

**APPROVED  
DECEMBER 12, 2017**

Item #IV-11  
December 12, 2017

**APPOINTMENT OF HEARING OFFICER  
PERTAINING TO THE POTENTIAL REVOCATION OF  
OPERATING AND DEGREE GRANTING AUTHORITY  
OF AN INDEPENDENT INSTITUTION**

**Submitted for:** Action.

**Summary:** This item recommends the appointment of a hearing officer to conduct a hearing regarding the possible revocation of operating authority for Northwest Suburban College of Basic and Allied Health Sciences pursuant to Section 1030.80(b)(5)(A) of the Illinois Board of Higher Education Administrative Rules

**Action Requested:** That the Illinois Board of Higher Education approve the appointment of a hearing officer pertaining to the potential revocation of an institution's Authorizations to Operate and Grant Degrees.



STATE OF ILLINOIS  
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**APPOINTMENT OF HEARING OFFICER  
PERTAINING TO THE POTENTIAL REVOCATION OF  
OPERATING AND DEGREE GRANTING AUTHORITY  
OF AN INDEPENDENT INSTITUTION**

In 1979, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) was assigned responsibility to administer “The Private College Act” (100 ILCS 1005/1 et. seq.) and “The Academic Degree Act” (110 ILCS 1010/1 et. seq.), two regulatory statutes governing the operation and degree-granting activity of private colleges and universities in the state of Illinois. Under these statutes and the rules to implement these statutes, postsecondary degree-granting institutions that were established after July 17, 1945, require approval from the IBHE to operate, and institutions established after 1961 require approval to operate and grant degrees.

In authorizing institutions to operate and grant degrees, the Board stipulates that approval is subject to maintenance of the conditions that were presented by the institution in its application and formed the basis upon which the specific authorizations were granted. The failure of an institution to maintain conditions of approval or conditions substantially equivalent to the conditions of approval constitutes grounds for revocation of authorizations as defined in Section 1030.80 of the rules to administer the statutes. Procedures for revocation as outlined in Section 1030.80 include the designation of a Hearing Officer who will schedule and conduct a hearing.

**Northwest Suburban College of Basic and Allied Health Sciences**  
**5999 South New Wilke Road, Building 400**  
**Rolling Meadows, IL 60008**  
**President: Dr. M. T. AliNiazee**

**Institutional Background and History**

Northwest Suburban College of Basic and Allied Health Sciences (NWSC or the College) is an independent, not-for-profit institution located in Rolling Meadows, Illinois. NWSC was established in 2008 and received authorization to operate in the North Suburban region through IBHE in 2010. The College is currently approved to offer an Associate in Biology and Bachelors of Science degrees in Biology and Chemistry. In addition to approval as a degree-granting institution, the College is approved to offer non-degree programs through the Private Business and Vocational Schools division of IBHE. Since June of 2016, IBHE staff have been working with the College on accreditation and administrative capacity issues. The College has been unable to maintain compliance with IBHE requirements for institutional accreditation, despite frequent communication and site visits from IBHE staff.

**Institutional Accreditation**

*1030.80(b)(5)(A) Grounds for revocation include the following: (ii) Failure to maintain the conditions under which the institution and/or its degrees were authorized and (iii) Failure to offer degrees or instruction for one continuous 12-month period.*

In preparation for communication to be sent to institutions regarding the possible removal of recognition by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) for the Accrediting Council of Independent Colleges

and Schools (ACICS), IBHE staff reviewed ACICS-accredited Illinois institutions and programs. This review revealed that NWSC, though IBHE-approved for associate- and baccalaureate-level programs, was only listed on the ACICS site as accredited for one associate-level degree. IBHE staff immediately reached out to NWSC for clarification. Staff also reached out to ACICS to inquire as to the status of these unlisted programs. The institution responded and indicated that they were unaware of the requirement to receive accreditor approval before offering new degree programs. The institution was told by IBHE staff to remove references to the degrees from the school's website. The College assured IBHE that they would submit these programs for accreditor approval as soon as possible.

IBHE staff conducted a site visit at NWSC in October of 2016 in response to issues that had arisen through review of pending program applications, inconsistent listings of programs on the ACICS site and the developing status of their institutional accreditor, ACICS. IBHE staff were informed during the visit that the institution was also seeking regional accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission. The President of NWSC was informed by IBHE staff that the institution needed to consider an accreditor with a shorter timeline to avoid a lapse in accreditation in preparation for the potential loss of U.S. Department of Education recognition of ACICS. The President stated that the College was in discussions with the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges. On December 12, 2016, ED withdrew recognition from ACICS and provided a provisional certification period of 18 months to affected institutions along with required transitional accreditation milestones. This prompted another focused site visit to NWSC in January of 2017 from the IBHE Deputy Director of Academic Affairs. This visit was to review the institution's accreditation plans and timelines in response to the ED decision and to reiterate IBHE's requirements around continuous accreditation.

The College's implementation of programs without accreditor approval prompted a show cause directive for the College from ACICS on February 28, 2017. In response to this directive, the College chose not to renew their accreditation with ACICS, but instead to allow their accreditation to expire on December 31, 2017. This decision by the College prompted another focused site visit by the IBHE Deputy Director of Academic Affairs. The deputy director reviewed the planned accreditation timelines with institutional leadership and found that there was a strong possibility that the institution would experience a lapse in accreditation at the end of 2017. He informed NWSC administrators that IBHE administrative rules do not permit a gap in accreditation, even if the College is in the process of moving toward accreditation with another appropriate body. Despite the College's decision to allow their accreditation to expire, ACICS moved ahead with processes to suspend the College's accreditation and withdrew their approval by suspension on August 9, 2017. The College filed an appeal of this suspension and the U.S. Department of Education placed NWSC on Heightened Cash Monitoring 2 status due to accreditation issues. The ACICS suspension prompted yet another site visit from IBHE staff in September 2017. This site visit focused on accreditation and administrative issues and reiterated the IBHE requirement around continuous accreditation. The College's appeal of their accreditation suspension by ACICS was denied on November 16, 2017, and was effective immediately. Consequently, NWSC was without accreditation on November 16, 2017. This loss of institutional accreditation resulted in the College being out of compliance with the IBHE requirements for maintenance of operating authority and the IBHE staff recommendation for revocation of approval to operate and grant degrees in the state of Illinois.

As noted above, four site visits were conducted by IBHE staff with the institution over the past year. All four of these site visits, and several follow-up communications from IBHE staff, emphasized the requirement of continuous accreditation in order to maintain operating authority in Illinois. The inability of the College to remain in compliance with their accreditor regarding program offerings and the lapse in institutional accreditation reveals an absence of the administrative capacity necessary to operate and grant degrees. Pursuant to these findings, IBHE staff recommend the appointment of a hearing officer to proceed to schedule and conduct a hearing pertaining to the potential revocation of the Authorizations to Operate and Grant Degrees for Northwest Suburban College of Basic and Allied Health Sciences.

## **Staff Conclusion**

The staff has determined that Northwest Suburban College of Basic and Allied Health Sciences and its degree programs do not meet the criteria in Sections 1030.30 and 1030.60 of the rules to implement The Academic Degree Act (110 ILCS 1010) and the Illinois Board of Higher Education policies pertaining to assessment and accreditation for licensure.

*Having considered staff findings and recommendations and pursuant to its authority under the rules to implement The Academic Degree Act, the Illinois Board of Higher Education hereby approves the appointment of a hearing officer to conduct a hearing relating to the possible revocation of operating authority for Northwest Suburban College of Basic and Allied Health Sciences. The hearing officer shall make a recommendation regarding revocation to the Board at a future Illinois Board of Higher Education meeting.*

