Approved by Undergraduate Council: March 17, 2014

Special Academic Programs: Committee on Special Academic Programs

The Committee on Special Academic Programs (Committee) provides oversight, guidance and insurance, by way of review, of approved and earned academic credit in special academic programs. The Committee’s review will consider the point of view of the program, student and campus. The Committee reviews programs that award academic credit but do not offer an undergraduate degree. As representative agents of the university, special academic programs are held to academic standards of quality commensurate to Academic Senate standards, treated to the same levels of scrutiny, accountability and responsibility for the quality of instruction, and contribute to a well-rounded UC Davis education. The establishment, revision, and disestablishment of Special Academic Programs require Academic Senate approval.

Special Academic Program Definition: A Special Academic Program provides academic credit or academic experience to UC Davis undergraduates, which 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.

Academic Senate Baseline Expectations of a Special Academic Program: Any program that offers academic credit to student must be under the supervision of members of the Academic Senate. A program committee makes academic decisions for the program and plays a key role in program reviews. Any course with academic course credit may only be offered by instructors with instructional appointments in an academic unit that are recognized by the Academic Senate.

Charge of Committee on Special Academic Programs:

a. To oversee all special undergraduate academic programs and to advise the faculty and the administration on the establishment and operation of newly initiated programs.

b. To review periodically all programmatic functions of the special programs, including but not limited to the following: the publications of material defining/describing the program; the recruitment, orientation and advising of students in each program; guidance in the selection of instructors and mentors for students in the programs; coordination of special activities; oversight of the general welfare of students in the programs; and the effectiveness of the programs in meeting their stated educational objectives.

Committee on Special Academic Programs Membership: The Committee shall consist of five members, with balanced representation from the colleges offering undergraduate instruction and from the professional schools. In addition, there shall be one undergraduate student representative and one representative from the Academic Federation.

Establishment or Revision of a Special Academic Program: Establishment, revision or disestablishment of a special academic program must be reviewed and approved by the Davis Division of the Academic Senate. The proposal is initiated by the interested group (provost, dean, department, etc.). The proposal must describe the unique benefit the program provides to undergraduate students and the UC Davis community. The proposal must include a description of academic structure including Academic Senate faculty oversight of curriculum by a program committee. The initiator shall consult with affected units (schools, colleges) for input and
assistance in proposal preparation and requirements. The proposal is to be submitted to the Chair of the Davis Division of the Academic Senate for review by standing committees such as, Undergraduate Council (including Committee on Special Academic Programs) and Committee on Planning and Budget.

**Periodic Review of Special Academic Programs:** The Committee will establish a schedule for Special Academic Program Review. The following are typical factors of interest to the Committee during a review:

- Is the program’s level of academic rigor in line with UC Davis’ expectations?
- For which activities are students awarded academic credit in the program?
- How are students demonstrating the level of their learning?
- Is the academic credit earned by students in the program commensurate with their efforts?
- Are there trends in student achievement and/or academic rigor of the program?
- Has the program stayed true to its stated objectives?
- How does the program impact student time to degree?
- Confirm a process is in place outside the Special Academic Programs Review to routinely evaluate program administrative structure effectiveness and fiscal health.
Description of general review process:

1. Programs to be reviewed over the course of the next academic year are notified at the beginning of the previous spring quarter by written correspondence. The Committee Chair will convene a meeting with program leaders describing review expectations, self-review process, timeline, faculty and program administration responsibilities and data that will be provide to the program.

2. The Academic Senate will solicit data that will be made available to the program by the end of May (including program instruction, number of students, instructors, etc.)

3. During the summer a self-review will be performed by the program and a report will be submitted to the Committee by the beginning of fall quarter.
   a. At minimum, Academic Senate members of the program will be responsible for preparing a document, to be submitted to the Committee, that describes:
      i. The program’s academic goals and objectives
      ii. How the academic goals and objectives are achieved
      iii. The academic learning outcomes of the program
      iv. The program’s impact on the academic mission of the campus
      v. Representative sample of teaching assessment performed by the program over at least the last year.
   b. At minimum, the program administrators will be responsible for preparing a document that describes:
      i. Student participation in the program since the last review
      ii. List of all course and instructors along with their academic teaching titles who have taught in the program for the seven years categorized per year and number of students participating in the program.
      iii. Financial summary of the administrative cost associated with the program.
   c. The program administrators may be asked to provide, at the Committee’s request, and for use at the Committee’s discretion:
      i. Any annual reports and self-reviews, including polls of student participants and course evaluations
      ii. Access to staff, participating students and participating faculty or instructors for interview by the Committee.

4. During the summer the Committee announces the membership of its internal review committee to the program and solicits opinions of any perceived conflicts of interest. The Committee will be making the final decision on review committee membership.

5. During the fall quarter the Committee’s internal review committee analyzes data gathered and drafts a summary report. Once the Committee’s report in drafted, it will be submitted to the program’s director, who will be able to bring factual corrections only to the attention of the Committee.

6. Early winter quarter a finalized Committee report will be submitted to the Undergraduate Council seeking approval of its recommendations. Once approved, the report and its recommendations are distributed to the director of the program, to program’s administrative head to the Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education and to the Provost.

7. Review findings will be summarized in the Committee’s annual report to the Academic Senate.
8. By the following fall, the program needs to indicate how it will be responding to the recommendations, and by the end of that academic year must report as to the progress of meeting all the recommendations to the Committee.

The Committee reserves the right initiate a review of a program at any time. The Committee may initiate at any time informal discussions with program administrators or other concerned parties on any pertinent academic issues facing such programs. In addition to special academic program reviews, the Committee may separately review any issues that cut across the special academic programs on campus, such as:

- Effectiveness of publicity and recruitment
- Availability of information about special academic programs on campus
- Duplication of effort across programs
- Utilization of special academic programs to student population based upon college, major, or academic standing.