

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

NO.: AAC 10-11

COMMITTEE DATE: March 16, 2010

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**MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN:
SELECTION OF PEER INSTITUTIONS**

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby accepts the attached list of accredited art and design institutions as the approved peer comparison group for the Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 15A, Section 7A

Contact: Jonathan Keller, Associate Commissioner for Research, Planning, and Information Systems

Background

On December 8, 2009, the Board of Higher Education approved the Massachusetts College of Art and Design (MassArt) Partnership Renewal Plan. Although this Plan included the specification of changes to MassArt's existing list of peer institutions, it was determined that such changes would be approved separately at a later date. Since the December meeting, DHE staff have thoroughly reviewed MassArt's proposed list of peer institutions and requested expanded documentation regarding the justification for changes to their existing peer group. MassArt provided the DHE with a substantive and detailed explanation for their peer selection and readily responded to all follow-up inquiries. MassArt also expressed support and willingness for taking part in future reassessments of peer group relevance and comparability.

As a result, staff recommends approval for MassArt's revised list of peers.

Overview

The new MassArt peer group results from the subtraction of a very large art institution in New York (Pratt Institute) and the addition of two smaller institutions (Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, Florida; and The College for Creative Studies in Detroit, Michigan). Below are the existing and proposed lists of MassArt's peer institutions. It is important to note that all of MassArt's peers are private colleges. This is completely unavoidable because of MassArt's unique status as the only public, independent (freestanding) college of art and design.

Original Peer Group:

- Art Center College of Design
- California College of Arts and Crafts
- California Institute of the Arts
- Columbus College of Art and Design
- Maryland Institute College of Art
- **Pratt Institute-Main**
- Rhode Island School of Design
- School of Art Institute of Chicago
- The University of the Arts

Proposed New Peer Group:

- Art Center College of Design
- California College of Arts and Crafts
- California Institute of the Arts
- **College of Creative Studies**
- Columbus College of Art and Design
- Maryland Institute College of Art
- Rhode Island School of Design
- **Ringling School of Art And Design**
- School of Art Institute of Chicago
- The University of the Arts

Subtraction of Pratt Institute

In their documentation to the DHE, MassArt called attention to the fact that Pratt Institute has always had the largest student enrollment within their peer group and has continued to grow at a rapid pace. Currently, Pratt's undergraduate degree-seeking FTE is almost double that of MassArt. The size differential for enrollment in graduate enrollments is even greater. Also, the estimated undergraduate cost of attendance at Pratt is substantially higher than MassArt. With these factors in mind, MassArt believes that Pratt has had significantly diminishing relevance as a peer and should be replaced with a more appropriate and comparable institution.

Addition of College of Creative Studies and Ringling School of Art and Design

MassArt is proposing the two colleges that fall immediately below their current peers in enrollment size: The College for Creative Studies (CCS) and Ringling College of Art and Design. Both CCS and Ringling offer undergraduate programs that are similar to MassArt and have comparable estimated cost of attendance. However, neither college offers graduate degree programs.

Conclusion

MassArt asserted the following in their submission to the DHE:

“Overall, we believe that dropping Pratt and adding CCS and Ringling will make for a more coherent and appropriate peer group for benchmarking measures in the performance agreement, without dramatically changing average measures for the group as a whole.”

The DHE concurs with MassArt's assertion but continues to emphasize the value of a periodic review process for peer selection. This is especially important in light of the utilization of peer groups for benchmarking with regard to accountability and fiscal analysis.