

Academic Programs Committee

Annual Report 2025–26

Stacy M. Horner, APC Chair

Introduction

The Academic Programs Committee (APC) advises the Provost on university-wide academic issues. The agenda is developed jointly by the Chair and the Executive Vice Provost. Most of the committee's work falls into the following categories:

1. Consideration of external reviews of units (departments and university institutes), newly adopted degree programs subject to a required probationary review (typically after the first three years of operation), and joint doctoral programs between units.
2. Consideration of proposals for new degree programs or the creation, contraction, termination, or merger of major units such as departments or university-wide institutes.
3. Consideration of proposals to modify existing university-wide academic policies or guidelines governing degree programs.
4. Consideration of major academic policy questions with salience for the entire campus, typically considered by the full APC committee.

Organization

To ensure that APC's deliberations incorporate faculty perspectives from across the university, the Provost and the Executive Committee of the Academic Council (ECAC) collaborate in the selection of members from each of the professional schools, as well as a range of departments in each division of Arts & Sciences. The Graduate & Professional Student Government and the Duke Student Government also have non-voting representation on APC. There are several ex officio, non-voting members from Duke's senior academic leadership.

Since 2014–15, APC has been split into two subcommittees, each structured to achieve the widest possible representation of schools and divisions. Each subcommittee meets once per month (except in months without pressing business) and has the authority to act on behalf of APC as a whole. The full APC committee also meets once a month. By this mechanism, APC typically convenes three times a month. The APC Chair has the responsibility of ensuring comparable standards of evaluation across the two subcommittees.

The Provost appoints faculty members of APC to serve for three-year terms, with the Chair typically coming from the third-year cohort. Chair selection is made by the Provost, in consultation with both the Executive Vice Provost and ECAC, with an attempt made to rotate representation among schools and broad divisions of intellectual inquiry in the university.

Mode of Operation

Typically, the two APC subcommittees handle external reviews or new degree/unit proposals, while the full committee discusses broader policy questions. On occasion, scheduling difficulties have resulted in a subcommittee discussing a policy issue. The Provost also retains the discretion to ask the full committee to consider an external review or proposal for a new degree program or unit.

When undertaking its standard review functions, APC receives the full documentary record concerning either the external review or the new proposal. These materials include the prior evaluation by the Executive Committee of the Graduate Faculty (in the case of departments or joint doctoral programs), or by the Masters Advisory Council (in the case of professional degree programs or interdisciplinary master's programs). The APC Chair then appoints a lead discussant. This faculty member reviews the materials especially closely and, in consultation with the APC Chair and Executive Vice Provost, authors questions for the head of the unit/program under review, or for the lead faculty members on a new program proposal. These queries provide a starting point for the brief presentation by unit/program heads at APC, and subsequent interaction between the presenters and the committee.

During an APC meeting considering an external review or new proposal, the lead discussant is responsible for opening the conversation with guests, taking notes on the committee discussion, and drafting the resolution. The resolution is a document that summarizes the discussion that APC had on the topic and provides concrete recommendations to the Provost on how to proceed regarding the proposal or review at hand. The resolution is drafted in consultation with the APC Chair and the Executive Vice Provost and encapsulates the views of the committee. Committee members can comment on the draft or suggest an edit or amendment. After an online revision and feedback process, the committee votes on the final version of the resolution. These votes take place electronically.

In the case of an external review, APC's resolution is provided to the respective unit/program and helps to inform any Memorandum of Understanding drafted by the Provost. In the case of a proposal for a new degree program or unit, the APC resolution, with the assent of the Provost, goes forward to ECAC for consideration by that body and then the full Academic Council, before final consideration by the Board of Trustees.

Before moving to generate a resolution, APC may ask for additional information from unit heads/lead proposers. In the case of new proposals, APC may also ask for minor revisions to the formal proposal or send the proposal back for more substantive reconsideration and reframing (although note that this did not occur during AY 2025–26).

APC also receives visitors to frame its policy meetings of the full committee. The Provost, Executive Vice Provost, and the APC Chair work together to set the broad agenda for these discussions. The Executive Vice Provost then works with the invited members of the university community to identify appropriate background reading materials and structure brief presentations to set up discussion. Typically, the Chair takes notes on these meetings and,

where appropriate, solicits additional feedback from committee members. After the meeting, when appropriate, the Chair submits a memorandum to the Provost and the heads of relevant university units/programs, summarizing the views expressed and suggestions furnished by APC members and, if appropriate, offering additional commentary.

APC Activities During the 2025–26 Academic Year

Policy Discussions

- 2030 Teaching and Mentoring Excellence Committee Report and proposed revisions to promotion standards for tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty, including the Career Track faculty title framework (Laura Howes, Bridgette Hard, and Jerry Reiter)
- The future of graduate education at Duke in the context of strategic realignments and evolving financial pressures (Suzanne Barbour, with program-level examples from Trinity, Nursing, Pratt, and the School of Medicine)
- Dialogue with visiting members of the Council of Graduate Schools on the future of graduate education (Michael Cunningham, Tulane University; Bill Karpus, University of Wisconsin–Madison; Tal Lewis, Cornell University)
- Duke Computing School (C-School) initiative (Provost Alec Gallimore, Jeff Glass, Ricardo Henao, and Tracy Futhey) — advisory discussion; no resolution required as faculty governance processes will be employed at a later stage
- Review of Core Faculty Committee Charges — policy discussion with the Provost on faculty governance and an overview of governance structures at Duke

External Reviews of Departments or Programs

- Civil and Environmental Engineering (CEE), Pratt School of Engineering
- Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (AMES), Trinity College of Arts & Sciences
- Dance Program, Trinity College of Arts & Sciences
- Neurobiology, School of Medicine
- Computer Science, Trinity College of Arts & Sciences

Proposals Considered

- Proposed revision to the guidelines for 4+1 Accelerated Masters programs, allowing simultaneous approval of a freestanding admitting masters program and a 4+1 program
- Duke Marine Lab First-Year Experience proposal, submitted by the Marine Science and Conservation Division, Nicholas School of the Environment
- Proposal to merge the Departments of Biochemistry and Cell Biology, School of Medicine

Appendix: Membership

Term Ending August 31, 2026

Stacy Horner, Integrative Immunobiology, School of Medicine (Chair)
Saskia Ziolkowski, Romance Studies, Trinity College of Arts & Sciences

Term Ending August 31, 2027

Kathleen Donohue, Biology, Trinity College of Arts & Sciences
Luciana Fellin, Romance Studies, Trinity College of Arts & Sciences
Lisa Griffin, School of Law
Stephanie Li, African & African American Studies, Trinity College of Arts & Sciences
Amanda Randles, Pratt School of Engineering
Colleen Robles, Mathematics, Trinity College of Arts & Sciences
Patrick Smith, Divinity School
Wilton Williams, Surgery, School of Medicine

Term Ending August 31, 2028

Catherine Admay, Sanford School of Public Policy
Margaret (Midge) Bowers, School of Nursing
David Brown, Fuqua School of Business
Amy Gladfelter, Cell Biology, School of Medicine
Dalia Patino-Echeverri, Nicholas School of the Environment
Chris Wildeman, Sociology, Trinity College of Arts & Sciences

Ex Officio

Suzanne Barbour, Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost for Graduate Education
Dylan Cawley, Duke Student Government representative
Grainne Fitzsimons, ECAC Representative
Alec Gallimore, Provost and Chief Academic Officer
Molly Goldwasser, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
John Klingensmith, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, The Graduate School
Mark Anthony Neal, Chair, Academic Council
Mohamed Noor, Executive Vice Provost
Terrence Oas, ECAC Representative
Sunag Udupa, Graduate & Professional Student Government representative

With thanks to Rebecca L. Stein, former APC Chair and author of the 2024–25 year-end report, on which this document builds.