

**DATE:** July 23, 2009

**SUBJECT:** Status of the January 2009 THEC Low-Producing Program Review

**ACTION RECOMMENDED:** Information

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** Tennessee Board of Regents and University of Tennessee responses to the January 2009 THEC Low-Producing Program Review will be presented to the Commission in January 2010, not in July 2009 as had been previously projected. This requested delay will enable both systems to base program termination or consolidation decisions on their use of two releases of the THEC Low-Producing Program data. The first, issued in January 2009, covered the five year period of 2003-04 through 2007-08. The November 1, 2009 THEC report will roll forward to cover 2004-05 through 2008-09. At the January THEC meeting of every year following, THEC will provide an updated report of low-producing programs.

**Purpose of the Review:**

The purpose of THEC’s partnership with UT and TBR in conducting the review of low-producing programs is to guide institutions in using evidence of program viability and need in making resource allocation decisions. A program is identified as low-producing if it is a doctoral program that does not graduate an average of 3 graduates per year over the most recent five years, a master’s or specialist program that does not generate an average of 5 graduates per year, or a bachelor’s, associate, or certificate program that does not produce an average of 10 per year over the five-year period. These benchmarks are standard measures of productivity used by colleges and universities nationally.

**Percent of programs not meeting desired number of graduates:**

The January 2009 THEC Low-Producing Program Review covered 2003-04 through 2007-08, as 2007-08 was the most recent academic year for which TBR and UT had reported graduates. The THEC report found that of the 1297 active programs in state colleges and universities 20 percent did not meet the productivity minimums. By program level, 27 percent of associates or certificates, 21 percent of baccalaureate programs, 10 percent of master’s, and 21 percent of doctoral degree programs did not meet their productivity thresholds.

**Instituting an Annual Review:**

In previous years, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission has periodically conducted a study of low-producing academic degree programs, generally every three to five years. Dedication of limited institutional resources to most needed and most viable programs has become doubly important in the face of budget reductions. Therefore, THEC staff will generate the report annually to ensure an on-going, not episodic, attention to program viability. These annual reports will show how institutions have balanced decisions to terminate or consolidate programs against plans to establish new ones.

**The THEC annual low-producing program review has two parts:**

**Part I: THEC annually issues a report of low-producing programs.**

THEC will issue a five-year report of low-producing programs by November 1, 2009 for the current year and at the January Commission meeting for years following. TBR and UT system offices collect from their institutions the number of graduates by program for the last completed academic year (summer/fall/spring), verify data accuracy, and report these files to THEC by August 1 of every year.

**Part II: TBR and UT annually identify programs to retain, consolidate, or terminate low-producing programs and report actions to THEC.**

Institutions and systems review each low-producing program, using the THEC low-producing report in combination with enrollment projections based on currently enrolled students and other program health indicators to decide the best course of action for each program: retain and monitor, consolidate, or terminate. Both UT and TBR are in the process of identifying programs for which consolidation or termination approval will be required by their governing boards. These 2009 actions, along with a plan for monitoring underproductive retained programs, will be reported to THEC January 2010.

**Reporting Cycle:**

With the January 2010 report of the results of System actions, THEC will establish an annual cycle of program monitoring charted below.

**For Current Delayed 2009 Study and January 2010 Report to THEC:**

August 1, 2009	UT and TBR send 2008-09 report of graduates to THEC
November 1, 2009	THEC releases 2004-09 Low-Producing Program Report
January 2010	THEC reports UT and TBR program deletions/additions

**2010**

August 1, 2010	UT and TBR send 2009-10 report of graduates to THEC
January 2011	THEC releases 2005-10 Low-Producing Program Report
January 2012	THEC reports UT and TBR program deletions/additions

**2011**

August 1, 2011	UT and TBR send 2010-11 report of graduates to THEC
January 2012	THEC releases 2006-11 Low-Producing Program Report
January 2013	THEC reports UT and TBR program deletions/additions