

# Proposed Program Discontinuance Policy

Note: This is the proposed program discontinuance policy, to be presented to the UHCL Faculty Council on 4/1/26. It was previously endorsed by the 2024-2025 Faculty Senate but was amended by the Office of General Counsel (OGC). Formatting changes were made for the purposes of meeting accessibility compliance standards.

## I. PURPOSE

This document defines policy and procedures for voluntarily discontinuing all or part of an academic program. UHCL is committed to maintaining robust, high-quality academic programs that meet the needs of the region and state. Program discontinuance decisions must be made in a reasoned way that will minimize damage to the university and to the majority of its programs and stakeholders. The process should reflect the university's commitment to the well-being and interests of students, faculty, staff, and alumni, recognizing that we are a community with shared responsibilities.

This policy does not apply to mandatory closures required by SACSCOC, THECB, UH System, and/or other appropriate state agencies.

## II. DEFINITIONS

- 1) Academic program is defined as a set of credit-bearing courses that lead to a degree on a transcript. Academic programs are subject to program review and are monitored by regulatory and accrediting agencies such as the SACSCOC, the THECB, and the UH System. The THECB maintains an inventory of all academic programs at Texas public institutions and assures that they meet certain criteria. Similarly, significant changes in academic programs, such as closures and changes in modes of delivery, must be pre-approved by the SACSCOC.
- 2) "Part of a program" and "partial" when referring to a discontinuance refer to minors, concentrations, certificates, and modalities (e.g. distance education).
- 3) "Program closure" is defined as the date when no new students will be admitted into the program.

## III. PROCESS FOR FULL OR PARTIAL PROGRAM DISCONTINUANCE

Consideration for program discontinuance will be similar to those for initiation of new programs. In addition, the final recommendation for discontinuation must include, but is not limited to, the following:

- 1) Structure of a Discontinuance Proposal

- i. **Profit Statement.** A three-year history of the cost and return on investment for the university.
- ii. **Enrollment Data.** A three-year history of student enrollment and a projection of future student enrollment.
- iii. **Supply and Demand Analysis.** The current or expected regional and/or statewide demand for graduates, as well as the existence of similar programs or parts of programs within Texas.
- iv. **Program Review.** The effectiveness in meeting goals and objectives, the accreditation status, and the contributions to the general education of students.
- v. **Closure Impacts and Remediation.** The impact of closure on faculty, staff, and university enrollment, as well as mechanisms to permit enrolled students to complete their degree.
- vi. **University Strategic Plan Impact.** The impact of closure in correspondence with the university mission statement and at least two of the three Ts of the strategic plan.

2) Initiation of a Discontinuance

- i. A request for discontinuation of all or part of a program may be initiated at any time by the following:
  - 1. a majority of the tenured and tenure-track faculty in the affected department, in consultation with their dean.
  - 2. the dean of the college in which the program is housed, in consultation with department and program faculty.
  - 3. the Provost, in consultation with the dean and program and department faculty.
- ii. Proposals must be submitted to the Provost by September 15 for consideration in the fall semester, and by February 15 for consideration in the spring semester. Earlier proposal submissions are encouraged.

3) Review of a Discontinuation Proposal.

- i. **College Level Review.** Once a proposal is initiated, the Curriculum Committee of the affected college has until October 15 in fall or March 15 in spring to review the discontinuance proposal with the faculty of the affected Department and either concur or oppose and may include suggestions for program modification or improvement. The committee will forward its recommendation to the Dean. The Dean will have until November 1 in fall or April 1 in spring to concur or oppose and will then notify the Faculty Council Curriculum Committee (FCCC) of their and the committee's positions.

- ii. **Faculty Council Review.** The FCCC will then have until November 15 in fall and April 15 in spring to review all documentation, consulting with the appropriate dean and college curriculum committee for input and clarification, and will then forward its recommendation to the Provost.
- iii. **Provost.** The Provost, in consultation with the President, will make the final decision regarding the discontinuance of the proposed program and shares this decision with all stakeholders.
- iv. **Delays.** In case of university closures, adjustments will be made to the timelines. Additionally, unless the next level of review grants an extension, ignored proposals will be considered forwarded without comment at the deadline.

#### 4) Execution of a Discontinuation Proposal

- i. **Notification process.** College advisors will contact each student by email and regular mail to announce the closing of the program and to indicate when the remaining courses should be taken.
- ii. **Teach-out plan.** Faculty in the program, working with their department chair and dean, will create a teach-out plan for each student in the discontinued program. They will also develop a communication plan for keeping students updated throughout the teach-out process.
- iii. **Advising.** Students of the discontinued program will have continuous support throughout the teach-out period. In addition to faculty advisors, academic advisors will be available to promptly assist students in navigating their options and developing individualized plans to ensure successful program completion. Students will be informed/reminded of other resources and support services (e.g. tutoring, counseling) available to assist them throughout the remainder of the program.
- iv. **Completion Timeline.** Students of the discontinued program will be provided with a clear timeline outlining the necessary steps to complete their program requirements. This timeline will include details about how (e.g., online, hybrid, in-person) and when courses will be offered, and will consider the academic needs of students. The institution will explore options for students to complete their coursework through alternative pathways within the university, such as offering hybrid or online courses, allowing course substitutions, allowing students to transfer to courses in similar UHCL programs, or providing additional support to meet graduation requirements. Courses should be offered in consecutive semesters, when possible, until the last student completes their program.
- v. **Closure.** Once the last student has completed the program, the Department Chair will inform the college Dean, who will then notify the Provost.

- vi. Termination of Faculty.** If the program discontinuance requires the termination of faculty, the notification guidelines for non-reappointment in SAM X and UAAP Faculty Dismissal shall be used to guide their dismissal. Grievances regarding the termination of tenured faculty under this policy must be filed within 30 calendar days of notification. The grievance is filed against the college dean and will automatically be heard by the Grievance Committee (see UHCL Faculty Grievance). The grievance is regarding the individual termination decision (e.g. argues that classes remain available the faculty member is qualified to teach) and not the program discontinuance process.