Committee on Special Academic Programs

Total Meetings: 5  Meeting frequency: As Needed  Average hours of committee work each week: Varies

Total Issues Reviewed: 11  Total of reviewed issues deferred from the previous year: 0  Total issues deferred to the coming academic year: 0

Listing of bylaw changes proposed:
None

Listing of committee policies established or revised:
None

Issues considered by the committee:
Procedures for regular review of the special academic programs on campus.
Timeline for review of the special academic programs on campus.
Schedule for review of the special academic programs on campus.
The appropriate channels to go through when the committee seeks information about a program.
The necessity of requesting clarification and follow-up information regarding information provided in a self-study report.
The kinds of activities that qualify for academic credit.
The coordination between theory and practice in an academic program.
How best to advise COCI on the evaluation of courses in special academic programs.
Proposal to establish the International and Academic English Program.
Revision of template to remove requests for comprehensive information about a special academic program’s financial status, budget, and funding that are unrelated to academic impacts.
Development of committee assessment process internal document.

Recommended procedural or policy changes for the coming year:
None

Committee's narrative:
This committee is a part of the Undergraduate Council. The committee is charged to oversee all special undergraduate academic programs on the UC Davis campus and to advise faculty and the administration on the establishment and operation of newly initiated programs. The committee is also charged to review periodically all programmatic functions of the special academic programs, including but not limited to the publications of material defining/describing the program, the recruitment, orientation and advising of students in each program,
guidance in the selection of mentors for such students, coordination of special activities, oversight of the general welfare of said students, and the effectiveness of the programs in meeting their stated educational objectives.

The review of three special academic programs and the evaluation of the new special academic program review process were the committee's priorities for 2014-15. The Special Academic Program Self-Study Report template was reviewed and analyzed for effectiveness in gathering substantive data, as part of the evaluation of the program review process.

The three special academic programs reviewed were: the Physical Education Program (PHE); the Military Science Program (R.O.T.C.); and the Student Farm Program. Outcomes of the review process included: substantiating sound procedures for review of special academic programs, some of which procedures had been crafted the year before; developing analysis and reporting of data provided and data requested for analysis, based on the data received and analyses of that data; substantiating the timeline for the special academic program review process; changing the special academic program review schedule; developing the appropriate procedure by which the Committee on Special Academic Programs (SAP) can advise the Committee on Courses of Instruction (COCI).

The changes to the special academic program review schedule included: consolidating the Integrated Studies Honors Program and the Davis Honors Challenge program into the University Honors Program; rescheduling the Freshman Seminars program review from 2016-17 to 2015-16; renaming the Freshman Seminars program as the First-Year Seminars program; adding UC Davis Study Abroad to the review schedule; and deleting the College of Engineering Honors Program from the review schedule. (This deletion came about when research revealed that that particular program did not exist, while the College of Engineering Chemical Engineering and Materials Science Honors Program proved to be a departmental program that had been reviewed when the department was reviewed.)

The first week of October 2014, the Chair of the Davis Division Undergraduate Council drew attention to a “Career Discovery Groups Program” that offers academic credit and that should be put on the list of special academic programs to be reviewed by the Committee on Special Academic Programs. However, a formal proposal regarding the establishment of a “Career Discovery Groups Program” was not brought forward, to the knowledge of the Committee on Special Academic Programs. So, no committee action was taken in regard to this program.

On June 8, 2015, program review notification letters were sent to those special academic programs to be reviewed 2015-16. These were designated as Group 2: the University Honors Program (which program is the consolidation of the Integrated Studies Honors Program and the Davis Honors Challenge program); and the First-Year Seminars program (formerly known as the Freshman Seminars program).
Special academic programs continued to be defined by their capacity to give academic credit or an academic experience to UC Davis undergraduates, which programs are not under the direct supervision of undergraduate majors in academic departments, do not lead to a degree, and are not subject to review by another committee of the Davis Division of the Academic Senate. The 2014-15 Committee on Special Academic Programs maintained: the understanding that a special academic program’s giving academic credit was distinguished from the program’s providing a campus administrative service or function; the review process for special academic programs was distinguished from the process for ending/closing a program; and the established reasonable and systematized process of scrutiny was best practice.

In addition to the issues listed on page one of this annual report, the topics that the committee considered were: the purpose of a special academic program; the object of a special academic program; the point at which a special academic program’s budget needed to be looked at; the student perspective of a special academic program; the departmental perspective of a special academic program; and the campus perspective of a special academic program.

A significant outcome of the committee’s foregoing considerations were the crafting and use of a rubric that defined the requirements for a course to be eligible for academic credit that involved scrutiny of theory and practice. The application of the rubric to the courses of the three special academic programs reviewed led to the following conclusions: substantiation that each was a special academic program as defined above; substantiation that most of the courses in the programs reviewed met the rigors for the granting of academic credit and should continue as currently structured; determination of those courses for which there was no “theory” component or written assessment of student learning; distinction of a course as pure practice; distinction of academic training from vocational training; distinction of appropriate utilization of standards of academic rigor; distinction of courses that followed accepted pedagogical standards in their mode of delivery and organization; distinction of hands-on experiences that reinforce the theory learned in lecture and reading; and creation of viable assessment reports with sound recommendations.

After completing its assessment of the Physical Education, the Military Science and the Student Farm special academic programs and submitting a separate report for each to the Undergraduate Council, the committee evaluated the special academic program review process and procedures. The outcome of this evaluation was the production of a committee assessment procedure document. This document chronicles the stages of the review process, identifies those elements of the process that proved useful, and provides guidance on best practices to future committee memberships. The document is an internal committee document to be developed and refined over the course of subsequent review cycles.

One outcome of the evaluation of the review process was the elimination of the requests for comprehensive financial, budget, and funding information. This information did not play a role in determining whether the academic rigors for academic credit were met. And, the committee concluded that the elimination of these requests would streamline the program review process—lighten the
workload burden of programs that do not need to produce the information and
the workload burden of the committee members who focus on the degree to
which program courses merit academic credit.

The committee also reviewed and commented on the proposal to establish the
International and Academic English Program.

Respectfully submitted,

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Raul Aranovich
Mark Rashid
Robert Taylor
Joan Frank, Academic Federation Representative
Bryan Rodman, Resource Analyst