PURPOSE: The purpose of this policy is threefold. First, the Handbook of Operating Procedures includes several policies that explicitly refer to “academic programs,” and it is important to define this term to clarify when such policies should be applied. Second, while the roles of Academic Dean and a Department Chair are codified and recognized at the University, UT System, and THECB levels, the role of individuals who manage academic programs is less well-defined and somewhat inconsistent. Third, the representation of academic programs in various administrative and governance structures across the university needs to be clarified, to assure equity and inclusion.

An Academic Program is defined as
...a set of for-credit courses that lead to a degree on a transcript. Minors, concentrations, and certificates are not academic programs, by this definition, unless they meet the exception criteria, below.

Why this definition? Academic programs are subject to Program Review and monitoring by regulatory and accrediting entities, such as SACSCOC, the THECB, and the UT System. For example, the THECB maintains an inventory of academic programs and assures these programs meet certain criteria. Similarly, significant changes in academic programs, such as closures or changes in modes of delivery, must be pre-approved by SACSCOC. Each of these monitoring and review processes is linked to programs that produce degree or certificate credentials.

Exceptions: If a set of for-credit courses does not lead to a degree, but it has the following characteristics, it may be considered an academic program upon the approval of the Provost: 1) two or more budgeted faculty lines are specifically assigned to this set of courses on a full time basis; 2) the unit supporting this set of courses has an operating budget and/or staff support; and 3) the courses are either required as part of a degree plan or required for some subset of students in pursuit of their degree.

For example: the Entering Student Program has full time faculty assigned to UNIV 1301, Developmental Math, and Developmental English; it has an operating budget and staff; UNIV counts toward degree plans and developmental courses are required of certain students.

Minors, concentrations, or certificates that do not meet the “exceptions” set forth above are typically embedded within a Department or Program and managed by the Chair or Director. In the case where they are not, a Dean may assign a coordinator to manage course offerings and schedules, as appropriate.

Program Management: Program management varies depending on the size and scope of the program. For programs that reside within a department, the Department Chair (in consultation with the Dean) may make the determination regarding the level of coordination needed for a program, taking into
consideration the number of faculty teaching in the program, the number of students enrolled in the program, the resources managed by the program, and the staff assigned to the program. When a Department Chair and/or a Dean determines that the size and complexity of a program warrants assigning a program director, an academically qualified faculty member should be assigned to direct the program. The faculty member’s workload should account for this administrative duty according to the institutional and college/school workload policies. Programs with program accreditation must always have a program director.

Where a program does not reside within an academic department or where a program may span multiple departments or colleges, the Dean(s) will identify a program director to manage the program. All approved graduate programs must have program committees who manage the curriculum, whether or not there is a program director. Where appropriate, undergraduate programs may be managed by a faculty program committee.

In collaboration and consultation with the Department Chair, the essential duties of those who are tasked with managing an academic program include:

- Reviewing the Catalog program information and degree plans
- Leading curriculum changes for the program (with approval of program committee)
- Coordinating the learning outcomes assessment for the program
- Representing the program at recruitment and awareness events
- Coordinating the self-study for program review
- Recommending appropriate overrides and substitutions to advisors
- Working with advisors to resolve other student issues, on a case-by-case basis

**Academic Program Representation:**

Programs are to be represented at administrative meetings by the Department Chair to whom the program reports. In the event that the program is not embedded in a department, a program should be represented by a program director. Any exceptions to this representation policy must be approved by the academic dean and the provost.