# New Program Development

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) supports its colleges, schools, departments, and faculty in developing and implementing new programs that meet the needs of students and support the university's mission and strategic plan. The Office of Institutional Accreditation, Program Development, and Analysis (OIA) is responsible for guiding new program development through the program proposal and university approval process to the development processes, addressing potential issues in program development such as:

- Minimizing the potential overlap of similar programs developed in different academic units
- Minimizing potential confusion in recruiting students to similar UTRGV programs
- Minimizing inefficiencies of operating multiple similar programs in terms of faculty and staff effort
- Ensuring proposals meet university-wide curricular requirements, as well as the UT System, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accreditation requirements
- Ensuring all new programs follow established review and approval processes

There are two phases in the new program development process:

**Program Proposal and University Approval Process**: This phase includes the development of an abbreviated new program proposal that demonstrates the viability of the proposed program.

**Program Development Process**: This phase includes the development of the full program proposal and both internal and external review and approval processes.

**Program Development and Analysis Team**
Before beginning the program proposal and approval phase, new program ideas must be submitted to the Program Development and Analysis Team (PDAT) for review and endorsement. Once the PDAT has endorsed the program idea, OIA will contact the program proposer to begin the program proposal and approval process.

## Program Proposal and University Approval Process

Following program endorsement by the Program Development and Analysis Team, the summary program proposal and university approval process begins. The summary program proposal and university approval process must be completed before the development of a full new program proposal. This phase of the process involves the development of an abbreviated new program proposal using the New Program Proposal Template. OIA works with the program developers to ensure the proposal demonstrates how the new program supports the university mission and strategic plan and provides evidence that the program proposal has followed the internal planning and review processes within the college/school. Where a proposed new program overlaps with programs offered outside the department/school, program planners must provide evidence that they engaged with units offering similar programs to ensure support for the proposed program.

The summary program proposal must include sufficient information for the provost and the president to determine whether a new program should be fully developed. Once the summary program proposal has been approved by the university for development, OIA works with the department/school/college to develop the full proposal required by the UT System and THECB.

Summary New Program Proposal Template: Complete the template in collaboration with OIA to obtain approval to develop the full program proposal.

## Program Development Process

Once the summary new program proposal has been approved by the university leadership, program development can begin. The following guidelines should be used when establishing new programs or making significant changes to existing programs. These guidelines are intended to support departments/schools and provide a seamless experience for students. The program development process is intentionally designed to ensure that key central units are notified early in the process and can work in collaboration with the proposing unit to implement the program efficiently and effectively.

**Lead Time**
Programs that may require a lead-time of 18-24 months in advance of the first admissions cycle are programs that:

- Are significant departures from existing programs
- Are anticipated to cost more than $2 million in the first five years of implementation
- Are engineering programs
- Are professional, doctoral, or terminal degree programs
- Are offered at a new teaching site/location
- Are applying for program-specific accreditation as part of the program implementation process

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) requires that any new program representing a significant departure from existing programs be reviewed and approved by SACSCOC before program implementation. This review and approval process may take up to six (6) months. New program prospectuses are submitted in June for implementation in the following spring semester and in December for implementation in the following fall semester. Failure to submit proposals by the June or December deadlines will result in a delay in program implementation of 6-9 months. Additional information regarding substantive change processes can be found here.

**New Academic Program Templates**
New academic programs must be developed using the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) new program forms. The Office of Institutional Accreditation, Program Development, and Analysis (OIA) provides new academic program templates which identify useful resources and guide programs through the THECB new program form. Program developers should ensure that all relevant questions are addressed in the program proposal.

- Template for New Bachelor's or Master's Programs
- Template for New Doctoral Programs

OIA meets with all new program proposers to establish timelines for program development and to assist with the program development and review process. To schedule a meeting contact Dr. Christine Shupala (christine.shupala@utrgv.edu).

**Review and Approval of New Programs**

All new programs follow the curriculum review and approval process, including:

1. Review/approval of the curriculum/degree plan at the department level
2. Review/approval of the curriculum/degree plan at the college level
3. Review/approval of the curriculum/degree plan at the university curriculum committee level

The completed proposal for a new program follows the proposal review and approval process, including:

1. Review/approval of the proposal at the department level
2. Review/approval of the proposal at the college level
3. Review/approval of the proposal by the graduate dean (graduate programs only)
4. Review/approval of the proposal by OIA
5. Review/approval of the proposal by the Provost
6. Review/approval of the proposal by the President's Office
7. Review/approval of the proposal by the UT System
8. Review/approval of the proposal by THECB
9. Review/approval of the proposal by SACSCOC (if the program constitutes a substantive change)

New programs may be advertised following THECB approval.

1. If the program constitutes a substantive change, specific language must be included in all marketing regarding pending SACSCOC approval.
   a. All marketing materials, including (but not limited to) web pages, presentation materials, recruitment materials, program emails, etc. must include the statement "This program is pending approval by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges."
   b. The statement must be clearly visible.
2. Note that if a new program requires SACSCOC approval
   a. Students may apply to the program after THECB approval is received. However, NO students may be admitted to the program before SACSCOC approval
   b. No students may enroll in coursework before SACSCOC approval