

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

**COMMITTEE:** Academic Affairs

**NO.:** AAC 11-33

**COMMITTEE DATE:** April 26, 2011

**BOARD DATE:** May 3, 2011

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**OFF-CAMPUS PROGRAMMING POLICY**

**MOVED:** Pursuant to applicable provisions of Chapter 15A, section 9 for the state universities and community colleges, and Chapter 75, section 1A for the University of Massachusetts, the Board of Higher Education hereby revokes the Branch Campus Policy ACA 98-21 approved on June 16, 1998, and adopts the attached Off-Campus Programming Policy.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapters 15A and 75

Contact: Dr. Francesca Purcell, Associate Commissioner for Academic and P-16 Policy

## Background

On June 16, 1998, the Board of Higher Education approved the Branch Campus Policy (ACA 98-21) that set forth a process for approval of new branch campuses and for the periodic review of existing branch campuses for public higher education institutions. The 1998 Branch Campus Policy utilized a definition for a branch campus consistent with the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) definitions. The USDOE and NEASC have subsequently adopted new definitions for off-campus educational activities, namely Branch Campuses and Additional Instructional Locations.

A Branch Campus is defined as:

A location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus which meets *all* of the following criteria:

- offers 50% or more of an academic program leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized credential, or at which a degree may be completed
- is permanent in nature
- has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization
- has its own budgetary and hiring authority

An Additional Instructional Location is defined as:

Any instructional site geographically apart from the main campus where 50% or more of a degree program is offered or where a degree may be completed, but which otherwise does not meet the definition of a Branch Campus.

The revised policy aligns the BHE definition for off-campus educational activities with regional accreditation and federal definitions and updates the review and notification processes.

## OFF-CAMPUS PROGRAMMING POLICY

### A. Definitions

A *Branch Campus* is defined as:

A location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus which meets all of the following criteria:

- offers 50% or more of an academic program leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized credential, or at which a degree may be completed
- is permanent in nature
- has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization
- has its own budgetary and hiring authority

An *Additional Instructional Location* is defined as:

Any instructional site geographically apart from the main campus where 50% or more of a degree program is offered or where a degree may be completed, but which otherwise does not meet the definition of a Branch Campus.

### B. Review Process for a new Branch Campus

A new branch campus proposed by a public higher education institution requires approval by the Board of Higher Education. The procedure for approval of a new branch campus is as follows:

1. The applicant institution shall notify the Commissioner of the Department of Higher Education of its intention to establish a new branch campus by submitting a two to three page letter of intent at least one month prior to the submission of a complete application and prior to the commitment of any significant resources. The letter should provide a fair and succinct description and rationale for the proposed branch campus following the format of the information requested below. The letter of intent will be circulated to all public campuses for review for twenty business days so that campuses can express concerns as well as consider the potential for collaboration. All responses will be shared with the applicant institution for its review and comment.
2. The proposing institution shall provide the following information for the application:
  - a. documentation of the centrality of the mission of the branch campus or additional instructional location to the mission and priorities of the institution;

- b. details of the educational activities to be offered (e.g., curriculum, courses, modes of evaluating and granting credit, methods of assessing program quality);
  - c. provisions for faculty, library, academic technological support, and student services including advising and counseling;
  - d. plan and structure for organization and governance;
  - e. plan for the acquisition and utilization of physical plant and equipment;
  - f. budgetary information demonstrating required financing for the projected activities including projected revenues and expenditures and cash flow for three years;
  - g. a completed needs assessment or market survey including a list of all programs offered by both public and private institutions within the geographic area of the proposed location;
  - h. descriptive and evaluative information on existing branch campuses and additional instructional locations currently operated by the institution including degrees or credentials offered, site location, the number of students enrolled (unduplicated headcount) at each location for the most recent year available; adequateness of faculty, facilities, resources, and academic and student support systems; and financial stability; and
  - i. long-range planning for future branch campuses and/or additional instructional locations.
3. Upon receipt of the application, a determination of whether the application is complete shall be made by staff within fifteen business days. The complete application will be reviewed by staff and forwarded to the Board within thirty business days or at the next Board meeting following the thirty-day business period. (The thirty-day business period will begin as of the date of determination of completeness of the application.) The completed application will be evaluated based upon four primary objectives:
- Centrality to the mission and priorities of the institution
  - Responsiveness to the demonstrated educational needs of Massachusetts students, communities, and industries
  - High quality educational activities
  - Reflection of the most effective and efficient use of state, student, and institutional resources.

### C. Notification Process for an Additional Instructional Location

1. The institution shall notify the Commissioner of the Department of Higher Education of its intention to establish an additional instructional location by submitting a two to three page letter of intent prior to the commitment of any significant resources. The letter should provide a fair and succinct description and rationale for the proposed branch campus following the format of the information requested below:

- a. documentation of the centrality of the mission of the additional instructional location to the mission and priorities of the institution;
- b. details of the educational activities to be offered (e.g., curriculum, courses, modes of evaluating and granting credit, methods of assessing program quality); and
- c. plan for the acquisition and utilization of physical plant and equipment;

#### D. Review of Existing Off-Campus Programming Activities

1. Upon the request of the Board of Higher Education, institutions with branch campuses and/or additional instructional locations will present to the Board of Higher Education, for each location, a review of the centrality of the mission of the branch campus to the mission and priorities of the institution; responsiveness to the demonstrated educational needs of Massachusetts students, communities, and industries; high quality educational activities; and effective and efficient use of state, student, and institutional resources.