

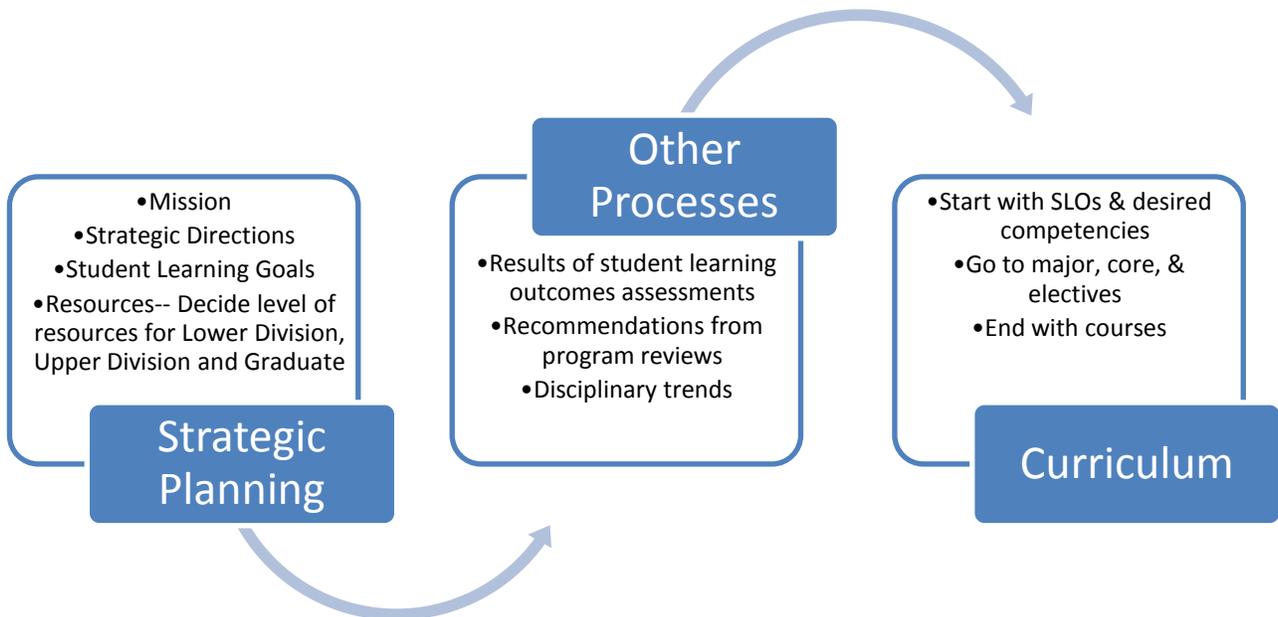
Best Practices in Curriculum Development
Curriculum Review and Approval Committee
San Francisco State University

1. **Strategic Planning As Place to Start.** Curriculum development should always come after, and be guided by, the development of a mission, a strategic direction, and desired student learning outcomes for each degree. Only after those are developed should the curriculum itself be developed or changed. The process *could* include:

- a. A mission statement for the department
- b. An analysis of the department's Strengths (S), Weaknesses (W), Opportunities (O) and Challenges (C)
- c. Developing goals for the department, including student learning goals

It *needs* to include:

- d. Developing appropriate student learning outcomes based upon disciplinary knowledge and trends
- e. Results from: 1. The assessment of these student learning outcomes; and, 2. Information and recommendations from the academic program review process
- f. A process for reviewing and updating the strategic plan based upon changes and progress.



2. **University-level questions and issues.** Questions that should be asked as the curriculum is considered. How do the proposed curricular changes:

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- a. Further the mission of the University?
 - b. Further the mission of the Department?
 - c. Serve the interest of the students?
 - d. Help the Department / Program meet your student learning objectives?
 - e. Ensure the Department / Program's curriculum and degree program is a rigorous one?
 - f. Ensure there are no bottlenecks to graduation?
 - g. Reflect the latest trends in your discipline?
 - h. Position students to be ready for changes in their discipline and in society?
 - i. Help ensure that transfer students have a clearly articulated path through your degree?
3. **Student Learning Outcomes Assessment.** The department's student learning outcomes assessment process should help drive any changes in the curriculum.
- a. Department-level student learning goals should be developed by department faculty.
 - b. Course learning objectives should follow from, and be coordinated with, these department-level student learning goals. Each objective should be related to at least one of the department-level learning goals.
 - c. Each piece of the department's degree should therefore be mapped to the student learning goals and objectives of the department.
4. **Academic Program Review.** A comprehensive examination of each department's curriculum should be made at least every six years as part of the self-study process in each program review cycle. The Department will then formally present the results of the curriculum review to the SF State Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) in its Program Review Self-Study. Recommendations from outside reviewers and the APRC can then aid in the Department's review of its proposals.
- a. Additional reviews should occur during other major milestones for the department (i.e., changes in accreditation standards, the arrival of new faculty or the retirement of other faculty, etc.). A department with multiple degrees may want to alternate consideration of each degree so that not all the curriculum is under consideration in any one year.
5. **Timing of curricular reviews.** Curriculum changes should not be made every year; this requires too many changes and transitions for students, faculty and staff.
6. **Allocation of resources between Lower Division, Upper Division and Graduate.** Departments need to make conscious and explicit decisions about the level of resources (courses and faculty time) dedicated to lower division, upper division and graduate levels of courses.
- a. Majors should have some (at least 6 units) courses available at the lower division for students to take.
 - b. From fifteen to twenty percent of a department's resources need to be dedicated to a graduate program in order for it to be, and remain, viable and sustainable. Faculty need to decide how this level of resource