ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEWS

Pursuant to the Board’s statutory responsibilities and also under HEPC Series 10, the Board is required to cause cyclical reviews of all of the academic programs. Under the provisions of Series 10, the Board should make one of five determinations regarding each program reviewed:

5.1.1. Continuation of the program at the current level of activity, with or without specific action; or
5.1.2. Continuation of the program at a reduced level of activity (e.g., reducing the range of optional tracks) or other corrective action; or
5.1.3. Identification of the program for further development; or
5.1.4. Development of a cooperative program with another institution, or sharing of courses, facilities, faculty, and the like; or
5.1.5. If it recommends discontinuance of the program, then the provisions of Higher Education Policy Commission policy on approval and discontinuance of academic programs will apply.

The Shepherd Program Review Committee undertook an extensive, internal review of the Shepherd Regents’ Bachelor of Arts program. The Committee recommended the continuation of the Regents Bachelor of Arts Degree Program at the current level of activity, without qualification.

The Shepherd Program Review Committee reviewed the Mathematics, Mass Communications, and Computer Information Sciences programs, consistent with requirements that had been expected by the State of West Virginia for program review when this was a state-wide procedure. Each review process included an off-campus reviewer. The Program Review Committee expressed special concern with the need for all faculty to become involved with professional development activities and for the department to develop a method by which graduate success following the awarding of the degree may be assessed. The Committee recommended the continuation of the Mathematics, Mass Communications, and CIS programs at the current level of activity, without qualification.

The following resolution is recommended for adoption by the Board:
RESOLVED, That the Shepherd University Board of Governors approves the program reviews for RBA, Mathematics, Mass Communications, and CIS and the Board adopts the institutional recommendations that each program be continued at the current level of activity. The Board authorizes the President to submit these reviews on its behalf to the Higher Education Policy Commission.
The current year's Program Review is still in progress and will be submitted to the HEPC and the Chancellor's Office when due at the end of the month. Copies will be made for the BOG as well. The purpose of this report is to provide BOG members with a status report.

The Program Review process at Shepherd University begins with a self-study report from each program scheduled for review. The reports follow the guidelines established by the State of WV. The evaluation process consists of two parts. The first is an internal committee consisting of a senior faculty member from each of the academic schools and an academic dean who serves as chair. The second part of the process involves external reviewers, one for each program as needed. The Program Review Committee believes the use of outside experts for each field of study provides us with an extremely objective evaluation and provides specific expertise in curriculum, faculty professional activities, and graduate achievement.

Five programs were scheduled for review this year—Communications, Mathematics, Computer and Information Sciences, Psychology, and Regents Bachelor of Arts.

The Psychology Department was unable to produce their report by the deadline and, under a new department chair, have been moved to the next year for review. After that they will return to the regular schedule and will be subject to review again after four years. There were a number of circumstances that led to their delay including the death of a faculty member and a change in leadership. The Program Review Committee did not see any major problems within the department that would require immediate attention so the one-year delay has been granted.

External reviewers were contracted to evaluate the Departments of Communications, Mathematics, and CIS. Each of the external reviewers holds the terminal degree in the appropriate subject field and is on the faculty at an institution of higher education. Their teaching institutions are New York University (Communications), the University of Delaware (CIS), and Allegheny College (Math). Due to their obligations at their own universities, the deadline for their reports was extended to June 15, 2005. The chair of the Program Review Committee, Dow Benedict, has been in regular contact with each reviewer to answer questions and to solicit information. One report was received on June 6, 2005, and the others are nearing completion.

An external reviewer was not contracted for the Regents Bachelor of Arts program. It was felt that the program is so unique to the State of West Virginia that a reviewer would
not have enough understanding of the program to provide anything beyond a cursory evaluation.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS.

The internal evaluation report will indicate the following:

• The Department is undergoing considerable change. The long-time chair announced her resignation too late last year to do a proper search for her replacement. As a result, the Department operated this year with two full-time faculty and one visiting faculty. The Department has now been granted permission to add a fourth faculty member. Active searches are underway to fill the new position and the open position from the retirement.
• Obviously operating short-handed has created some difficulties within the department but the current faculty, especially the new chair, have made certain that student needs have been met. There has actually been a small increase in the number of majors and initial data indicates the curriculum changes initiated this year have led to an increase in retention.
• Professional activity among the faculty runs from outstanding to very poor. This will be an issue the final report will address.
• An approved assessment plan is in place but shows little evidence of consistent activity and little evidence, save for one area, of the use of assessment findings to direct the curriculum. The department will be urged to increase their assessment activities in hopes of identifying and correcting reasons for the low graduation rate in the major.
• Graduate follow-up is also an area of inconsistent application. One faculty member consistently follows graduates in his area of the major but there is no evidence to show activity in the other areas.
• The department makes a significant contribution to the General Studies Program through COMM 103, Fundamentals of Speech.

DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS.

The internal evaluation report will indicate the following:

• The faculty have appropriate teaching assignments for their education with four of the five holding the terminal degree.
• All faculty members show a level of professional development activities but, in some cases, a recommendation for increased activity will be made.
• The department services a small number of majors but studies show this is not unusual for a school like Shepherd (small, public).
• The department has an approved assessment plan in place but provides little evidence of consistent activity and use of findings. As a result there
is little evidence of success in graduate school or employment.
• The department makes a significant contribution to the General Studies Program through a 3-credit hour math requirement. The department also provides a number of service courses for several other majors.
• The department will undergo significant changes in the coming year as it joins with the current CIS Department to form a new department with different leadership.

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER AND INFORMATION SCIENCES.

The internal evaluation report will indicate the following:

• Of the seven full-time faculty, four have the terminal degree. There has been a very strong effort to add terminally degreed faculty in this area to build the kind of program needed in our region.
• Four of the faculty are recent hires.
• Teaching assignments appear to be appropriate.
• There is evidence of professional development activities among most but not all of the faculty. Most attend conferences in the field and are active in professional organizations. Two faculty members have a combined twelve publications.
• No evidence to show ongoing assessment activity was submitted with the report thought there is evidence that the department has a record of commitment to continuous improvement in the program and plans for the revision and enhancement of the curriculum in both the major and the minor. The department will be asked to specifically address the assessment activities for the past five years.
• A database was established in 1998 to track graduates including employment trends, average salary, and graduate education.
• There is an ongoing assessment of employment satisfaction through the internship and coop programs.
• There is evidence to show the department makes critical contributions to the economic development of the region. Faculty have also begun to work with the Gateway New Economic Council.
• Ample evidence exists to show the growth in enrollment and graduates since the last review.
• As noted in the summary for Math, CIS and Math have joined to form a new department. This decision was made and approved after the self-study was submitted.
REGENTS BACHELOR OF ARTS.

The internal evaluation report will indicate the following:

- The RBA is a unique program. It has no specific major, no set of required courses, no faculty specifically assigned to the program. The RBA was established by the State of WV to provide a flexible degree option for people already in the work force by combining credit for work experience and courses selected to meet specific work goals. WV was one of the early states to develop this type of degree program. Almost all states now have a degree program designed to serve a similar purpose.
- As there are no faculty assigned to this program, it is not possible to evaluate the faculty in terms of degrees held, teaching assignments, or professional development activities.
- As the set of courses taken is unique to each student in the program, evaluating the curriculum is not possible.
- An ongoing assessment plan exists that tracks the students and graduates and is used to further advise new students in their career goals.
- The RBA has proven to be a successful program with one of the largest total number of graduates over the five years covered by this review.