

## Clarifying Comments

### CBHE Policies and Procedures for the Review of Academic Program Proposals (Adopted February 6, 2003)

#### Background

Sections 173.005(1), 173.005(7), and 173.030, RSMo, assign to the Coordinating Board for Higher Education (CBHE) responsibilities for new academic program approval at public higher education institutions and for the review of relevant data and information from all institutions. All public institutions are required to receive CBHE approval prior to implementing any new programs. Independent institutions are encouraged to submit new program proposals for review and comment only. Information provided by independent institutions enables the CBHE to fulfill its obligations as the state's planning agency for higher education. The CBHE's **Policies and Procedures for the Review of Academic Program Proposals** are located on the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) website. These policies and procedures are intended to ensure

- an orderly, timely, and equitable review process;
- mission alignment;
- avoidance of unnecessary duplication;
- increased collaboration; and
- a balanced, high-quality, cost-effective system.

#### Rationale

The CBHE revised its policy framework on program review in 1997 to make it less regulatory. Within the CBHE's current policy framework, institutions have expanded their program offerings. Between April 1997 and June 2002, approximately four new degree/certificate programs were added by public institutions for every one deleted, and at independent institutions, approximately seven new degree/certificate programs were added for every one deleted. At a time when all of higher education is struggling to address the state's current and future financial challenges, it is essential that the justification for new program proposals be clear, concise, and compelling.

By adopting Clarifying Comments to its existing policy, the CBHE is establishing more explicit descriptions of the types of data necessary for evaluation of new academic program proposals. The CBHE and the MDHE are committed to a program review framework that continues to promote a diverse high-quality system of higher education throughout the state.

#### Clarifications

The moratorium for all new program actions, adopted by the CBHE at its October 2002 meeting, is removed. New academic program proposals will begin to be posted on the MDHE website beginning February 15, 2003. Institutions are expected to follow the review process and use the forms outlined in the CBHE's Policies and Procedures for the Review of Academic Program Proposals. Clarifications about the scope of the data to be submitted are provided in the following five areas: Alignment with Institutional Mission, Demonstrable Need, Efficient Use of Resources, Benefits of Collaboration, and Expansion of Distance Learning.

#### Alignment with Institutional Mission

New program proposals will be evaluated within the context of outcomes and strategies outlined in an institution's strategic plan including those related to students served, program emphasis areas, centers of excellence, and admission selectivity. New academic program proposals should advance an institution's mission.

#### Demonstrable Need

New academic programs should help expand and sustain a quality workforce in Missouri. Although the predictable economic impact of a new program will not be used as a sole criterion, evidence relating to student and market demands, as well as how the proposed program will contribute to identified needs in the region, state or nation, should be presented. While not an exhaustive list, Missouri has identified the following fields as representing areas of need:

- Information technology
- Advanced manufacturing
- Biomedical/biotechnology or life sciences
- Teacher education (Especially in the fields of science, mathematics, and special education).

Whether addressing the needs in these or other fields, institutions should provide evidence of, and a rationale for, the importance of the proposed program to Missouri's economy and educational opportunities for more Missourians. Institutions should consider both current and future needs of particular regions, the state, and the nation when identifying new programmatic areas.

Cost differentials and geographic location may become important factors in examining the extent of access provided to Missouri's citizens. When cost differentials and/or geographic location are used as part of the justification for a new program, evidence demonstrating the impact of these and other factors on enrollments, program quality, sustainability, and other related elements should be provided.

### **Efficient Use of Resources**

In developing new programs, institutions are encouraged to design programs that will contribute to a coordinated, balanced, and cost-effective postsecondary delivery system. While some level of duplication can be expected among institutional program inventories, the costly, unnecessary duplication of existing programs offered by Missouri institutions should be avoided. Institutions should demonstrate, through descriptions of content, structure, and other related details, not only that a proposed program is clearly different from an institution's current programs but also that there are compelling reasons for adding the program even when prospective students have access to equivalent programs at other Missouri institutions. It is acknowledged that in evaluating unnecessary duplication, several factors, including ease of access (both geographical and financial), the college-going rate in particular regions, sophistication and complexity of program offerings, and regional job demands, should be considered. In addition, the alignment of the proposed program's structure and content, the proposed degree nomenclature, and the program's CIP designation with statewide practices must be readily discernable.

For public institutions - since it is anticipated that additional state funding for new programs will not be available in the immediate future - information about program finances must be very clear. It is acknowledged that each institution's governing board is responsible for the oversight of the institution's internal resource decisions, that new programs can be designed to serve additional students at little or no cost, and, furthermore, that several sources of funds may exist to support a new program. Program deletion is not considered a necessary requirement for the addition of a new program. Within this context, the following questions should be considered:

- What are the specific sources of funds to support the new proposed program?
- If the new program is being funded through the "core institutional budget," what amount of funds will be reallocated and from which areas?
- Are there any programs that will be deleted as a result of implementing a new program?
- If the program will be supported by external funds, have the funding agency, the amount of funds, and whether they are one-time or ongoing funding been identified?

The proposing public institution should provide evidence that sufficient funds will be available to financially implement and sustain a high-quality new program without compromising the quality of existing programs.

### **Benefits of Collaboration**

Collaboration for mutual benefits is strongly encouraged. Institutions are expected to describe whether collaborating with other institutions is feasible. Regardless of whether collaboration is part of the proposed program, if an institution proposes to deliver a program that is already offered in the state, i.e., already exists in the official CBHE program inventory, the proposing institution should include its rationale for collaborating or for moving forward alone. The

possibility of contractual and cost-sharing arrangements among institutions within and across sectors should be given consideration.

### **Distance-Based and Off-Site Programs**

Technology continues to have a major impact on the number of alternatives open to institutions in the design and delivery of academic programs. Proposals for distance-learning programs should be in alignment with the board's Principles of Good Practice for Distance Learning/Web-based Courses. In the case of proposals for off-site delivery, proposing institutions should work collaboratively by building on the inventory of available coursework within the locale and by utilizing the human resources and facilities of local providers to thereby reduce the costs associated with establishing new delivery sites.