Resolution on UW System Draft Policy 102: Program Productivity Monitoring

WHEREAS the UW-Madison Faculty Senate recognizes the importance of regular program review to evaluate the deployment of resources to ensure their most effective use to ensure program quality and achievement of campus mission and strategic goals;

WHEREAS the expenditure of resources for programs of little value to students takes away resources from programs serving large segments of the student population;

WHEREAS students may consider some programs valuable for certificates and coursework while not necessarily wanting to major in them;

WHEREAS we recognize that UW System plays a role in ensuring institutions are offering the appropriate array of programs and has the authority to approve certain actions, at the same time curricular control lies with the faculty of the institution, not System administration;

WHEREAS UW System has appointed a task force to review SYS Policy 102, Sec. 6.3, "Monitoring Low-Degree-Producing Academic Degree Programs," the charge for which includes "Create a new policy for monitoring low-degree-producing academic degree programs that has clearly defined criteria, monitoring thresholds, and a means to eliminate programs that do not meet expectations.";

WHEREAS UW System has requested comment on the proposed modifications to SYS 102 by December 21, 2018;

WHEREAS the proposed new SYS 102 Program Productivity Monitoring Policy establishes a single metric (number of graduates over a five-year period) as the sole determiner of a program's value without regard (except in the appeal process) to campus mission, campus size, strategic goals, interrelations of programs, importance of programs for recruiting and retention, or actual program costs;

WHEREAS the faculty representatives to UW System and others have proposed alternative measurements of program productivity, including but not limited to FTE/major and majors/total students;

WHEREAS Master's programs partnered with a PhD program cost very little to maintain, are for the purpose of serving the rare student who seeks only a master's degree in the field or a student who chooses not to finish the PhD, and should thus be considered as a single program for the purposes of this policy;

WHEREAS each campus has better data on its own programs than are available to System and, more specifically, System relies on CDR data, which may identify programs as low-degree when they are not;

WHEREAS UW-Madison has a robust and efficient program monitoring and review process and a longstanding degree policy already in place;

WHEREAS the proposed new SYS 102 Policy mandates closure of programs rather than flexibility for local campuses to determine the best ways to deploy resources for meeting local needs;

WHEREAS identified programs in the proposed policy are given only three years to address program deficiencies, which is not enough time to meet the metric based on changes made in response to having been identified as a low-production program, and other timelines indicated in the proposed policy do not conform to the standard academic calendar or program review process; and

WHEREAS the proposed policy removes final decision-making over programs from institutions and established shared governance processes;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the UW-Madison Faculty Senate requests that this draft policy not be approved in its present form;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we only accept the proposed metric as a way to identify programs for further evaluation and consideration and not as a valid index for determining a program's value;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the final decision to keep or cut a program must be made at the institutional level where mission, strategic goals, interrelations with other programs, student needs, and other factors can be considered through shared governance processes;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that appeals regarding program decisions should be heard and evaluated by existing governance procedures; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that UW System should not substitute itself for existing shared governance processes in local curriculum or programmatic decisions.

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