

# Pierce College

## Viability Review of Educational Programs

Adopted by the Pierce Academic Senate April 25, 2005

### Overview

- Program Viability Review is a Senate- directed process meant to assure that the College's instructional resources are used in response to the College's Mission, its Educational Master Plan, the needs of its students, and the requirements of the community it serves.
- Viability review involves a *special* process, one that is only invoked under *unusual* circumstances: it is not 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 state-approved certificate instructional programs, all instructional disciplines, and all departments or other campus units offering instruction.
- Board Rule 6803 requires that each college, in consultation with its Academic Senate, develop procedures for initiating and conducting a viability review of educational programs.
- Board Rule 6803.10, Education Code 78016, and Title 5, §51022(a) require that a viability review be conducted prior to program discontinuance (termination).
- This policy shall supersede the following existing policies:
  1. Department Establishment and Modification Policy, Adopted by the Pierce Academic Senate March 24, 2003 & modified May 5, 2003
  2. Guidelines for Discontinuance of Instructional Programs, Adopted by the Pierce Academic Senate and approved by the College President October, 1998

### Outcomes

Viability review committees make recommendations that include but are not limited to the following:

1. *Program Initiation*  
The institution or adoption of a new program, a new discipline, or a new department
2. *Program Discontinuance*  
The discontinuance (termination) of an existing program, discipline, or department
3. *Program Modification and Improvement*  
A plan of action to enhance the performance and effectiveness of an existing program, discipline, or department
4. *Departmental Reorganization*  
The restructuring of an existing program, discipline, or department for greater effectiveness, including the joining of smaller departments into a larger one, or splitting a larger department into smaller ones.

### Establishing a Special Viability Review Committee

The process of Viability Review is carried out by a special study committee organized by the Educational Planning Committee in all cases of program initiation or program discontinuance. The process may be initiated by a request or motion on the part of any of the following: the Department; the College President; the Vice President of Academic Affairs; the Educational Planning Committee (as the result of Program Review and/or Educational Master Planning); the Academic Senate. In cases of program modification and improvement or departmental reorganization Viability Review is carried out only if there is no consensus within the Educational Planning Committee or when at least a quarter of the Educational Planning Committee calls for such a review.

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

- The Academic Senate President or Designee
  - 2 - Educational Planning Committee members (selected by the Educational Planning Committee)
  - 2 - Department Chairs (selected by the Academic Policy Committee)
  - The Curriculum Committee Chair or designee
  - 2 - AFT representative
  - The Vice President of Academic Affairs or designee
  - 1 - Academic Dean
- At most two additional members from other institutions when either program initiation or program discontinuance are being considered.

## Information Gathering

Decisions made in the course of the Program Viability Process must be based on a broad and thoroughgoing investigation of factors relating to the benefits of a program for students, for the college, and for the community served by Pierce College. They must, therefore, take into consideration information that goes far beyond simple measures of current student demand or weekly student-contact hours. The following general types of information should be gathered as needed and weighed in the process of formulating the Review Committee's recommendations:

1. Relation of the program to the College Mission
2. Relation of the program to the Educational Master Plan
3. Recent Program Review or accrediting agency recommendations
4. Measures of student demand
5. Measures of labor-market demand
6. Measures of demand in the 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 meet to elect a chair and 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 use of focus groups. At least one well-publicized open forum should be held to allow any concerned member of the campus community or of the College's service area the opportunity to voice opinions and express concerns. In addition, the committee shall consult when necessary with District, regional, and State agencies and institutions overseeing specific types of programs, such as certain vocational programs.
- 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 the following:
  1. a summary of the process used by the committee
  2. a review of all data consulted
  3. a detailed assessment of the recommendations' impact on the College's overall educational program and budget, as well as its impact on all students, faculty, and staff involved.

- Program Discontinuance
  - In general, 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.
  - Pursuant to Board Rule 6803.10, a viability review is required prior to program discontinuance and must consider the following:
    1. The effects on students and student success if the program is discontinued;
    2. Provisions that can and should be made for students in progress to complete their training;
    3. The impact that discontinuance of the program will have on the comprehensiveness and balance of offerings across the college curriculum and within the district;
    4. How the program’s discontinuance would impact the educational and budget-planning process used at the institution;
    5. How the program’s discontinuance affects the region;
    6. The effects of the program’s discontinuance on transfer to four-year colleges and universities;
    7. The effects of the program’s discontinuance on local businesses and industries;
    8. The effects of the program’s discontinuance on faculty and staff.

**Making the Decision**

- Viability Review Committee recommendations shall be forwarded to the Academic Senate for approval. The Viability Review Committee’s recommendations shall be forwarded also to the Educational Planning Committee, the Academic Policy Committee, and the Office of Academic Affairs for review and comment.
- The Senate’s decision shall be taken to the College President in consultation with the Academic Senate President and the AFT Chapter President. [Article 17, §A.2 AFT Faculty Guild Collective Bargaining Agreement]
- “The College President and College Academic Senate President shall make program discontinuance recommendations to the Board of Trustees for approval. The recommendation shall include a description of the viability review process and the reasons for the recommendation.” [Board Rule 6803.10]

Copies of this *Vitality Review of Educational Programs*, signed by the College President and the Academic Senate President, shall be on file the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of the Academic Senate.

College President \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

Senate President \_\_\_\_\_

Date: