

Academic Program Review – Q&A

Q. Why did you undertake the Academic Program Review?

A. Academic program review is a process that all higher education institutions do to ensure their degrees are up-to-date, relevant and attractive to students. It is required by the Ohio Department of Higher Education Office for Graduate Education and as well as by many accrediting bodies. While UA had done some limited program reviews several years ago, this comprehensive review of virtually all of our degree offerings provides the foundation for a regular cycle of reviewing a percentage of degrees each year. This current comprehensive review also gives us the platform for strategic planning, which will commence later this fall.

Q. What was the process?

A. We were very systematic and comprehensive in this process. It was led and managed by faculty representative of all colleges. The exercise launched in fall 2017 and input was received from unit-level faculty, department chairs, school directors, deans, a 24-member faculty Academic Program Review Executive Committee and Faculty Senate. That information was given to Interim President John Green and Provost Rex Ramsier for consideration, and, after some further discussion with deans, they submitted final recommendations to the UA Board of Trustees on August 15, 2018. The goal is to align the University's offerings with areas of distinction, excellence and opportunity to advance the creation of knowledge, prepare our students for productive careers and help grow our economy.

Q. What criteria were used to determine which programs stayed and which were phased out?

A. There was a great deal of data gathered about each degree and degree track. The principal factors considered were:

- number of students admitted and number of degrees awarded
- student performance and learning outcomes
- general-fund-centric revenues and expenditures
- comparative performance of programs against other peer programs in Ohio

Also considered were:

- research and creative activity
- market demand
- distinctiveness of the program
- strategic growth opportunities using current resources

Q. What were the results?

A. What the Academic Program Review showed us was very positive. We learned that the vast majority of UA's degrees and degree tracks are performing very well, and we were able to identify key areas of strength and opportunity for investment. It also helped identify those that should be phased out due to low enrollment and graduates or because other regional universities have more well-developed degree offerings in those areas.

Q. What, specifically, will happen?

A. The vast majority (81%) of UA's current 414 degrees and degree tracks are performing well and will be continued. In addition, several areas of investment were identified (details below). Finally, a total of 80 degrees or degree tracks were determined to be phased out. Less than 5% of UA students are admitted into those degrees or degree tracks and the University is committed to ensuring they can finish their degrees at UA. New admissions to those degrees or degree tracks will be suspended, with no further admissions allowed.

Q. What are those areas of investment?

A. We have identified polymers, music, dance, cybersecurity, nursing, health and biosciences, communication, engineering and business as the academic programs and fields for initial investment, by hiring 31 full-time faculty (including 23 tenure-track positions) and a contract professional in these key areas, in time for the start of classes in fall 2019. These areas were selected based on the APR research which reviewed current enrollment, competition at nearby institutions, future career opportunities, etc.

Q. Are these faculty positions new?

A. Twenty-three (23) of the faculty to be hired for fall 2019 will be for positions that do not now exist and are not in this current fiscal year's budget. In several cases, these positions reflect the University's strategic priorities, such as those which will be joint, interdisciplinary appointments. Eight (8) of the planned hires will be to convert visiting lecturer positions to full-time faculty positions.

Q. What about the degrees and degree tracks to be phased out?

A. Degrees and degree tracks with low enrollment and/or degrees earned, or that duplicate heavily invested programs at other Northeast Ohio institutions, were identified and will be phased out. This will enable us to compete even more effectively in our areas of excellence while trying not to duplicate offerings that other area universities and community colleges may have - which is a better and more efficient use of public resources.

Less than five percent of UA's total student population is enrolled in these degrees or degree tracks. In fact, 72% of the degrees or degree tracks to be phased out had less than five (5) graduates during the 2017 – 2018 academic year, including 23% that had no (0) graduates in that time. The list and specific reasons for each phased-out degree are available on the website – uakron.edu/advance-ua.

Q. Where can students or parents get information about how these decisions might affect them personally?

A. We are committed to ensuring that current students (both continuing and new freshman) who are admitted to the degrees to be phased out will be able to complete their degrees at UA. Students should connect with their academic advisors with any questions or issues they may have about how to proceed.

Q. How much money will this save the University?

A. That's a difficult question to answer, as the process of phasing out the degrees likely will take several years. As we said from the beginning, this was not a budget-driven exercise. We do believe that the decisions being made will contribute to UA's future financial stability by having more attractive degree offerings and re-allocating resources from the phased-out degrees to other academic areas.

Q. What does the future hold for faculty and staff that are affiliated with the programs that are being phased out? Will there be layoffs?

A. No elimination of regular faculty, contract professionals or staff positions is planned due to these phase-outs. The University also is committed to ensuring that current students (both continuing and new freshman) who are admitted to degrees to be phased out will be able to complete their degrees at UA.

Q. What's next for Academic Program Review?

A. There is a lot to be done. This announcement is just the beginning. We will begin communicating with students admitted to each degree and the phase-out process may look different for each depending on the context.

What is of utmost importance is that the information gathered during the APR will be used to inform University strategic planning, which will commence this fall and engage the entire University and community. Details on that process will be forthcoming.