

Reading Abstract

Article: *The Right Mix of Academic Programs – Making decisions to add, cut, grow, or shrink Departments and degrees*

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Abstract:

Higher education institutions need to develop processes to thoroughly examine all their academic programs for efficiency and relevance. Programs and courses need to be evaluated based on their financial costs, connection to the institution's mission, and whether they meet labor market needs. A strategic review should gauge each program's importance to the institution, measure student interest and outcomes, and fully account for revenues and expenses. The article explores what factors to consider when assessing academic programs, what to consider when making cuts, and which programs to expand. Collaboration between the administration and the faculty is key, as is balancing business and academic mind-sets. This article explores how to cut, adapt, and expand programs, as well as optimize course scheduling. Campus leaders who adjust their mix of offerings can reallocate finances while better promoting students' educational and career opportunities. The article also discusses how to engage faculty in data-informed decision making, evaluate and optimize course schedules that meet student needs and institutional financial considerations.

Strengths: YC has developed an Academic Program Review process, including demand, employability, transferability, completion, and resources allocated equitably and used efficiently. The Academic Program Review process provides an opportunity for staff and faculty to actively participate in the growth and improvement of their programs or departments and provides a vehicle for accountability and transparency. Institutional planning and budgeting are based on recommendations and evidence provided by the process. YC has already implemented a process to optimize data-driven course offerings. After this semester, fall 2020, all departments and degree programs and certificates will have gone through the comprehensive program review process for academic departments and programs.

Weaknesses: YC does not look at the whole portfolio of offerings to ensure that we have the right mix of programs but instead looks only at individual academic programs. We currently do not move beyond the data with reliable rubrics for sunsetting programs. We have often gone against the data provided by Institutional Research when starting new programs (example, Hospitality). ELT now has access to all academic program reviews as of the end of November 2020. Data should be used for data driven decision making.

Opportunities: We have many opportunities to work with REDC to meet our county employers' needs. This may lead to many CTE opportunities. We need to take lessons/benchmarks earned from the academic program review process to analyze feedback on benchmarks and continuous improvement during spring 2021 as we move forward into the 2021-2022 academic year. We need to explore how we can work more collaboratively with and use non-credit as an incubator for the credit side of the house. We need Marketing to be able to list and market new programs that have been approved by HLC and the Department of Higher Education. The REDC should understand the curriculum process for credit programs as they look to bring noncredit programs into the mix.

Threats: Private industry has moved into the educational realm to train the nation's workforce. These private industry trainers can often provide a more efficient model that takes less time to complete and is connected to post-education job opportunities within the industry. Higher education institutions must evaluate the decline in liberal arts courses and programs and how they connect our students to an effective career pathway. YC attempts to get around the bureaucracy by quickly putting noncredit programs into credit programs strictly for financial aid and tuition purposes. Need to review the noncredit option that offers the speed needed to develop programs related to an urgent work-force need. Determine exploration of starting a program in noncredit to determine if we receive the credit enrollment.