MnSCU Requirements for Occupational Program Proposals

APPENDIX

In Chapter 2 we looked at the information used by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system colleges when adding, modifying, or closing their academic programs. MnSCU Board of Trustees policy requires colleges to obtain approval from the Office of the Chancellor when making these changes. This appendix briefly outlines MnSCU processes and documentation requirements that colleges must follow to obtain approval from the Office of the Chancellor. In 2007, the Board of Trustees repealed certain policies related to academic programs and approved a new one. Further, the Office of the Chancellor developed procedures based on the new policy, which were then implemented in August 2007. Table 1 allows a comparison of past board policies with system procedures put into effect in August 2007 and shows how the 2007 changes strengthened requirements.

Colleges have broad discretion when making changes to their academic programs, and Office of the Chancellor requirements vary considerably depending on the nature and scope of the program changes, as shown below in Table 1. For instance, colleges do not need prior approval from the Office of the Chancellor when they are making very minor changes in program credit length; they need only notify the office of these changes.

On the other hand, proposals to add or significantly redesign current programs involve a much more extensive review and approval process. Generally, these proposals require the colleges to first obtain approval from within the college prior to submitting the proposals. This typically involves review and approval by the department dean at the college, pertinent curriculum committees, the chief academic officer, and the college president. Colleges affiliated with the Metropolitan Alliance of Institutions must also obtain approval from the Alliance before the Office of the Chancellor will approve the changes. Next, the colleges must post the proposal to a MnSCU listserv to apprise other MnSCU colleges of the intended program proposal and allow for feedback. Finally, colleges must submit documentation of program need, resource capability, and other information, to support their program proposals. For these and other program changes, the process is not always linear and can involve considerable review

and comment to shape the requests and compile documentation sufficient to support the program changes.[1]

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[1] Additional information about these and other program approval requirements are available from MnSCU at http://www.academicaffairs.mnscu.edu/academicprograms/ index.html#2.

Table 1: MnSCU Program Approval Process and Requirements

Program Proposal Type	Requirements Prior to August 2007	Requirements Effective August 2007[a]
Close	The MnSCU chancellor may approve a program closure if: 1) The closure is requested by the college president, and the chancellor determines that the documentation[b] provided by the college supports closure; or 2) Following consultation with the college's president, the chancellor determines that closure is warranted (a) because no student has enrolled in the program within 18 months of its approval, or (b) based on an evaluation of the program's performance. A previously suspended program shall automatically close at the end of the three year period unless the college president notifies the chancellor to extend the suspension period. A suspended program that does not enroll any students during the extension will automatically close at the end of one year.	Proposals require approval by the chancellor. Approval will be granted only under the following circumstances: a. The college requests the closure, and the chancellor finds documentation provided by the college supports closure; b. The chancellor determines that closure is warranted, or c. The program has not been reinstated after a suspension. The application must include evidence, as applicable, regarding: (1) academic program need, (2) student enrollment trends, (3) employment of graduates, (4) financial circumstances affecting the college, (5) the plan to accommodate currently enrolled students, (6) impact on faculty and staff, (7) consultation with appropriate constituent groups, (8) alternatives considered, and (9) other factors affecting program operation.
New	A program or major shall be approved by the chancellor or designee before it is offered. Approval requires that the program proposal demonstrates: a) need and appropriate location(s) to address unmet student and occupational demand, b) resource sufficiency, i.e. capability of the system and college(s) to provide necessary human, physical, and financial resources to support the program or major, and c) mission relevance, i.e. contribution to the college and system missions. Colleges must include information on transfer of credit on proposals for new programs.	Proposals for new programs require approval by the Chancellor before the new program is offered. The college must submit proposal to the Office of the Chancellor (although proposals may be withdrawn at any time). Program proposals must provide documentation of: 1) Alignment with college mission, 2) Resource capability related to human, facility, technological, financial, and other resources, 3) Program need, including student interest, occupational demand, unnecessary duplication of other MnSCU programs, 4) Program attributes, for instance location and delivery mode, 5) Curriculum, including description, learner outcomes, conformance to award requirements, among other criteria, and 6) Approvals and agreements, for instance, signed articulation or collaborative agreements, and program advisory committee recommendations.
Redesign	Requires approval from the chancellor for redesigns that affect the name, program code, addition or deletion of related program alternatives, award conferred, or certain changes in program credit length. Approval must be obtained prior to implementation. Colleges must provide prior notice to the chancellor of changes in credit length.	Prior approval must be obtained from the chancellor for program redesigns that affect the approved name, program code, the addition of emphases, a change in award, or certain changes in program credit length. Prior approval is not required for deleting an emphases or certain minimal changes of credit length, but colleges must report these changes to the chancellor.

Table 1: MnSCU Program Approval Process and Requirements (cont.)

Program Request Type	Requirements prior to August 2007	Requirements effective August 2007[a]
Relocate/ Replicate	Program relocations or replications to another authorized location require approval of the chancellor when: 1) the relocation affects an existing agreement between colleges; 2) the new location is in the same program service area or within a reasonable commute of a similar program offered by another MnSCU college, or 3) the relocation is from one college to another college.	Relocation or replication within a college requires the chancellor's approval when the program: 1) Is offered at a location that is new to the college 2) Affects an existing agreement between colleges 3) Is in the same program service area or within a reasonable commute of a similar program offered by another MnSCU college, or 4) Involves leasing non-system property. If none of the above applies, colleges need only notify the chancellor of the location. Relocation to another college requires approval of the chancellor.
Suspend/ Reinstate	A college president may suspend a program for up to three years, following a review of all applicable documentation.[b] The president shall notify the chancellor of the suspension no later than 30 days after its effective date, and submit all applicable documentation. The college president may extend the suspension for up to one year upon notifying the chancellor. The president may reinstate a suspended program upon notification to the chancellor.	A college may suspend a program for up to three years. The college must notify the chancellor of the suspension no later than 30 days after its effective date, and the notice must include documented reasons for suspension and a plan and date for reinstatement. The suspension may be extended for up to one year with notification to the chancellor. The chancellor must close an academic program that has not been reinstated following suspension. A suspended program cannot not be relocated or replicated until it is reinstated. Reinstatement of a suspended program requires approval of the chancellor based on review of required documentation. The reinstatement plan must address the following, as applicable: (a) program need, (b) student enrollment trends, (c) employment of graduates, (d) financial circumstances affecting the academic program or college, (e) the plan to accommodate currently enrolled students, (f) impact on faculty and staff, (g) consultation with appropriate constituent groups, (h) academic program accreditation or licensure, (i) alternatives considered, and (j) other factors affecting academic program operation.

NOTE: The table includes requirements both prior to and after August 2007 to show how the 2007 changes strengthened the requirements.

[a] Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, *System Procedures, Procedure 3.36.1 Academic Programs, Part 5 Academic Program Approval* (St. Paul, August 1, 2007).

[b] Documentation is information, as applicable, regarding (a) academic program need, (b) student enrollment trends, (c) placement of graduates, (d) the financial circumstances affecting the program or college, (e) any obligations to accommodate students currently enrolled in the program, (f) impact on faculty and support staff, (g) consultation with appropriate constituent groups including student, faculty, and community, (h) alternatives considered, (i) programmatic accreditation or licensure, (j) program costs and benefits, and (k) other factors affecting program operation.

SOURCE: Office of the Legislative Auditor, summary of MnSCU repealed and current board policies and system procedures.