Final Version
New Degree Program Review Process
Northwestern University

April 2013

Overview

Northwestern University has always strongly supported the role of its schools and faculties in developing and implementing curricular change and innovation. Prior to April 2013, the schools addressed curricular issues through either standing or ad hoc committees. Recommendations for curricular changes and/or new academic programs were then forwarded to the respective school’s faculty and dean for review; changes in existing undergraduate degree programs were approved at the school level, whereas other approved proposals were then forwarded to the Provost for review and a final decision. This process generally worked well when curricular changes affect only a particular school.

Many of the exciting new fields of study are inherently multi-disciplinary, and thus potential programs in these areas do not fit neatly within a single school. As a result, proposals submitted to the Provost through the previous process may have required further discussion beyond the originating school. Issues that might need to be addressed include the:

- potential overlap of similar programs that are developed in different schools and the opportunity to build a unified, stronger, cross-school program;
- potential confusion in recruiting students to similar University programs;
- consideration of proposals for meeting University-wide curricular requirements, such as diversity, or curricular needs that students will have from across schools, such as foreign languages;
- inefficiencies of operating multiple similar programs in terms of faculty and staff effort; and
- reputation and branding of Northwestern and individual schools related to certain areas of study.

Previously, these types of issues were discussed informally between deans or with ad hoc groups of faculty, but given the recent frequency of proposals that span multiple areas and the importance of this matter for the University, a transparent, regularized approach providing significant advantages was approved by the deans and the Provost at the April Council of Deans meeting.

Decanal/Provost Review Process

Since curricular issues are generally discussed and addressed on an informal basis among the deans, a process will be used in which all proposals for new programs will be initially reviewed by the full group of deans and then forwarded to the Provost for review and approval. In this review option, schools/programs are asked to follow the following process:

1. Develop an initial new degree program proposal using the attached guidelines
2. Forward the initial proposal to the Provost and the Council of Deans for review.
3. The deans will provide input on the proposal in advance of a collective discussion of the proposal at an upcoming Council of Deans meeting.
4. The proposal will be formally addressed at a Council of Deans meeting; the Council of Deans will recommend to the Provost either:
   a. approval,
   b. approval with amendments,
   c. further development of the proposal,
   d. further review required, or
   e. non-approval by the Provost.
5. If the Council of Deans recommends that further review is required, the Provost will convene an *ad hoc* new program review committee comprised of faculty and Provost’s staff; the *ad hoc* committee will:
   a. review the proposal, discuss the proposal with the proposing dean(s), program faculty, and others as appropriate
   b. make a recommendation to the Provost
6. If the Council of Deans recommends any other of the above options, the Provost will take the Council of Deans recommendation under advisement for final review and approval; in the case of an *ad hoc* faculty committee being formed, the Provost will similarly take the committee’s recommendation under advisement.
7. The Provost will communicate his decision to the proposing schools/programs and the Council of Deans.
8. If approved, development and implementation of the new program could then begin.
GUIDELINES FOR PROPOSAL FOR NEW DEGREE PROGRAMS
MARCH 2013

The proposal should address the following topics:

1. OVERVIEW
   - Outline a statement of philosophy/purpose (i.e., the program is designed to…)
   - State how the degree program will serve the University’s and the unit’s academic mission
   - Summarize the rationale for the program’s creation
   - Identify which department or academic unit in the University proposes this new degree program

2. NEED FOR THE NEW DEGREE PROGRAM
   - Specify what need(s), opportunities or audiences exist to justify a new degree program
   - State clearly differentiations between this proposed new degree and existing programs if they are related (regardless of whether or not the existing program is in a different school). Describe areas of productive overlap or plans to collaborate across units, if appropriate
   - Describe the distinctive competence of the unit(s) and the University for offering this program
   - Provide an estimate of how many students are expected to participate in the program in its initial years and in its steady state. Describe what efforts have been made to determine if there is a demand for such a program

3. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS
   - Outline the proposed curriculum for the degree program. Specify the number of courses. Describe areas of emphasis or concentration, if applicable
   - Provide detail on whether this program will call for the creation of new courses or rely on existing courses and whether any program components are off-campus or include distance/online education
   - List and describe required core courses, electives, prerequisites, and concentrations, if applicable
   - Describe the timeline for coursework and other requirements leading to the completion of the degree

4. SELECTION OF CANDIDATES AND ADMISSIONS CRITERIA
   - List admissions requirements
   - Identify who will review applications and make admissions decisions

5. RESOURCES AND SUPPORT
   - State how this new program will draw on existing faculty and resources (including Library resources) or will provide such resources
   - List core faculty who will oversee this program. Include rank and department.
• State whether this new program will require additional resources and who will provide them
• Review the new program administrative checklist to ensure that the appropriate central support units are engaged as necessary

6. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION
• State which department or program will administer the program. If joint between two units, specify the division of labor
• Identify the Program Director or Coordinator
• Describe the process for evaluating student performance/student learning outcomes
• State plans for providing adequate advising, mentoring, and support for students in the program

7. EVALUATION OF PROGRAM
• Describe how and how often program evaluation will be conducted
MAJOR MODIFICATION CHECKLIST

In order to assess whether modification of an existing degree program is substantial enough to merit a full-scale review, the following checklist should be consulted:

Does the proposal:

- Make a substantial change to the philosophy/purpose of this degree
- Change the relationship to other degrees that may have been approved or modified since the existing degree was designed
- Propose major curricular changes (e.g. are more than 25% of the courses new to this degree?)
- Involve departments or academic units that have not been previously involved with this program
- Involve faculty from new or different departments or schools
- Have access to new resources that present new opportunities for expansion of the degree, or face a loss of resources that requires downscaling
- Propose shifting the administration of the degree to a different administrative unit
- Propose discontinuing the degree

If the answer to one or more of these is “yes,” please consult with the Provost about whether a new review is required.