

Updated: November 15, 2018

Basic Principles: The Role and Responsibilities of the Appointed Academic Lead for a CSUN Self-Support Program Prior to Cohort/Program Launch

The development of California State University Northridge (CSUN) self-support degree and credit certificate programs is a collaborative process involving faculty, administrators and staff. In nearly all cases, self-support degree and credit certificate programs are designed for midcareer professionals (working adults). They are funded to allow faculty to carefully craft (or refine) programs so that each program is distinctive, excellent, and at the forefront of scholarship and professional practice for urban regions of Los Angeles, California, the U.S. and beyond. Each self-support program focuses on student success in learning goals, content, program format, instructional strategies, assignment design, and the creation of learning communities that stress an integrated curriculum. The program development/refinement team crafts and maintains the curriculum through ongoing collaboration with instructors. (Programs are almost always offered in the cohort format – whether face-to-face or online.) For details on CSUN’s approach to the development and academic oversight of its self-support degree and credit certificate programs, see the basic principles documents at the following links:

[Basic Principles of Program Development For Degree and Credit Certificate Programs](#)

[Basic Principles Academic Oversight of Self-Support Programs](#)

[Basic Principles of the CSUN Approach to Crafting Online Degree and Certificate Programs](#)

Self-Support Degree and Credit Certificate Programs – Curriculum Development, Update and Review Processes Prior to Program Launch

Since programs are offered in the cohort format, the program development process focuses on courses that build on one another from start to finish, to achieve cumulative learning goals for the program as a whole. Self-support program development (or redesign/refinement) starts with the overview of the field (scholarships and professional practice); the forefront programs in the field at the regional, national and international levels; and the career pathways envisioned for those who enroll in the program. In light of this initial broader, reflective and innovative overview, the program planning group considers how the program should be crafted given contemporary scholarship and practice, the full range of strengths within and across departments and colleges, and insights and resources CSUN can access through links to practitioners/industries in the region.

The program development (redesign/refinement) process then develops/refines the program through a thoughtful and co-creative discussion about the learning outcomes that should be achieved by graduates. The process continues by identifying which courses need to be developed (and in what order they should be offered) to provide

graduates with the knowledge, field-specific skills, advanced critical reasoning capabilities, ongoing learning, and research and information literacy skills, in order to innovate and design solutions as professional practice evolves.

This approach to program development (and program redesign or refinement) requires:

- Full development group meetings with CSUN faculty, staff and practitioners engaged in program development to envision the overall program and explore innovative forefront possibilities, outline the features that will make it excellent and distinctive in a contemporary context, and define essential learning goals;
- Individual faculty (or faculty teams) to meet and work on the development of program components (courses, modules, etc.);
- Meeting as a full development group to draw emerging courses/modules together and create strong links in content, assignments, and instructional strategies to create a strong overall program.

This cycle of group meetings and smaller individual (or small team) meetings will, in most cases, be repeated several times to arrive at the necessary and well-integrated (seamless) strength at the program and course levels, and to make the program an excellent, distinctive, comprehensive and highly effective learning experience. Through this approach to program development and ongoing program refinement, self-support degree and credit certificate programs have achieved a very high level of student success as measured by very high on-time graduation rates (generally over 80%, with many over 90%).

Some CSUN self-support degree and credit certificate programs have been crafted with required core and linked options/certificates that may be taken on their own. In such cases, each component of the program is designed as a program in its own right that can stand alone and/or complement the core, depending on whether the certificate is offered to a post-degree cohort, or the cohort includes both the core and option/certificate as a seamless full program.

Responsibilities of the Academic Lead Prior to Program Launch

Depending on the life of the program, the academic lead will be asked to participate as a facilitator of the curriculum development process as well work in close collaboration with the lead professional staff member of CSUN's Tseng College: *Graduate, International, and Midcareer Education* (the Tseng College) prior to the cohort launch.

For Curriculum Development and Redesign/Update Process Facilitation: The faculty member appointed as academic lead will facilitate the curriculum development process and engage faculty and staff in the planning stages prior to launch. The academic lead helps to identify forefront programs and resources (articles, conferences, etc.) about the field and changes in practice to foster a broad, co-creative and forefront

conversation about possibilities at the start of program development. Going forward, the academic lead also provides both cohesion and communication during the planning process, working with the full development group and the individuals (or small teams) on courses or modules. Working with the full development group involves convening and attending meetings and facilitating the communication and progress of planning to a successful outcome. This includes responsibilities such as gathering and sharing information and drafting plans with the full group; facilitating discussion to keep a focus on the overall educational quality and impact of the program; developing links among the courses that ensure that one course/module builds upon another; giving attention to assignment design to support learning goals of the program and its courses/modules; and keeping all members of the program development project linked and engaged in the creation of the program and its courses/models.

The academic lead brings expertise in the field(s) and should also have an ability to lead faculty in productive working groups, exhibit strong project management skills, successfully lead projects to completion, and communicate clearly and effectively.

The program academic lead is appointed by the dean of the partner college (in consultation with the dean of the Tseng College and others as appropriate). The academic lead is appointed for a renewable two-year term. (Renewal is a decision made by the dean or the partner college in conversation with the dean of the Tseng College.) The role of the appointed academic lead for program development/review projects begins with the start of planning/review and continues through approvals to the successful launch of the program (cohort).

Working Collaboratively with Assigned Tseng College Academic Staff: The academic lead for each program works in close collaboration with the senior academic staff member(s) from the Tseng College appointed to work on the program development/refinement project. This typically is the dean and/or the associate dean of the college, and/or the assistant dean for program development, and/or the director of distance learning, and/or the director of self-support graduate and professional education programs and services. Tseng College senior academic staff members assigned have program development, adult learning theory, instructional design and/or other relevant professional expertise focused on midcareer professionals, as well as expertise in the range, processes and policies related to the development, approval and launch of self-support programs at CSUN and within the CSU.

Throughout the program planning and development process, the lead senior professional staff member (usually the assistant dean for program development or the associate dean) from the Tseng College works in close, open and collaborative partnership with the academic lead; documents the evolving program narrative, which will be regularly shared with the full program development group; and ensures a shared understanding of program curricular and instructional decisions, distinctive program features crafted by the planning group, and the reasons for program choices in light of scholarship and practice in the field, the curriculum structure, strategies for cultivating advanced conceptual skills and ongoing learning and innovation.

The academic lead and appointed senior academic staff member will also work in close collaboration with other units in the Tseng College (and from other CSUN and/or CSU offices/units as needed) to craft consistent messaging that reflects the excellence and distinction of the program. This supports effective marketing of the program, recruitment/and prospective student support strategies, and timely application review and response.

Such active engagement of the appointed academic lead continues through various stages of program development, including approvals (when needed), online program/course production, marketing, responding to questions from prospective students, and enrollment carried over from the program development/refinement and review processes through the launch (or relaunch following review). In the engagement of the appointed academic lead with Tseng College academic staff prior to program launch, the academic lead is heavily relied upon to work with department chair(s) and others in the partner college to identify relevant field and degree criteria for admission to the program. Such admission criteria guidance can include application criteria, minimum GPA needed for success in the program, entrance exam requirements if applicable, requirements for letters of recommendation (if any) for the application process, the level and/or length of professional experience required for admission, and a clear articulation of the reasons for and expectation of any statement of purpose that may be required for the application process.

The academic lead's ability to represent and maintains the broader collaborative partnership between the partner academic college/department for the program through regular, open, clear and effective communication with all of the faculty and administrative stakeholders in the partner college and with Tseng College professionals assigned to a program is crucial to the success of program development, program launch, student achievement, and student graduation and completion. The academic lead's continuous reflection about and potential revision of the program with the faculty team are encouraged, in order to launch the program and recruit, admit and support well-qualified students.

Approvals: The academic lead assigned to the program works in collaboration with the associate dean of the partner college as well as the associate dean of Tseng College to develop the necessary documents for the approval process for new and modified programs. The academic lead may be asked to write or coordinate the writing of the required curriculum documents for review by campus faculty committees and administrative units (such as Undergraduate Studies, Graduate Studies and the provost), as well as the CSU Chancellor's Office, for new program proposals. Such curriculum documents must be clear, strong and accurate statements about the purpose, features, learning goals, etc. of the program. Tseng College staff can and do provide significant assistance in crafting, editing and refining such documents; but the core statements about scholarship and practice in the field, and the academic purpose, excellence and issues, rely heavily on the academic lead to craft (working with the faculty team developing and teaching in the program and the partner department chair and/or dean), to meet CSUN and CSU approval process requirements and, when appropriate, requirements of special accreditors. In order to successfully present these

documents both to CSUN campus and the CSU Chancellor's Office, the academic lead should always actively engage the associate dean of Tseng College in the process from the start to the completion of the approvals documents. During the approval process, the academic lead is expected to attend campus approval meetings with the partner college associate dean, associate dean of Tseng College and other program faculty.

Program Marketing and Communications: The academic lead assigned to the program development or review project may also be required to meet with CSUN's self-support program marketing team to provide insights into the target audience/students for the program, including demographics, career experience/aspirations, educational background and behavioral indicators known to the academic lead. An important aspect of the close collaboration between the partner college(s)/department(s) and the Tseng College includes communicating to prospective students the high value of and specific features that have been carefully crafted in the development/refinement of the program.

The marketing team in the Tseng College plays a central role in that effort – to be successful they need to identify relevant professional or academic conferences at which prospective students might be found (or those which might refer such students to the program); the industry associations and specific publications (including websites, or social media outlets) that the target audience is likely to read/visit; and other such publications and/or venues that will help ensure that the information about the program reaches prospective students. The academic lead will collaborate with senior academic staff member(s) from the Tseng College that were actively engaged in the development/refinement of the program and help the marketing team identify potential advertising outlets and develop marketing strategies to reach the midcareer student. While the Tseng College does market research in support of new programs and has significant marketing expertise focused on self-support programs, the direct insights of the academic lead into the field and the world of professional practice in the Greater L.A. region and beyond are important components of CSUN's ability to make the program a success.

Prospective Student Communication/Recruitment: An essential component of program planning prior to launch involves a close working partnership between the appointed academic lead for the program and the Tseng College's outreach/recruitment and external relations staff, who have direct responsibility for presenting the program to a wide array of external audiences and/or for discussing the program with prospective students who make inquiries. The recruitment/communications and client services staff assist students considering the program and helps them through the application process. The academic lead assigned to the program planning or review project may be asked to play a role in communicating with prospective students about the program when a student has academic questions about the program and/or the field. Such duties may include attending selected open houses/information sessions, attending new student orientations, and/or advising prospective students whose academic questions about the program are more in depth than can be addressed by Tseng College staff.

If assigned by the partner college/department to program admissions responsibilities,

the assigned academic lead will work closely with the recruitment/program management and/or admissions staff to provide prospective students with responsive and timely support and will work with a sense of urgency regarding the return of pertinent documents pertaining to the student's files and their acceptance or denial into their program. Most midcareer students need timely and clear responses from CSUN regarding application to a CSUN self-support degree or credit certificate, in order to commit to the program, arrange their work and personal lives accordingly, work out financial considerations, and prepare to start on the cohort launch date.

For many midcareer professionals, the decision to enroll in a CSUN degree or credit certificate program is a significant, and often life-changing, choice. Students need to know that CSUN respects the choice they make and the challenges involved and will, in turn, support them with a focus on their success. The academic lead for the program will work collaboratively with the recruitment/management staff and prospective students applying to the program, in an effort to ensure each cohort has the enrollment needed for the cohort to be successfully launched.