

Program Improvement and Viability Process: Cañada College¹

Definitions

- Program: “An instructional program is defined as a discipline and as an organized sequence or grouping of courses leading to a defined objective such as a major, degree, certificate, license, the acquisition of selected knowledge or skills, or transfer to another institution of higher education” [Title 5 §55000(g)]
- Vitality: the state of being strong and actively meeting student, community, and/or industry needs.
- Viability: the ability to maintain the qualitative factors, quantitative factors, and learning outcomes factors, as specified below in the Criteria for Initiating the PIV Process.
- Revitalization: process of moving a program from a concern for its viability to a state of vitality
- Continuance: a program is accepted as-is with no stipulations.
- Suspension: temporary discontinuance of a program for a set number of semesters, which is followed by re-evaluation of the program improvement and viability plan.
- Discontinuance: termination of an existing program, discipline, or department.
- De Facto Discontinuance: an intentional or unintentional discontinuance of a program in circumvention of this administrative procedure that results from the reduction of course sections or from any other institutional or administrative action, thereby rendering program implementation and completion impossible or improbable.

Context

[Board Policy 6.13](#) (BP 4020) stipulates that Program Review (PR) and Program Improvement & Viability (PIV) are academic and professional matters under the purview of the Academic Senate. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Academic Senate, under [Administrative Procedure 6.13.1](#) (BP 4020 and 4022), to design and recommend to the college administration processes for conducting these evaluations of instructional programs.

Regular cycles of introspection, analysis, and planning are mandated and integral to Program Review (PR) and are intended solely for the purpose of ensuring continuing efficacy, quality, and improvement of our instructional programs. In other words, regular cycles of Program Review are designed to address the waning and waxing of the strength and activity, the vitality, of our instructional programs.

Unlike Program Review, the Program Improvement & Viability (PIV) process focuses on the persistent absence of vitality and, therefore, brings into question program viability. Program Review documents may inform PIV but should not determine the outcome of PIV. The intention of the PIV process is to design and implement plans and allocate institutional resources to revitalize instructional programs. If these efforts are unsuccessful, then the college may consider program suspension or discontinuance.

¹ Process approved at Cañada College [Academic Senate, September 12, 2024 meeting](#)

Criteria for Initiating the PIV Process²

In evaluating whether an instructional program should undergo the PIV process, the college mission, vision, and values should be paramount. Depending on the type of instructional program, the following criteria should be considered alone or in combination:

1. Quantitative factors include but are not limited to:
 - a. Enrollment trends over a sustained period of time as compared to the college average (note that amount of time will differ between established and new programs)
 - b. Student persistence, retention, and success as compared to the college average
 - c. Program completion trends over a sustained period of time
 - d. Impacts on diversity with respect to the students that this program serves and whether discontinuance will adversely affect this subset of our student population
 - e. Frequency of course section offering
 - f. The importance of the program for related certificates, degrees, and other programs
 - g. Projected future student demand
 - h. Projected market/industry demand for skill or major
 - i. Projected community needs
2. Qualitative factors include but are not limited to:
 - a. Pedagogical changes in the discipline
 - b. The development of the whole student
 - c. The balance of college curriculum
 - d. The effect on students of discontinuing the program
 - e. The potential for a disproportionate impact on diversity at Cañada College
 - f. The quality of the program and how it is perceived by students, articulating institutions, industry, and the community
 - g. The ability of students to complete their degree or certificate or to transfer. This includes maintaining the catalog rights of students
 - h. The availability of programs in the surrounding area
 - i. Program Advisory Committee recommendation
3. Learning Outcomes
 - a. Taking note of institutional, program, and student learning outcomes that will be affected by the discontinuance of this program, and in which ways they will be affected

PIV Process

1. The Vice President of Instruction, a division dean, a division or department faculty member, the Instruction Planning Council, or the Academic Senate may identify a program in need of PIV based upon [established criteria](#) and request a meeting with the division dean, the VPI, and discipline faculty, to initiate the PIV process. A request for initiating the PIV process should examine the program's most recent comprehensive program review in order to consider how the relevant [criteria](#) have or have not been addressed.
2. The VPI calls for formation of a PIV task force consisting of at least one faculty member from the program who acts as the task force chair, the division dean, dean of PRIE, one counselor, and two tenured faculty from outside the program with at least one of the two being from outside the division.
 - a. Faculty on the task force are appointed by the Academic Senate.

² Adapted from [Foothill Administrative Procedure 4021 – Program Discontinuance](#)

- b. If there are no available faculty from the program, a faculty member from the division can substitute as the task force chair.
 - c. Upon agreement of the Academic Senate, additional members including students, staff, faculty or external professional experts may be appointed.
3. Within 90 academic calendar days of being formed by the Academic Senate, the task force evaluates [quantitative and qualitative data](#) plus Program and Student Learning Outcomes to assess the causes of decline and formulate a recommendation. The task force:
 - a. Solicits input from all relevant constituencies including faculty, staff, administrators, students, the employing business and industry, and the community.
 - b. Meetings should be open to the public with advance notice to the entire college community, using multiple means of communication. Meeting times, days, and location should be announced at least three days in advance, including announced at an Academic Senate meeting or announced by the Academic Senate president.
 - c. Establishes agreed-upon rules and record, and posts written records of the outcomes of discussions. These written records will be submitted regularly to Academic Senate and posted in a publicly-accessible location, such as the program's division office.
 - d. Considers both [qualitative and quantitative indicators](#), and references and cites the applicable data, which may come from PRIE; faculty, staff, and students of the program; program plan and program review documents; advisory committees; the articulation officer; employers in the workforce; and administrators and faculty from other affected programs.
4. Based on its review of the qualitative and quantitative data plus Program and Student Learning Outcomes the task force recommends:
 - a. Continuance: the program is accepted as-is with no qualifications.
 - b. Revitalization: the task force creates a plan for revitalization with measurable outcomes and a timetable, not to exceed two years, for implementation. Among other considerations, the task force may recommend ways of supporting or modifying the program. This plan could include integrating or promoting continuing education, lifelong education and enrichment, transfer or non-transfer options, and GE offerings.
 - i. The revitalization plan must identify responsibilities of involved parties and required resources.
 - ii. The VPI will monitor the program's progress and report any concerns to Academic Senate.
 - iii. If insufficient progress is made by the fourth semester, not to include summer semesters, the task force is reconvened to recommend:
 1. granting of an extension (length recommended by task force) for revitalization with possible amendments to the revitalization plan, or
 2. Initiation of the suspension or discontinuance process.
 - c. Suspension of the program
 - i. The task force identifies the suspension timeline and period in order to update the program or wait for conditions to be more favorable.
 - ii. At the end of the suspension period, the task force is reconvened to re-assess the program and determine whether to recommend for revitalization or discontinuance
 - d. Discontinuance (Based on Administrative Procedure 6.13.1)
 - i. Administrative Procedure 6.13.1 details specific tasks required before a program is discontinued.

- ii. If the committee recommends discontinuance, it should consult the current AP 6.13.1 and complete any required tasks that have not already been completed by the committee. This may include, for example, a SWOT analysis.
 - iii. After completing any additional tasks set forth by AP 6.13.1, the committee should confirm whether or not it still recommends discontinuance.
- 5. The task force recommendation is presented the Instructional Planning Council for support and feedback.
- 6. The Task Force recommendation, with the feedback from the Instructional Planning Council, is presented to the Academic Senate, which deliberates and determines its recommendation to the President and the Board of Trustees.
 - a. As PIV is an academic and professional matter, the College President and the Board of Trustees shall rely primarily on the recommendation of the Academic Senate.
- 7. The Academic Senate President and Vice President of Instruction shall present their respective recommendations to the Planning and Budgeting Council (PBC).
 - a. The feedback from the Instructional Planning Council is included in this report.
 - b. PBC makes recommendation to the college president including, if relevant, allocation of resources to support a revitalization plan.
 - c. The College President makes final decision regarding recommendation and sends it to the Board of Trustees.
- 8. If the President recommends to the Board of Trustees that a program be discontinued, and the Board concurs, then the college will make appropriate arrangements to ensure that currently enrolled students are able to complete their plan of study in accordance with the college catalog in a timely manner and with a minimum of disruption. As this decision affects employment, the college will also address contractual obligations regarding program faculty and staff.
 - a. Contacting and planning with students
 - i. Identify and contact students in the affected major, degree, and/or certificate program.
 - ii. Award degrees and certificates to students who have already completed but not petitioned.
 - iii. Identify courses that each student must complete, and identify which faculty will teach said courses. Develop Admissions and Records procedures to ensure students enroll in courses identified.
 - iv. Confirm sufficient counseling support exists for each student.
 - v. Identify similar programs at area colleges. Determine if completed courses will transfer so that a student may complete the program, degree, and/or certificate at another college that is accessible to the student.
 - vi. Establish the length of time needed for each student to complete and identify the last scheduled offering of each course.
 - b. Contacting and planning with faculty
 - i. Follow district Human Resources policy for possible reassignment
 - c. Closing the program
 - i. If needed, appoint a faculty member as program coordinator during the discontinuance process for tasks such as SLO coordination, program review, deleting and editing curricula and programs.
 - ii. Communicate the action plan to affected students as well as program faculty.
 - iii. Communicate the action plan to the community and external agencies and licensing groups, where appropriate.

- iv. Program information will be removed from college and district informational materials, including catalog, schedule, websites, etc.

Notifications of Possible De Facto Discontinuances

A De Facto Discontinuance is an intentional or unintentional discontinuance of a program in circumvention of this administrative procedure that results from the reduction of course sections or from any other institutional or administrative action, thereby rendering program implementation and completion impossible or improbable.

In the majority of cases, De Facto Discontinuances should be avoided, as the goal is to help struggling programs by following the official PIV Process. However, in some rare circumstances, any party listed in the PIV Process of this procedure may notify the Academic Senate President of a possible De Facto discontinuance.

Upon receipt of such notification the Senate President will inform the full Senate of the notification at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Academic Senate. The Senate President will request the College President **or their administrative designee** to report, within 60 days of said notification, to the full Senate on the status of the program in question. Academic Senate recommends that the program either go through the full PIV process or follows the [Administrative Procedure 6.13.1](#) for permanent discontinuance.

Mandated Discontinuance

A recommendation to discontinue is mandated if so ordered by an external regulatory, governing or licensing body to which the program is subject, as stated in Board Policy 6.13. If such a mandate occurs, discontinuance of the program will be said to have been approved upon proper notification to the Academic Senate. Such notification should clearly cite the governing entity and legal or administrative authority requiring discontinuance. Pursuant to the mandate, the PIV Task Force will be formed for the sole purposes of formally recommending discontinuance to the Academic Senate.

References

Educational Code 78016, Title 5 Sections 51022, 55000, 55130

[Board Policy 6.13](#) (BP 4020) and [Administrative Procedure 6.13.1](#) (AP 4020, 4022)

Los Medanos College Procedure 4008.01 "[Program Revitalization and Discontinuance Procedure](#)"