




RICHARD G. RHODA  
*Executive Director*

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
**HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION**  
PARKWAY TOWERS, SUITE 1900  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243-0830  
(615) 741-3605  
FAX: (615) 741-6230

PHIL BREDESEN  
*Governor*

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Chancellor Charles W. Manning  
President John D. Petersen

**FROM:** Richard G. Rhoda 

**SUBJECT:** Academic Degree Program Productivity

**DATE:** January 13, 2009

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Starting new academic degree programs and ensuring the viability of existing ones are major resource commitments as campuses come to terms with 2009-10 budget reductions. The purpose of this memo is to state the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's position for the foreseeable future on the approval of proposed programs currently under review and approval of letters of intent to plan additional new programs. Allied to these decisions, the Commission staff has recently completed four types of program productivity reports. THEC routinely assesses productivity of proposed and existing programs as its statutory responsibility to maximize cost effectiveness and ensure that benefits to the state outweigh costs and that programs are adequately supported and not duplicated. The four attached reports have been generated out of cycle to assist institutions in program planning.

As an immediate response to current higher education fiscal constraints, the Commission has decided not to entertain approval of any new programs at its January 2009 meeting, though it has not formally placed a moratorium on the establishment of new programs. The possibility for new program approval by interim action exists for any exception warranted by the availability of non-state start-up funds or documented compelling need.

On a longer-term basis, THEC will work with systems to institute a more detailed assessment of need for new programs by modifying the Letter of Intent process. Beginning in January 2009, evidence of resources from internal reallocation or non-state funds must accompany Letters of Intent to plan new programs. This added measure of financial accountability justifying the Letter of Intent should strengthen

resource planning while still encouraging institutions to project mission-consonant programs that meet student and employer demand.

I am providing the following four system-specific program productivity reports. Summaries of these reports will be presented to the Commission at their January 29, 2009 meeting. These reports are also posted on the THEC website at:

UT:

[http://state.tn.us/thec/Divisions/AcademicAffairs/productivity\\_ut/UT\\_Program\\_Productivity\\_Report\\_Jan\\_2009.pdf](http://state.tn.us/thec/Divisions/AcademicAffairs/productivity_ut/UT_Program_Productivity_Report_Jan_2009.pdf)

TBR:

[http://state.tn.us/thec/Divisions/AcademicAffairs/productivity\\_tbr/TBR\\_Program\\_Productivity\\_Report\\_Jan\\_2009.pdf](http://state.tn.us/thec/Divisions/AcademicAffairs/productivity_tbr/TBR_Program_Productivity_Report_Jan_2009.pdf)

### **Report on Low-Producing Programs.**

Of the 1,297 active academic degree programs and certificates offered by institutions in the Tennessee Board of Regents and University of Tennessee systems, 1,044 (80 percent) successfully meet the benchmarks for a sufficient number of graduates for program viability. The benchmarks are those traditionally used in higher education: an average of 10 graduates per year over a five year period for bachelor's, associate, and certificates; 5 for master's and specialist; and 3 for doctorates. In isolating low-producing programs by degree level, data show that 27 percent of pre-baccalaureate programs, 21 percent of baccalaureate programs, and 10 percent of master's programs do not meet benchmarks. Of particular concern is that 21 percent (26 of 121) doctoral degree programs do not meet the productivity threshold. Systems are asked to respond to THEC by May 1 regarding institutional decisions to retain, consolidate, or terminate programs identified as low producing.

#### **Tables:**

Overview and Trends

Table 1: Summary of Active and Low-producing Programs -- Statewide

Table 2: Summary of Active and Low-producing Programs -- System

### **Program Additions and Terminations (2000-2008).**

In the last eight years, a total of 192 programs were added state wide, and 208 were terminated for a net reduction of 16 programs. This profile indicates that the number of programs has remained essentially constant.

#### **Tables:**

New Programs Approved 2000-2008

Programs Terminated 2000-2008

### **Post Approval Monitoring Report.**

The Post Approval Monitoring (PAM) report provides a review of programs within the first three to five years of implementation based upon degree level. These programs are assessed annually in regards to the program proposal's projections for enrollment, graduates, and cost. Four documents are included in this report. The first document is an overview of each system's PAM report and highlights programs that may need further scrutiny. The next document is the agenda item for the THEC January meeting that gives an overview of PAM and lists the programs attaining benchmarks, failing to attain benchmarks, delayed programs, and terminated programs. Following the agenda item is a workbook with detailed information on each program by institution. The final document is a listing of programs that completed the PAM cycle this academic year and programs that will be new to PAM in the upcoming year. Over 100 programs were reviewed. Of this number, 57 programs met their projected

enrollment benchmarks (or performed above the low-producing threshold) and 32 did not. Eight programs were delayed for implementation. Two certificate programs were terminated by the governing board.

**Productivity of Selected Programs by Classification.**

THEC has conducted a review of existing programs by selected subject classifications: business administration, engineering, agriculture, educational leadership and related programs, and computer science. These particular classifications show a significant number of existing programs, some low producing and some with low licensure scores of graduates. The geographic distribution, number, and degree levels of these programs suggest sufficient student access, and THEC will consider potentially duplicative any additional programs proposed in these subject areas.

**Tables:** Selected Programs by CIP Classification

Please contact Dr. Linda Doran, Associate Executive Director for Academic Affairs ([Linda.doran@state.tn.us](mailto:Linda.doran@state.tn.us) and 615-741-6289), with any questions about these reports.

Attachments

cc: Tennessee Higher Education Commission  
Dr. Paula Myrick Short  
Dr. Bonnie Yegidis