Section II.6

UNIT TERMINATION

Adopted by the Faculty February 7, 1984

BACKGROUND

The 1981-82 Policy and Development Committee was instructed to develop a set of procedures to employ in reviewing units subject to possible termination. The report, submitted in the Spring of 1982, was reviewed by the College Executive Committee which made a few minor changes in the procedures. The recommended procedures (without the introductory pages of the 1981-82 report) were submitted to the faculty for action in spring, 1983. The faculty voted to refer the matter back to the Policy and Development Committee with the request that units be asked to submit suggestions for changes in the report. A copy of the introductory pages of the report and the proposed procedures were distributed to all units in March with a call for response. Three letters were received by the Committee. Committee members also suggested revisions. The suggestions from units and Committee members were considered by the 1982-83 Policy and Development Committee and some revisions in the original report were adopted. These included lengthened time for unit response, protection for tenured faculty if units are retrenched, and a recommendation that the entire report be made available to all LAS faculty members as part of a request for action. The Committee views the introductory section of the 1981-82 document as integral to the procedures in the sense of providing the history and framework within which the evaluation would function.

The remainder of this report is the work of the 1981-82 Policy and Development Committee with revisions in procedures adopted by the 1982-83 Committee. These include additions and minor changes in the procedures section proposed by the Executive Committee.

The Dean's charge to the 1981-82 Policy and Development Committee called for a recommendation regarding procedures for unit elimination in the College. The Committee found this a charge with extensive implications for the College; consequently, its discussions focused not only on specific procedures but also involved issues implied by the perceived need to employ program elimination to address budgetary problems of the College. This report includes the Committee's views concerning these larger issues as well as its specific recommendations for procedures to be followed in unit termination. The report is organized into three sections: (1) the role of unit elimination as a tool of budgetary control, (2) criteria for program and unit evaluation, and (3) procedures for unit termination.

I. The Role of Unit Termination as a College Budgetary Control Strategy

The Committee is agreed that the primary bases for program continuation should be need and quality within the mission of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. With societal and disciplinary changes and with developments in educational technology, educational systems will undergo change over time. This may involve termination of units made obsolete or ineffective. The need to be responsibly adaptive to social, educational, and technological developments thus
makes necessary adoption of procedures for program evaluation and, if appropriate, unit termination.

The exigency created by a deteriorating budgetary situation in the College is another source of perceived need for procedures for unit elimination. Great care and deliberation must characterize the use of unit termination as a mechanism of budgetary control: indeed, unit elimination should not be considered a primary means to achieve that goal. The Committee wishes to underscore the need for developing mechanisms of budgetary control within the College that can assure program quality without resort, except in the most extreme cases, to unit termination for essentially financial reasons. Administrators at all levels must give attention to the development and implementation of procedures by which units themselves can identify nonessential aspects of their programs which could be terminated without seriously damaging the integrity of core components of the unit's structure. In most units some programs or operations are central and essential. Other programs and operations are more peripheral, but it may be useful and desirable to maintain at least some of them. We see two problems that need to be addressed: (1) developing administrative procedures by which such nonessential programs and operations within units can be identified for elimination or curtailment, and (2) developing mechanisms for rewarding units for eliminating or curtailing such programs within the context of college needs, budgetary or otherwise. Without such actions the College may have little recourse in times of major budgetary constriction other than unit elimination or across-the-board cuts damaging the quality of important and essential programs.

Thus, the Committee recognizes unit and program termination as an appropriate means of accommodation to changing academic perceptions. Termination may also serve as a device of budgetary control, but only in the most extreme cases and with the greatest attention possible to the need for and quality of the unit's programs and to the protection of the professional careers of tenured faculty in the unit. Moreover, we urge primary reliance on mechanisms of budgetary control short of unit termination, including those requiring the development of procedures for identifying programs and operations for termination within units. Even where it is judged that a specific unit should be eliminated, attention must be given to maintaining components of the unit's programs and operations that contribute importantly to the College's mission. Administrative realignment, program consolidation, and the like generally will better serve the College than total elimination of a unit's programs.

We also recommend that the College exercise leadership with the Campus and University administrations to foster procedures that offer promise for long-term amelioration of budgetary problems. The Committee is not committed to any particular policies, but we believe that if we are not to face excessive reliance on program termination as a means of budgetary control, long-range solutions need to be developed. We urge the College administration to lead the way in promoting consideration of long-range options to secure flexible budget control.

II. Criteria for Unit Termination in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

The Committee discussed at length criteria to be employed in unit and program evaluation. It is our belief that in making decisions regarding unit elimination, it will be necessary, inevitably, to make cross-unit comparisons. However, only criteria germane to the specific unit should be
employed in making an initial evaluation of a unit and its program. Thus, for instance, with an academic unit, the appropriate criteria will reflect comparison with other units at comparable universities in the specific discipline. We recognize that after such evaluation is made, the administrative decision regarding continuation or termination necessarily will involve a more general judgment of the need and value of the unit's programs and operations within the mission of the College as a whole. So that we do not lose sight of our shared general goals in discussion of unit termination, indeed in all discussions of academic policy, we urge the Dean and faculty to articulate the philosophy and mission of the College.

The Committee also discussed the general categories of evaluation that ought to be employed in evaluating units. The Committee strongly believes that the process of identifying a specific unit for possible termination should be based on the systematic application of evaluative criteria and that in order to protect against happenstance identification of units for possible termination, the College should consider the development of an on-going review process. There is a feeling that the present COPE procedures are inadequate and that consideration should be given to the College's implementation of its own review procedures. Indeed, the development of systematic review procedures is essential if caprice is to be avoided in identifying units for possible termination.

In regard to the general categories of evaluation that ought to be employed in unit review, the primary criteria should concern the need, appropriateness, and centrality of the unit's programs and operations to the accomplishment of the LAS College mission. Thus, a unit judged to be of poor quality should be strengthened rather than eliminated if it is important to the accomplishment of the College mission. If a unit is judged not essential to the fulfillment of the College mission, the next most important criteria should concern the quality of programs and operations. Obviously, depending on the character and mission of the unit, the criteria relevant to specific programs and operations will differ.

In addition to criteria concerning the unit's relevance to the LAS mission and the quality of its programs and operations, other appropriate criteria include considerations of societal and educational demand, the availability of similar programs within the Illinois higher education system, service value to other units within the College and University, and cost-efficiency of the programs and operations.

III. Procedure for Review of a Unit for Possible Termination

The Committee's aim in developing procedures for review of a unit designated for possible termination were to (1) assure the fairness and integrity of the evaluation process, (2) establish appropriate faculty involvement in decision-making, (3) permit decisions to be made in a reasonable time frame, and (4) safeguard the rights of the individuals in the designated units.

Introduction

The primary bases for program continuation should be need and quality within the mission of the College. With societal and disciplinary changes and developments in educational technology, educational systems undergo change over time. This results in reorganization or, occasionally, termination of programs or units rendered obsolete or ineffective. Consideration of a unit for
possible elimination might arise out of concerns of school directors, the Dean, or internal reviews or from sources external to the College such as other administrators or review committees. The suggestion for such a review would undoubtedly be based upon a number of factors which might include cost of instruction, shifts in enrollment, changes in disciplinary structures, shifts in missions and responsibilities, quality indicators, or a critical financial situation for the College as a whole.

Whatever the reason for review, undertaking the review must not be viewed as tantamount to a decision to eliminate the unit and thus jeopardize the unit's standing in terms of faculty and student retention and recruitment or its standing in the university community and discipline. Therefore, the evaluation must be thorough but rapid and involve factors internal to the unit while also analyzing that unit within the context of the educational policy of the College and the campus. A review might result in various decisions, e.g., to restructure; to transfer, limit or terminate some/all programs; to add needed resources.

The following criteria should determine the ultimate decision:

1. Need, appropriateness, and centrality of the unit to the LAS College mission.
2. Quality of unit programs and operations.
3. Additional factors such as:
   1. societal and educational demand
   2. service value to other units within the College and university
   3. cost/benefits and efficiency of programs and operations
   4. availability of similar program within the system of Illinois public higher education

Procedure: Adopted by LAS Faculty February 7, 1984

The following procedures shall govern the review of units subject to possible termination within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

1. A Unit Review Committee (URC) shall be established to review each designated unit.
2. With the advice of the Executive Committee, the Dean may constitute and charge the unit review committee. For a unit within the school, the dean shall also seek the advice of the school director.
   1. The committee shall consist of 5-7 members appointed by the dean with the advice of the Executive Committee from a larger panel nominated by the Committee on Committees. The unit under review shall have the option of designating one of the members of the URC from the panel proposed by the Committee on Committees.
   2. No member of the unit under review shall serve on the URC.
3. The URC shall make a recommendation to the Dean regarding continuation, restructuring, or termination of the unit.
   1. The URC may use special internal and/or external review committees to assess various components of the unit. Such Committees shall make specific assessments as needed by the URC. No recommendations regarding the continuation of the unit may be made in these assessments.
2. In cases where an academic (degree-granting) unit is being reviewed, the judgment of an external review panel must be considered as part of the URC evaluation.
   1. This external review panel shall consist of at least three scholars of national stature within the discipline(s) under review. The unit under review shall nominate at least two such scholars and at least one member of this panel shall be selected from among individuals nominated by the unit.
   2. The external review panel is not used to make a judgment about continuation. Its function is to make judgments of quality, program and operational strengths and weaknesses, etc. (While it may be necessary or useful to bring the panelists to campus, their functions could be accomplished through consideration of materials supplied to them. The review may involve consultation among the panelists or consist of independent assessments by the panelists.)

3. Before arriving at the final recommendation, the URC shall formulate and provide the unit with a list of questions and a bill of particulars of concerns or possible deficiencies relative to the unit. The unit shall have at least 20 working days to make a response to the URC.

4. After considering the response of the unit, the URC shall arrive at its recommendations and transmit those recommendations along with the supporting rationale and materials to the Dean. (Copy to the school director for units within schools.)

5. Although the time consumed may vary, under most circumstances the URC should complete its evaluations and recommendations within three months of receiving its charge.

4. The Executive Committee shall review the recommendations and materials and formulate its advice to the Dean relative to the URC’s recommendations. (For units within schools, the Dean shall also seek the advice of the school director.)

5. The Dean shall make a recommendation relative to the unit. A range of options is available including continuation of all operations, termination of some components, transfer of programs or personnel to other units, termination of the unit. In no event shall a tenured faculty member's employment be involuntarily terminated due to the retrenchment of a unit. Rather, the Dean shall ensure a suitable alternate academic assignment for tenured faculty acceptable to those involved. Such recommendations shall be implemented in accordance with the Statutes and established procedures and personnel policies of the college, the campus and the university.

Updated April 2003