

MJC Program Viability Assessment: Revitalization, Reduction, and Discontinuance Procedures

A program is defined as “an organized sequence of courses leading to a defined objective, a degree, a certificate, a diploma, a license, or transfer to another institution of higher learning” (Title 5, Section 55000).

In conformance with Title 5 (CCR sect. # 51022) as well as with generally accepted, institutional good practice, the purpose of the processes described here is to conduct an assessment of programs that have been identified as requiring either revitalization, reduction, or discontinuance. Modesto Jr. College recognizes that its curriculum and course offerings must be responsive to the needs of the students and the community that it serves, and further that the college must continue to support its mission as well as the goals of individual programs. As the needs of the students and community change, the content and make-up of the educational programs must undergo regular review for appropriateness and effectiveness. The purpose of the following procedures is to ensure that appropriateness and that effectiveness in those cases where the viability of a program is deemed to be questionable.

1. Procedure for Identification of Programs with Questionable Viability

A program’s viability may be considered to be “at-risk” for the following reasons:

- A. A sustained (three or more years) period of low enrollment.
- B. Insufficient frequency of section offerings, resulting in students’ inability to complete the program in a timely fashion.
- C. Ongoing low retention or persistence rates.
- D. For programs that are mainly academic in nature: low program completion rates or lack of availability of the transfer major.
- E. For programs that are mainly vocational in nature: lack of demand in the workforce.

Identification of programs with questionably viability may originate in a variety of different ways:

Recommendation through Program Review:

- During the normal program review cycle, the Planning and Budget committee may observe problematic indicators, such as low enrollment, a significant downward trend in enrollment, and/or lack of currency or relevance. Based on these or other indicators, the Planning and Budget committee may request of the Academic Senate that Program Revitalization, Reduction, Discontinuance be considered. The request must

be accompanied by a detailed rationale explaining the reasons the program is considered to be struggling.

Recommendation from Faculty:

- Faculty who teach in the affected program may request of the Academic Senate that Program Revitalization, Reduction or Discontinuance be considered. A detailed rationale must be given.

Recommendation from Administration:

- Either the Vice President of Instruction or the Vice President of Student Services may request of the Academic Senate that Program Revitalization, Reduction or Discontinuance be considered for a program under their auspices. A detailed rationale must be given.

2. Procedure for Assessment of Program Viability

The review and decision regarding the revitalization, reduction, or discontinuance of a program is a joint venture of the faculty and the administration.

Within a month of being notified of an at-risk program, the appropriate Vice President will call a meeting of the dean or administrator and a minimum of 4 faculty from the affected area, or a related area if necessary. The composition of this task force must be approved by the Academic Senate. The charge of this group is to study the program and decide whether to recommend the use of either intervention strategies to revitalize and support the program or the implementation of procedures for the reduction or elimination of the program. The research and recommendation are to be included in a written document that is to be completed by the end of the following semester.

- A. Research may include information from the College Research and Planning Office; faculty, staff, and students of the program; Program Review documents; the Articulation Officer; employers in the workforce; Tech advisory committees; and deans and department heads from other affected programs.
- B. The following set of questions, at minimum, must be addressed in detail:
 1. What is the student demand for the program, considering recent and current enrollment?
 2. What are the retention and persistence rates for the program?
 3. What is the long-term viability of the program?
 4. What is the success level of students who have completed the program and are currently working in the field?
 5. What is the cost to the college of the program compared to similar programs at other colleges?

6. Are there any courses within this program that are required in another program?
7. Could elements of this program be combined with another program?
8. Is the program offered at any nearby colleges?
9. What college resources have already been used to support the program?
10. What effect has this program had on college diversity efforts?
11. How would the elimination of this program affect the ability of the college to fulfill its mission?
12. Does this program meet a special community need or provide special benefits to the college?
13. Does the program duplicate outcomes that students can get from other programs?

For programs that are mainly academic in nature:

14. Which high school and/or university programs are articulated with this program?
15. What are the program completion rates for the program?
16. What percent of students who have graduated from this program have transferred?
17. What is the workplace demand for the graduates of this program?

For programs that are mainly vocational in nature:

18. What are the course completion rates for the program?
19. What is the workplace demand for the participants of this program?

3. Procedure for Revitalizing and Supporting Viable Programs

If the task force determines, based on the documented evidence, to recommend continuation of the program, intervention strategies to revitalize and support the program are to be listed in the research document. Such strategies may include specific outreach projects to recruit new students, the development of articulation agreements, modification of scheduling, curriculum development, faculty retraining, and/or investment in updated equipment. Identification of institutional barriers to the success of the program may also be appropriate to address. A report including the research results, rationale for recommending revitalization, and strategies will be submitted to the Academic Senate.

4. Procedure for Reducing Semi-Viable Programs

If the task force determines, based on the documented evidence, to recommend that the program be reduced with respect to the number of courses, sections, faculty and staff associated with that program, a plan to address the needs of affected students, faculty, staff and operations will need to be designed and a timeline for the reduction process developed.

- A. Students already enrolled in the program must be given the time to complete the program or assistance in transferring to a college which offers a similar program. Students should also be encouraged to utilize career and/or academic counseling. It is the responsibility of the college to protect the investment students have already made in their education.
- B. A process to facilitate the retraining of faculty which includes timelines and college support must be developed in conjunction with the local bargaining unit.
- C. Staff must be given assistance to transfer to another area of the college.
- D. A plan must be developed to inactivate courses, reestablish the program (if appropriate in the future) and address other operational issues.

A report including the research results, rationale for recommending reduction, and the implementation plan for the reduction will be submitted to the Academic Senate.

5. Procedure for Discontinuing Non-Viable Programs

If the task force determines, based on the documented evidence, to recommend that the program be discontinued, a plan to address the needs of affected students, faculty, staff and operations will need to be designed and a timeline for the discontinuance developed.

- A. Students already enrolled in the program must be given the time to complete the program or assistance in transferring to a college which offers a similar program. Students should also be encouraged to utilize career and/or academic counseling. It is the responsibility of the college to protect the investment students have already made in their education.
- B. A process to facilitate the retraining of faculty which includes timelines and college support must be developed in conjunction with the local bargaining unit.
- C. Staff must be given assistance to transfer to another area of the college, as specified in contract.
- D. A plan must be developed to inactivate courses, reestablish the program (if appropriate in the future) and address other operational issues.

A report including the research results, rationale for recommending discontinuance, and the implementation plan will be submitted to the Academic Senate.

6. Procedure for Ratifying Assessment of Program Viability

A final written document will be created and voted on by the Academic Senate to serve as its official recommendation. The official recommendation document should be professional and well thought out, and include all relevant research, a

clearly worded and detailed recommendation for action, and an analysis of the impact the action will have on all affected areas of the college. This document will be forwarded to the College Council for a final recommendation to the College President and Board of Trustees.