

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION**

**COMMITTEE:** Academic Affairs

**NO.:** AAC 17-02

**COMMITTEE DATE:** October 4, 2016

**BOARD DATE:** October 11, 2016

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**REVOCATION OF BOSTON CONSERVATORY DEGREE GRANTING AUTHORITY**

**MOVED:** The Board hereby revokes the legal authority of **Boston Conservatory** to operate and grant degrees in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts retroactive to July 1, 2016.

**Authority:** Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 69, Section 30 et seq.

**Contact:** Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D.,  
Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

## **Background**

In December 2015 the Boston Conservatory Board of Trustees voted unanimously in favor of merging with Berklee College of Music, to become the Boston Conservatory at Berklee College. On April 8, 2016, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education informed Berklee College that programs offered previously at the Boston Conservatory were approved as degree programs at Berklee College of Music.

The decision to merge occurred following months of exploration by a steering committee into finances, academics, administration, operations, and facilities. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by both institutions on June 25, 2015, creating a formal, nonbinding agreement that outlined the intention to explore a merger. This initiated an exploratory phase during which the steering committee conducted studies and facilitated discussions to determine the feasibility of a successful merger. The steering committee identified strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. In December 2015, both Boards of Trustees approved a definitive merger agreement with a target closing date of June 1, 2016, confirming that the merger would proceed and would be best for both institutions. The closing was fully realized as planned on June 1, 2016.

The primary motivations for the merger were educational and strategic, rather than financial, as both institutions were operating on a financially sustainable basis. The merger agreement anticipated a level of synergy to support investment in the new combined entity. Students from both the Conservatory and Berklee are expected to benefit from new opportunities to collaborate, create, and learn from one another. Current students saw no substantial changes in admission procedures or academic programs. Berklee College of Music, including the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, believes that there is a unique opportunity to create a truly distinctive educational institution that enables the next generation of performing artists and arts professionals not only to thrive but also to lead.

## **Summary**

The Boston Conservatory was merged with and into the Berklee College of Music effective July 1, 2016. The merger was legally completed on June 1, 2016. The Berklee College of Music's degree granting authority in Massachusetts is inclusive of all the degree programs that were previously offered by the Boston Conservatory.

The merger between Berklee College of Music and the Boston Conservatory was approved by Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) at the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) on May 18, 2016. The Boston Conservatory Board of Trustees voted to merge with the Berklee College of Music on December 17, 2015. All programs that existed under the Boston Conservatory as a separate organization currently exist under the Boston Conservatory at Berklee College. Berklee College is accredited by the CIHE of NEASC and has been continuously in operation since 1973. The required Notice of Closure documentation was submitted to BHE staff on September 12, 2016, and has been deemed thorough and complete.

**Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the Board revoke the authority of Boston Conservatory to operate and grant degrees in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts retroactive to July 1, 2016.