

**Massachusetts Board of Higher Education
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

December 5, 2017
10:00 a.m.

One Ashburton Place, 21st Floor
Conference Room 3
Boston, Massachusetts

Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present: Committee Chair Nancy Hoffman; Sheila Harrity, Vice Chair; Henry Thomas; Fernando Reimers; Secretary of Education Designee Tom Moreau; Student Board Member Danielle Dupuis.

Committee Members Absent: Board Chair Chris Gabrieli
Commissioner Carlos Santiago, non-voting member
Department Staff Present: Patricia Marshall; Kate Flanagan; Winifred Hagan; Bob Awkward; Constantia Papanikolaou; Elena Quiroz-Livanis; Thomas Simard; Angela Williams; Franny Wood; Ashley Wisneski

I. CALL TO ORDER

AAC Chair Nancy Hoffman called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. She then invited the AAC members and DHE staff present to introduce themselves.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

On a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the October 24, 2017 meeting of the Academic Affairs Committee were unanimously approved.

III. REMARKS

Chair Hoffman provided brief remarks, noting that the AAC has a number of program reviews on the agenda today, as well as a discussion of SARA and a continuation of our discussion of the review of the program approval process. She added that today's discussion on the program approval process is a discussion only, with no vote. She then turned the meeting over to Deputy Commissioner Patricia Marshall for her remarks.

Dr. Marshall began her remarks by providing an update on the Performance Incentive Fund (PIF) Grant program. She remarked that in early October, the DHE released the RFP for the FY18 process, and received 22 proposals totaling \$1.9 million in grant requests. She continued, stating that of those 22 proposals, the DHE recommended 16 proposals for awards, totaling just under \$1.25 million in funding. She noted that there were four categories awarded this year: 1) 100 Males to College, 2) Competency Based Pathways in Early Education, 3) Co-requisite at Scale and Multiple Math Pathways and 4) New Approaches to Affordability and Student

Success. She was happy to report that the grants will allow expansion of 100 Males to College sites from 4 to 5, as well as the expansion of Competency-Based Education, which was featured at the Governor's recent Convening for Digital Innovation and Lifelong Learning on November 20. Additionally, PIF funds will also support two co-requisite and multiple math pathways programs, and allow for the investment of over \$550,000 in initiatives designed to advance affordability and student success, including the use of cost saving open educational resources, as well as the expansion of hybrid and online degree programs, lending libraries and creative partnerships between community based organizations and our campuses.

Dr. Marshall continued by providing an update on Early College, noting that 33 applications were submitted in the preliminary phase of the early college designation process. She remarked that the twenty Early College programs moving forward to the final designation phase will be officially announced by the Governor on December 13; 9 of those programs will receive \$10,000 in planning grants. She noted that the programs represent partnerships between high schools and our higher education institutions in every part of the state. The final applications are due in mid February, with final decisions in late March or early April, for approval by the ECJC.

Lastly, Dr. Marshall notified the board that the Commissioner recently approved Simmons College's request to change its name to Simmons "University." By way of background, she stated that BHE regulations delegate certain matters to the Commissioner for review and approval, including institutional name changes. For Commissioner-approved name changes the regulations require that actions taken under this delegation of authority be recorded in the BHE minutes. She stated that Simmons College submitted a request to the Department on July 19, 2017 to change its name to Simmons University, and as part of its request, provided documentation to show that it met the definition of a university as set forth in BHE regulations 610 CMR 2.04. Department staff's review of Simmons' submission confirmed that the institution offers a wide range of programs leading to baccalaureate and master's degrees, provides graduate programs in nearly 90 fields of study, including doctoral degrees in 6 fields, and that graduate programs enjoy dedicated resources, commencement exercises, facilities and faculty, and have far greater enrollments than their undergraduate program, demonstrating that they are a distinct element within the institution. On September 15, 2017, the DHE informed Simmons that its request for a name change had been approved, subject to completing the public hearing requirement. A public hearing was held on October 24, 2017 and no comments were received. On October 25, 2017, the DHE informed the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office that the articles of amendment effectuating Simmons' name change had been approved, and the name change was registered by the Secretary of the Commonwealth on that same day. She concluded that Simmons College is now officially named Simmons University.

AAC Chair Hoffman offered her congratulations. Board Member Henry Thomas asked what the main driver was behind the name change, and whether it was for marketing purposes or otherwise. General Counsel Dena Papanikolaou responded that while DHE staff could not speak to the institution's intent, a review of the materials indicated that the purpose of the request was to allow the institution to accurately reflect its nature and degree offerings in alignment with regulatory definitions.

IV. MOTIONS

A. AAC 18-09

**Springfield Technical Community College
Associate of Science in Biomedical Engineering Technology**

Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success, Winnie Hagan presented the program. The proposed Biomedical Engineering Technology Associate in Science program is designed to prepare students to serve as biomedical engineering technicians in hospitals and medical research centers, either as employees of these institutions or contracted service firms, who are capable of installing, inspecting, maintaining, repairing and calibrating biomedical equipment. Prominent, external, biomedical engineering technology professors reviewed the program and made a few recommendations regarding assessments and faculty recruitment but, otherwise, indicated students graduating from the proposed program would be competitive and that the program and course design set the bar higher than the average biomedical engineering technology associate degree program in the U.S.

Staff thoroughly reviewed all documentation submitted by Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) and the external reviewers. Staff recommendation is for approval of the proposed *Associate in Science in Biomedical Engineering Technology*.

Committee Chair Hoffman opened the floor to questions. Board member Fernando Reimers asked if there was a job placement for students while participating in the program; Dr. Adrienne Smith responded that there are co-op opportunities, though it is not required. Vice Chair Sheila Harranty asked about the reference to hospitals in the area, and asked for clarification on who would be hiring these students, since companies would be servicing the technology. Dr. Smith responded that both hospitals and biomedical companies would be hiring these students. Board member Henry Thomas remarked that in full disclosure, STCC is located in Western Massachusetts and has a reputation for high caliber science and tech programs, and the Urban League for which he is the president has operated a number of STEM enrichment programs in the greater Springfield area. He asked if he has a conflict of interest given his affiliation with the Urban League, and added that he does not have a personal financial interest in the matter. General Counsel Papanikolaou responded that while she could not speak to the details of his relationship with the Urban League, generally board members must abstain from matters in which they or their immediate family members have personal financial interests, and may otherwise choose to abstain in matters where other relationships exist to avoid the appearance of conflict.

Chair Hoffman remarked that she was impressed by the proposal; she then stated that few high schools prepare students for engineering programs and asked if there are any plans to expand into other high schools for dual enrollment opportunities. Mr. Matthew Gravel, Dean of Enrollment Management, said they are always looking for new early college opportunities.

There being no further discussion, the following motion was duly made, seconded and approved unanimously by all board members present.

AAC 18- 09 APPLICATION FROM SPRINGFIELD TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO AWARD THE ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCE IN BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY.

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the application from **Springfield Technical Community College** to award the **Associate of Science in Biomedical Engineering Technology**.

Upon graduating the first class for these programs, Springfield Technical Community College shall submit to the Board a status report addressing its

success in reaching program goals as stated in the application and in the areas of enrollment, curriculum, faculty resources, and program effectiveness.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, §9(b).

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

**B. AAC 18-10 University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
Bachelor of Arts in Health and Society**

Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success, Winnie Hagan presented the program. The proposed BA in Health and Society (BA/HS) is intended to engage students in a critical analysis of the multiple factors that impact the health and health behaviors of diverse populations, and the formulation of health-related policy. UMD expects that students will learn to draw on the theoretical perspectives, knowledge bases, and research paradigms in a range of social science fields and humanities to explore health and healing within social, cultural, historical, political, economic, and ecological contexts. UMD intends that the curriculum defines health as encompassing physical, mental, and social well-being and takes a social justice lens to the question of how globalizing economies and structures of inequality shape patterns of illness, the quality of health care, and strategies for promoting health. UMD intends that the program will help students develop a more broad, interdisciplinary and holistic understanding of health and wellness.

Staff recommendation is for approval of the proposed Bachelor of Arts in Health and Society.

Board member Hoffman opened the floor to questions. Board member Reimers asked for clarification regarding the curriculum's alignment with industry and job opportunities. Dr. Mohammad Karim, Provost at UMASS Dartmouth responded by citing some examples of national competing programs and remarked that they have aligned their curriculum with other successful programs. Vice Chair Harranty asked about lower graduation rates for campus freshman in STEM programs, and asked if they are losing students. Dr Karim responded that many STEM students are pre-med or waiting for a spot in nursing or engineering programs, which is contributing to their lowered success rate. He continued that this program is trying to capture students who have a general sense of wanting to help humanity through health fields, but are unclear on what path to take. Board member Hoffman stated she had a similar concern as Board member Reimers and wondered if the curriculum was appropriate and rigorous enough to fulfill the jobs listed in the materials, or if these students would also need to attend graduate school. Board member Thomas remarked that there was a case to be made regarding the development of strong "generalists" with soft skills for human services and health care and social work fields. Board member Reimers remarked that graduates from the humanities and liberal arts are often not faring very well in the labor market and he does not understand the purpose of putting students in a holding pattern for graduate school. He continued that he trusts that these are responsible academic leaders who will not disadvantage students in any way. Committee Chair Hoffman stated that she shared this concern and suggested that DHE staff follow up with the institution through a reporting requirement or otherwise to keep an eye on this issue. Student member Danielle Dupuis asked a clarifying question about internship opportunities. Dr. Karim responded that every student at UMASS Dartmouth has an experiential education requirement, and they do student surveys at intervals after graduation that inform their curriculum requirements.

There being no further discussion, the following motion was duly made, seconded and approved unanimously by all board members present.

AAC 18-10 APPLICATION FROM UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS DARTMOUTH TO AWARD THE BACHELOR OF ARTS IN HEALTH AND SOCIETY

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the application of the **University of Massachusetts Dartmouth** to award the **Bachelor of Arts in Health and Society**.

Upon graduating the first class for these programs, the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth shall submit to the Board a status report addressing its success in reaching program goals as stated in the application and in the areas of enrollment, curriculum, faculty resources, and program effectiveness.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, §9(b).

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

**C. AAC 18-11 University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science in Public
Administration**

Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success, Winnie Hagan presented the program. The proposed program will prepare students to work in the public sector at the local, state or federal levels. UMD expects students who earn the BA degree will be prepared to work in jobs that require more interaction with the public, where as those who earn the BS degree will be in positions that require more management and analysis. Both degrees are designed to educate students who will be effective communicators, knowledgeable about politics and policy-making, and demonstrate competence with economic and fiscal analysis.

An external review team found that UMD has the capacity to offer both the proposed BA and BS degrees in Public Administration, supported UMD's position that graduates from the proposed programs will be able to find employment given the predicted shortage of employees, and commended the faculty on the proposals. The review team also made four key recommendations which UMD accepted and will integrate into their program.

Staff recommendation is for approval of the proposed Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science in Public Administration.

AAC Chair Hoffman opened the floor to questions. Board member Reimers praised the program for its coherent design and asked if it was designed with traditional students in mind, and if so, if the school considered alternative entry points and pathways, such as public employees who still need to complete BA degrees. Dr. Karim cited examples of successful community college partnerships to accommodate these students and remarked that given the success of their online Public Policy master's degree program, they hope to move this program online as well. AAC Chair Hoffman remarked that this is an excellent program.

There being no further discussion, the following motion was duly made, seconded and approved unanimously by all board members present.

AAC 18-11 APPLICATION FROM UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS DARTMOUTH TO AWARD THE BACHELOR OF ARTS AND A BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the application of the **University of Massachusetts Dartmouth** to award the **Bachelor of Arts and the Bachelor of Science in Public Administration**.

Upon graduating the first class for these programs, the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth shall submit to the Board a status report addressing its success in reaching program goals as stated in the application and in the areas of enrollment, curriculum, faculty resources, and program effectiveness.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, §9(b).

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

**D. AAC 18-12 Westfield State University
Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences (BSHS)**

Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success, Winnie Hagan presented the program. The major objective of the proposed BSHS program is to prepare Westfield State University (WSU) graduates to apply to graduate schools in high-need workforce areas in advanced health professions such as physician assistant, physical therapy, occupational therapy, bioinformatics, athletic training, emergency management, public health, nursing, health education, and epidemiology. It is intended that students in the proposed program will earn one professional credential relevant to an intended career path (EMT, CNA, Medical Scribe, Personal Care Assistant, Phlebotomy etc.). WSU expects that this requirement will provide students with patient contact hours required to meet application requirements for graduate schools in a variety of health fields.

WSU intends to pro-actively work with local community colleges to develop STEM block-based articulation agreements between community college programs and the proposed degree in anticipation of the health sciences being added to the “A2B” transfer pathways.

Staff recommendation is for approval of the proposed Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences.

Board member Hoffman opened the floor to questions. Vice Chair Harrity asked for clarification regarding the high number of student transfers. Jen Hixon, DHSc, PA-C, Professor and Chair Health Sciences and Founding Physician Assistant Program Director responded that the data come from a student survey, and there has been much campus discussion about losing students and brain drain, though some of that was resolved with increased opportunity for dual majors. She also remarked that they have a large population of students who are undeclared and waiting for space in a different program. Board member Reimers remarked that, based on media accounts, it was his understanding is that WSU has had some recent challenges with race relations on campus and asked what actions are being taken to support students of color in

these programs. Ms. Hixon responded that they have a university diversity committee that helps educate departments on these matters, and although they have yet to enroll students in these programs, they are actively preparing to support these students. She continued that program staff are all practitioners who maintain frequent interaction with the population in the Springfield area. Dr. Parviz Ansari, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, responded that they have a variety of measures at different levels to respond to these incidents to support students who feel vulnerable. He continued that the University has also installed 400 cameras, and is working with both the Massachusetts State and local police to create the safest environment for students, faculty and staff. Board member Reimers asked a follow up question about the existence of any organized white supremacist groups on campus, and if they have done any campus climate surveys. Dr. Parviz responded that he is not aware of the existence of any supremacist groups, but they are not isolated or immune from what is going on in the world. He continued that they are trying to be both reactive and proactive, and are employing measures to assess the climate on campus in an aggressive and mindful way.

Vice Chair Harranty noted that the materials indicated that students do not take their first health science course until the sophomore year, and asked if that is typical. She cited poor year-one to year-two retention rates and asked if there was any concern about losing students. Ms. Hixon responded that it is not unusual, and this structure gives students a strong general education foundation. Chair Hoffman asked how many students will be pre-med. Ms. Hixon responded very few, as pre-med is better served by the biology program.

There being no further discussion, the following motion was duly made, seconded and approved unanimously by all board members present.

AAC 18-12 APPLICATION FROM WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY TO AWARD THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN HEALTH SCIENCES.

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the application of **Westfield State University** to award the **Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences**.

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

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

Before turning to the next agenda item, Chair Hoffman referenced the earlier conversation about racial climate on campus, as well campus sexual assault and sexual harassment, and remarked that as a Board, we should come back to this discussion and develop strategies to address these important issues. It was noted that a broad discussion of assessing campus climate was discussed during the BHE retreat within the context of reviewing goals and initiatives for the year. Board member Thomas remarked the BHE should be communicating a sense of urgency around this issue, and push this up as a more urgent priority.

The following consent agenda motion was brought forth, seconded and unanimously approved.

E. AAC 18-13 CONSENT AGENDA

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education approves the following motions on a

consent agenda:

- AAC 18-09 Springfield Technical Community College
Associate of Science in Biomedical Engineering
Technology
- AAC 18-10 University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
Bachelor of Arts in Health and Society
- AAC 18-11 University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science in Public
Administration
- AAC 18-12 Westfield State University
Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences

Authority: Article III, Section 6, By-Laws

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

**F. AAC 18-14 Northeast Maritime Institute
Associate in Applied Science in Nautical Science Without
Condition**

Northeast Maritime Institute (NMI), located in Fairhaven, Massachusetts, is a private, for profit post-secondary education institution that offers training for maritime careers. In October 2014, the BHE conditionally approved NMI to offer an Associates in Applied Science in Nautical Science, subject to three stipulations: 1) the Department would commission an external committee review of the continued progress of NMI towards meeting standards of 610 CMR 2.00, to be completed by June 30, 2015; 2) NMI would post on its website regarding the conditional nature of the Board's approval; and 3) NMI would enroll a relatively small cohort of no more than 11 students in January 2015. NMI complied with stipulations 2 and 3, and a visiting committee was assembled to evaluate the institution's compliance with 610 CMR 2.00.

The visiting committee issued a report on June 12, 2015 in which it noted improvement in some areas cited in the Board's conditional approval. However, the visiting committee determined that it had insufficient data to properly review NMI's progress toward meeting the regulatory requirements regarding financial resources, and they recommended the continuation of the conditional status of NMI's degree program. Audited financial statements were submitted to the Department in August 2015 and were reviewed by the visiting committee, which determined that concerns expressed in the June 2015 report were ongoing. As a result, the Department continued NMI's conditional approval.

In July 2017, NMI submitted a request that the Board grant full, unconditional approval of its degree program. It is worth noting that the institution cannot be accredited without Department approval, and without accreditation, students are not eligible for federal financial aid. In support of this request, NMI provided audited financial statements for FY16 and FY15, along with a financial review report which mirrors and updates the analyses issued by the visiting committee in 2015. Based upon the Department's review of the materials submitted by NMI and its analyses of NMI's current position relative to its position at the time of the visiting committee's report in 2015, staff conclude that NMI is taking its financial stability and responsibility seriously,

that it has notably improved its financial position, and that it is committed to continuous improvement in this area.

Staff finds the proposal meets the Massachusetts regulatory requirements and recommends approval of Northeast Maritime Institute's petition for an Associate in Applied Science in Nautical Science without Condition.

Vice Chair Harrity asked a clarifying question regarding the deadline stipulated in the original motion granting NMI conditional approval. General Counsel Papanikolaou responded that there is no mandatory minimum timeline related to lifting a conditional approval. Vice Chair Harrity asked the campus representatives in attendance to clarify if they did profit in 2015. NMI President Eric Dawicki responded that the loss was due to the investment to initially grow the college, noting that their growth has been purposefully very conservative. He remarked that the United States Coast Guard actually asked NMI to become a college from a private trade school for professional licensure. He continued that they made a significant profit in 2016 and expect to do so again in 2017, though they have recently hired new staff, which will cut into their profits. He noted that their program is very successful with 100% job placement; they have 23 students right now and will enroll another 6-9 students in January. He continued that they will enroll a full cohort in September and "put the rubber to the road."

Board member Thomas asked a clarifying question about their endowment. Mr. Dawicki responded they have a foundation, but it is used to provide financial assistance to students; each student gets tremendous academic, social and financial support at NMI.

There being no further discussion, the following motion was duly made, seconded and approved unanimously by all board members present.

AAC 18-14 APPLICATION OF THE NORTHEAST MARITIME INSTITUTE OF ASSOCIATE IN APPLIED SCIENCE IN NAUTICAL SCIENCE WITHOUT CONDITION

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education (BHE) hereby grants the request of **Northeast Maritime Institute, Inc.** (NMI) to remove the conditional restriction on its authority to award the **Associate in Applied Science in Nautical Science** previously imposed by the BHE on NMI through AAC 15-09

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter c. 69, § 30 et seq.

Contact: Patricia A. Marshall, Ph.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

G. AAC 18-15 Authorization for Commissioner to Solicit Public Comment on 610 CMR 4.00: Operation of Massachusetts Degree-Granting Institutions Under the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)

Chair Hoffman turned the meeting over to General Counsel Papanikolaou to introduce the next motion. General Counsel Papanikolaou remarked that at the last BHE meeting, the Board voted to approve the Department's participation in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), noting that we are one of the last states to do so. She continued that the Board also delegated to the Commissioner the authority to take the necessary steps to pursue

Massachusetts' entry into SARA. One of those steps is the promulgation of regulations that will govern the Commonwealth's review and approval of Massachusetts' institutions that wish to operate under the provisions of SARA. She stated that the vote before the committee today would authorize the Department to solicit public comment on such regulations. General Counsel Papanikolaou stated that the purpose of the regulations was to provide institutions and members of the public with procedural and substantive information on SARA participation requirements, including: minimal institutional eligibility requirements; initial application and renewal processes; processes for approval or disapproval; fee authorization; student complaint management; institutional withdrawal; and institutional loss of eligibility. She remarked that the next steps include submitting the regulations to the Secretary of the Commonwealth for publication, and then to entertain a public comment period, which will include a hearing. The DHE will make any necessary changes as a result of the public comment period, and will bring the final regulations to the BHE for approval in March. She also acknowledged the hard work of Assistant General Counsel Ashley Wisneski on this matter, and then opened the floor to questions.

Board member Thomas asked who would be against this. General Counsel Papanikolaou referred to the SCIRA report and BHE motion which authorized entry into SARA (AAC 18-08), and noted that the underlying issue of whether the Commonwealth should enter the SARA agreement has gone through extensive vetting. While we expect to receive comments that may help us refine some of the content of the regulations, since the regulations are technical in nature major opposition is not anticipated. Board member Reimers asked about the potential for someone to create a fraudulent university. General Counsel Papanikolaou responded that there are fundamental protections in place in the underlying NC-SARA reciprocity agreement, pursuant to which each state essentially vouches for the institutions located within that state (the home state) and authorized to operate under SARA. Beyond that, the Massachusetts Attorney General's consumer protection regulations afford additional protection to MA residents enrolled in online institutions authorized in another state but operating in Massachusetts.

Chair Hoffman remarked that we are going to revisit this one more time after the public comment period. There being no further discussion, the following motion was duly made, seconded and approved unanimously by all board members present.

AAC 18-08 AUTHORIZATION FOR COMMISSIONER TO SOLICIT PUBLIC COMMENT ON 610 CMR 4.00: OPERATION OF MASSACHUSETTS DEGREE-GRANTING INSTITUTIONS UNDER THE STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPRICITY AGREEMENT (SARA)

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the authorization for Commissioner to solicit public comment on 610 CMR 4.00: Operation of Massachusetts degree-granting institutions under the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)

Authority: M.G.L. c. 15A, § 9 (as amended by 2017 Mass. Acts ch. 47, § 10); c. 69, § 31A

Contact: Constantia T. Papanikolaou, General Counsel
Patricia A. Marshall, Ph.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

V. PRESENTATIONS

Chair Hoffman introduced the last agenda item: the “Revised Program Approval Process for Public Institutions: Summary of Public Comment and Next Steps” presentation. She remarked that the AAC has been talking about this for a couple of years now, and introduced Deputy Commissioner Marshall to provide an update of where we are in the process. Chair Hoffman also asked that we put this important matter first on the agenda for the next AAC meeting.

Dr. Marshall handed out a document entitled “Draft for AAC Discussion: Status Update on Program Review Revision,” and Chair Hoffman emphasized the importance of being very clear about the rationale for the proposed changes to the program approval process. Chair Hoffman reminded committee members that the Commissioner was asked to develop a new process that would allow the Board to conduct a high-level review at the outset of the process, not after campuses and the DHE have worked for months and years to put a program forward.

Dr. Marshall presented the timeline for the revised program approval process, highlighting the draft proposal that was put out for public comment on March 27, 2017. She reviewed the proposed changes to the existing, expedited process and reminded committee members that the major change to the process involves the BHE approval at the letter of intent (LOI) stage. In transitioning to a summary of the public comment received on the draft proposal, she thanked campuses for their thoughtful and extensive feedback on the draft of the revised process.

Dr. Marshall provided a high-level summary outlining the number of responses received from all three segments. She indicated that 1/3 of the community colleges responded and that feedback was received from all of the four-year institutions. The State University Council of Presidents submitted one letter on behalf of the segment, and comments were received from all UMass Chancellors and Provosts with a cover letter from the President’s Office. Letters were also submitted by the Rules Committee of the UMass Amherst Faculty Senate, the UMass Lowell Faculty Senate Executive Committee, the Steering Committee of the UMass Dartmouth Faculty Senate, and the Executive Committee of the Faculty Council at UMass Boston.

Dr. Marshall then provided a summary of the public comment. She stated that the feedback from the community colleges was favorable, and that respondents from this segment indicated that the new process provides greater clarity and will help expedite program approval. The state universities and UMass both expressed a preference for the current process. The four-year institution’s stated that the new process contradicts M.G.L. Chapter 15A, Section 9 and M.G.L. Chapter 75, Section 2 and expressed concern that it displaces local boards in the preliminary review process. The State Universities perceived the new process as inefficient, more time consuming, and maintained that it would add significant time to an already lengthy program approval process. The State Universities also stated that the DHE failed to solicit campus input in the development of the new process, that there is an absence of evaluation criteria, and that there is a lack of procedural parity between the independent and public sectors. Feedback unique to the UMass segment included the following comments on the new process: 1) it reduces institutional self-determination, with programs aligned with BHE’s strategic plan rather than being aligned with the strategic plan of the applicant; 2) there is a lack of alignment with the unique role of UMass as a research university and it creates a misalignment with peer institutions; 3) it contradicts the statutory authority of the UMass President per Doc. T73-098 and 4) it contradicts NEASC Standards Three and Four.

Dr. Marshall then presented staff observations on the feedback received from the four-year institutions and asked committee members to consider potential next steps which included the following: creating a timeline detailing the current and proposed processes for the committee's review, including an additional round of stakeholder engagement if the changes to the draft are deemed substantive, informing campuses of the LOI criteria through the development of a template that aligns with the criteria outlined in the draft document, conducting a comprehensive review of program approval procedures for peer institutions, clarifying the timing and the role of the local Board of Trustee's vote in the draft document.

In response to the feedback regarding the absence of evaluation criteria, Chair Hoffman remarked that we only outlined the new process in a very general way in the draft document. Regarding feedback related to MGL Chapter 15A, Sect. 9 and MGL 75, Section 2, General Counsel Papanikolaou clarified that our statutory requirements require program approvals, as Massachusetts is a program approval state. Vice Chair Harranty remarked that we are at the table to discuss a revised program approval process to make sure that the big picture is considered: that there are jobs waiting for graduates of specific programs with earning potential relative to their debt. Board member Reimers remarked that the comparison of the two processes was helpful. He remarked that we need to illustrate that the intent is consumer protection, quality control, and resource allocation; state resources are finite and the whole point is to make a case for strategic resource allocation.

Chair Hoffman remarked that given the time, we will need to come back to this discussion and called for the meeting to adjourn.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS:

There was no other business.

VII. ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.