

Report of Recommendations of the Great Basin College Agriculture Program Review Committee

April, 2014

INTRODUCTION

The Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) Code stipulates that low-yield programs “shall be evaluated for consideration for elimination or for continuation” as is outlined in detail in the policy below. During the months of March and April, this committee met twice weekly to review the GBC Agriculture Program’s productivity relating to the number of graduates and to establish grounds for any possible exemptions (3.0).

The committee conducted face-to-face, IAV, e-mail, and telephone interviews with the program director, Tracy Shane, Tech Prep Program Coordinator Heather Steele, community members who have a stake in agriculture and ranching, and students. The committee also reviewed recruitment, enrollment and graduation data, and the 2013 Preliminary Five-Year Agriculture Program Review.

GBC POLICY and PROCEDURE FOR LOW-YIELD PROGRAMS

At least every three years Great Basin College shall review the productivity of its academic programs that are at least 10 years old. To achieve this cycle, productivity reviews shall be done as part of the scheduled five-year program review cycle (GBC Policy 3.40) and then again two years after that. For each productivity review the data shall be used from the three years before the year of the review. Programs that meet the definition of low-yield programs through productivity reviews shall then be further evaluated for consideration for elimination or for continuation under an exemption or a written set of conditions.

Associate, baccalaureate, and stand-alone Certificate of Achievement (30 or more credits) programs shall be designated as low-yield if there are less than 20 graduates from any program in the last three consecutive years before the review. Certificate of Achievement programs whose curriculum is embedded into the content of an Associate of Applied Science degree shall have the numbers of graduates from these programs combined. (As an example, if within the evaluated three-year time frame a Laser Technology program has 14 AAS graduates and 12 Certificate graduates, this is not a low-yield program.) Emphases within a degree shall be combined as a total for the one degree. “Patterns of Study” are not approved degrees, and graduates with these patterns shall count toward the appropriate totals of Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees awarded.

This policy shall be in accordance with NSHE Code as prescribed in Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 6.

Procedures

1.0 Program Productivity Review Schedule

1.1. Upon adoption of this policy, all GBC programs older than 10 years shall undergo an initial screening for those meeting the low-yield definition and designation. Programs meeting the criteria for low-yield designation shall then be evaluated under the criteria for continuation or elimination and given appropriate recommendations. After the initial review, programs more than 10 years old shall have subsequent productivity reviews in conjunction with scheduled five-year program reviews. Two years after each five-year program review each program shall have a new productivity review.

1.2. The Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) shall maintain a schedule of program productivity reviews. A file of the reports of these reviews shall also be maintained. Programs may also be reviewed for productivity at any time by request of the President of the College or the VPAA.

2.0 Review Process

2.1. Program Data. As the first step in the program productivity review, the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness shall collect the pertinent data for subject programs. A form shall be developed that indicates the name of the program being reviewed, the different levels or emphases of the program that are being combined for review, the number of graduates in each of the previous three consecutive years, and two check boxes to indicate (1) meet the criteria for continuation, or (2) meet the criteria for further review as a low-yield program. This step involves only collecting and presenting the data and the initial determination of how a program meets the productivity criteria.

2.2. Programs Meeting Productivity Criteria. Programs that meet or exceed the minimum graduation productivity requirements provided in this policy shall require no further review until the next review cycle. The program reports shall be retained in the records of the Office of the VPAA.

2.3. Low-Yield Program Review. Programs designated as low-yield by the program data review must be further evaluated. If the productivity review is in conjunction with a five-year program review, the program review committee shall also provide an evaluation and recommendation on the program relating to its low-yield status. If the productivity review occurs outside of the five-year review cycle, the VPAA shall appoint a five-member review committee consisting of two faculty members of the department hosting the program, two faculty members from outside the department, and one member from the Curriculum and Articulation Committee not being a member of the department. A written report on the low-yield program shall include a recommendation to (1) eliminate the program, (2) allow its continuation under exemption

criteria, or (3) allow the program to continue subject to a defined set of conditions. The report with its recommendation shall be submitted to the faculty Curriculum and Articulation Committee for review and action and then be taken to the Faculty Senate for approval. The recommended action shall then be provided to the President's Council for action. A decision is made by the President of the College.

3.0 Exemption Criteria

3.1. Possible Exemptions from Elimination. A low-yield program may be exempted from elimination if it is determined that it meets any of the following criteria:

- a. Is central to the educational mission of GBC;
- b. Meets a demonstrated workforce or service need of the state or GBC service area, including any projected future needs of the state or region;
- c. Demonstrates an increase in student demand through a pattern of increasing enrollment;
- d. Supports underrepresented student or community groups;
- e. Is funded by non-state resources to an extent that offsets the lack of graduates; or
- f. Is provided a set of conditions, including a time limit of not more than three years, which the program must meet to fulfill the production criteria for continuation (continuation conditions described below).

3.2. Conditions for Continuation. A review committee may recommend a series of actions, steps and/or benchmarks for a low-yield program to achieve within a set time limit of not more than three years. The conditions must be clearly described with a timeline for each condition to be met.

3.3 Continuing Review Schedule. Regardless of exemptions and conditions for continuation, all programs will continue to be reviewed for productivity on the established schedule.

4.0 Final Decision

4.1 The final action taken on low-yield programs shall be the decision of the President of the College. Each year the President shall report to the Chancellor of NSHE all programs designated as low-yield and the results of the institutional review process of such programs as required by NSHE Code in Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 6.5.

4.2 If any program is eliminated under this policy, the procedure for elimination shall be followed as stated in GBC Policy 3.42, Program Elimination.

(Approved by GBC President's Council: September 24, 2013; Approved by Faculty Senate: September 20, 2013)

PROGRAM HISTORY

The current agriculture program started as a grant funded program in 2003. Note: a previous agriculture program existed at GBC in the 1980's, but had been terminated for low enrollment at that time. The current program initially was offered as an AAS, but with the addition of Tracy Shane the program was expanded to AS and AA degrees (patterns of study). Also, synergy was generated with the BAIS-NR degree. Many NRES courses were required in all of these degrees. A BAS agriculture concentration area was tried, but abandoned due to low enrollment. The agriculture program has had a low, but steady enrollment across 10 years, two program supervisors and increased number of degrees. Please refer to the Table 2 from the Preliminary Five Year Program Review for enrollment numbers.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE

The committee unanimously recommends that the agriculture associate degrees at GBC be eliminated and proposes that the GBC administration considers offering a 30-credit certificate of completion. The associate degrees in agriculture do not meet any of the "possible exemptions from elimination" in the program review criteria (Guide to Program Reviews GBC Policy 3.40 section 3.1). These criteria are outlined in Section 3 of the "GBC Policy and Procedure for Low-Yield Programs."

- Specifically, requirements (a) and (b) are not met because this program is not producing enough graduates (less than 3 per year on average) to contribute significantly to the GBC mission or to workforce development in our region.
- Current enrollment (see Table 2, Preliminary Five Year Program Review, which does not include four 2013 graduates) does not indicate that the agriculture associate degrees meet requirement (c) with a pattern of increasing enrollment.
- This program fails to meet requirement (d).
- The agriculture program is not supported by any external funding; therefore, it does not meet requirement (e).
- The historic trends of agriculture programs at GBC, indicate that GBC has always had difficulty in sustaining these type of programs. This, together with current enrollment data, make it difficult to conclude that even given an extension of three more years as outlined in requirement (f), the agriculture associate degrees are very unlikely to meet the appropriate productivity criteria of 20 graduates in three years.
- The committee reviewed several documents from community members, Tracy Shane, and other sources, in support of future enrollment at GBC in agriculture. This included surveys of students and their career paths, and future Nevada agriculture industry employment projections. From these documents this committee concludes that the number of jobs requiring college education in agriculture that can be provided by GBC will continue to be very low, and the types of future employment cited as reasons for keeping an agriculture program (such as a milk production plant, or large scale food processing facilities) are irrelevant to the programs that we can reasonably have at GBC (food science, etc). It is unclear at best from the information this committee received

that small-scale family operations will provide sufficient student clientele for GBC's agriculture programs.

- Documentation from several sources stating that Nevada employment in the following sectors: agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting; animal production; support activities for agriculture and forestry; and dairy product manufacturing totaled approximately 9,000 employees. If we estimate that of these 9,000 employees, approximately 10% need a college degree, and we further estimate that employees in this sector "turn-over" once every 30 years, you can see that the demand for graduates in agriculture in Nevada is approximately 30 people per year. This is a small pool of jobs for graduates, which leads to a small number of students in agriculture. GBC would need to attract nearly half of all students in agriculture in Nevada (and graduate a majority of those we take in) in order to have a strong program.
- Tracy Shane traveled 25 days on recruitment and outreach each year for the last three years (data from the GBC Controller's Office), and traveled nearly double that in the years before this period. This is a substantial amount of resources invested in this activity. This indicates that recruitment and outreach would be difficult to improve upon without substantially increased resources. In the opinion of the committee it is not realistic to hope that increased marketing, recruitment, and outreach will significantly increase enrollment in associate-level agriculture programs.

SUMMARIES OF REMARKS MADE BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND STUDENTS DURING THE COMMITTEE'S INTERVIEWS

- All interviewees had a high regard for Tracy Shane and the high quality of instruction and advisement she built into the program.
- All stated that GBC needs to have a better recruitment and marketing strategy.
- All agreed that GBC needs to have a draw to attract students such as an opportunity to participate on a rodeo team or in livestock judging.
- The community members agreed that graduates of the agriculture program are employable.
- The community members stated that the University of Nevada Reno's agriculture program is low-quality, non-viable, and without credibility in the community, and therefore, cannot serve as a viable 2 + 2 transfer option for GBC students. Hence, student lack of confidence with the UNR agricultural program is a valid concern, regardless of the validity of community perceptions. Students who seek a 4-year degree in agriculture are going to institutions outside of Nevada, and if at some future time GBC is in a position to have a 2 + 2 program, it will need to build partnerships with out-of-state institutions.

DETAILS OF PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE

Although the scope of this committee is limited to the agriculture associate degree programs, we present some alternate pathways that may preserve, in part, some of the infrastructure from the agriculture degree program.

The committee unanimously agreed that if the associate agriculture degrees are eliminated and GBC administration desires to maintain an agriculture program, then the college could consider offering a certificate. Building on the ideas brought forward by community members and students, this certificate would:

- reside in and be managed by the CTE department
- contain 30 credits
- This certificate should not be a continuation of the current program, but specifically oriented to Ranch Management
- provide coursework in hands-on agriculture (which are already popular), forage production, hands-on engineering, water management, and financial management and accounting
- provide coursework in public land use to facilitate communication between land users and the public land managers
- provide internships with agriculture producers and land managers

Success of this model will be more likely if the certificate can be offered completely online, as suggested by Tracy Shane.

This certificate could transition to an Associate of Science degree, if certain benchmarks have been reached and the college has done a thorough study of community and industry needs. Otherwise GBC may find itself in another low-yield review after a few years.

If the college, after deep and careful consideration, once again offers two-year degrees in agriculture, the committee feels strongly that the program **MUST** have these attributes, as stated by the community members, in order to have a chance for success:

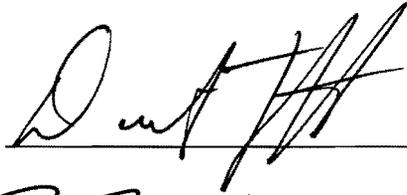
- extensive community/student outreach
- faculty participation in state education boards
- faculty participation in FFA, 4H, and other pre-college groups
- faculty participation in extensive recruitment efforts
- significant resource expenditures by GBC
- no less than 2 – 3 full time faculty members
- a dedicated lab facility
- a dedicated livestock demonstration facility
- partnerships with local ranches
- access to a field ranch
- extensive recruitment and marketing
- essential clubs for students (students will go elsewhere without these)
 - Livestock judging team
 - Rodeo team
 - Soil judging team

This is a large set of attributes for an agriculture program at a small college such as GBC. However, community members were very clear that these are necessary elements for an agriculture program to be taken seriously and to be well-attended.

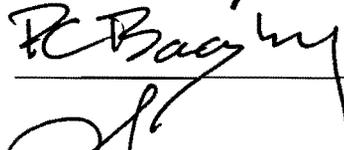
The committee cannot emphasize enough that in order to avoid low-yield reviews, all future degrees should be evaluated for viability before they are created.

Respectfully submitted,

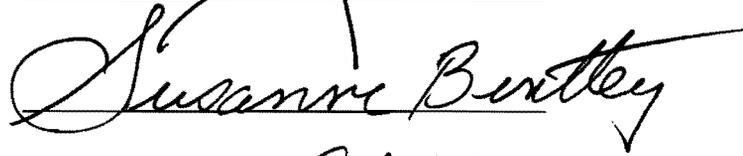
David Freistroffer, Chair



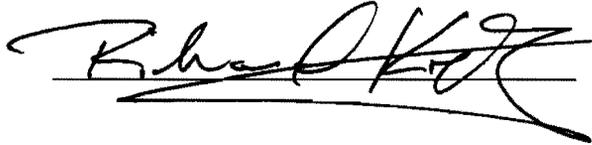
Peter Bagley



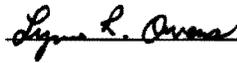
Susanne Bentley



Richard Kampf



Lynne Owens



APPENDIX of supporting documents (located in the office of GBC Vice President for Academic Affairs)

Preliminary Five Year Program Review

Letters of support for the agriculture program from community members