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# NEW PROGRAM APPROVAL PROCESS

## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose

Rutgers program approval procedures were developed to provide a rational and effective method of program development, consideration, and approval. University procedures provide mechanisms for ensuring that consistent and coordinated decisions are made concerning program development and resource allocation. The underlying principle that informs the entire program approval process is that academic decisions at a university are best made in a collegial fashion, with full and open discussion among all relevant parties at the departmental, college/school, campus, and university levels. The final responsibility for program approval within the university rests with the Rutgers Board of Governors (BOG).

Once approved by the university, new programs must be reviewed by the state. The New Jersey Commission on Higher Education (Commission) and the New Jersey Presidents' Council (Council) have responsibility for oversight of new programs. The Commission and Council require Program Announcements (PAs) from those institutions proposing new programs. The Council takes the lead role in new program reviews. Only in exceptional cases will an additional formal review by the Commission be required.

The staff of the Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning (OIRAP) is available to assist with the program approval process at each stage. It is advisable to contact the Office in the earliest stages of program development. While the timeline for the process varies by program and circumstances, in general, the approval process takes six months to one year from inception to conclusion.

The program development process described here addresses the requirements of the Rutgers Board of Governors, the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education, and the New Jersey Presidents' Council.

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## PROGRAM APPROVAL PROCESS

### A. Overview

#### 1. First Steps

The program approval process is designed to encourage collegial discussion at all levels of the university. The process usually begins at the faculty/department level and then involves all relevant parties at the school/campus level, culminating with the Provost or Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs. The next stage involves university review, culminating with the Board of Governors. While the internal approval process is described in stages, it is anticipated that all appropriate parties will communicate with one another from the earliest planning phase, even though formal approval may not come until a later point in the process. The final stage of the review process is at the state level. The New Jersey Presidents' Council and, in exceptional circumstances, the New Jersey

Commission on Higher Education, review programs on the basis of mission, cost, and duplication. As part of their review, the Council and Commission consider the comments from other institutions within the state about the proposed program.

A proposed program should be described in a [Program Announcement \(PA\)](#), a document detailing the rationale for developing the program and the need for it. The PA should also describe the curriculum and requirements for admission and graduation, identify faculty and other program resources, and provide information about opportunities for graduates. In developing any new program, the University Mission Statement (<http://oirap.rutgers.edu/instchar/visionandmission.pdf> - Appendix A), the Campus Strategic Plan (available from the campus leadership), and the University Strategic Plan (<http://oirap.rutgers.edu/instchar/stratplan.html>) should be consulted, as these documents provide the context in which program approval decisions are made. The University Mission Statement describes the tripartite mission of the University: instruction, research, and service and describes the complementary missions of the three campuses. The Campus Strategic Plans describe the unique qualities and priorities of each campus. The University Strategic Plan incorporates planning at all levels of the university.

## **2. Timelines**

While program development times vary greatly depending upon a variety of factors, generally the approval process can be accomplished in six months to a year. It is important to be aware of the schedule of meetings of the faculty bodies that need to review the proposal; these timelines will vary by campus and program.

## **3. Resource Commitments**

To move ahead with the approval process, there must be clarity concerning responsibility for program costs. In order for a program to be approved by the President's Cabinet and the Board of Governors, all resource needs, including need for program faculty, must be identified and fully committed. Programs that lack clear commitments for resources will be referred back to the campus leadership, a process that could delay program approval significantly. Memoranda of support acknowledging commitments for new resources should be appended to the program announcement.

## **B. Reviews**

### **1. Campus**

#### *a. Decanal Review*

Program proposals usually originate with the faculty who work closely with appropriate administrators (e.g. department chairs, center directors, deans, etc.) to assess planning and resource implications of the proposed program. The Program Announcement provides the outline for program development, detailing the areas that need to be fully considered. The relevant faculty group should review and approve the program before it is sent forward within the university for approval. The Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning (OIRAP) is available to work with the faculty in developing the proposal. OIRAP should be contacted at the earliest stages of program development. Before proceeding with the development of the Program Announcement, it is important to contact the relevant dean and the campus leadership to inform them of plans. In general, the key concerns to be addressed by any proposal for a new program are

academic quality, relevance and need, and adequacy and commitment of all resources necessary to support the program.

The relevant dean will work with the campus leadership to initiate any necessary reviews by faculty governing bodies. Upon successful completion of these reviews, the Program Announcement will be formally presented to the Provost or the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.

*b. Review by Campus Leadership*

The Provost or Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs will review the proposed program for quality and for congruence with the Campus's mission and strategic plan. OIRAP will then send the Program Announcement to the campus leadership on all three campuses to inform them about the proposed program and solicit any comments they might wish to provide.

The campus leadership will ensure that needed resources are available, including faculty, administrative, library, computer, laboratory and other resources. The Provost will consult with the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and the University Vice President for Budgeting regarding any request for central administration funding. When all budgetary concerns are resolved, the campus leadership will forward the Program Announcement to OIRAP.

## **2. University**

*a. External Consultant*

The Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning will engage a consultant to evaluate the proposed program. The consultant will review written documentation, conduct a site visit, and submit a written report to OIRAP. In identifying appropriate candidates to serve as consultants, OIRAP will contact professional associations and leading figures in the particular field for advice. From these sources a list of potential consultants will be developed. The consultant's report will be shared with the program faculty, dean(s) and campus leadership.

*b. Response to Consultant*

The staff of the Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning will work with the program faculty, the dean(s) and the campus leadership to address any concerns of the consultant, and, if necessary, modify the program announcement accordingly. Upon resolution of academic, budgetary and administrative issues, OIRAP will forward the program proposal to the President's Cabinet.

*c. President's Cabinet*

The President's Cabinet, comprised of the vice presidents and provosts, reviews proposals from a universitywide perspective to assess academic and budgetary issues, need, and congruence with the university's mission and strategic plan. The Cabinet will consider the proposed programs, based on quality, need, existing areas of strength, major new initiatives, and resources available.

#### *d. Board of Governors*

Programs approved by the Cabinet will be forwarded to the Educational Planning and Policy Committee of the Board of Governors, which will make a recommendation to the full Board for review and approval. The Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning will prepare the documentation required for Board of Governors' review.

### **3. State**

#### *a. Circulation of Announcement*

The Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning will distribute the Program Announcement to other higher education institutions in New Jersey for comment regarding congruence with institutional mission, excessive costs, and undue program duplication. These are the three areas designated for review by the Presidents' Council and the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education. Any negative comments regarding mission, cost, or duplication must be addressed before the proposal is forwarded to the Presidents' Council.

#### *b. Presidents' Council*

The Presidents' Council, a statewide organization comprised of the presidents of New Jersey institutions of higher education, will receive the Program Announcement, the Rutgers' Board of Governor's resolution, and the consultant's report for review. If the Presidents' Council determines that there are no problems regarding congruence with institutional mission, excessive cost, or program duplication, the program can be implemented. If a problem is identified in the areas of cost or duplication, the Presidents' Council will attempt to resolve it or will refer it to the Commission on Higher Education for additional review. If the Council finds that a proposed program would exceed an institution's mission (for an example, a community college proposing to offer a baccalaureate degree), the proposal would be referred to the Commission for review.

#### *c. New Jersey Commission on Higher Education*

The Commission has administrative authority for approving or disapproving new programs that raise unresolved concerns related to cost or duplication. It also has responsibility for final administrative decisions over academic programs that change or exceed an institution's mission. If a program is referred by the Presidents' Council, the Commission will attempt to resolve any concerns within 60 days of referral. Unless the Commission specifically disapproves of a new program within those 60 days, it shall be deemed approved.

### **4. Follow-Up**

New programs will be reviewed as part of the university's ongoing cyclical external review process. In the case of a new program, the external review team will be given a specific charge to assess the quality and administrative structure of the new program, along with its review of other, pre-existing program(s) in that unit.

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## Outline of Program Announcement

The Program Announcement (PA) describes the program and its objectives. The PA is used to inform the campus leadership, other New Jersey institutions of higher education, the Presidents' Council, and the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education. While the Higher Education Restructuring Act of 1994 places primary responsibility for program development with the governing boards of each institution, the state retains oversight of new programs when they:

- ❖ Exceed or change the programmatic mission of the institution;
- ❖ Require significant additional resources to develop;
- ❖ Are unduly duplicative of existing programs.

Program Announcements generally range in length from five to ten pages. Before developing any new program, it is useful to consult the Mission Statement of the University (<http://oirap.rutgers.edu/instchar/visionandmission.pdf> - Appendix A), the campus strategic plan (available from the campus leadership), and the University Strategic Plan (<http://oirap.rutgers.edu/instchar/stratplan.html>). The staff of the Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning is available to assist in the preparation of the PA: [burkley@instlres.rutgers.edu](mailto:burkley@instlres.rutgers.edu) or 732 932 7956.

### Format

#### *a. Title Page*

Title of the proposed degree  
Department  
School  
Campus  
U.S. Classification of Instructional Programs Code (CIP)  
Date program is to begin  
Accreditation or licensure requirements

#### *b. Objectives*

Description of the nature of the program, its objectives, the rationale for it, the skills or knowledge that students will acquire, and the relationship of the proposed program to the general field.

#### *c. Need*

Description of the intellectual, artistic, cultural, social or economic need for the program. Employment opportunities should be clearly delineated. Evidence of student demand and projected enrollments for the first five years of the program should be specified. The enrollment projection should include estimates of full-time-equivalents and total number of students anticipated.

#### *d. Other Programs in the State and Area*

Description of similar programs in the state and surrounding region, with particular attention given to programs that are geographically close to the campus proposing the program. In the case of similar programs, descriptions of the similarities and differences

are particularly important. For doctoral programs, program announcements should identify programs of national prominence and describe similarities and differences.

*e. Educational Program*

Description of the academic program, including:

- ❖ Statement of student learning outcomes: the knowledge, skills, and competencies that students are expected to exhibit upon successful completion of this academic program. (This applies to all degree levels – bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral.)
- ❖ Statement of the measures, tools, and strategies that will be used to assess students’ achievement of the program’s learning outcomes. (This applies to all degree levels – bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral.)
- ❖ Admissions requirements
- ❖ Graduation requirements
- ❖ Curriculum outline of a typical course of study
- ❖ Potential for inter-departmental, inter-campus, or inter-institutional cooperation
- ❖ Transferability of credits
- ❖ Potential for articulation with other institutions.
- ❖ Typical course sequence, identifying required and elective courses and optimum sequence
- ❖ Potential for collaboration with other units at Rutgers and articulation with other institutions.

*f. Faculty*

Description of existing and needed faculty resources to launch and sustain the program, including:

- ❖ List of current faculty and areas of expertise
- ❖ List of faculty to be hired and areas of expertise
- ❖ Estimate of the percentage of faculty time devoted to the program
- ❖ Need for adjunct faculty
- ❖ Number of teaching assistants available/needed.

*g. Program Administration*

Description of how the program will be administered, who will direct the program, and the reporting arrangements. Description of advisory board, if applicable.

*h. Program Review*

Description of the university’s external peer cyclical review process and any additional kinds of program review that are planned, e.g., self-evaluation or external accreditation.

## Appendices

### *a. Budget*

The budget should detail the following (distinguishing existing from new resources):

- ❖ Faculty
- ❖ Teaching assistants
- ❖ Staff
- ❖ Assessment activities, includes projected costs of measures and tools to be used in the evaluation of the achievement of the program's learning outcomes. (This applies to all degree levels – bachelor's, master's, and doctoral.)
- ❖ Library and computer resources
- ❖ Facilities and equipment
- ❖ Miscellaneous (e.g., travel, phone, etc.).

The identification of all available and needed resources is a key aspect of the approval process. Resource needs must be identified and committed in order to move the program forward through the approval process. Memoranda detailing resource commitments and identifying offices responsible for all new program resources should be included with the budget description.

### *b. Course descriptions*

Brief summaries of the courses that comprise the program, noting which courses already exist and which are to be developed.

### *c. Faculty C.V.s*

C.V.s of all faculty who will participate in the new program.

### *d. Library resources*

Assessment of the impact a new program will have on the Library System. When new resources are required for collections or services, a statement must be included describing how existing resources are to be reallocated to cover the new demands.

### *e. Computer resources*

Assessment of the impact a new program will have on computer resources within the department and universitywide.

### *f. Additional documentation*

Description of additional program needs and sources of funding available.

## **RELATED APPROVAL PROCESSES**

### **Overview**

Other related university program development procedures include:

- ❖ Creation of New Departments
- ❖ Creation of Centers, Bureaus, and Institutes
- ❖ Creation of New Schools
- ❖ Nomenclature Changes for Existing Departments and Programs
- ❖ Suspension or Discontinuance of Programs, Departments, and Centers

These processes are intended to guarantee that all affected parties have an opportunity to comment, and that approval is granted by the appropriate oversight bodies. The Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning is responsible for oversight of the above approval processes and should be contacted upon initiation of any action in these areas.

### **Creation of New Departments**

The creation of new departments is ordinarily accomplished by consensus among the appropriate faculty, and with the approval of the Dean, Provost, President's Cabinet, and Board of Governors. Any proposal for the creation of a new department should include the rationale for the department and its purpose, a description of all needed resources, documentation concerning the commitment of needed funds, and relevant future plans. If a department is to be created at the same time that a new program is being developed, the approval process for both may be accomplished simultaneously.

### **Creation of Schools, Centers, Bureaus, and Institutes**

The establishment of schools and centers, bureaus, and institutes (CBIs) has wide implications for the university, frequently affecting and involving more than one department, many faculty, and inter-unit cooperation. Therefore, the process for their establishment should be broadly consultative, involving faculty, deans, provosts, and the President's Cabinet. The establishment of a new school also requires consultation with the University Senate. The documentation in support of the proposal should state the rationale and purpose of the school or CBI; how it fits in with the campus and university strategic plans; faculty and other resources required; student involvement; implications for computing and library services; technological requirements; and a discussion of the potential for inter-disciplinary and inter-campus cooperation. CBIs vary widely in their ambitions and their impact upon the university. Some centers may be created simply as a means of administrating grant and research funds, while others may have much broader goals. Small scale units, reporting directly to a department or a single dean, do not have to undergo the universitywide approval process. The general guidelines for the new program approval process should be followed whenever a school or a CBI with wide institutional impact is being planned.

## **Nomenclature Changes**

In general, nomenclature changes do not involve significant curricular changes or entail large expenses, but, rather, reflect a more appropriate terminology in light of developments in a particular field. A nomenclature change may also be appropriate when two related departments or programs are merged into one joint department or program. A proposal for a nomenclature change should cite the rationale and, if appropriate, indicate what other institutions are following similar practices. The proposal should also describe the consultations that took place and subsequent approvals by appropriate faculty and administrative bodies. If significant resources or curricular changes are associated with the proposed nomenclature change, the process for approval will entail additional steps to ensure that the resources are available and the appropriate procedures for curricular changes have been followed. Nomenclature changes require only the consultation and agreement of appropriate parties, approval by the Dean, the campus leadership, and the President's Cabinet. Notice of program name changes must be forwarded to the Board of Governors and then to the Presidents' Council for its information, and finally to the Commission on Higher Education, which is the repository of information about program status for New Jersey institutions of higher education.

## **Suspension or Discontinuance**

Decisions to significantly alter or abolish programs, departments, or centers must be preceded by extensive consultation and careful consideration. These decisions affect the investments of the state, faculty, and students, as well as the integrity of the university. Decisions on the suspension of a program, department, or center ultimately rest with the President; decisions on the discontinuance of a program, department, or center rest with the Board of Governors. A copy of any resolution by the Board on discontinuance must be forwarded to the Presidents' Council for its information, and to the Commission on Higher Education, which is the repository of information about program status for New Jersey institutions of higher education. The Board of Governors' Policy on the Suspension or Discontinuance of Programs, Departments, and Centers policy must be followed when considering suspension or discontinuance.

Staff of the Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning are available to provide assistance during any phase of the academic planning and program development process ([burkley@instlres.rutgers.edu](mailto:burkley@instlres.rutgers.edu) or 732 932 7956).

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## **Our Vision**

Rutgers, New Jersey's preeminent public university, is one of a small number of comprehensive research universities that is both prepared and committed to exercise national leadership for higher education. We are dedicated to a standard of quality that makes Rutgers a preferred choice for students, a first-rate intellectual environment for faculty, and an outstanding place to work for staff.

We are committed to:

- Creating knowledge and ideas for the improvement of the human condition.
- Preparing students to meet the needs of a changing society and encouraging their personal and professional growth.
- Advancing the well-being of our communities, state, and nation.

Rutgers seeks nothing less than to become one of America's very best universities.

## **A Commitment to Excellence**

To realize our vision, Rutgers will:

- Sustain the highest standards in learning, discovery, and engagement with our constituents.
- Serve our communities, our state, our nation, and the international community.
- Advance scholarship and intellectual vitality in our academic disciplines.
- Attract, welcome, develop, and retain outstanding students, faculty, and staff.
- Encourage the open and civil exchange of ideas and perspectives.
- Provide superior curricular and cocurricular opportunities for students at all levels.
- Educate exceptional leaders and citizens for future generations.
- Foster a supportive and collaborative social environment, and a community dedicated to respecting and valuing diversity.
- Maintain a safe, clean, and attractive physical environment.
- Maintain accessible, responsive, and cost effective programs and services.
- Dedicate our learning community to ongoing self-assessment, and unceasing improvement of all that we do.

## **University Mission and Goals**

As the sole comprehensive public research university in the New Jersey system of higher education and the state's land-grant institution, Rutgers University has the mission of instruction, research, and service. Among the principles the university recognizes in carrying out this three-fold mission are the following:

- Rutgers has the prime responsibility in the state to conduct fundamental and applied research, to train scholars, researchers, and professionals, and to make knowledge available to students, scholars, and the general public.
- Rutgers should maintain its traditional strength in arts and sciences, while at the same time developing such new professional and career-oriented programs as are warranted by public interest, social need, and employment opportunities.
- Rutgers will continually seek to make its educational programs accessible to an appropriately broad student body.

- Rutgers is committed to extending its resources and knowledge to a variety of publics, and bringing special expertise and competence to bear on the solution of public problems.

Consistent with this mission, the Board of Governors in 1980, following a review of the university's achievements and capabilities as well as New Jersey's needs, adopted a statement of goals that set the bold aspiration of enhancing Rutgers' national and international standing and establishing the university as a major center of higher education.

By pursuing these goals in the 1980's the university has made major strides towards the attainment of a new level of national distinction. These goals shall continue to guide the development of the university in the decade ahead as Rutgers achieves even greater eminence and contributes even more fully to New Jersey's well being in the tradition of this nation's great land-grant universities. As the goals state, Rutgers will:

- Continue development of the university as a national and international resource by:
  - improvements in the quality of its instruction, research and public service;
  - increased emphasis on the contributions of its scholars; and
  - increased emphasis on an atmosphere that stimulates learning, encourages creativity, rewards service, and contributes to the personal and professional growth of all the members of the Rutgers community.
- Increase the number of areas of graduate education, research, and scholarship of national and international renown.
- Improve the already high quality of the undergraduate experience in the liberal arts, seeking both to preserve the diversity of its programs and to develop students who will provide future leadership for the state, the nation and the world.
- Develop and improve programs to serve society's needs for broadly educated, humane, competent professionals.
- Serve the needs of the State of New Jersey by:
  - conducting research on such basic issues of public policy as energy, transportation, urban affairs, agriculture, human services, coastal and marine science and similar areas, especially those of emerging importance;
  - fostering programs in the arts, music, and theater to enhance the cultural environment;
  - conducting research and retraining programs to improve education in the schools;
  - working with state and local government officials to help improve the quality of citizens' lives;
  - working with business, industry and labor to provide a resource for their research and development needs and for the future education of their personnel; and
  - working to strengthen and improve the institutional capability and performance of state governmental bodies.