



CALIFORNIA
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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 CSUN faculty, administrators, and staff. In nearly all cases, CSUN self-support degree and credit certificate programs are designed for midcareer professionals (working adults). CSUN self-support degree and credit certificate program development projects 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 particularly professional practice in the context of the extended LA urban region and other urban regions in California, in the US, and beyond. Each CSUN self-support program focused on student success in the context of program excellence in educational focus and learning goals, content, program format, instructional strategies, assignment design, and the creation of learning communities for the enrolled that stresses an integrated curriculum crafted by the program development/refinement team and maintained through the ongoing collaboration among those teaching in each distinctive program (nearly always offered in the CSUN 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:

<https://www.csun.edu/exlinfo/policies/Basic-Principles-Program-Development-for-CSUN-Self-Support-Degree-and-Credit-Certificate-Programs.pdf>

<https://www.csun.edu/exlinfo/policies/Basic-Principles-Academic-Oversight-of-Self-Support-Programs.pdf>

<https://www.csun.edu/exlinfo/policies/Basic-Principles-CSUN-Approach-to-Crafting-Online-Degree-Certificate-Programs.pdf>

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

Since CSUN self-support degree and credit certificate programs are offered in the cohort format, the program development process focuses first and finally at the program level with courses within each distinctive program building on one another from start to finish of the cohort to achieve higher-level cumulative learning goals for the program as a whole. CSUN’s self-support program development (or redesign/refinement) is an iterative process that starts with the overview of the field (scholarships and professional practice) in question; 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 question. In light of this initial broader, reflective, and innovative overview, the CSUN program planning group moves on to consider how CSUN's program in the field in question should be crafted give the contemporary context in scholarship and practice and the full range of CSUN strengths within and across departments and colleges as well as the additional insights and resources CSUN can access through its links to practitioner/industries in the regions (as appropriate).

The program development (redesign/refinement) process then moves on to begin to develop/refine the CSUN program in question through a thoughtful and co-creative discussion about the learning outcomes that should be achieved by graduates of the CSUN program in question. The process continues by working to identify which courses would need to be developed (and in what order they should be offered) to lead to graduates having the knowledge, field specific skills, advanced critical reasoning capabilities/habits of mind, ability to keep current (ongoing learning) as well as lead, innovate and design solution as the field in question and professional practice evolve, research and information literacy skills, and more as appropriate, that need to be a part of the overall educational attainment plan for the program in question.

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

- Full development group meetings with CSUN faculty, staff, and practitioners engaged in the program development to envision the overall program and explore innovative forefront possibilities, begin to outline the features of the program that will make it excellent and distinctive in contemporary context, and start to outline essential learning goals;
- The work of individual faculty (or faculty teams) meeting and working on the development of program components (courses, modules, etc.);
- And then meeting as a full development group again to draw the emerging courses/modules together and create strong links in content, assignments, and instructional strategies between the courses 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 to make the program an excellent and distinctive comprehensive and highly effective learning experience. It should be noted, that through this approach to program development and ongoing program refinement, CSUN's 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 work in strong complement with 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 in question, the academic lead will be asked to participate in 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 role of the faculty member appointed as academic lead is to facilitate this iterative curriculum development process and engage faculty and staff in the planning stages prior to launch. The academic lead helps to identify forefront programs in the field in question and forefront resources (articles, conferences, etc.) about the field in question and changes in practice in the field to foster a broad, co-creative and forefront conversation about possibilities at the start of the program development work. 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) working on individual courses or modules. Working with the full development group involves convening and attending meetings and facilitating the communication and forward progress of the 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, fostering attention to developing links among the courses that ensure that one course/module builds upon another, facilitating attention to assignment design to support the learning goals of the courses/modules and the program overall, and keeping all members of the program development project linked and engaged in the creation of the overall program, and the course/models that it comprises through regular communication.

The academic lead brings expertise in the particular field(s) in question and should also have a demonstrated ability to lead faculty co-creative and productive working groups, exhibit strong project management skills, successfully lead projects through to completion, and communicate clearly and effectively.

The academic lead is appointed by the dean of the partner college (in consultation with the dean of CSUN's Tseng College and others as appropriate) for the program in question. 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) in question.

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 CSUN's Tseng College appointed to work on the program development/refinement project in question, typically 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. CSUN's Tseng College senior academic staff member assigned have program development, adult learning theory, instructional design and/or other relevant professional expertise focused on program development for midcareer professionals as well as expertise on the range and the 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 (most often the assistant dean for program development or the associate dean) from the Tseng College works in close, open, co-creative, and collaborative partnership with the academic lead, documents the evolving and collaboratively designed program narrative, which will be regularly shared with the full program development group to ensure a shared understanding of program curricular and instructional decisions, distinctive program features crafted by the planning group, the reasons for particular program choices in light of the forefront of scholarship and practice in the field in question, the curriculum structure, strategies for cultivating advanced conceptual skills and the capacity for ongoing learning and innovation, learning goals/outcomes at the course and program level and the like.

Throughout the program planning and development/refinement process, the academic lead and appointed CSUN 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 accurately and appropriately craft consistent messaging that reflect the full excellence and distinction of the program in question as it has been crafted. This supports effective marketing of the program to those who might best benefit from it, recruitment/and prospective student support strategies, and the timely application review and response for the program in question.

Such active engagement of the appointed academic lead continues in changing ways through various stages of program development, approvals (when needed), online program/course production as appropriate, marketing, responding to the academically focused questions from prospective student, and enrollment is carried over from the program development/refinement and review processes through the launch (or relaunch following review) of the program in question. In the engagement of the appointed academic lead for a given program with various Tseng College academic professional staff prior to program launch, the academic lead assigned to the program in question is heavily relied upon to work with the relevant department chair(s) and others in the partner college to identify relevant field and degree criteria for admission to the program in question given the level and academic focus of the program. Such admission criteria guidance can include but is not limited to: application criteria, minimum GPA needed for success in the program, entrance exam requirements if there are such for the program in question, requirements for letters of recommendation (if any) that are part of the application process, the level and/or length of professional experience for admission to the program in question, and a clear articulation of the reasons for and expectation of any statement of purpose or the like that may be deemed a useful component of the application process.

The academic lead's ability to represent and maintains the broader collaborative partner between the partner academic college/department for the program in question through regular, open, clear and effective communication with all of the faculty and administrative stakeholders in the partner college and with CSUN's Tseng College professionals assigned to a given program is crucial to the success of the program development, program launch, student success throughout their program, and student graduation and completion. The academic lead's (in collaboration with the faculty team developing and teaching in the program in question) continuous reflection and potential revision of the program in question is encouraged, in order to successfully launch the program as well as 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 CSUN curriculum documents for review by CSUN campus faculty committees and appropriate CSUN administrative units (such as, undergraduate studies, graduate studies, the provost, and the like) as well as CSU Chancellor's Office required document for new program proposals. Such curriculum documents must be clear, strong, and accurate statements about the true purpose, features, learning goals, etc. of the program in question. The Tseng College staff can and does provide significant assistance in crafting, editing, and refining such document, but the core statements about scholarship and practice in the field in question, the academic purpose and excellence of the program in question, and like essential academic issues rely heavily on the academic lead to craft appropriately (working in consultation with the faculty team developing and teaching in the program and the partner department chair and/or dean as warranted) in keeping with CSUN and CSU approval process requirements and, when appropriate, the requirements of special accreditors for the program in question. In order to successfully present these documents both to CSUN campus and 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 in question. 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 in question may also be called upon to meet with CSUN's self-support program marketing team to provide broad and clear insights into the target audience/students for which the program was design including any 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 CSUN's Tseng College includes successful communicating to prospective students the high value of and specific features that have been carefully crafted in the development/refinement of the program in question.

The CSUN marketing team in the Tseng College plays a central role in that effort – to be successful they need to be able to identify the most relevant professional or academic conferences at which the most promising prospective students might be found (or those who 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 in ensuring that the information about the program reaches the prospective students. The assigned academic lead will collaborate with assigned senior academic staff member(s) from the Tseng College that were actively engaged in the development/refinement of the program in question, with the Tseng College marketing team, to help identify potential advertising outlets and help to inform marketing strategies so that it is able to better reach the midcareer student who can best benefit from the program in question so that each cohort of the program has a strong cohort (in size and appropriate preparation) each time a new cohort begins. While the Tseng College does formal market research in support of new program and has significant marketing expertise focused on CSUN's self-support programs, the direct insights of the academic lead into the field in question and the world of professional practice in contemporary context in the greater LA region and beyond is a very important component of CSUN's ability to make the program in question a success.

Prospective Student Communication/Recruitment: Another essential component of program

planning prior to launch, involves a close working partnership between the appointed academic lead for the program in question and CSUN's Tseng College's outreach/recruitment and external relations staff, who have direct responsibility for presenting the program a wide array of external audiences and/or for discussing the program in question with prospective students who make inquiries about the program. The recruitment/communications and client services staff assist students considering the program and helps them through the application process (from student inquiry to enrolled student). The academic lead assigned to the program planning or review project in question may be asked to play a role in communicating with prospective students about the program in question when a given student has very specific academic questions about the program and/or the field in question. Such duties may include but are not limited to: attending selected planned open houses/information sessions, attending new student orientations (on campus, online, and/or offsite), and/or advising prospective students whose academic questions about the program are more in depth than can be appropriately addressed by assigned Tseng College staff.

If assigned by the partner college/department in question to program admissions responsibilities -- the assigned academic lead would work closely with the assigned Tseng College recruitment/program management and/or admissions staff, in an effort to provide prospective students with responsive and timely support and work with a sense of urgency, regarding the return of pertinent documents pertaining to student's files and their acceptance or denial into their programs of interest. It should be noted that most midcareer students do 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 in question, arrange their work and personal lives accordingly, work out financial considerations (including applying for financial aid in a timely manner), and prepare to start the program in question 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 change choice. Many making that choice need to know that CSUN respects the choice they are making and the challenges involved and is, in turn, there to support them with a focus on their success. The academic lead for the program in question 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 to the benefit of all enrolled.