To: The Committee on Planning and Priorities

From: The Steering Committee

Re: Principles for Prioritization for Program Closure

Date: March 3, 2010

**Background :**

In a recent email (copy attached), Pres. Gitenstein has asked, through the college’s governance system, that the Committee on Planning and Priorities provide her with input on principles of prioritization for program closure at the college. She asks for your input both because CPP originally participated in developing the college’s Policy on Program Closure and because of CPP’s essential planning function.

**Charge :**

The Steering Committee feels that the President’s request is particularly appropriate in light of the description in the Governance Document of the Committee on Planning and Priorities’ charge:

The Committee on Planning and Priorities (CPP) is charged with promoting the TCNJ mission and core values as the primary guide in campus planning, decision-making, and resource allocation. CPP serves as the Planning Council in the strategic areas of leadership, planning, and decision-making, reporting to the President.

The current policy on program closure deals with criteria and processes for individual program closure. Now it is necessary to consider program closures holistically and strategically within the broadest institutional context. Therefore, we ask CPP to develop principles for prioritization for closing academic and non-academic programs at the college. These principles should be based upon the college’s mission and the role of CPP to help fulfill this mission in light of both challenges to and opportunities to the college. They should also be placed within CPP’s role in planning.

**Timeline:**

The Steering Committee requests that CPP make this a priority consideration.

**TCNJ Governance Processes:**

**Step #1 -- Identifying and reporting the problem:** When a Standing Committee receives an issue from the Steering Committee, the first responsibility is to clearly articulate and report the problem to the campus community through regular updates to the campus community and the Governance Web Page ([www.tcnj.edu/~steering](http://www.tcnj.edu/~steering) ). The problem may have been set out clearly in the charge received from the Steering Committee, or it may be necessary for the Standing Committee to frame a problem statement. The problem statement should indicate the difficulties or uncertainties that need to be addressed through new or revised policy, procedure, or program. The problem statement should be broadly stated and should include a context such as existing policy or practice. Problem statements may include solution parameters but should not suggest any actual solutions. Clearly stated problems will lead to better recommendations.

**Step #2 -- Preparing a preliminary recommendation:** Once the campus community has received the problem statement, committees can begin to collect data needed to make a recommendation. Committees typically receive input through committee membership, formal testimony, and open comment from affected individuals and all stakeholder groups. Committees must be proactive in inviting stakeholder groups (including Student Government Association, Staff Senate and Faculty Senate) to provide formal testimony prior to developing a preliminary recommendation. When, in the best judgment of the committee, adequate clarity of the principles contributing to the problem are known, a preliminary recommendation should be drafted and disseminated to the campus community through regular updates and the Governance Web Page.

**Step #3 -- Making a Final Recommendation:** Committees must use sound judgment to give the campus adequate time to review the preliminary recommendation before making their final recommendation. Again, committees are expected to be proactive in receiving feedback on the preliminary recommendation. If a full calendar year has passed since the formal announcement of the preliminary recommendation, the committee must resubmit a preliminary recommendation to the campus community. When, in the best judgment of the committee, the campus community has responded to the proposed resolution of the issue, the committee shall send their final recommendation (complete documentation) to the Steering Committee.

**Testimony**

The presenting of testimony is central to the concept of shared governance. All stakeholder groups will have an opportunity to provide input into governance issues through direct membership as well as invited testimony. Individuals appointed or elected to the governance system are expected to take a broad institutional perspective relative to issues being considered. In contrast, invited testimony will reflect the stakeholder perspective on the issue being considered. Committees are expected to be proactive in inviting stakeholder groups to provide testimony at both step # 2 and #3 of the process. Committees need to identify stakeholder groups that are interested in each particular issue and invite their testimony at scheduled Committee meetings or hearings. Committees should report in their minutes which groups were targeted as stakeholders, how testimony was invited, the form of the testimony (written, oral, etc.), and the substantive content of the testimony.