First Monday Report

Focus on
Program Approval

Issue 31, April 11, 2016

## Upcoming Events:

April 17   College Open House:
              Beyond Farm Walk
              9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
              Campus-wide

April 20   Alternative Sexualities
              Sexuality & Diversity
              Film Festival
              7:00 p.m.
              The Great Hall

April 22   Earth Day

April 30   Health Awareness Night
              6:30 p.m.
              South Gym

What is a "program" and how is it approved?

On the website of the State Chancellor's Office is a document called the *Program and Course Approval Handbook** (PCAH). The Fifth Edition of the PCAH, which replaces all previous editions, was published in September 2013. This handbook covers the guidelines for course and program approval and is required by law; it was first published in 1985 with revisions in 1987, 2001, 2003, 2009, 2012 and 2013. As stated in the document, the purpose of the Handbook is to assist "administrators, faculty, and staff in the development of programs and courses and the submission of these proposals for review by the [State] Chancellor's Office" (PCAH, p7).
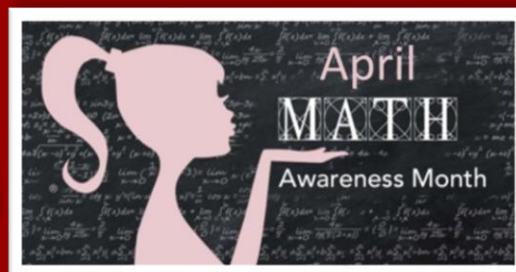
Program and Course Approval Handbook…

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According to the PCAH:

> By statute, the Board of Governors has statewide responsibility for approving all new instructional programs and courses offered by community colleges. This mandate is one of the earliest and most basic legislative charges to the Board. Before 1968, approval of programs for junior colleges was the responsibility of the State Board of Education. When the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges was created by the Legislature in 1968, this responsibility was transferred to the new Board, which is detailed in California Education Code section 70901. …

> The *Program and Course Approval Handbook* was developed to provide the CCC [California Community College] system with general guidelines and instructions for the submission of curriculum for approval and maintenance. … Each published edition of the *Handbook* replaces preceding editions (PCAH p. 9).

What is a "program?"

As defined in Title 5, section 55000(g), a program is "an organized sequence of courses leading to a defined objective, a degree, a certificate, a diploma, a license, or transfer to another institution of higher education." Functionally, the State Chancellor's Office approves "only associate's degrees and those credit certificates that community colleges wish to award to students and which will be listed on transcripts" (PCAH, p. 20).

According to the *Handbook*:

> The types of educational programs that must be submitted to the [State] Chancellor's Office for approval are the following:

Credit Programs
- Associate Degrees – traditional A.A. or A.S. and A.A.-T/A.S.-T
- Certificates of Achievement that require 18 or more semester units (or 27 or more quarter units)
- Certificates of Achievement that require 12 to fewer than 18 or more semester units (or 18 to fewer than 27 quarter units [PCAH p.20])

Noncredit Programs
All noncredit programs that receive state funding must be submitted to the [State] Chancellor's Office for approval. These include course sequences in Career Development and College Preparation (CDCP) that lead to:
- Certificates of Competency – in a recognized career field articulated with degree-applicable coursework, completion of an associate degree, or transfer to a baccalaureate institution
- Certificates of Completion – leading to improved employability or job opportunities
- Adult High School Diploma (PCAH p. 20).

What is required in a program approval proposal?

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Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR) mandates the content of program and course proposals (PCAH p. 15). Supporting documentation for both credit and noncredit programs includes a narrative. As stated in the PCAH: "Narrative requirements are derived from statute, regulation, intersegmental agreements, guidelines provided by transfer institutions and industry, recommendations of accrediting institutions, and the standards of good practice established in the field of curriculum design and development" (PCAH p.56).

A degree or certificate "may have the following specified program goals:
- Career Technical Education (CTE)
- Transfer
- Career Technical Education (CTE) and Transfer
- Other – Designed to meet community needs" (PCAH p. 67).

Policies related to submitting program approval proposals for each of these goals is described below.

Career and Technical Education Program Goal:
A CTE program goal for a degree or certificate prepares students for employment immediately upon completion of the CTE degree or certificate. In addition, such a degree or certificate may assist students with upgrading employment skills; however, CTE programs cannot design curriculum for or limit enrollment to students already employed by a specific employer or in a particular industry unless a parallel program is readily available for students not employed by that employer or in that industry (PCAH p. 68).

The PCAH states that for a proposal with CTE as the goal: "Required documentation includes labor market information and analysis and an explanation of employer relationship. Justification of the need for a new CTE program is specifically required through a job market study, pursuant to Education Code section 78015" (PCAH p.68). The labor market information (LMI) data required in the proposal must be current and demonstrate that jobs are available in the next five years within the local service area of the college. Additionally, it must account for the projected number of completers at similar programs at other institutions within the geographical region (PCAH p. 85).

In addition to the labor market study, a new CTE program requires the recommendation of the local CTE program's Advisory Committee and the Career Technical Education Regional Consortium. There are seven regional consortia throughout the State of California that serve in this role. The Los Angeles area consortium is combined with Orange County; the Los Angeles Orange County Regional Consortium is known by the acronym LAOCRC.

The State Chancellor's Office relies on the advice of the regional consortia on the need for the proposed program in relationship to other community colleges serving the surrounding geographical area. However, this regional consortia recommendation is not absolute. If a college feels the lack of regional support was unjustified or unfair, it may submit the proposal without the regional consortium's endorsement. In these circumstances, the burden of proof falls to the proposal-submitting college to justify why the program should be approved without the recommendation of the regional consortium (PCAH p. 68).

Transfer Goal:
For a degree or certificate with a goal of transfer, the proposal must demonstrate that the program "prepares students to continue study in the same or similar area at a baccalaureate-granting institution" (PCAH, p. 69). All courses in the proposed degree must be transferrable, and the intent of the degree should be clearly articulated in the narrative portion of the proposal. Certificates with a transfer goal would include achievement of California

Requirements...

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State University (CSU) breadth requirements or the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) as described in Title 5, section 55070 (PCAH, p. 69).

The required documentation for transfer-goal program proposals includes 1) articulation information that demonstrates the required courses fulfill the majority of the lower-division requirements for the baccalaureate degree major, and/or 2) evidence of transfer agreements between the college and the baccalaureate institutions to which students may transfer. The proposal should demonstrate a "good-faith effort on the part of the college to assure that, to the extent possible, students will not have to repeat courses completed at the community college after they transfer" (PCAH p. 69).

Other (Designed to Meet Community Needs) Goal:

According to the PCAH:

> A degree or certificate with a program goal of "other" is used to develop degree majors or areas of emphasis designed to meet community needs and reflect the educational philosophy of the faculty in a discipline or disciplines. Evidence of need for program proposals is required. Required documentation can be in the form of survey results, letters of support from community agencies, or other regional data in support of the need.

> This type of proposal may have a broad area of emphasis, such as Social Sciences, or a theme-based area of emphasis that consists of an

interdisciplinary grouping of courses, such as American Studies, International Business, or Multicultural Studies. The required courses may not align with requirements for transfer, but nevertheless represent a cohesive packaging of courses (PCAH p. 69).

If the intent of the area of emphasis degree is to prepare students for transfer, then all of the required courses "must be transferable and must prepare students for a field of study offered at a baccalaureate institution" (PCAH, p. 92).

In addition to a new program receiving approval from the State Chancellor's Office, it must also be approved by the Accrediting Commission; thus, the design of interdisciplinary degree programs must consider the Standards of accreditation. Standard II.A.13 states that:

> All degree programs must include focused study in at least one area of inquiry or in an established interdisciplinary core. The identification of specialized courses in an area of inquiry or interdisciplinary core is based upon student learning outcomes and competencies, and include mastery, at the appropriate degree level, of key theories and practices within the field of study (Accreditation Standards p. 8).

According to the Accrediting Commission, an interdisciplinary core is defined as a set of courses required of all students completing the degree. Courses included in an interdisciplinary degree should be selected based on the "skills, knowledge, and habits of mind that students

Approval Proposal

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within the interdisciplinary program of study are expected to attain and demonstrate" (Accreditation Standards, p.8).

Traditional associate degree program proposals are required to identify the program's goal and objectives, which must be consistent with the mission of community colleges as defined in Education Code section 66010.4. The program must be designed at "the appropriate level for community colleges—that is, it must not be directed at a level beyond the associate degree or the first two years of college" (PCAH, p. 141). In addition, the program must fulfill a valid purpose, such as transfer, occupational, etc.; it "may not be primarily avocational or recreational" (PCAH, p. 141). The proposal must address the role the new program will play in relationship to the college's mission and current curricular offerings, and to the district's master plan and statewide master plan for higher education (PCAH p. 145).

A catalog description must be submitted along with the program requirements and course sequence. A projection of enrollment in the program and an estimate of how many students will complete the program annually once it is fully established and entered into the California Community College Curriculum Inventory is required (PCAH, pp. 142-146). In addition, the proposal must describe the place of the new program within the college's existing program inventory, including a discussion of related programs offered by the college (PCAH, p. 147). Finally, the proposal must describe "all similar programs offered by colleges within commuting distance of the college, commonly known as the 'college service area'" (PCAH p. 147). When two or more colleges in a region are seeking approval for similar programs, "evidence of collaboration is especially important" (PCAH, p.147). While competition is generally not an issue for transfer programs, it is important for the success of students to compare program requirements (PCAH, p. 147).

When seeking approval for a CTE program or combined transfer/CTE goal, additional documentation is required as described above in the section on a CTE program goal. This includes the labor market information, advisory committee recommendation, and evidence of discussion of the program proposal and a recommendation from the regional consortium (PCAH, p. 148-149).

How long does it take for programs to be approved?
Ideally, State Chancellor's Office review of proposals occurs within 60 days depending on the number of proposals received within a given time frame. However, if a response is not received within 60 days, there is no automatic approval of the program (PCAH p. 15). Proposals are reviewed on a first-in-first-out (FIFO) basis. The only exception to the FIFO approach is for Associate Degree-Transfer (AD-T) proposals, which currently take precedence over non AD-T program proposals (PCAH, p.50).

The State Chancellor's Office conducts a three-stage review of program proposals including intake, content analysis and technical assistance, and approval/denial (PCAH, p. 50). At intake, the proposal is reviewed to ensure that all required components are included and to provide any technical assistance "if inaccurate, incomplete or missing proposal requirements are identified" (PCAH, p. 51). At this stage, the proposal could be returned to the college with a status of "Revision Requested" (PCAH, p. 51). At the second stage of review, a deeper analysis of the proposal content is conducted and additional technical assistance is provided, if necessary. At the third and final stage of proposal review, a decision is rendered and the

How long for approval?

proposal is approved or denied (PCAH, p. 51). At each stage, the status of the proposal can be reviewed by college personnel with the appropriate access to the Curriculum Inventory; this is typically the vice president of Academic Affairs.

It should be noted that all programs and courses must receive State Chancellor's Office approval prior to the program or the course being offered at a community college (PCAH p. 16). Courses and programs without prior approval are not eligible to receive state apportionment.

Are there any other approvals required prior to the College offering a program of study?

In order to offer degrees and certificates, an additional step beyond approval by the local governing board and the State Chancellor's Office is required. In order for a program to be recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC)/Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) must formally approve the program via a substantive change proposal. If a program is not recognized by the ACCJC, students enrolled in the program are not eligible for financial aid or veterans benefits and the College is not allowed to collect state apportionment for the program.

Prior to submitting a substantive change proposal to the ACCJC, the program must first be approved by the State Chancellor's Office

through the processes described above. Degrees and certificates may not be awarded by the College and "are not eligible to collect state apportionment or federal support" prior to approval from both the State Chancellor's Office and the ACCJC (PCAH p. 59).

This article is intended to serve as a broad and brief overview of the program approval process. The PCAH is a robust resource and it is readily available online for anyone seeking a more in-depth exploration of the processes of course and program approval through the State Chancellor's Office.

*At cccco.edu, open the *System Operations* tab, select *Divisions* from the drop down menu and on the right drop down menu select *Academic Affairs*. The *Program and Course Approval Handbook* (PCAH) is accessible as a link under the Curriculum and Instruction heading.

References:
1. *Accreditation Standards, Cross-Walked, with Glossary Terms*, Adopted June 2014.
2. *Program and Course Approval Handbook (PCAH)*, 5th Edition.