

MOTION

That the University hold in abeyance the suspension of admissions to the set of 18 degree programs recently announced until such time as a framework for guiding the assessment of program sustainability has been reviewed and endorsed by Senate, and

That, consistent with its mandate, APPRC review a draft framework for assessing program sustainability and bring its recommendation to Senate for Senate's consideration and endorsement.

Moved: Professor Brenda Spotton Visano (LA&PS)

Seconded: Professor Marina Morrow (Health)

RATIONALE

The suspension of admissions to some 30 degree programs in recent years, including the 18 suspensions announced Friday February 14, 2025, at 5:00pm, has been premature. The combined programs suspended by administrative fiat comprise nearly 15% of all degree programs. Acknowledging the administration's authority to initiate the suspension of admission to a program in need of "review and/or curriculum renewal of a program experiencing low enrollment," the number of recent suspensions justified by resource considerations is, as an order of magnitude, an academic decision that lies squarely within Senate's mandate to oversee academic programming and within APPRC's mandate to oversee academic planning and advise on resource allocation on behalf of Senate.

In the absence of a Senate-endorsed framework guiding such decisions, the mass suspension of 18 programs academic programs this past week and the previous suspensions of programs in Glendon, Lassonde, Science, Education, and LA&PS were premature. The surprise suspension of the most recent set of programs across four of the five faculties has created much confusion, fostering discontent unnecessarily. The purported logic informing both the process and the selection of programs is questionable and the choice of programs disturbing. The rationale given for this most recent suspension is budgetary, yet no savings have been demonstrated and indeed in some instances are unlikely to be material. These suspensions contradict recent decanal promises to support some of the targeted programs and include programs that had undertaken significant restructuring of the curriculum for addressing low enrolments less than 12 months prior. Other suspended programs run counter to commitments Senate previously approved as part of the University Academic Plan.

Every academic program is subject to a periodic review process. This Cyclical Program Review process supports efforts to continually improve programs and encourages ongoing attention to those programs that are precarious. The CPR process would benefit from clearer guidelines informing both the assessment of program sustainability and recommended forward actions. A framework identifying key elements of a program's performance affecting and defining sustainability, informed by both academic and financial assessment, would bring greater clarity and consistency to key decisions. A framework outlining possible measured responses would offer greater transparency.

A framework that includes clear definitions of threshold criteria and conditions under which admission to a program might be administratively suspended is needed. Such a framework would bring clarity to and promote consistency of such responses. Any such actions as suggested by the framework would then proceed in consultation with the members of the unit housing the affected program.

Such a framework is appropriately within Senate's authority to review and endorse given the joint role of APPRC and ASCP in the oversight of the CPR process through the Joint Sub-Committee on Quality Assurance. In addition to its role in overseeing both the CPR process and the University Academic Plan, APPRC's enhanced role in the review of this framework derives from its role in "the establishment of academic priorities guiding the deployment of academic resources, and advice and recommendations on the allocation of academic resources," as well as its role in "the coordination of program and policy development."

Given the public's awareness of these most recent administrative suspensions, it is recommended the University expedite its submission of a draft framework to APPRC for its review and action and that Senate look to receive it as soon as is practicable. Decisions on which programs may be subject to action, including administrative suspension, as guided by the framework would come into effect no earlier than two of the three recruiting cycles (Summer, Fall, Winter) after Senate's endorsement.