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ALERT TOP STORY

Valparaiso University to eliminate 30 academic programs

Adrian Martinez-De La Cruz

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The chapel at Valparaiso University is shown.
File, The Times

Adrian Martinez-De La Cruz

Valparaiso University will be cutting 30 undergraduate and graduate programs, according to a communication from university president Jose Padilla sent to faculty, staff and students Monday.

Programs to be eliminated include the German language major, the music bachelor's degree, the cyber security master's degree and several business, math and medical areas of study, among others.

The discontinued programs will affect approximately 2% of Valpo's current student body, or roughly 50 students.

The university will immediately halt new enrollment in the academic programs being cut. However, those currently enrolled in a discontinued program will be allowed to complete their degrees as originally planned.

Some of the discontinued programs may be combined with existing ones, and courses related to these program subjects may still be offered even after they are phased out, the university said.

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Valpo first announced in March **it was considering cutting academic programs** with low student enrollment, with the school undergoing a five-month review of several academic studies.

According to Padilla, the discontinuation of 21 of the programs was not challenged by campus constituents, who included college deans, program directors and governing bodies representing faculty members.

However, the elimination of nine programs was contested. Eric Johnson, the university's provost, said academic departments were asked to come up with proposals in support of keeping the programs and present changes meant to build up their enrollment numbers.

Five contested programs will not be eliminated, including astronomy, music therapy, Spanish and public health. However, they will work with the provost's office to establish benchmark goals to meet and will be reevaluated in three years.

"We looked at every one of these programs on a case-by-case basis to try to determine if we saw that there was a way that (they) could be successful in the future," Johnson told The Times.

All programs being cut, according to the provost, had 10 or fewer students in them, with some programs having no students currently enrolled.

Additionally, the theology program's curriculum will be redeveloped, while students currently in the program will not experience changes in requirements for their degree completion. Theology will also remain a mandatory general education component.

The university also expects a modest faculty reduction by the end of the 2026-27 academic year, with Johnson saying they anticipate around five to 10 positions being phased out across multiple academic departments.

Valpo's **declining student enrollment** has already forced the discontinuation of several programs, including its secondary education major, theater program and multiple foreign language majors, as well as the **closure of its law school** in 2020.

Colleges and universities across the country have announced plans to cut academic programs or jobs citing, in part, stagnant enrollment numbers.

However, Johnson emphasized the university was still thriving despite the program cuts.

"We are just looking at ... our academic portfolio and thinking through what we should be doing and what we should be offering in the future," he said.

The provost envisions the university reviewing academic programs on an annual basis moving forward to catch any further trends of declining enrollments in other programs and intervene in order to prevent further program cuts.

“I don’t want to get to a point where there’s two or three students in a program,” Johnson said.

He also said Valpo is looking more at an interdisciplinary approach by encouraging students to pair different academic studies together and demonstrating opportunities these combinations of studies can present.

PHOTOS: \$1 million in federal funding secured for Valparaiso University nursing program



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Nursing students learn the basics in the skill center before moving on to the simulation center at Valparaiso University.

John J. Watkins, The Times

By Adrian Martinez-De La Cruz

Education Reporter
