Context

The Connecticut General Assembly's PA #11-48, as amended by PA #11-61, reorganized the governance structure of public higher education in the state, and transferred the responsibility for academic program approval to the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) ¹. This document outlines the process and conditions to be adopted in conducting academic program approvals under the BOR beginning in 2012. The intent in adopting the new process is to maintain consistency with state regulations while at the same time embracing the operating principles spelled out in the section immediately below.

Operating principles

- **Nimbleness** - streamlining and focusing approval process to ensure highest significance for every step
- **Responsiveness** - paying closest attention to state needs and the needs of students
- **Effectiveness** - advancing the distinctiveness and most productive use of resources of each institution, while at the same time exploring opportunities for collaboration and academic innovation

BOR review of the effectiveness and efficiency of the program approval process itself will be thorough and ongoing. A full evaluation will be conducted at the end of the first year, and modifications introduced accordingly. Institutions will begin using the proposed forms on January 1, 2012, with official action on the process by the BOR Academic and Student Affairs Committee in early January, and by the full BOR on January 19, 2012.

Programs Requiring BOR Action

Programs formerly requiring Board of Governors for Higher Education (BOGHE) approval need to be reviewed and approved by the BOR under one of the following categories:

- **New programs are:** a) A new degree program; b) a new major; or c) a new stand-alone certificate program that is Title IV eligible. No prior approval has existed for the program by either the BOR or the former BOGHE. Institutions shall seek approval of new programs either as Licensure or simultaneous Licensure and Accreditation:
  a) **Licensure**, normally granted for a period of three years, authorizing the enrollment of students and their advancement toward the completion of degree requirements; or
  b) **Simultaneous Licensure and Accreditation**, simultaneously authorizing the enrollment and award of credentials to students. The accreditation action is considered renewed with each regional accreditation of the institution. Simultaneous licensure and accreditation is generally sought for new degree and certificate programs that are closely related to a set of already existing programs and aligned with institutional strengths. A full description of the approval process of new programs is

¹ Sec. 253. (NEW) (Effective July 1, 2011) Notwithstanding sections 10a-34 to 10a-35, inclusive, of the general statutes, as amended by this act, the Board of Regents for Higher Education shall have the authority, in accordance with the provisions of said sections 10a-34 to 10a-35, inclusive, as amended by this act, over academic degrees awarded by public institutions of higher education, including the (1) operation of public institutions of higher education and the programs offered by such public institutions of higher education, (2) licensure and accreditation of public institutions of higher education and programs offered by such public institutions of higher education, (3) evaluation and approval of applications to confer academic degrees made by public institutions of higher education, and (4) assessment of any violation by a public institution of higher education of the authority of said board as described in subdivisions (1) to (3), inclusive, of this section and the imposition of a penalty for such violation.
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provided beginning on page 4 of this paper.

- **Accreditation of a Licensed Program**: Program accreditation authorizes the institution to award credentials in the program. Accreditation is considered renewed with each renewal of the regional accreditation of the institution offering the program. Program accreditation should be pursued in a timely fashion toward the expected date of first graduation. The process for Accreditation approval requires a report on any changes to the program since its licensure action, details on program enrollments, any financial considerations, and the addressing of any issues brought up at the time of the BOR/BOGHE licensed the program.

- **Program Modification**: A program modification is the substantive change to a previously BOR/BOGHE-approved program. The following instances are processed as Program Modifications:

  a) Creation of a new undergraduate certificate program of more than 30 semester credit hours of courses belonging to a previously approved baccalaureate major(s) at a four year institution, or an associate degree program(s) at a two year institution; a new baccalaureate minor of more than 18 semester credit hours; a new undergraduate option or certificate containing more than 15 semester credit hours of courses not falling within a previously approved program(s), or a new graduate option or certificate program including more than 12 semester credit hours of courses not falling within a previously approved program(s). Modifications below these thresholds may also require approval if required by existing state regulations for the licensed professions or work area of the program;

  b) Significant modifications in courses or course substitutions of more than 15 credits in a previously approved undergraduate degree program or more than 12 credits within a previously approved graduate degree program;

  c) The authorization for an approved program to be offered at an off-campus location or using an alternate modality (e.g., on ground to online); and

  d) A change in the title of a degree or title of program.

Application formats for the approval of program modifications will contain sections for background, rationale and nature of the modification, enrollment/degree awards estimates, and resource summary. Depending on the nature of the modification and the constituent unit to which the institution belongs, other additional details such as full course descriptions, course sequences, etc. may be required.

- **Program Discontinuation**: The discontinuation of an existing BOR/BOGHE-approved degree or certificate program must be authorized through BOR action. Program discontinuation consists of a phase out period during which any students in the program graduate and a termination step in which the program is taken off the official list of existing programs maintained by OFAAHE. Program discontinuation should: a) occur in the context of a related academic improvement, e.g., the merging

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2 Constituent Units of Higher Education are: the Connecticut Community College System, the Connecticut State University System, Charter Oak State College, and the University of Connecticut. Administrative processes within these units may require additional information and review beyond what is outlined or required in this document and related process forms. For example, any certificate program created at a CC System institution, even if below threshold for BOR approval, requires an administrative review and entry of such program and its courses in the of system-level operated programmatic database.
of programs with declining enrollment/completions into a new program that effectively addresses relevant state needs and students' interests; b) emerge as a result of the periodic Academic Program Review for all programs at each institution, under the guidance of existing BOR policy; c) other institutional considerations such as redirecting capacity, adoption of new mission, etc. Program discontinuation should not impact state priorities for workforce preparation.

Informational Items for the Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the BOR

The following instances require that a communication be submitted for inclusion in the BOR-ASA agenda as an information item and do not require a BOR resolution: a) new minors, concentrations/options, specializations or certificate programs not classified in the categories outlined above; b) any program that under previous legislation and process would not have required BOGHE approval; and c) programs that do not qualify students to become eligible for federal financial aid. These instances will also be included as information items to the BOR-AC.
Summary of Process

- Early in the proposal development phase at the local level, the institution submits a one-to-two-page *New Program Concept Paper* to the BOR Office which is shared with the BOR Academic Council (BOR-AC) at its nearest possible meeting for early input, suggestions, and consideration of potential collaborations as appropriate.

- Institution creates a *Full Proposal* in a standard format and submits for review to the BOR Office. Site Visit/Team Visit is only required in special cases (e.g., new degree level, unique direction for the institution, new area of competence).

- Based on a *Planning and Quality Review*, the proposal either a) moves to the BOR Academic and Student Affairs Committee (BOR-ASA) for review and recommendation for approval by the full Board; or b) moves to the Advisory Committee on Accreditation (ACA) to undergo a Quality Review as an intermediate step. In the latter case, the BOR President considers the ACA advisory recommendations before moving the proposal to BOR-ASA and subsequently the full Board.

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3 The BOR-AC is composed of the Principal Academic Officers from all institutions under the BOR: the College Deans at CC System, the Provosts/AVPs at the CSUS and COSC, and a representative designated by the Provost of the University of Connecticut. Meetings are planned and facilitated by BOR Academic and Student Affairs Staff.
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Process Details

1. **Sharing of New Program Concept Paper in Anticipation of Full Proposal**
   Intent to establish new program is shared at a BOR-AC meeting using a one-to-two-page concept paper sent to the BOR Office. BOR-AC provides input as appropriate and in consideration of program justification and benefits, potential for transfer agreements, avoidance of unnecessary duplication, and creation of potential collaborations. Institution takes the comments from BOR-AC under consideration and BOR Office facilitates any further communication as needed. The New Program Concept Paper should be submitted at a time established by the institution in consideration of estimated time of completion of the full proposal, posted dates of BOR-AC, BOR-ASA, ACA, and BOR meetings, desired initiation date for the program, and any necessary lead time required by federal or state laws and regulations.

   Notes: 1) Along with the New Program Concept Paper, the principal academic officer at the institution may require any additional information, as deemed necessary, for internal use at that institution and in conformance with local governance procedures; 2) In the few cases in which it may not be clear whether the program should fall in the New Program or Program Modification category, early consultation with the BOR Office is highly encouraged.

   **Timeframe** - Ongoing, and at each BOR-AC meeting

2. **Submission of Full Proposal and BOR Office Review**
   Provost/AVP/Academic Dean at institution submits a full proposal for Licensure/Licensure and Accreditation to BOR Office using a standard electronic format; other than the concept paper, this is the only document required for the entire process; no paper copies are ever required. Substantive modifications of existing programs are also submitted in a standard format. BOR Office responds to applicant institution within two weeks of initial submission and may require that further information or clarifications be added to the proposal document. Proposal is e-mailed to BOR-AC members, placed on the agenda for the next meeting of this group, and posted on the BOR Web site. Members of the BOR-AC are invited to submit any final comments in anticipation to the meeting in which the full proposal is being discussed. Occasionally, a conference call with pertinent principal academic officers and others may be conducted.

   Full proposal application for a new program contains three sections: Section 1. General Information; Section 2. Program Planning Assessment; and Section 3. Quality Review. The BOR Office conducts a **Planning Assessment Review** in consideration of: a) how the program addresses Connecticut workforce needs and/or the social and economic wellbeing of the state, including employment prospects for program graduates/completers; b) potential for transfer agreements or transfer programs; c) all programmatic budgetary and cost considerations and projections. The BOR Office also conducts an internal **Quality Review** using the criteria in existing state regulation, conducts site visit if needed, and makes recommendation to the BOR President. President moves relevant sections of a new program/substantive change proposal to external Quality Review by ACA (see below).

   Note: In cases in which a site visit takes place, such as new degree level (e.g., a masters degree level is offered for the first time), unique direction for the institution (e.g., a new school or department is created), new area of competence or type of program (e.g., the first Professional Science Master to be offered), such visit will be conducted in a fashion that contributes to the preparation for the particular professional/national accreditation, or consistent with BOR-approved Academic Program Review policy. Program applications required to undergo a team site visit will also undergo external Quality Review by ACA. Programs requiring simultaneous approval by a designated state agency other than the BOR.

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4 At the CC System, the New Program Concept Paper replaces the Preliminary Program Announcement
5 In development at the time of issuing this document
3. **External Quality Review**

New program proposals and most substantive modifications (e.g., the change in more than 15 required credits in an undergraduate program or 12 credits requirement in a graduate program) will significantly benefit from an external Quality Review by ACA. For new programs, the BOR Office circulates the proposal for comment to all Chief Executives and Chief Academic Officers at public and private institutions of higher education in the state, as maintained by OFAAHE. A two-week period is provided for submitting comments. BOR Office collects and reviews comments and responses to include in materials for BOR President and submission to ACA Quality Review. Depending on the extent of the modification some substantive modifications will also require this canvassing process. Concurrent with proposal circulation, the BOR Office requests that the item be added to the ACA agenda at the nearest possible date. The BOR Office provides all documentation in final form for timely inclusion in ACA packet for meeting. At the ACA meetings, BOR staff briefly outlines program and introduces institution’s representatives, opening the item for discussion. The *advisory recommendation* from ACA is presented to the BOR President for *consideration* and decision to move forward in the process.

**Timeframe** - No more than five weeks, depending on timing of ACA meeting

4. **Approval**

Proposal is added to the nearest BOR-ASA meeting for discussion and recommendation for full Board approval. The BOR President places the item in the agenda of the nearest full Board meeting.

**Timeframe** - Between one and two months, depending on timing of BOR-ASA and BOR meetings

**Important Requirement for Any New Program**

*Any new program* that entitles an enrollee to apply for federal student financial aid under Title IV must receive approval by the BOR. The institution is responsible for determining that a program is eligible. Once approved, the institution is also responsible for compliance with all Title IV requirements and procedures declaring the approved program as eligible.

**Overall Timeframe**

No longer than two months for nonsubstantive changes. No longer than four months for cases in which a site visit and external ACA quality review are conducted.

**Document Flow**

The totality of the process is conducted electronically, except for the printing of materials for the BOR.

**Formats for Program Approval**

Drafts of formats to be used in the approval process are being circulated to all public higher education institutions for comment. Final draft of the process and necessary forms will be available, and become *provisionally* effective pending BOR-ASA approval on January 10 and BOR approval on January 19, 2012.

**Nature of this Document**

This document constitutes Board of Regents policy for academic program approval for all public higher education institutions in the state of Connecticut.

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