refers to all undergraduate and graduate degree programs, as well as credential programs not housed in CELIA.

[2] "Planning for 2014-15 Support Budget Request." Presentation to the Board of Trustees, September 24-25, 2013.

[3] 2013 Handbook for Accreditation. WASC 2013

[4] "Report of the WASC Visiting Team, Educational Effectiveness Review". March 6-8, 2013, p. 50.

[5] "San Francisco State 2007-2020 Campus Master Plan." Document source: <http://www.sfsu.masterplan.org>. For a good general assessment of the value of undergraduate research experiences, see the supporting documents for the National Science Foundation's Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) program: <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2013/nsf13542/nsf13542.htm>.

[6] Any instructional unit may request or be requested to begin a self-study for reasons of time since last review or other concerns

[7] This meeting is predicated on #F12-133's inclusion of release time for APRC members, who would otherwise be unduly taxed by the time demanded by these meetings,

[8] Bachelor of Arts degree programs are reminded to include their complementary studies plan as a component of the requirements for their major.

[9] The campus is currently developing parallel "indicators and criteria of undergraduate program sustainability and quality". Should this effort result in a new University policy, this Guidelines document should be amended to include all accredited undergraduate programs as well.
