1.2 - CSCU Academic Program Proposals and Approval Process

(Board of Regents for Higher Education: Approved 01/19/2012 BR, Revised 09/17/2015 BR# 15-086)

Context
The Connecticut General Assembly 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 for conducting academic program approvals under the BOR. The intent 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. Institutions will use current forms as established by the BOR’s Provost’s office.

Programs Requiring BOR Action

Programs need to be reviewed and approved by the BOR under one of the following categories. All program actions will be submitted to BOR office staff. Each item will be presented at Academic Council, then be submitted to the BOR Academic & Student Affairs Committee for review and recommended for pertinent action by the full BOR at their next meeting. The following categories undergo this process:

1. **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 (Board of Governors for Higher Education). 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 provided beginning on page 4 of this paper.

2. **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

\(^1\)Sec. 10a-35a states the Board of Regents for Higher Education shall have authority over establishment of new academic programs for the universities, the regional community colleges, and Charter Oak State College
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 program was licensed.

3. **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.

4. **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 OHE (Office of Higher Education). Program
discontinuation should:
   a. occur in the context of a related academic improvement, e.g., the merging of programs with
decreasing 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.

**Programs that are Informational Items Only**

---

2 Constituent Units of Higher Education are: the Connecticut Community College System, the Connecticut State University System,
Charter Oak State College. 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 system-level operated programmatic database.
The following nonsubstantive instances require that a communication or form be submitted to BOR central office staff for inclusion in the agendas for the CSCU-AC and the BOR-ASA as an information item. They do not require a BOR resolution:

a) new minors, concentrations/options, specializations or certificate programs not classified in the categories outlined above, i.e.:
   i. an undergraduate certificate of program of 30 credit hours or fewer which falls within an approved program,
   ii. a new baccalaureate minor of 18 or fewer semester credit hours,
   iii. a new undergraduate option or certificate program of 15 or fewer semester credit hours,
   iv. a new graduate option or certificate program of 12 or fewer semester credit hours

b) programs that do not qualify students to become eligible for federal financial aid.
Academic Program Proposals and Approval Process
at the
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities
(Board of Regents for Higher Education: Approved 01/19/2012, Revised 09/17/2015)

PROCESS FOR THE APPROVAL OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Summary of Process
- **Concept Paper.** 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 CSCU Academic Council (BOR-AC) at its nearest possible meeting for early input, suggestions, and consideration of potential collaborations as appropriate.
- **New Program Proposal.** The 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 moves first to the CSCU-AC and then to the BOR Academic and Student Affairs Committee (BOR-ASA) for review and recommendation for approval by the full Board.
- **Modification or Discontinuation.** The institution creates a proposal for either a modification or a discontinuation in the standard format and submits for review to the BOR Office. The proposal will subsequently be submitted to the CSCU-AC, then to the BOR-ASA and finally to the full BOR for pertinent action.

New Program-Process Details
1. **Sharing of New Program Concept Paper in Anticipation of Full Proposal**
   Intent to establish new program is shared at a CSCU-AC meeting using a one-to-two-page concept paper sent to the BOR Office. CSCU-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 the 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 CSCU-AC, BOR-ASA, 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; 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 CSCU-AC members as part of the agenda for the next meeting of this group. Members of the CSCU-AC are invited

---

3 The CSCU-AC is composed of the Principal Academic Officers from all institutions under the BOR: the College Deans or Provosts at the CCs, and the Provosts/AVPs at the CSUS and COSC. Meetings are planned and facilitated by BOR Academic and Student Affairs Staff.
to submit any final comments at 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 pro forma 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 Provost.

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. Programs requiring simultaneous approval by a designated state agency other than the BOR (such as educator preparation programs approved by the State Department of Education) will undergo an onsite visit in conformity with the process and requirements of such agency.

Timeframe - From two weeks to no more than six weeks (in cases requiring a site visit)

3. Approval
Proposal is added to the nearest BOR-ASA meeting for discussion and recommendation for full Board approval. Following the ASA meeting, the BOR Provost 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 is conducted.

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

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

4 http://www.eligcert.ed.gov/