

California State University Northridge (CSUN)

Basic Principles of Program Development for CSUN Self-Support Degree and Credit Certificate Programs

The Goal of Program Excellence and Distinction in CSUN Self-Support Programs:

The CSUN self-support degree and credit certificate programs are offered through CSUN's Tseng College: *Graduate, International, and Midcareer Education* (the Tseng College). CSUN's self-support degree and credit certificate programs are designed to focus on providing excellent and purposefully distinctive advanced education for mid-career professionals/working adults.

Excellence is defined in terms of both:

- Each program's insightful and forward-focused connection to scholarship and contemporary practice in the field(s) in question, as well as the program's ability to foster advanced conceptual and practical skills in program participants.
- Student achievement, as measured by on-time graduation rates, students' mastery of the measurable student learning outcomes for the program, and graduates of the program's success in finding a viable career path in the field(s) in question.

Distinction is defined in terms of how the choices made in the crafting of each program create educational excellence in a thoughtful and innovative way, looking at aspects of program development such as:

- How well the program is crafted in light of forefront issues in scholarship and professional practice in the field(s) in question.
- How thoughtfully the curriculum is developed by the faculty program development group and integrated from one course to the next to provide a comprehensive program of study focused on achieving the program's learning goals.
- How carefully the instructional strategies are chosen and refined to ensure graduates have developed the advanced conceptual skills needed to be reflective, innovative, and agile leaders in the field(s) in question.
- How effectively each program engages students in acquiring the knowledge, professional skills needed in senior roles in contemporary practice in the field(s) in question, and advanced conceptual skills (habits of mind) needed to be an

effective senior professional in the field(s) in question – a leader in the field (including being a thought leader and someone influencing the future of the field).

- How well the program is created to link scholarship in the field(s) in question to the excellence in professional practice and/or to the broader forefront conversations that are shaping the future of the field(s) (preparing students to make meaningful contributions and to be lifelong learners growing in habits of mind, knowledge, and reflective practice across the career span and the lifespan).
- How well the program's structure is innovatively and purposefully designed to provide an exceptional educational experience focused on ensuring that students achieve measurable student learning outcomes.

Each self-support degree and credit certificate program CSUN offers is crafted with a focus on excellence and distinction as outlined above. Whether a program is already offered by CSUN through state-funding (being considered for a first-time offering in self-support with a focus on the educational needs of midcareer professionals) or will be an entirely new CSUN degree that is created using self-support funding, there is a careful program development process that ensures that each program is thoughtfully crafted to provide the forefront advanced education that the university-prepared workforce needs in order to be leaders in professional practice in the field(s) in question in California, the U.S., and beyond. While there is a selection of self-support baccalaureate degree completion programs that CSUN offers, the emphasis for CSUN self-support degree and credit certificate programs is on post-baccalaureate education at the master's and post-master's levels.

If a CSUN degree or credit certificate program is offered in both state-support and self-support formats, the partner academic college(s) and department(s), in collaboration with the Tseng College, ensure that the curriculum remains aligned in academic substance and standards across both offerings. This includes maintaining consistent program learning outcomes, measurable student learning outcomes, and core curricular requirements, while allowing purposeful differences in format (e.g., cohort structure, modality, scheduling, and student support services) that respond to the needs of midcareer/working adult learners. The associate deans (and, as appropriate, the department chair) use the program learning outcomes, curriculum map, and key assignments to ensure that any approved program changes are evaluated for implications across both the state-support and self-support versions.

The Choice of Which Programs to Develop and Offer in CSUN Self-Support: The CSUN self-support degree and credit certificate programs that CSUN offers are developed through a close collaboration between the Tseng College and the partner academic college(s) and department(s) that will be the academic home of the program. This ensures CSUN's self-support degree and credit certificate programs draw on the university's faculty excellence and research, academic strengths and distinctions across fields and disciplines, changing technologies, and educational relationships with industries, communities, and leading practitioners at the regional, national, and international levels. This allows CSUN self-support programs to be designed and

developed in ways that respond very effectively to forefront educational needs with particular emphasis on professional practice in emerging, changing, and increasingly global contexts.

Before a program reaches the program development stage, there will have been a number of idea exchanges between/among the dean of the partner academic college(s) in question and the dean of the Tseng College, conversations with relevant department chair(s), and formal and informal market research done prior to consensus on whether or not a given degree or credit certificate program would be a valuable addition to the educational opportunities that CSUN offers for those it serves.

Creating the Faculty Program Development Group for Each CSUN Self-Support Program: After extensive research and exploration of the viability of a new program, if a given CSUN self-support degree or credit certificate program is approved for development using CSUN self-support funding, the program development process begins with a conversation between the dean of the Tseng College and the dean(s) of the partner academic college(s). This conversation focuses on identifying the faculty members from the partner academic college(s) that should be involved in the program planning and development process. Those faculty members identified are those who are recognized as excellent in their teaching abilities, course design experience, collaboration and innovation, links to industry, and/or the scope and influence of their scholarship. Predominantly, they are also faculty members who are active in the field in question and, in turn, understand the realities of practice in the profession (they are “in touch” in other words, with practice in the field today). It is also an advantage if the faculty members chosen are familiar with the structure, content, and points of distinction in the forefront programs in the field(s) in question at other universities (regional, national, and international). The deans of the partner academic college(s) will also work together, along with their associate deans and members of the faculty, to identify leading practitioners/subject matter experts (SMEs) in the field(s) who should be a part of the curriculum development process.

Note: Faculty members who participate in the program development process as part of the program development group are compensated. During the program planning and development phases, there is compensation for participating in the full program development group meetings, additional compensation for developing a specific course if assigned to do so, and, if the program is to be fully online, there is also additional compensation for working with CSUN’s Distance Learning instructional design team in the Tseng College to produce the course online.

The Distinctive CSUN Self-Support Program Development Process: Following the agreement between the partner academic colleges regarding the parameters for the program being developed, its level, academic purpose, and target audience, curriculum development begins. The partner academic colleges are represented during the program development process by their associate deans, with the associate dean of the Tseng College leading the process so that the work links seamlessly to all CSU and CSUN-related approval processes and to the full CSUN self-support program support and delivery capacities of the Tseng College. During the curriculum development phase (after the program in question has been added to the CSU Academic Master Plan), a group of faculty approved by the partner deans is convened by the Tseng College’s

associate dean, working in ongoing communication with the associate dean of the partner academic college(s) and the relevant department chair(s).

- The CSUN self-support program development process is focused at the full program level first, rather than individual courses, in order to promote program excellence and a cohesive, integrated student experience. The process starts with a very broad consideration of the field(s) in question from the perspective of forefront scholarship and professional practice. The faculty group, alongside CSUN staff and leading practitioners, first considers how to craft the program from a fresh, contemporary context – one that reflects current and emerging trends in the field(s). The program development group looks closely at the curricula and instructional strategies of competing programs at leading/innovative regional, national, and international universities. The program development group also looks at recent influential articles regarding the evolution of professional practice in the field(s) in question. In addition, the program development group gives careful consideration to CSUN's strengths within and across disciplines/colleges; CSUN's links to other resources in the field (sister campuses, practitioners, and more); and contemporary practice and needs in the field. During this phase of program development, the broader exploration of models, current and emerging issues, and a wider range of possibilities is the emphasis.
- Following the exploratory and formative conversations, a set of program learning goals is developed and refined in co-creative conversations. Once these program learning goals are agreed upon, the program development group creates measurable student learning outcomes that align with those program learning goals.
- After the program development group has developed general program learning goals and student learning outcomes, the group determines what courses would have to be offered, created, and/or redesigned (and in what order those courses would need to be offered) to ensure the program's curriculum supports the achievement of the developed learning goals. These considerations also factor in overall student success and each student's achievement of the essential measurable student learning outcomes (in keeping with CSU, CSUN, and WASC standards).
- CSUN self-support degree and credit certificate programs are offered in a distinctive CSUN cohort format, with all students starting the program at the same time, taking the same set of courses, and completing the program at the same time. This cohort approach allows courses to be developed with a focus on the cumulative impact of the program by designing the program so that one course builds on another to foster the development of increasingly advanced conceptual skills and to support achievement of the program-level learning goals at the highest possible levels.
- Once the program development group agrees upon the courses and sequence of those courses, the group determines which faculty and practitioners will work on the development of each course. This is an iterative and collaborative process

with each course development effort tied back to the work and goals of the full program development group. This approach allows all group members to see how each course in the program is taking shape and, from there, work with one another to ensure courses are strongly linked and aligned with the learning goals and outcomes of the program.

- The program development process is an iterative process that begins with meetings of the full program development group. Once decisions are made about the courses needed, individual faculty members (or small faculty teams – which might at some points in the process include small working teams composed of faculty members developing, for example, courses to be offered in the same term within the program’s course sequence so they can work on tighter connections between those courses to enhance the impact of that term) will work on developing drafts of assigned courses in keeping with the decisions made by the full program development group about learning goals, the sequence of the courses, the purpose of each course in the overall program, and how each course fits into the cohort sequence (building on prior courses and providing a purposeful learning platform on which later courses will build).
- The courses are drafted and then shared in additional meetings of the full program development group so that the full group can respond to, refine, and enhance the cohesiveness among courses and promote sequential and increasingly substantial learning across the program in order to increase the educational impact of the overall program. The individual faculty members (or small faculty teams) then go back to work further on their assigned courses, taking them closer to final form in light of the full group co-creative discussion. The full program development group then meets again to review the evolving courses and the evolving program to make further co-creative changes. This process of alternation between full group meetings and individual (or small group) working time continues until the full program development group considers the program to be complete.

Assignment Development, Assignment Design, and Program Assessment: In keeping with standards put in place by the CSU, WASC, CSUN, and any special accreditor required for the program in question, the program development group crafts key assignments designed to measure how well students have achieved the student learning outcomes established by a program’s faculty development group. Once the courses and program are well aligned in development, the program development group works on the design of these key assignments. This step in the program development process helps to ensure that key assignments purposefully draw together the learning across courses and push forward both the refinement of advanced conceptual skills and the demonstration of the essential professional knowledge, skills, and abilities that the program planning group has determined to be essential by the program learning goals and, in turn, the defined measurable student learning outcomes.

The key assignments designed as part of the program planning process are also the assignments that will form the foundation for program assessment. Collecting student work from these key assignments (via electronic portfolio for each cohort or the like) will

allow program faculty to assess if the program's curriculum is indeed successful in ensuring that students achieve the specified student learning outcomes expected from each assignment and from the program as a whole.

Making the Case – Crafting the Program Narrative: Throughout the program development process, the associate dean of the Tseng College and team work to capture in a narrative format the evolving “story” of the program – including, but not limited to how the program approaches the field in question, who it is designed for, program learning goals, student learning outcomes, the purpose of each course, the content/learning experience to be built into each course, how each course in the program builds on prior courses, how each course prepares students for successful professional practice, how the program prepares students to be impactful leaders at the forefront of their professional practice, and the like. This evolving program narrative will be regularly shared with the full program development group to ensure a shared understanding of the program decisions made and the parts in the context of the whole, as well as to document how the program is taking shape overall. By the end of the program development process, the program narrative will capture all of the features of the program, as well as the thinking behind the design and content of the program. This, in turn, will serve as the foundation for accurately and effectively explaining the value of each CSUN self-support degree or credit certificate program to prospective students and serve as a useful onboarding tool for any new program development group members who also serve as instructors in the program.

Feedback from Industry and Target Audience: When the “penultimate” version of the full program curriculum is ready, it is often shared by the associate dean of the Tseng College, working with the partner academic college(s) associate dean, with leading scholars and/or practitioners in the field to get final feedback from those who are widely respected in the field but who have been outside of the planning process and who, in that light, can offer a fresh eye. In light of the feedback from this external informal review, the faculty program development group will make any final refinements to the program based on feedback from this broader sharing.

Program Approvals and the Associate Deans: All CSUN self-support degree and credit certificate programs require CSUN approvals and reviews at the CSUN departmental, college, and university levels. In addition, for new (and sometimes for significantly redesigned) degree programs, approval at the CSU Chancellor's Office level is also required. The associate dean of the partner academic college(s) and the associate dean of the Tseng College, working with the Tseng College's assistant dean for program development, guide the final curriculum through the required approvals. The approval process will vary depending on whether this program is a modification of an existing program or an entirely new program. So that all parties are aware of the expectations for the approval process, a timeline is developed for the approval process and the launch of the program, taking into consideration the nine (9) to twelve (12) months needed prior to the first application deadline for marketing the program.

When program development, revision, or redesign is driven by accreditation expectations (WASC/WSCUC or a specialized accreditor) or program requirements needed for professional licensure (if applicable), the Tseng College and the partner academic college(s) handle the matter as a priority compliance responsibility. The associate deans coordinate early with the relevant department chair(s) and campus accreditation/program review leadership, clarify the specific requirements and timeline, and convene the appropriate faculty group to develop the needed curricular, assessment, and documentation updates. These updates are advanced through the same CSUN approval and review processes described above, with internal timelines adjusted as needed to meet accreditor deadlines. Required changes and rationales are reflected in the curricular documents, in program assessment plans, and key assignments as needed.

Tseng College Staff Expertise in Support of Program Development: Working with the associate dean of the Tseng College, the College's senior professional staff will bring expertise in fields and areas of instructional design, learning theory (particularly adult learning theory), online teaching, learning best practices and national models, educational technologies, program design best practices and national models with a focus on working adults/midcareer professionals, program design options available through the flexibility offered by self-support funding, relevant CSUN and CSU policies and approval processes, budgeting and pricing, accreditation and regulatory compliance issues, market factors and marketing strategies that may impact the success of the program, and extensive connections with leading organizations and industries in the region. Senior professional staff from the Tseng College, with the leadership of the College's associate dean, collaborate with each program development group to support the program development process.

CSUN Self-Support Program Budgeting and Financial Management: The Tseng College is responsible for developing the budget for each self-support degree or credit certificate program, looking at the features and requirements of the program in question, given how it has been developed by the program development group. The Tseng College develops the program budget in keeping with CSUN and CSU policies and approved practices, setting a price aligned with CSU principles, and then marketing the program. The details of the working agreement and financial plan are captured in an MOU created for each program by the Tseng College's director of finance, working collaboratively with the Tseng College's dean and the associate dean. For new degree or credit certificate programs, the dean of the Tseng College often works with the dean of the partner academic college(s) to review the program plan and the program budget.

Note: The Tseng College takes all the risk for the development and marketing of the program. If the program fails to achieve the required minimum enrolment, the Tseng College assumes responsibility for the loss and does not pass any of it on to the CSUN partner academic college(s) or department(s). Further, if the program achieves the required minimum enrollment (as outlined in the MOU) to offer the program, the Tseng College commits to offering the full program and paying all instructional and program costs regardless of attrition in the program and, in turn, financial loss such that no loss is passed on to the CSUN partner academic college(s) or departments.

Program Management and Student Support Services After Program Launch: Once the program launches, the associate dean of the Tseng College and team work with the associate dean from the partner academic college(s) for the program in question to reconvene the full program development group annually after a new program is launched. This will be a meeting at which the faculty teaching in the program can discuss how the program is going, in light of their original plan and vision for the program (as captured in the final program narrative). The program development group will consider how students are responding to the educational experience and whether or not students are succeeding in achieving the specified measurable student learning outcomes (based on how successfully students are completing key program assignments, as well as other course assignments). During this reconvening, the program development group will consider levels of student engagement in the program. The group will also discuss what changes, if any, should be made in the first part of the program prior to the start of the next scheduled cohort to enhance student achievement and/or enrich the educational experience the program offers. The program development group will discuss how those teaching in the remaining part of the program for the first cohort might anticipate the learning dynamic of the group and/or enhance or refine program components in light of the experience of those teaching in the first half of the program in question. The program development group for new programs will also meet at the end of the first cohort for a similar meeting to consider the experiences of those teaching in the program and make decisions about how the program and/or the instructional strategies should be refined or enhanced to make the program increasingly excellent. The dean of the partner academic college(s) and/or the relevant department chairs can join these reflective conversations as listeners (and information resources as needed) to enhance their understanding of the program and its strengths and distinctions.

Thereafter, the program development group for the program would be convened by the Tseng College, in collaboration with the partner academic college(s) associate dean, once every twelve (12) months. The Tseng College's associate dean and the assistant dean for program development will facilitate discussion and participate in academic decision-making at these meetings, focusing on the continuous improvement of the excellence, distinction, and educational impact of the program in question. The faculty team that develops and teaches in each of CSUN's self-support degree and credit certificate programs are the academic community that work collaboratively and regularly to ensure the continuous improvement of the program and its ongoing enrichment through the regular exchange of ideas, experience, and possibilities among program faculty.

It should be noted that faculty are paid an honorarium for participating in such program enhancement meetings, and doing so is part of the obligations of those who accept an assignment to teach in the program in question.

Appointment of an Academic Lead for Self-Support Degree Programs: After the program is approved and prior to opening applications for the program in question, the dean of the partner academic college(s), working in close collaboration with the dean of

the Tseng College, appoints an academic lead for the program whom, if successful, serves a three-year term in that role which can be renewed for an additional three year term. Upon appointment, the academic lead serves as the program's coordinator of instruction, instructional excellence, and instructional performance evaluation. The academic lead is also responsible for addressing academic questions and concerns, in keeping with CSUN policies and practices. When the program launches, the academic lead acts as the primary academic point of contact for students and instructors for academic questions/concern. The academic lead works collaboratively with the Tseng College associate dean and the associate dean of the partner academic college(s). The academic lead focuses first on ensuring the success of students in the program and evidence-based continuous improvement of instruction and instructional strategies.

Within thirty (30) days of appointment, the academic lead completes an orientation organized by the Tseng College's associate dean (or designees) in collaboration with the partner academic college(s). The orientation addresses roles and approvals, assessment and measurable student learning outcomes, the protocol for addressing student concerns and faculty issues (including privacy and FERPA), and core operational touchpoints, such as admissions and academic calendars.

The academic lead is appointed for a renewable three-year term and works in close collaboration with the Tseng College's associate dean (or designee).

The academic lead also participates with the program's faculty development group as an equal member of the full faculty team responsible for working with the associate dean of the Tseng College and the associate dean of the partner academic college to craft the curriculum for a given program and modify it as needed over time. This curricular work is framed by the nature of the program to be developed in self-support, which results from an agreement between the partner academic colleges following market research, consideration of CSUN's academic strengths and priorities for the evolution of CSUN's programs, and the educational needs of those CSUN serves.

As an equal and active contributing member of the faculty group that is the curriculum hub for the program in question, the academic lead is not responsible for leading, initiating, or advancing changes to the curriculum in question proposed by the full faculty group working with the associate deans. That responsibility resides with the associate dean of the Tseng College, working in close collaboration with the associate dean of the partner academic college.

Note: During the application and admission phase, the academic lead is compensated by the Tseng College. The academic lead will be compensated per term for this role by the partner academic college after the launch of the program.

Prior to the start of the academic lead role, if the faculty member who will later assume the academic lead role is one of the faculty members approved to be part of the curriculum development faculty group, they will be compensated for that work in keeping with the compensation offered to all other members of that group.

Basic Principles for the Curriculum Modification or Redesign of CSUN Self-Support Degree and Credit Certificate Programs

To ensure that each CSUN self-support degree and certificate program is continuously reconsidered from the perspective of continuous improvement in all academic aspects of the program, the Tseng College reconvenes the full faculty group teaching in the program (who are predominately also the faculty who worked with the partner academic colleges to craft the program originally), the program's current appointed academic lead, the Tseng College associate dean, and the associate dean of the partner academic college(s), (and, for department specific programs, the department chair) once every twelve (12) months.

Following the yearly reconvene meeting for a given program, the associate deans from the Tseng College and the partner academic college(s) for each CSUN self-support program meet and consider any proposed changes in the program and of the faculty for the program in question. The associate deans discuss any curriculum change concepts/proposals emerging from the faculty review of the curriculum and/or changing technologies and/or changing CSUN approaches to the field(s) in question in the department/college overall, and/or from periodic research of the market that highlights the changing demand for the program and comparative curriculum. If the collaborating associate deans feel it is appropriate to propose a change to the program in question, that change is proposed to the partner deans and, if both deans concur that a change is appropriate, the faculty are convened as would be the case for a new program (as described above) and the change is considered and crafted into the overall program to keep the program excellent, distinctive, and viable in CSUN self-support context.

If a reconvening identifies an accreditation-related need (WASC/WSCUC or specialized accreditor), the associate deans will handle the matter as a required program action and proceed promptly, engaging the partner academic college deans and department chair as appropriate, so that compliance timelines are met while maintaining program excellence and student success.

Modifications follow the same sequence used for new program development: initiation and planning, collaborative consultation by the program development group, impact review, proposal development, decision and required approvals, and coordinated implementation. Program work remains within the college-to-college partnership and is not conducted independently.

Routine course adjustments that do not alter the approved program structure or learning outcomes may be made by the responsible faculty member with standard documentation and notice.