

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL AND  
PROGRAM APPROVAL WORKING GROUP**

**Submitted for:** Action.

**Summary:** This item requests approval of the recommendations of the Institutional and Program Approval Working Group. At its August 2006 meeting, the Illinois Board of Higher Education established this working group and charged it to review policies and procedures with regard to program approval and review in all educational sectors. In addition to representatives of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, this working group included representation from the public universities, the Illinois Community College Board, the Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities, and three IBHE standing committees (Student Advisory Committee, Faculty Advisory Council, Proprietary Advisory Council). The working group met three times: October 9 and December 5, 2006; and February 5, 2007. Working group members reviewed current IBHE policies, examined policies from other states, and heard a presentation by an expert on issues related to the intersection of for-profit and not-for-profit education. Based on the information provided, discussion with Board staff, and comment from interested individuals and groups, the working group formulated the seven recommendations contained in this item for the Board's consideration.

**Action Requested:** That the Illinois Board of Higher Education approves the recommendations of the Institutional and Program Approval Working Group.



STATE OF ILLINOIS  
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL AND  
PROGRAM APPROVAL WORKING GROUP**

**INSTITUTIONAL AND PROGRAM APPROVAL WORKING GROUP**

At its August 2006 meeting, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) established an Institutional and Program Approval Working Group that was charged to review policies and procedures with regard to program approval and review in all educational sectors. In addition to representatives of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, this working group included representation from the public universities, the Illinois Community College Board, the Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities, and three IBHE standing committees (Student Advisory Committee, Faculty Advisory Council, Proprietary Advisory Council).

The working group's formation was prompted by such issues as the rapid expansion of the proprietary sector, the increased use of on-line educational technologies in all educational sectors, and a blurring of the boundaries between the various sectors of higher education. The working group was specifically asked to examine the following issues:

- Are criteria for operating authority and new program approval sufficient to ensure the level of quality we want to see in the state's academic programs? If not, how may they be improved?
- Are potential students provided with sufficient and useful information regarding institutions and degree programs present in Illinois? If not, what more should we be providing?
- Are criteria and procedures related to closing of program and/or institutions adequate? If not, how may they be improved?
- Should we have a state-mandated review of newly approved programs five years following approval? If yes, what would such a review entail?

The working group met three times: October 9 and December 5, 2006; and February 5, 2007. Working group members reviewed current IBHE policies, examined policies from other states, and heard a presentation by an expert on issues related to the intersection of for-profit and not-for-profit education. Based on the information provided and discussion with Board staff, the working group formulated specific recommendations for consideration by this Board. Those recommendations focus on the following areas: (1) the length of the review process; (2) the role of accreditation; (3) site visits; (4) consumer protection; (5) post-approval program review; (6) transferability and articulation of earned credits; and (7) the establishment of a standing academic affairs committee. In addition to these recommendations, working group members were asked to consider three other issues: (1) the advisability of implementing a fee structure for new institution and program applications; (2) the role of the state higher education regions; and (3) the

advisability of requesting information about institutional diversity in the approval forms for new institutions and programs.

The working group's draft recommendations were placed on the IBHE website for public comment and interested parties were notified by e-mail that public comment was invited through June 15, 2007. In addition, the recommendations were distributed to Presidents and Chancellors, Chief Academic Officers, Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities, the Faculty Advisory Council, the Student Advisory Committee, and the Proprietary Advisory Council. Comments were received from each of these groups, as well as Board legal counsel. Many of those comments have been incorporated into the recommendations listed below.

The IBHE will continue to apply the same standards to institutions in all sectors, with exceptions being made only in situations where the different classes of institutions lead to different requirements.

The staff recommends adoption of the following resolution:

*The Illinois Board of Higher Education hereby adopts the following recommendations and directs staff to initiate the necessary steps to incorporate the recommendations into administrative rules as set forth in the Illinois Administrative Code where this is required:*

1. *Application and Approval Process*

- 1.a. *Staff shall develop an expedited application process for institutions in all sectors that meet the following minimal criteria: (1) have been authorized to operate in Illinois for at least three years; (2) have received IBHE degree program approval within the past two years; and (3) provide evidence that the institution has no outstanding accreditation issues. Institutions new to Illinois will continue to be required to undergo the full review process.*
- 1.b. *Staff shall develop an expedited application process for Illinois institutions seeking approval to offer programs approved for their home campus in a region other than their home region.*
- 1.c. *Institutions offering programs at recognized consortial graduate study centers (i.e., such as the University Center of Lake County and the Quad-Cities Graduate Center) shall not be required to seek IBHE approval when offering programs approved for their home campus. For these institutions, the graduate study center shall be treated as part of their home campus. Centers, however, will continue to report annually to IBHE on the new programs introduced in the previous year.*
- 1.d. *Staff will offer an orientation session on a regular basis to inform candidate institutions of the application process and the expectations of Board staff.*
- 1.e. *Staff shall require that original application materials include copies of institutional enrollment agreements where appropriate.*
- 1.f. *Staff shall develop approval criteria for determining those institutions that have a "limited physical presence" in Illinois (e.g., seminars not to exceed a determined number of days, in-person testing). Institutions falling in this*

*category would be required to register their presence with the IBHE and describe the nature of that presence.*

2. *Authorization to Operate*

- 2.a. *Initial authorization to operate in Illinois for institutions new to the state shall be for three years. In the third year of its operation, the institution shall request continuation of its initial approval based on its record of performance to that time.*
- 2.b. *All institutions making application for authorization to operate in Illinois must specify their accreditation status. New institutions without accreditation from an accrediting authority recognized by the U.S. Department of Education must provide a clearly defined plan, with specific milestones, outlining their plan to receive accreditation.*
- 2.c. *Require that all associate degree institutions seeking authorization to operate or new program approval provide evidence of existing baccalaureate completion options, where applicable, and of the process for informing the institution's students of those options.*

3. *Reporting Requirement*

*Require that, in the fifth year of the new program's existence, Board staff shall review the program, in cooperation with institutional staff, to ensure that it is viable and continues to meet the original conditions of approval. This fifth year review shall include information on improvements in the institution's capacity to efficiently and effectively deliver programs using technological innovation and comprehensive data system. Retain the current requirement for a brief report on the status of a program in the third year of its operation.*

4. *Consumer Protection*

- 4.a. *Require that all institutions approved to operate in Illinois include in program materials provided to students the following information: (1) a statement of the nature of transfer, including the fact that the decision to accept transfer credits is currently made by receiving institutions; and (2) a statement of how it advises students on the nature of the transfer process, including the importance of consulting with institutions to which the student may seek to transfer.*
- 4.b. *As part of the institution's regularly scheduled program review, it shall be required to include information on improvements to its capacity to efficiently and effectively deliver programs using technological innovation and comprehensive data systems.*
- 4.c. *Require that institutions provide evidence of provisions for articulation with institutional counterparts, where these articulations are appropriate.*

5. *Academic Affairs Committee*

*Establish a standing Academic Affairs Committee to advise staff on general academic issues and questions that arise in the review of new program proposals.*

6. *Fee Structure*

*Staff is directed to further examine the implications and possible mechanisms for instituting a fee structure for processing institutional and new program applications in the independent and proprietary sectors. Staff will report back to the full Board in spring 2008.*

7. *Diversity Information*

*As part of new institutional and program applications, institutions will be asked to provide information on the gender and race/ethnicity of: (a) all faculty, including full- and part-time; (b) staff; and (c) students.*