

APPROVED
January 21, 2026

Melissa Bealon
Board Secretary Melissa Bealon

Item #F-3
January 21, 2026

**NEW OPERATING AND/OR DEGREE-GRANTING AUTHORITY
FOR INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS**

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: New independent institutions, institutions planning to operate at a new location, including a location outside the higher education region of the original operating authority, and out-of-state institutions planning to operate in Illinois for the first time are required to obtain authorization to operate. These institutions are also required to obtain authorization for each new degree program.

Action Requested: That the Illinois Board of Higher Education approves the recommendations to grant degree-granting authority and/or operating authority to the following institution:

Not-For-Profit

Southern California University of Health Sciences

- Operating Authority in the Chicago Region



STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**NEW OPERATING AND/OR DEGREE-GRANTING AUTHORITY
FOR INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS**

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) has responsibility for administration of The Private College Act (110 ILCS 1005) and The Academic Degree Act (110 ILCS 1010). Under these statutes, new independent institutions, institutions planning to operate at a new location, including a location outside the higher education region of original operating authority, and out-of-state institutions planning to operate in Illinois for the first time are required to obtain authorization to operate. These institutions also are required to obtain authorization for each new degree program.

Applications for new operating and degree-granting authority submitted by independent Illinois institutions and out-of-state institutions are reviewed by the staff. Recommendations are developed by applying criteria for operating and/or degree-granting authority, which are defined in the rules adopted for administration of the statutes and Board policies on assessment of student learning and specialized accreditation requirements for student licensure. These criteria encompass educational objectives, institution and degree titles, curricula, facilities, faculty and administrator qualifications, student policies, publications, records, compliance with pertinent laws, and fiscal stability. Staff recommendations are based on analyses of application materials, responses to questions, and site visits. Out-of-region sites are defined as sites located within an IBHE approval region other than the region within which an institution's original operating authority was granted. There are ten IBHE approval regions; each is coterminous with one or more community college districts. Approval to operate within a new approval region entitles an institution to operate throughout the region, and not solely at the site at which the institution initially applied. In addition to the approval criteria in rules, each new program was reviewed for its contributions to the goals of *A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Pathways to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth*, which sets forth priorities to guide Illinois higher education. Staff recommendations are based on analyses of application materials and responses to staff questions.

This item includes recommendations to grant operating authority and degree-granting authority to one institution.

Not-For-Profit Executive Summary

Southern California University of Health Sciences

- Operating Authority in the Chicago Region

Southern California University of Health Sciences (SCUHS or the University) is a private, nonprofit institution with a primary mission to educate students as competent, caring, and successful integrative healthcare practitioners and professionals. The University is committed to providing an academic community imbued with kindness, integrity, humor, and determination. It offers educational credentials ranging from certificates through doctoral programs in areas such as health sciences,



acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, medical science, genetic counseling, human genetics and genomics, physician assistant, chiropractic, occupational therapy, physical therapy, whole health leadership, Ayurvedic medicine, and psychodynamic psychology.

SCU was founded in 1911 as Los Angeles College of Chiropractic (LACC). The Chiropractic Initiative Act of 1922 was established, adopting legal requirements for chiropractic education. During this time and continuing through the late 1940s, the LACC absorbed the Eclectic College of Chiropractic and continued to expand curriculum and acquire many institutions including Golden State College of Chiropractic, Cale Chiropractic College, College of Chiropractic Physicians and Surgeons, Southern California College of Chiropractic, Hollywood College of Chiropractic, California College of Chiropractic, and the California College of Natural Healing Arts. In the late 1940s, the non-profit corporation California Chiropractic Educational Foundation (CCEF) was created and acquired LACC. The holding company CCEF retained the LACC name for its chiropractic college and moved its operations to Glendale, California. In 1981, LACC moved to Whittier, California. In 2000, the Board of LACC voted to change the name of the institution to Southern California University of Health Sciences (SCUHS) in order to offer additional programs in the health sciences. In that same year, the Board created the College of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine which is today's College of Eastern Medicine, housing both Master and Doctor of Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine programs.

SCUHS is seeking operating authority in the Chicago region as part of its acquisition of several acupuncture and Chinese medicine programs from Pacific College of Health Sciences (PCHS) which holds IBHE authorization in the Chicago region. The acquisition of PCHS will help SCUHS work towards its strategic goals to become "The nation's premier integrative and interdisciplinary healthcare educator."

SCUHS policies are in place to ensure faculty possess the training, credentials, and qualifications to provide instruction. The College has sufficient library, technology, staff, and financial resources to support the proposed operation.

The staff recommends adoption of the following resolutions:

The Illinois Board of Higher Education hereby grants authorization to Southern California University of Health Sciences to Operate in the Chicago region subject to the institution's implementation and maintenance of the conditions that were presented in its application and that form the basis upon which this authorization is granted.



Southern California University of Health Sciences
16200 Amber Valley Drive
Whittier, CA 90604
President: John Scaringe

Seeking Operating Authority: Chicago Region

Institutional Accreditation: Southern California University of Health Sciences is accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC).

Background and History

Southern California University of Health Sciences (SCUHS or the University) is a private, nonprofit institution with a primary mission to educate students as competent, caring, and successful integrative healthcare practitioners and professionals. The University is committed to providing an academic community imbued with kindness, integrity, humor, and determination. It offers educational credentials ranging from certificates through doctoral programs in areas such as health sciences, acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, medical science, genetic counseling, human genetics and genomics, physician assistant, chiropractic, occupational therapy, physical therapy, whole health leadership, Ayurvedic medicine, and psychodynamic psychology.

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SCUHS is seeking operating authority in the Chicago region as part of its acquisition of several acupuncture and Chinese medicine programs from Pacific College of Health Sciences (PCHS) which currently holds IBHE authorization in the Chicago region. The acquisition of PCHS will help SCUHS work towards its strategic goals to become "The nation's premier integrative and interdisciplinary healthcare educator." Upon IBHE approval of the operating authority, SCUHS will seek degree-granting authorization to implement PCHS's currently approved programs.

Institutional Data

1030.30(a)(3)(F): Success in student progression and graduation across all existing approved programs, and success rates in programs preparing students for certification and licensure, shall be



consistent with expectations in higher education and the appropriate related field of study. At a minimum, the Board shall consider the following factors, based on results for similar institutions: (i) Graduation rates, certificate and degree completion rates, retention rates, and pass rates for licensure and certification aligned with thresholds set by State or national regulatory bodies; and (ii) Success rate, which shall be, at a minimum, higher than that of the lowest quartile of these measures for similar Illinois institutions defined as open versus competitive enrollment institutions and primarily associate versus primarily baccalaureate granting institutions. Exceptions may be made to the lowest quartile if an institution is above the national average for these measures using the same comparison categories of institutions.

1030.30(a)(3)(G): Additional student success measures shall be considered in the review of applications for authorization. The Board shall establish minimum rates of success based on results for similar institutions or thresholds set by State or federal regulatory bodies. i) At a minimum these data shall include student loan default rates, student indebtedness rates, job placement rates, student learning measures and other success indicators. ii) Institutions that participate in Federal Student Loan programs shall have 3-year Official Cohort Default rates no higher than 25 percent. Institutions with Federal Financial Responsibility Composite Scores shall have a score that is no lower than 1.0. Institutions that fail to meet these thresholds may be restricted from implementing new certificate or degree programs. iii) The success rate shall be, at a minimum, higher than that of the lowest quartile of these measures for similar Illinois institutions defined as open versus competitive enrollment institutions and primarily associate versus primarily baccalaureate granting institutions. Exceptions may be made to the lowest quartile if an institution is above the national average for these measures using the same comparison categories of institutions.

Southern California University of Health Sciences does not have operating or degree-granting authority in Illinois; therefore, data measures of student success are not available.

Need

Public Act 102-1046, 110 ILCS 1005/4, Sec. 4 (7): That the proposed degree program is educationally and economically consistent with the educational priorities and needs of this State and meets a need that is not currently met by existing institutions and is supported by clear evidence of need. If the examination shows that the applicant has such qualifications a certificate of approval shall be issued.

There is a consistent growth for health-care related professions, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Total employment is projected to grow by four percent through 2033, with approximately half of the openings being in the healthcare sector. BLS reported a national mean annual salary of \$84,260 and the Illinois workNet Center reported annual earnings of approximately \$93,524 per year. U.S. Department of Labor's O*Net OnLine reported the field of acupuncture has a "bright outlook," which are occupations expected to grow rapidly in the next several years, will have large numbers of job openings, or are new and emerging occupations. BLS also reported that industries with the highest levels of employment of Acupuncturists include Offices of Other Health Practitioners, Offices of Physicians, Outpatient Care Centers, General Medical and Surgical Hospitals, and Colleges and Professional Schools. O*Net reports that Acupuncturists are required to follow protocols or regulations for healthcare activities, treat patients using alternative medical procedures, develop treatment plan that use non-medical therapies while evaluating patient outcomes to determine effectiveness of treatments.



Southern California University of Health Sciences is seeking to operate and expand on the student recruitment and placement market established by the Pacific College of Health Science. SCUHS's strategic plan emphasizes collaboration with healthcare systems, clinical partners, and industry stakeholders to ensure that educational offerings are aligned with workforce needs and evolving industry standards.

A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth

Supportive of *A Thriving Illinois: Goal 1, Equity, to close the equity gaps for students who have historically been left behind*, SCUHS has outlined targeted recruitment strategies for underrepresented groups through partnerships with Chicago community organizations and transfer agreements with local community colleges. The institution will monitor progress annually to ensure alignment with equity goals. The implementation in Illinois would be supported by a range of high-impact, comprehensive, wrap-around student support services to ensure access and success for all students. SCUHS will draw upon the strengths of Pacific College of Health and Science through its emphasis on holistic, integrative, and patient-centered healthcare education supported by a diverse faculty. SCUHS is dedicated to continuing the diverse faculty and staff backgrounds for the Chicago location. The institution actively seeks to attract faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds by broadening recruitment channels, partnering with professional organizations that support underrepresented groups in healthcare, and prioritizing diversity in hiring committees. Investments in faculty support continue after onboarding. The institution continues faculty development in training for such topics as culturally responsive teaching and mentorship programs designed to help support faculty and staff throughout their careers. SCUHS has established alumni communities, student council, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion committees to build supportive campus climates to serve all students, especially those who have historically been underserved.

SCUHS contributes to *Goal 2, Sustainability, to build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions, by finding ways to reduce the financial burden of education on students and their families*. SCUHS focuses on making its programs affordable for all students, especially those who have been historically underserved, by offering a robust array of scholarships and financial assistance options. Scholarships are funded through donations and are awarded for both need and merit and are available to both new and continuing students. In addition, the institution benchmarks its costs against other comparable programs in Illinois, comparing its tuition and fees. Tuition is competitive when compared to other similar programs in the state, ensuring it remains an affordable option for students. The institution is committed to reducing reliance on student loans and offering targeted support for students to help build a stronger financial future for students and ensuring that cost is not a prohibiting factor for educational and professional advancement in integrative healthcare and ensuring education is affordable and accessible for students.

In alignment with *Goal 3, Growth, to increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth, by contributing to regional and state workforce needs*, Southern California University of Health Sciences is committed to high-impact practices to enhance learning and career readiness. The integrative, evidence-based approach to education ensures that all individuals, regardless of background, have fair opportunities within the institution. The curriculum has extensive clinical training, interprofessional education, and business management to ensure graduates are workforce ready. The partnerships with local health system create a supportive network for its faculty, students, and staff to build connections and enhance professional opportunities. The curriculum for each program is reviewed with stakeholder input, to help stay aligned with workforce needs.



From a review of job postings, the institution has documented that there is a steady demand for acupuncturists in Illinois. The IDES reports that the average wage earned for acupuncturists is \$93,524 per year, which is significantly higher than the 2024 state median wage of \$51,191. Even at the average entry wage level, acupuncturists earn an average annual salary of \$87,290, which remains well above the state average. In addition, the State of Illinois supports licensure for acupuncturists and herbalists, and Medicaid is increasingly covering acupuncture for pain management, combining to create stronger pathways for practitioners.

The institution has prioritized collaboration with healthcare systems, clinical partners, and industry stakeholders, mirroring best practices of the industry. These partnerships are designed to provide students with experiential learning, facility job placements, and foster research collaborations and enhance clinical skills. By integrating these high-impact practices SCUHS ensures that students will be well-prepared for careers.

Comparable Programs in Illinois

Currently, there is only one other institution in the Chicago higher education region offering programs in the “Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine” Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code in the IBHE Program Inventory. Besides the Pacific College of Health and Science, the Chicago College of Oriental Medicine offers master’s level programs in acupuncture. The proposed transaction for SCUHS to assume operations for the Pacific College of Health Science programs will not impact the educational marketplace in the region.

Mission and Objectives

Criterion 1030.60(a)(1) provides that the objectives of the degree program(s) must be consistent with what the degree program title(s) imply.

Criterion 1030.60(a)(2) provides that the requested degree program shall be congruent with the purpose, goals, objectives and mission of the institution.

The institutional mission is “to educate students as competent, caring, and successful integrative healthcare practitioners and professionals. The University is committed to providing an academic community imbued with kindness, integrity, humor, and determination.” The application for operating authority is consistent with the mission, goals, and objectives of the Southern California University of Health Sciences.

Curriculum and Assessment

1030.30(a)(3): The caliber and content of each course or program of instruction, training or study shall be reasonable and adequate for achieving the stated objectives for which the course or program is offered. An undergraduate curriculum shall include general education in alignment with the degree level and objectives.

1030.60(a)(4): The caliber and content of the curriculum shall assure that the stated certificate or degree objectives for which the program is offered will be achieved.



Admission Requirements

Southern California University of Health Sciences utilizes a selective admission process based upon a holistic review of each applicant's background, prior education, and readiness for the particular program. Individual program requirements vary, but all applicants must meet the general requirements including submission of official transcripts from all previously attended institutions, proof of a high school diploma, or equivalent for undergraduate programs.

Master's or Doctoral level programs require:

- Completed bachelor's degree, or a minimum of 60 (Master's) and 90 (Doctoral) semester hours of undergraduate-level coursework, from a U.S. Department of Education (ED) recognized accredited institution or foreign agency equivalent
- Successful interview with a member of the Eastern Medicine Department faculty, or administration, as needed
- Minimum GPA for 2.5 on a 4.0 scale
- Introductory Physics course, which may be taken prior to enrollment or as a concurrent enrollment.
- Meet the Technical Standards (physical and technical requirements) to successfully complete the program, with or without reasonable accommodations.
- Meet the English Language Proficiency standards, as outlined in International Student Admission, regardless of citizenship.

Admission to the Certificate in Chinese Herbal Medicine program requires applicant to be either licensed acupuncturists or currently enrolled in a qualifying acupuncture program and must submit official transcripts verifying education.

Curriculum

Southern California University of Health Sciences anticipates requesting degree-granting authorization from IBHE for the current Pacific College of Health and Science programs including Master of Science in Acupuncture with a Chinese Herbal Medicine Specialization, Post-Masters Certificate in Chinese Herbal Medicine, Doctor of Acupuncture, Doctor of Acupuncture with a Chinese Herbal Medicine Specialization, and a Certificate in Massage Therapy/Asian Body Therapy. SCUHS does not plan to develop or implement any additional program in the first years of operation in Illinois. The planned programs are intentionally designed to serve a diverse student body, supporting A Thriving Illinois. These programs will feature high-impact experiential curricular components to help prepare students for the workforce. Each program is designed to integrate multicultural perspectives and culturally competent care into the curriculum. In addition, each prepares its graduates for licensure, independent practice, and leadership in acupuncture and Chinese medicine.

Students in the Master of Science in Acupuncture with a Chinese Herbal Medicine Specialization will be prepared to become licensed acupuncturists with advanced training in both acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, covering traditional theory, acupuncture techniques, herbal pharmacology, diagnosis, treatment planning, and clinical practice to equip graduation for national certification and independent practice. The Master of Science in Acupuncture program will focus on learning core acupuncture principles and practices, emphasizing Chinese medicine theory, diagnosis, treatment planning, and hands-on clinical skills to prepare students for licensure and professional practice.



The Doctor of Acupuncture with a Chinese Medicine Specialization program provides advanced doctoral-level education in both acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, building on master's level competencies with an emphasis on advanced diagnosis, integrative care, evidence-informed practice, and collaborative healthcare, preparing graduates for leadership and advanced clinical roles.

The institution will provide wrap-around, comprehensive student support services in a holistic, proactive manner. Services will include proactive academic advising, tutoring, mentoring, and mental health resources tailored to support students' well-being and persistence. Students will also have access to career counseling, continuing education opportunities, and alumni networks to support professional growth beyond graduation. The integration of the high-impact practices and support services is structured to ensure that all students have the resources, guidance, and opportunities needed to be successful.

Assessment of Student Learning

Southern California University of Health Sciences programs are designed with program and student learning outcomes that align with the institution's mission and the evolving needs of healthcare. A variety of direct and indirect assessment instruments are used to measure whether students have achieved the stated course level outcomes, including coursework and examinations, clinical competency evaluations, capstone projects, student portfolios, employer surveys, and licensure examination pass rates. Assessment data is systematically collected and analyzed at the courses, program, and institutional level to ensure student learning outcomes are met. The institution has policies and structures to support continuous evaluation and improvement of programs, including assurances that online programs are equivalent to traditional programs.

Program Assessment

The institution has designed program-specific outcomes which ensures graduates are prepared for licensure, independent practice and leadership roles within the field of acupuncture and Chinese medicine. Outcomes for each program include the ability to demonstrate critical thinking, ethical decision-making, evidence-informed practice, integrative health knowledge, compassionate patient care, effective interpersonal communication, collaborating, equity, and inclusion, and lifelong learning. The curriculum for each program is regularly reviewed and updated with stakeholder input, ensuring alignment with current healthcare needs. Program assessments are conducted through the regular review of curriculum, comprehensive program reviews, student forums and evaluations, and performance metric evaluations including items such as licensure examination passage rates, retention and graduation rates. Program learning outcomes emphasize ethical practice, diagnosis, treatment planning, and interprofessional communication, preparing students for evolving healthcare environments.

Facilities (space, equipment, instructional materials)

1030(a)(4) and 1030.60(a)(5): The institution shall have adequate and suitable space, equipment, and instructional materials to support institutional programs.

The 6,300 square-foot facilities are sufficient to implement the proposed institution operation at 230 West Monroe Street, Chicago location. The 2024 lease agreement allowed for facility improvements as well as providing a central downtown Chicago location. Stake holder



engagement crafted the direction of the improvements, including reorganization of academic, administrative, and clinical spaces to be on one floor of the building, expansion of student lounge space and accommodations, additional study areas. All classrooms have new display technology. The institution plans to expand an on-campus Academic Health Center in its first five years. This center will serve patients and will allow SCUHS to improve clinical partnerships with local health systems to enhance experiential learning and community engagement.

The library, which is staffed by professional librarians, has a sufficient collection of books, periodicals, databases, and resources to support the proposed programs featuring access to EBSCO and ProQuest. The library holdings represent a broad cross-section of diverse materials available on traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture, herbal pharmacopeias, biomedical sciences, and integrative medicine to support the curriculum in both physical and electronic access. It features the most pertinent publication in the field of acupuncture, Chinese medicine, and herbology, covering traditions developed in China, Japan, and Korea, which include translations of classic works as well as current commentaries and contemporary research. The total institutional collection is over 120,000 items. The institution will continue to monitor the collection and improve the availability of items.

Faculty and Staff

1030.30(a)(5) and 1030.60(a)(6): The education, experience and other qualifications of directors, administrators, supervisors, and instructors shall ensure that the students will receive education consistent with the objectives of the program.

SCUHS has established institutional policies that ensure faculty possess the training and credentials to provide instruction. The College has successfully recruited and retained a diverse faculty and has strategies in place to support their development to ensure the academic success of students. The institution also has established policies to evaluate faculty on a regular basis.

Fiscal and Personnel Resources

1030.30(a)(11): The institution should be financially stable and capable of assuring the revenues needed for meeting stated objectives and fulfilling commitments to students; and

1030.60(a)(8): Fiscal and personnel resources shall be sufficient to permit the institution to meet obligations to continuing programs while assuming additional resource responsibilities for the new certificate or degree program.

SCUHS has submitted fiscal plans demonstrating financial stability. The total revenues will exceed the expenditure from the first year of operation. The institution has adequate faculty, staff, and other instructional resources to administer the proposed campus. The operational costs will be mainly supported by tuition revenue, with supplemental revenue from governmental grants, contracts, sales and services.

Accreditation/Licensure

Southern California University of Health Sciences will maintain the same institutional and programmatic accreditation as its main campus. The institution holds accreditation from WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). It holds programmatic accreditation from the



Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine (ACAHM). The institution has submitted plans for accreditation of the Chicago campus from both WSCUC and ACAHM.

Program Information

1030.30(e): Publications and Information. Institutions shall be scrupulously ethical in all communication with the public and with prospective students. School publications, advertisements and statements shall be wholly accurate and in no way misleading; and

1030.60(a)(7): The information the institution provides for students and the public shall accurately describe the programs offered, program objectives, length of program, schedule of tuition, fees, and all other charges and expenses necessary for completion of the course of study, cancellation and refund policies, and such other material facts concerning the institution and the program or course of instruction as are likely to affect the decision of the student to enroll. This information, including any enrollment agreements or similar agreements, shall be available to prospective students prior to enrollment.

Detailed information on academic policies, tuition, fees, refund policies, admissions procedures, and other relevant information necessary for prospective students to make informed decisions on enrollment were provided in the application and will be published on the institution's website pending Board authorization.

Staff Conclusion

The staff concludes that Southern California University of Health Sciences meets the criteria in Sections 1030.30 and 1030.60 of the rules to implement The Private College Act (110 ILCS 1005) and The Academic Degree Act (110 ILCS 1010), and the relating Illinois Administrative Code (Title 23 Section 1030) pertaining to the assessment and licensure of a postsecondary institution.

