

Section Title: Academic Policies

Policy Title: New Academic Programs: Approval Process

Policy Number: A1.0

1.0.10 **Scope and Purpose.** In accordance with Chapter 179 of the Legislative Act creating the Higher Education Commission in 1967, the Commission has the statutory responsibility to review and approve new academic programs, off-campus extensions of existing academic programs, new academic units (divisions, colleges, and schools, and departments) and new instructional locations for public institutions of higher education in the State of Tennessee. These responsibilities shall be exercised so as to:

- promote academic quality
- maximize cost effectiveness and efficiency to ensure that the benefits to the state outweigh the costs and that existing programs are adequately supported
- fulfill student demand, employer need and societal requirements
- avoid and eliminate unnecessary duplication to ensure that proposed programs cannot be delivered through collaboration or alternative arrangements
- encourage cooperation among all institutions, both public and private

These expectations for program quality and viability are underscored by Tennessee Code Annotated §49-7-202 as amended by Chapter 3, Acts of 2010 (1st Extraordinary Session). This Act directs public higher education to:

- A. Address the state's economic development, workforce development and research needs;
- B. Ensure increased degree production within the state's capacity to support higher education; and
- C. Use institutional mission differentiation to realize statewide efficiencies through institutional collaboration and minimized redundancy in degree offerings, instructional locations, and competitive research.

Program Review Criteria for Review -- In order to ensure that these responsibilities are optimized, the Commission strenuously considers the following criteria in order to maximize state resources:

Need – evidence of program need that justifies institutional allocation/reallocation of state resources (See A1.1.20I New Academic Programs).

Program Costs/Revenues – evidence should be provided that program costs will be met from internal reallocation or from other sources such as grants and gifts. Institutional commitment should be consistent with the centrality and level of priority as described in the program proposal and projected on THEC Fiscal Projection form (Attachment A).

Quality – evidence should be provided that assessment, evaluation, and accreditation criteria (A1.1.20M) are being met.

1.0.20 **Schedule.** The Commission will normally consider proposals for new programs, off-campus extensions of existing academic programs, ~~academic units~~, and new instructional locations at each regularly scheduled Commission meeting.

The THEC Executive Director will have approval authority for proposals of new academic units (divisions, colleges, schools, and departments).

1.0.30 **Action.** Commission action on a given proposal must follow approval by the governing board and may take one of four forms:

- approval
- disapproval
- conditional approval
- deferral

Conditional approval may be granted in special cases. This type of approval is reserved for programs for which the need is temporary. Conditional approvals will identify a date that the program must be terminated.

1.0.40 **Funding.** Evidence must be provided on forms for approval of new academic programs relative to internal reallocation and other sources such as grants and gifts must be validated. The Commission will approve no special start-up funding (See 1.0.10, Program Costs/Revenues).

1.0.50 **~~Early Consultation/Notification.~~**
Upon consideration by an institution to develop a proposal for a new program or program modification (A1.1 New and Modified Academic Programs: Evaluation Criteria), governing board staffs must provide the Commission staff with a copy of that institution's letter of application to develop a program proposal. The letter of ~~intent~~ application must address the Criteria for Review as outlined in Section 1.1.20 (Academic Programs) ~~should be in the format provided as Attachment B~~, and the THEC Financial Form (referenced as Attachment A in A1.0.1.10) ~~should~~ must accompany it. Programs that institutions intend to develop should be consistent with and reference institutional mission, the state master plan for higher education, and campus master plan

or the academic plan. A thorough early assessment of program justification is necessary for programs requiring Commission approval in order to identify issues relative to the need for the program, program duplication, accessibility through collaboration or alternative means of delivery (distance education), source of start-up funds, and the need for reviews by external consultants.

Upon consultation and approval to proceed, governing board staffs must share all relevant documents in a timely fashion with the Commission staff leading up to the submission of the final proposal for new programs at least two weeks prior to notification of being placed on the agenda for consideration by a governing board (See also 1.1.20A in Policy A1.1 --~~New Academic Programs~~ New and Modified Academic Programs: Evaluation Criteria). THEC delegates the TBR the authority to approve community college Letters of ~~Intent~~ Application to Plan associate degrees and certificates.

- 1.0.60 **Articulation/Transfer.** Upon consideration of a new undergraduate degree program, evidence must be provided to ensure adherence to the requirements of Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-7-202 as amended by Chapter 3, Acts of 2010 (1st Extraordinary Session) requires that “an associate of science or arts degree graduate from a Tennessee community college shall be deemed to have met all general education and university parallel core requirements for transfer to a Tennessee public university as a junior. . . .” Admission into a particular program, school, or college within the university, or into the University of Tennessee, Knoxville shall remain competitive in accordance with generally applicable policies.
- (1) The forty-one (41) hour lower division general education core common to all state colleges and universities shall be fully transferrable as a block to, and satisfy the general education core of, any public community college or university. A completed subject category (for example, natural sciences or mathematics) within the forty-one (41) hour general education core shall also be fully transferrable and satisfy that subject category of the general education core at any public community college or university.
 - (2) The nineteen (19) hour lower division AA/AS area of emphasis articulated to a baccalaureate major shall be universally transferrable as a block satisfying lower division major requirements to any state university offering that degree program major.

- 1.0.60A **Credit Hours to Degree.** The Commission recommends that credit hour requirements for new and existing undergraduate academic programs shall not be substantially more than 120

hours for baccalaureate degrees or 60 hours for associate degrees without justification. The principle intent is to reduce the time and costs of earning a degree for individual students and taxpayers and, over time, improve graduation rates and increase the higher educational attainment levels of Tennesseans. This excludes programs with accreditation or licensure requirements.

1.0.60B **Announcements.** Announcements of plans for new academic programs, off-campus extensions of existing programs, new academic units, and/or new instructional locations must await Commission approval, prior to implementation.

1.0.70A **Delegated Authority for Final Approval of New Community College Programs (Associates and Certificates) to the Tennessee Board of Regents.** Tennessee Code Annotated §49-8-101 as amended by Public Chapter 3, Acts of 2010 (1st Extraordinary Session) directs that “the board of regents, in consultation with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, shall establish a comprehensive statewide community college system of coordinated programs and services to be known as the Tennessee community college system.”

Notwithstanding anything in this policy to the contrary, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, in accord with Chapter 3 and toward the establishment of the unified and comprehensive community college system, delegates authority to the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) for final approval of new community college associate degrees and certificates. THEC also delegates final approval authority to TBR for the replication of a certificate or associate program approved for one community college (after August 1, 2011) at other TBR community colleges. TBR final approval is subject to the following conditions:

- (1) The criteria for review and accountability (especially justification of need and documented sufficiency of resources and faculty to support the program) set forth in THEC Policies A1.0 (New Academic Programs – Approval Process) and A1.1 (New Academic Programs) must be the basis for the TBR review and approval of new and replicated certificates and associate programs.
- (2) The TBR will provide a monthly summary report to THEC of all community college program actions approved by the TBR, including community college Letters of Intent to Plan associate degrees and certificates, community college associate degree program and certificate approvals, associate and certificate substantive curricular changes, community college associate degree major and concentration name changes, and associate, concentration, and certificate terminations.

- (3) The TBR will provide program proposals and financial projection forms for all TBR-approved associates and certificates as baseline data for THEC Post-Approval Monitoring.
- (4) THEC will list all TBR-approved community college associate and certificate programs and reported changes on the State Inventory of Academic Programs;

1.0.70B

THEC Authority for Post-Approval Monitoring of All Community College Programs. THEC expressly does not delegate to the TBR the authority for the post-approval review of community college associate and certificate programs set forth in A1.1.30 and A1.1.30A-C (New Academic Programs). All TBR community college programs listed on the THEC Inventory of Academic Programs will be subject to the following THEC monitoring and evaluation:

- (1) Community college associate degree programs and certificates are subject to THEC annual reporting through Post Approval Monitoring of programs for the first three years after implementation and annual productivity evaluations of programs in operation more than three years;
- (2) Community colleges will participate in all components of the THEC Performance Funding Quality Assurance Program, and associate and certificate programs will be evaluated according to Performance Funding program review standards.

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