

## **Virginia Public Higher Education Policy on Program Productivity**

*Technical Updates: October 2019*

### **I. Statutory Duties Related to Program Productivity Review at Public Institutions**

The Code of Virginia, §23.1-203, charges the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) with various duties and accords Council the authority to carry out those duties.

#### **Duty #6**

- To review and require the discontinuance of any academic program which is presently offered by any public institution of higher education when the Council determines that such academic program is (i) nonproductive in terms of the number of degrees granted, the number of students served by the program, evidence of program effectiveness, or budgetary considerations, or (ii) supported by state funds and is unnecessarily duplicative of academic programs offered at other public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth. As used herein, 'academic programs' includes both undergraduate and graduate programs.
- The Council shall make a report to the Governor and the General Assembly with respect to the discontinuance of any academic program. No such discontinuance shall become effective until thirty days after the adjournment of the session of the General Assembly next following the filing of such report (§23.1-203 (6)).

#### **Duty #15**

- To adopt such rules and regulations as the Council believes necessary to implement all of the Council's duties and responsibilities as set forth in the Code. The various public institutions of higher education shall comply with such rules and regulations.

### **II. Principles Guiding Review of Program Productivity**

Council executes its duty to review the productivity of academic degree programs in furtherance of its general responsibility "to promote the development and operation of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education in the State of Virginia" §23.1-200 A. Accordingly, this policy and the process it governs seek to accomplish the following goals:

- to establish minimal quantitative standards for program productivity in terms of program enrollment and degrees granted;

- to prompt the rigorous institutional review of program productivity, which must include—but need not be limited to—the examination of programs in terms of the SCHEV quantitative standards;
- to utilize the program productivity review to promote the efficient use of resources, including—but not limited to—minimizing unnecessary duplication of academic programs;
- to account for relevant qualitative and mission-related factors in deciding the final disposition of programs under review.

### III. Program Productivity Review Stages

SCHEV will review the productivity of academic degree programs at public institutions once every five years. The review will encompass all academic degree programs at all public institutions of higher education. For purposes of this review, Certificates of Advanced Graduate Study (CAGS) and Educational Specialist (EdS) degrees will be treated as academic degree programs subject to review. Minors, concentrations, tracks and the like will not be subject to review.

Associate degree programs are included in the SCHEV productivity review. Council has delegated to the State Board for Community Colleges the functional responsibility to review and discontinue any nonproductive community college associate degree programs. Quantitative standards applicable to associate degree programs are included in the appendix to this policy: “Virginia Community College System—Standards for Productivity Review of Associate Degree Programs.” Associate degree standards specified there will also be applicable to relevant degree programs at Richard Bland College.

**Stage 1** Following completion of the fifth year enrollment data collection, SCHEV will provide official notice to four-year public institutions and Richard Bland College of academic degree programs that fail to meet quantitative standards for FTES enrollment and numbers of graduates. Institutions will promptly notify SCHEV of any data corrections that may remove targeted programs from further review. Institutions will then submit a report to SCHEV which includes:

- i. notification, via the “Targeted Program Exemptions Form” provided in this policy, of any exemptions or data aggregation options that may be used to remove targeted programs from further review;
- ii. a list, via the “History of Discontinued Programs Form” of all degree program discontinuances since the last program productivity review.

**Stage 2** Each four-year institution and Richard Bland College will then submit a second report to SCHEV, which includes:

- i. notification, via the “Institutional Action Form” for each targeted program, whether the institution is
  - o discontinuing the program; or
  - o providing justification for continuing the program.
- ii. *optional*: a description of institutional planning priorities and deliberative processes that have informed its overall approach to the review of program productivity.

The Virginia Community College System will report the results of its program productivity reviews and the totality of program discontinuances over the last five years.

**Stage 3** SCHEV staff reviews institutional submissions. SCHEV may request additional information and/or meetings with institutions to discuss the overall implications of potential actions that may be taken with regard to targeted programs.

**Stage 4** Following the review of all submissions, SCHEV staff will submit to Council recommendations for action. The final plan approved by Council will include a closure effective date for each program to be discontinued. It is anticipated that recommendations will be submitted at the March meeting and a final plan will be approved at the July meeting, although these targets are subject to modification.

**Stage 5** Following Council’s final action, SCHEV will submit a report on program discontinuances to the Governor and General Assembly, as per Code of Virginia §23.1-203 (6).

## **IV. Four-Year Institution Program Productivity Quantitative Standards**

### **A. Formula for Graduates**

$$([\text{Student/faculty ratio}] \times [\text{number of FTEF}=2]) \div (\text{number of years to complete the degree}) = \text{minimum \# of graduates per year.}$$

#### **Variables:**

Student/faculty ratio—derived from the base adequacy policy

Number of FTEF—two faculty FTE assumed per program

Number of years to complete the degree—baccalaureate (4);  
masters/professional (3); doctoral (5)

***Illustrative Calculations:***

Bachelor's degree in Business:  $24 \text{ Students/Faculty} \times 2 \text{ FTEF} \div 4 \text{ years} = 12$   
graduates per year

Master's degree in Business:  $11 \text{ Students/Faculty} \times 2 \text{ FTEF} \div 3 \text{ years} = 7$   
graduates per year

Doctorate in Business:  $9 \text{ Students/Faculty} \times 2 \text{ FTEF} \div 5 \text{ years} = 4$   
graduates per year

Professional degree in Law:  $17 \text{ Students/Faculty} \times 2 \text{ FTEF} \div 3 \text{ years} = 11$   
graduates per year

**B. Formula for FTE enrollment**

$([\text{Student/faculty ratio}] \times [\text{number of FTEF}=2]) = \text{FTE enrollment.}$

**C. Four-Year Institution Quantitative Standards by Discipline and Level**

Discipline Groupings (as per Base Adequacy)	Baccalaureate		Masters/Prof		Doctoral	
	FTE	Grads	FTE	Grads	FTE	Grads
<b>Group 1</b>	48	12	22	7	18	4
Area Studies						
Business & Management						
Interdisciplinary Studies						
Library Science						
Military Science						
Public Affairs						
Social Sciences						
Study Abroad						
<b>Group 2</b>	40	10	20	7	16	3
Communications						
Education						
Home Economics						
Letters						
Mathematics						
Psychology						
<b>Group 3a</b>	36	9	18	6	14	3
Agriculture & Nat Resources						
Architecture & Env Design						
Computer/Information Sys						
Fine & Applied Arts						
Foreign Languages						
<b>Group 3b</b>	36	9	16	5	12	2
Biological Sciences						
Engineering						
Physical Sciences	24	6	14	5	10	2
Health Professions <sup>1</sup>						
Pharmacy						
<b>Other</b>	-	-	34	11	-	-
Law						

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<sup>1</sup> Excludes medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine

## D. Utilization of Quantitative Standards in Program Productivity Review

**Stage 1** of the program productivity review consists of SCHEV notifying institutions as to which programs have not satisfied both applicable standards (FTE and Grads) as specified in the table above. Upon receiving this notice, institutions should promptly review the information for targeted programs available on SCHEV's [policy and data tools page](https://research.schev.edu/PolicyandDataToolsPage) (<https://research.schev.edu/Productivity/>), and report any apparent data inaccuracies to SCHEV's Policy Analytics Unit. If a data correction results in a program satisfying a previously failed quantitative standard, that program will be removed as a target of the productivity review. At this time, institutions will list all degree program discontinuances since the last program productivity review on the "History of Discontinued Programs Form." Institutions will also report to SCHEV, using the "Targeted Program Exemptions Form" whether they wish to exercise any of the following options to remove eligible programs from further review:

- Five-Year Exemption. Any program that has been in existence for five or fewer years (i.e., since 2014-15) may be exempt from review, at request of the institution.
- Aggregating Data for Programs at the Same Level. For programs that offer more than one degree option in the same subject at the same level, SCHEV may consider aggregated data for all options at that level (e.g. BA/BS in Sociology, or MA/MFA in Music). Normally, this option will require that the aggregated programs have the same CIP code.
- Aggregating Data for Programs at the Master's and Doctoral Levels. For programs with the same CIP code that are offered at the master's and doctoral levels, data on enrollment and graduates may be combined to meet the applicable productivity standards. In such cases, aggregated data for the programs must satisfy the aggregated productivity standards for the programs in question.

## V. Justification of Targeted Programs on Qualitative Grounds

If a targeted program is not eligible for the five-year exemption and "data aggregation" does not apply, the institution must submit a completed "Institutional Action Form," indicating whether it will discontinue the program or seek to justify its continuation. If seeking continuation, the institution must indicate which qualitative criteria apply to

the program in question and submit supporting documentation for each criterion. Qualitative criteria are indicated on the Institutional Action Form. In general, in order for a proposed justification to be successful, the targeted program must receive a compelling defense in terms of mission centrality, efficient use of resources, quality, and institutional commitment. The specified qualitative criteria are intended to elicit a full range of factors according to which a compelling defense can be made. SCHEV may request additional information with regard to any particular targeted program or with regard to an institution's overall approach to program productivity review and program discontinuances.

## **VI. Staff Recommendations and Council Action**

Following review of institutional submissions, staff will recommend actions to Council. Council action will generally be to continue or discontinue a targeted program. In certain exceptional cases, Council may place restrictions or ask for follow-up reports on a program that has been approved to continue. In cases where an institution and SCHEV staff have not been able to come to agreement on a program or programs, the institution may request to appear before Council before final action is taken.

## Appendix

### Virginia Community College System—Standards for Productivity Review of Associate Degree Programs

The Virginia Community College System systematically reviews programs and courses for all twenty-three community colleges. The Council of Higher Education has delegated to the State Board for Community Colleges responsibility for review and discontinuance of any associate degree program that is nonproductive, based on the following:

- Through existing campus-based processes, each community college will systematically review each degree program at least once every five years;
- Based on CIP code and standards congruent with SCHEV’s minimum standards for productivity, the VCCS will systematically monitor FTE enrollments and numbers of graduates for all approved associate degree programs;
- For any program that does not meet standards, colleges will submit to the VCCS: (1) a plan to phase out the program; (2) justification for continuing the program; or (3) strategies to enhance the program’s productivity.
- Consistent with SCHEV’s procedures for productivity review, the VCCS will report to SCHEV at least once every five years the results of its program productivity review and describe any proposed changes to its policies and procedures.

#### Quantitative Standards for Associate Degree Programs

Institutional Size	Degree Program							
	Transfer (AA, AS, AA&S)		AAS Agriculture & Natural Resources, Business, Arts & Design, Public Service Technologies		AAS Engineering, Mechanical, and Industrial Technologies		AAS Health Technologies	
	FTES <sup>2</sup>	Grads	FTES	Grads	FTES	Grads	FTES	Grads
Less than 1800	17	12	13	8	9	6	7	5
1800-4999	22	15	16	11	12	8	9	6
5000 or greater <sup>3</sup>	24	17	18	12	13	9	10	7

<sup>2</sup> To determine number of FTES and graduates, a factor of .7 was used for institutions under 1800 and .9 was used for institutions with 1800-4999 FTES (VCCS efficiency ratio).

<sup>3</sup> SCHEV will continue to review programs at Richard Bland College using standards of 24 FTES and 17 graduates for transfer associate degree programs.