Justification of changes to the Chancellor’s Low Yield Policy Draft

prepared by Robin Herlands, Faculty Senate Chair at Nevada State College, in consultation with NSC Senate and NFA leadership with input from leaders at other institutions.

1. The number of degrees awarded that designate a program as low-yield need to change, preferably taking into considering the size of program or institution.
   1. The current model of blanket numbers that identify low-yield without considering enrollment possibly over-identifies programs at small institutions and under-examines programs at large institution. Examining graduation rates based on the specific number of students who enroll in a program eliminates this bias.
      1. Example of Bias: If an institution with 20,000 students is expected to graduate 10 students a year per program, should an institution with 2,000 students be expected to graduate that same number? This simply doesn’t make sense.
      2. Small programs at large institutions: Even large institutions have programs of varying sizes. For example, at UNLV, 294 students graduated from hospitality management in 2009-2010, and 1 undergraduate graduated from Jazz Studies. Even large institutions such as UNLV would have ~30% of their programs designated “low yield” under the current draft.
   2. A sliding scale based on institutional size could be implemented, though because our institutional populations (of students) vary so widely, this will be the equivalent of setting up standards for each institution. This could be a good plan, and these standards could be set in consultation with the individual institutions and the systems office.
   3. A sliding scale based on program size could also be implemented, and would set up system wide standards so that no institution could claim there was bias in the formulation of targets.
2. Community Colleges do not just exist to generate degree-holders
   1. Other Higher Ed governing bodies have made extra allowances for community colleges to include students completing a set number of credits prior to returning into employment as “graduates” (see Alabama Code 16-5-8). In this kind of policy, the institution must document and verify *to the satisfaction of the Board* that the credits were completed and that the student achieved employment based upon successful completion of courses at the community college. We may want to consider this.
3. If system-wide standards demand overall numbers of graduates must be used without consideration of size of institution, size of program, or FTE, then these numbers must be made more reasonable and the possible exemptions must be expanded.
   * 1. Lower the number of awarded degrees demanded.
        1. Of all the state policies provided as examples, the average size of institution in these states is proportionally much higher than the average size of institution in Nevada. **On average**, the institutions outlined in the draft policy would designate programs as low yield if they had less than 4.8 degrees awarded per year, but this ranged from 2 a year to 12 a year. Nevada should be on the lower end of the spectrum due to having a lower student population within the higher education system.
     2. Change the “most recent year” language to a language that represents an average or a total over a period of years.
        1. Most policies utilize an average over a block of time (for example Nebraska and Tennessee require 10 bachelor’s degrees average over a 5 year period). Hardly any look at most recent year alone. Events that occur in a single year could drastically affect the number of graduates in a year and should not be used.
     3. Add to the exemptions
        1. Program Quality
           1. Modeling Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education, Policy A-7.0, Program Quality should be valued in the process of obtaining exemption (or permission to continue)

Program Quality- evaluates performance of a program, including the impact of that research on the state, the notoriety of the research produced, and the external dollars being brought in to fund the research. In addition, it is well known that some of the more difficult programs will be less popular because of the higher rigor demanded by the curriculum. These programs should not be penalized for their high standards, and assessing the success of a program should not rely on degrees awarded alone.

* + - 1. Resource,
         1. Modling Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education, Policy A-7.0, the Resources Required should also be valued in the process of obtaining exemption (or permission to continue) which evaluates the size of the program, resources (personnel, facilities, external or internal funding), and sustainability of the program.

1. Alter language about automatic termination
   1. As written, programs considered low yield for 2 consecutive years are automatically terminated. This is problematic for multiple reasons
      1. The reports on low yield programs are only delivered biennially, so it will be impossible to have this designation in 2 consecutive years
      2. If a program were designated low yield in one year, the program will have less than 365 days to attempt to pull the graduation rate up. This is not enough time to make any significant changes to the enrollment and graduation rates of a program.
   2. Termination should only be considered if a program is low yield for a longer time frame, such as over the course of two biennium (4 years).
   3. Academic Review prior to automatic termination would be a way to more deeply assess the viability of a program.