

S93-14 CURRICULAR PRIORITIES; ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

Legislative History:

Document dated May 13, 1993.

At its meeting of May 3, 1993, the Academic Senate approved the following Policy Recommendation presented by Kay Schwartz for the Curriculum and Research Committee.

This policy supersedes S 79-2 and was approved as University Policy effective immediately.

Copies sent to Executive Committee and Academic Senate

ACTION BY THE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT:

"Approved as University Policy". Signed: J. Handel Evans, May 13, 1993.

CURRICULAR PRIORITIES

S 93-14

Supersedes S 79-2.

Whereas, The current statement on Curricular Priorities at San Jose State University has proven to be difficult to implement; and

Whereas, The current statement on Curricular Priorities needs to be revised in light of fourteen years of curricular changes and developments at San Jose State University; and

Whereas, Recent events underscore the need for San Jose State University to be able to rationally plan its curriculum; now, therefore be it

Resolved, That the attached document, "The Curricular Priorities of San Jose State University", be adopted as policy.

THE CURRICULAR PRIORITIES OF SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

This statement of curricular priorities provides a tool for the rational evaluation of the San Jose State University curriculum. It is to guide any decisions to add, expand, eliminate, consolidate, reduce, or review programs. It is to be employed by all those who are charged with making such decisions.

B. Curricular Priorities defined

The university strives to achieve its mission by providing students with opportunities for education that are appropriate to varied points in their educational development. These opportunities are formalized as courses and programs that collectively constitute a curriculum.

It is unlikely that any university possesses sufficient resources to provide a curriculum that satisfies all demands at the highest level of quality. In the face of limited resources, choices must be made between various potential parts of a university curriculum. These choices are a university's curricular priorities.

C. Considerations for application

Those who are given the responsibility of applying this statement of curricular priorities should consider the following:

A product of the whole university community:

The Mission Statement and these accompanying Curricular Priorities are the fundamental documents that shape San Jose State University. Because of their importance, they were crafted with the broadest possible consensus of the San Jose State University community and approved through collegial means. These documents should be implemented with the same community spirit that created them.

A holistic view of an entire university curriculum:

The whole of a university is more than the sum of its parts. Some vital components of the University's curriculum, such as General Education and Teacher Education, either contribute to or draw from many programs. Since curricular priorities are largely implemented by the allocation of resources to particular instructional programs, the implementation of curricular priorities should be tempered with a broad vision of the whole university.

Traditional commitments to students in the service region:

Curricular priorities should be implemented with due regard for the roles that the university has historically played for students within its service region. San Jose State University has been dedicated to providing access to higher education to a wide range of students. It has provided students with broad choices of fields of study, including professional studies as well as those in the liberal arts. It has served the needs of students at different stages in their intellectual development by providing instruction at the lower division, upper division, and graduate levels. It also has historical relationships with community colleges and public universities as specified in the California Master Plan for Higher Education. It would not be appropriate for these curricular priorities to greatly modify such commitments; any such modification should be the subject of a separate and sustained public debate within the university community.

The ordering of criteria:

The eight criteria offered below are provided in order of priority (A-H). However, this ordering in no way implies that criteria lower on the list are unimportant, but that they are all relevant and useful guides in curricular planning. This ordering of criteria is intended to be applied with due regard for the sophistication and complexity of each individual case. Notes are contained for each criterion that may tend to modify its importance depending upon relevant circumstances.

Finally, as a general rule, only the eight main criteria are presented in order of priority. Unless a sub-list is specifically designated as being offered in order of priority, its order has no special significance.

II. Criteria for the evaluation of the curriculum at San Jose State University

A. Centrality to Mission

1. Explained:

The Mission of San Jose State University is:

to enrich the lives of its students, to transmit knowledge to its students along with the necessary skills for applying it in the service of our society, and to expand the base of knowledge through research and scholarship.

2. Considerations for application:

Centrality to the Mission of the University can be determined by considering the extent to which programs contribute to the attainment of its stated goals by providing, for both undergraduate and graduate students:

- in-depth knowledge of o major field of study.
- broad understanding of the sciences, social sciences, humanities, and the arts.
- skills in communication and in critical inquiry.
- multi-cultural and global perspectives gained through intellectual and social exchange with people of diverse economic and ethnic backgrounds.
- active participation in professional, artistic, and ethnic communities.
- responsible citizenship and an understanding of ethical choices inherent in human development.

3. Notes on relative priority among other criteria:

- This criterion has precedence over all others.
- While "Centrality to Mission" is the first criterion, it may not differentiate between the many actual or possible programs that would contribute to the mission. The remaining criteria provide narrower guidance within the boundaries of the more expansive Mission Statement.

B. Quality of instructional program

1.Explained:

The overall quality of a program is predicated upon three separate but related elements: quality of the academic program (in terms of curricular content and faculty expertise), quality of instruction, and benefit to students.

2. Considerations for application:

- For quality of academic program:

Assessment by the University program planning process.

Accreditation by an appropriately recognized accrediting agency, if applicable.

Faculty expertise and currency in their discipline.

- For quality of instruction:

Surveys of student opinion of teaching effectiveness.

Expectations of student achievement.

Effective student advising.

Student outcomes assessment.

- For benefit to student:

Student performance, student awards.

Success of graduates.

Graduation rates (i.e., degree to which a program helps insure a timely progression of students to the completion of a degree) compared to those of similar programs.

- The preferred technique for evaluating a program's instructional quality is comparative; care must be taken to assure that comparisons be as objective as possible:

For example, the relative quality of a program is best determined by comparing it with similar programs at other universities.

The relative quality of a program can seldom be determined by comparing it with dissimilar programs at SJSU.

3. Notes on relative priority among other criteria:

- In general higher quality programs that contribute to the mission of the university are preferred over lower quality programs that also seek to contribute to the mission of the university.

- Programs of low quality that are nonetheless essential for other reasons may need additional resources in order to improve.

- Programs of high quality may be dispensable if student demand is absent (see below).

C. Student demand

1. Explained:

Measurable indicators of student interest in the program, provided that there is an adequate body of

knowledge to justify the existence of the program as an academic field.

2. Considerations for application:

Indicators of student demand include actual enrollment, potential enrollment, and enrollment trends:

- Course enrollments that are appropriate to the method of instruction and the discipline.
- Number of students sufficient to support appropriate program offerings in the program's major field of study (or minor, concentration, waiver program, etc.)
- A sustained student interest in the program at a sufficient level to meet the above criteria.
- Total number of students served by the program.
- Hypothetical enrollments should all student demand be satisfied.
- Application and admissions data.

3. Notes on relative priority among other criteria:

- Student demand takes on a special importance as a "threshold" indicator. If there is an insufficient number of students to make a program viable, then all other criteria become moot.
- Heavy student demand suggests that other criteria might also be high such as interdependence of programs or societal need for the program.

D. Societal need:

1.Explained:

A program is needed by society if it does one or more of the following:

- Teaches fundamental intellectual skills, such as critical inquiry, aesthetics, creativity, communication, and quantitative and deductive reasoning, that are necessary or beneficial for all individuals.
- Provides knowledge about society that facilitates responsible citizenship, such as civics, ethics, history, global and multi-cultural perspectives, and all forms of knowledge that contribute to broad social understanding.

- Prepares students to apply knowledge and skills in the service of their society and the solution of its problems.

2. Considerations for application:

- Hiring of graduates by the private, public, and non-profit sectors.
- Responsiveness to challenges facing society and the economy with attention to regional needs.
- Development and growth of students into individuals able to critically view and appreciate their society and fully participate as democratic citizens.
- External support for program as indicated by community involvement or financial assistance.
- Demonstrable needs for the scholarship of a program.
- Community service by faculty and/or students.

3. Notes on relative priority among other criteria:

- In general, programs needed by society that meet all higher criteria are preferred over less needed programs that also meet all higher criteria.

E. Financial resource effectiveness, viability, and efficiency

1. Explained

Financial resources have never been adequate at SJSU to satisfy all aspirations or to fund all plans. As a consequence, the capacity to retain academic programs as well as improve their quality involves joining academic planning with well-designed strategies for managing revenues and costs. At the program level as well as for the university overall, resource evaluation and planning must involve several perspectives. These perspectives are offered in order of priority:

- a. The first perspective is effectiveness, the extent to which stated goals are or can be attained with the resources available.
- b. The second perspective is viability, the extent to which a program can function at an appropriate level of quality within current and projected state support or supplemented by non-state resources such as continuing education, grants, industry support, and private donations.

c. The third perspective is efficiency, the extent to which goals are attained at the most reasonable cost to the university.

2. Considerations for application:

a. For effectiveness:

Capacity to successfully meet goals with current resources.

Capacity to meet enrollment and service goals established by the university.

Capacity to meet emerging trends in the field.

b. For viability:

Program capacity and willingness to augment state resources with non-state resources in an ethically and legally acceptable manner (acknowledging that not all programs have similar earning potentials or sources.)

c. For efficiency:

Relationship of resource consumption to resource generation.

Opportunity taken or plans made to contain or reduce costs through resource sharing with other programs, prudent management, or innovative instructional methods.

Relationship of actual student-faculty ratio to student-faculty ratio established for the program.

3. Notes on relative priority among other:

a. In general, more effective programs that meet all higher criteria are preferred over less effective programs that also meet all higher criteria.

b. Viability becomes crucial if a program's resources drop below the "critical mass" necessary to sustain it. This criterion by itself cannot answer the question whether such a program should be maintained at the minimum threshold or eliminated entirely; that decision would depend upon higher criteria.

c. Efficiency or lack of efficiency may sometimes be outweighed by other criteria:

Some programs of high quality or high societal need may sometimes be preferred over more efficient programs that are of lesser quality or that fulfill fewer societal needs.

Conversely, relatively efficient programs may be dispensable if they fail to satisfy other criteria, such as "Societal Need" or "Quality of Instructional Program."

Costly programs that are nonetheless important by the standards of the other criteria may need to be retained, and if they can be made more efficient their chances for retention will be improved.

F. Interdependence of programs

1. Explained:

In addition to or in place of offering a baccalaureate or graduate degree, some programs provide a basic general education on which other programs can build, and some also provide specific courses to serve the needs of other programs. Conversely, some programs are dependent upon other programs for these services.

Whether a program is a provider or a consumer of inter-program services, reducing or increasing the resources allocated to that program may have a major impact on other programs.

In short, programs seldom operate in isolation, but are often interdependent with each other. The extent of interdependence needs to be considered in the evaluation process.

2. Considerations for application:

- The extent to which a program prepares students for work in other programs.
- The extent to which a program directly serves the needs of other programs, by providing specialized training.
- The converse of the above two--the extent to which a program is dependent upon instruction offered by other programs.
- This criterion applies primarily to two categories of instruction: service courses and general education.

3. Notes on relative priority among other criteria:

- In general, programs that provide courses and services to meet university-wide requirements or essential services to other programs will be preferred over programs that do not.
- While seldom decisive on its own, this is a useful supplementary criterion. The actual priority of any interdependent program will vary, in part, with the number and priorities of the programs with which it is linked.

G. Capacity to contribute to an academic field

1. Explained:

The program contributes to the advancement of its field in ways that go beyond the instruction of students.

2. Considerations for application:

- Collective contributions by the program, such as professional journals, symposia, research activity, and events in the public interest that are sponsored by the program.

- Individual contributions by the faculty members and students of the program, such as quality publications, works of art, performances, inventions, contributions to the community, etc.

3. Notes on relative priority among other criteria:

- While seldom decisive on its own, this is a useful supplementary criterion.

- All higher criteria being equal, a program that demonstrates an outstanding record of scholarship or community contribution will be preferred over a program that does not demonstrate such achievements.

H. Availability of instructional alternatives

1. Explained:

SJSU cannot determine its priorities in a vacuum. The availability of instruction in other public and private contexts may be a relevant factor in setting priorities.

2. Considerations for application:

- Availability of comparable instruction at other institutions of higher education within the region.

- Availability of comparable instruction in business and industrial settings.

- If the above two points suggest that alternatives to SJSU's instruction exist, then the alternative needs to be compared with SJSU's program in the following ways:

Quality of instruction.

Number of (additional) students the alternative program can accommodate.

Cost of the alternative for students.

Other uses of funds by the university.

3. Notes on relative priority among other criteria

- This is a useful supplementary criterion that can, under some circumstances, become decisive.

- The decisiveness of this criterion often depends upon the related criterion of student demand:

When the criterion of student demand is strong for SJSU, the availability of alternative means of instruction is usually irrelevant.

When student demand is marginal, the availability (or lack thereof) of alternatives to a program may prove decisive.