

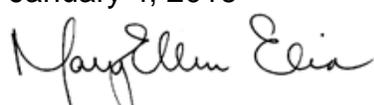


TO: Higher Education Committee

FROM: John L. D'Agati 

SUBJECT: Renewal of Institutional Accreditation: American Museum of Natural History - Richard Gilder Graduate School

DATE: January 4, 2016

AUTHORIZATION(S): 

SUMMARY

Issue for Decision

Should the Board of Regents renew the institutional accreditation of the American Museum of Natural History - Richard Gilder Graduate School?

Reason(s) for Consideration

Required by State regulation.

Proposed Handling

This question will come before the Higher Education Committee at its January 2016 meeting, where it will be voted on and action taken. It will then come before the full Board at its January 2016 meeting for final action.

Members of the Board of Regents with a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest on this application are asked to recuse themselves from participating in the deliberation and decision.

Procedural History

On December 1, 2015, the Regents Advisory Council on Institutional Accreditation (RAC) met to consider the accreditation renewal application of the American Museum of Natural History - Richard Gilder Graduate School. The RAC's recommendation was to renew the Museum's accreditation for a period of ten years.

Consistent with Section 4-1.5(a)(8)(v) of the Regents Rules, the Commissioner adopted the RAC's findings and recommendations and hereby transmits them to the Board of Regents for consideration and final action. The full record of the application for renewal of accreditation is available to the Board, electronically and in hard copy, through the Board Secretary.

Background Information

The American Museum of Natural History - Richard Gilder Graduate School, located in New York City, has applied for renewal of its institutional accreditation by the Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education.

The Museum is an independent institution that, through its graduate school, offers a Comparative Biology program that is registered for state purposes as a single Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) program and a single Ph.D. program. In addition, in 2015 the Museum established a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) program, *Earth Science Teaching Residency 7-12*, following a funded pilot of this clinically rich teacher preparation program.

The New York State Legislature chartered the American Museum of Natural History in 1869. In 1991, the Regents took charter action to admit the Museum to The University of the State of New York. In 2006, the Regents authorized the Museum as a degree-granting entity. The Board of Regents and Commissioner of Education awarded initial institutional accreditation to the Museum in 2009. In December 2015, the Board of Regents and Commissioner approved a change in scope of accreditation for the Museum to recognize the noted M.A.T. program.

Recommendation

VOTED: That the Board of Regents renew the accreditation of the American Museum of Natural History - Richard Gilder Graduate School for a period of ten years.

Attachment

Information in Support of Recommendation

Peer Review Visit

On October 29, 2014, a peer review team (“Team”) conducted a site visit to the Museum as part of a review to determine the institution’s compliance with Regents accreditation standards. In its report, the Team made a total of two recommendations.

The Team found the institution to be in compliance with standards (as defined under Section 4-1.4 of the Regents Rules) addressing institutional mission; assessment of student achievement; programs of study; faculty; resources; support services; admissions; consumer information; student complaints; and requirements addressing Title IV and teach-out responsibilities.

The Team found the institution to be out of compliance with the following standards: administration and the accreditation disclosure statement. It made a total of two recommendations, which are items that must be rectified to ensure compliance with accreditation standards.

Overall, the Team concluded that the institution has the understanding and resources to adequately address the recommendations.

The Department transmitted the draft Team report to the Museum for review and comment. The Museum accepted the draft report’s recommendations, provided clarification of existing Museum activities in relation to the standards, and described actions and plans to address the recommendations. The resulting compliance review report includes the draft Team report, the Museum’s response, and the Department’s recommendation with respect to accreditation action.

Based on the self-study and other pertinent material, the Team’s report and the Museum’s response, the Department found that follow-up matters are not of a nature or scope that affects the institution’s capacity to maintain adherence to the institutional accreditation standards for the period of accreditation. Recommendations related either to minor compliance matters or to the strengthening of practices that meet the standards of compliance. As a result, the Department recommended accreditation for a period of ten years.

Regents Advisory Council on Institutional Accreditation (RAC) Review

As required by Subpart 4-1 of the Regents Rules, the Department transmitted the compliance review report and Graduate School’s self-study for consideration by the Regents Advisory Council. (The RAC is established in §3.12(d) of the Rules of the Board of Regents “to review applications for accreditation and renewal of accreditation pursuant to Part 4 of this Title, and such other matters as the Department may ask it to review, and make recommendations to the Regents and the Commissioner based on its review.”)

On December 1, 2015, the RAC met to consider the Museum's application. In a public meeting, it met with representatives of the Museum, a member of the peer review team, and Department staff. RAC members discussed their observations and asked questions of the institution. The institution's representatives responded to each of these questions. The RAC then voted unanimously to recommend renewal of institutional accreditation, as follows:

Renew the accreditation of the American Museum of Natural History - Richard Gilder Graduate School for a period of ten years.

Commissioner's Review

Neither the institution nor the Deputy Commissioner for Higher Education appealed the RAC's recommendation. Therefore, pursuant to Subpart 4-1 of the Regents Rules, the Commissioner adopted the Council's recommendation as her recommendation to the Board of Regents.

The attachment to this item sets forth the range of accreditation actions authorized under Subpart 4-1 of the Rules of the Board of Regents.

Rules of the Board of Regents

Subpart 4-1, Voluntary Institutional Accreditation for Title IV Purposes

§4-1.2 Definitions.

As used in the Subpart:

(a) *Accreditation* means the status of public recognition that the Commissioner of Education and the Board of Regents grant to an educational institution that meets the standards and requirements prescribed in this Subpart.

(b) *Accreditation action* means accreditation, accreditation with conditions, probationary accreditation, approval of substantive changes in the scope of accreditation, and denial, revocation, or termination of accreditation.

(c) *Accreditation with conditions* means accreditation that requires the institution to take steps to remedy issues raised in a review for accreditation, and provide reports and/or submit to site visits concerning such issues, provided that such issues do not materially affect the institution's substantial compliance with the standards and requirements for accreditation.

(d) *Adverse action or adverse accreditation action* means suspension, withdrawal, denial, revocation, or termination of accreditation or pre-accreditation.

....

(s) *Probationary accreditation* means accreditation for a period of time, not to exceed two years, during which the institution shall come into compliance with standards for accreditation through corrective action.

From NYSED's Handbook of Institutional Accreditation (p.5)

At a regularly scheduled public meeting, the Board of Regents considers the complete record of the accreditation process (including the institution's self-study, compliance review report, and the record of the RAC) and makes the final determination on accreditation action. Representatives of the applicant institution may be present at this meeting; however, they do not participate in discussion of their application. The Regents may act or may defer action pending further consideration by the Council or the receipt of additional information. If the Regents take adverse action as defined in Regents Rules §4-1.2(d) on an application for institutional accreditation or renewal of accreditation, a statement of the reason(s) for this action will be provided to the applicant institution.

Possible Accreditation Actions

- ***Accreditation without conditions.*** The institution is in full compliance with the standards for institutional accreditation. Any follow-up matters are not, in the judgment of the Regents, of a nature or scope that affects the institution's capacity to maintain adherence to the institutional accreditation standards for the period of

accreditation. Recommendations or any follow-up reports relate either to minor compliance matters or to the strengthening of practices that meet the standards of compliance. Accreditation without conditions may be for a period of up to ten years. Accreditation without conditions may apply to institutions seeking initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation.

- ***Accreditation with conditions.*** The institution is in substantial compliance with the standards for institutional accreditation. Any areas of non-compliance are not of such nature or scope as to call into question the institution's substantive adherence to the institutional accreditation standards during the term of accreditation. The institution has demonstrated the intent and capacity to rectify identified deficiencies and to strengthen practice in marginally acceptable matters within no more than two years. The institution will be required to take steps to remedy issues raised in the review for accreditation and to provide reports and/or submit to site visits concerning such issues. Accreditation with conditions may be for a period of up to ten years, contingent on a finding of compliance within no more than two years on any areas or deficiency cited in the Regents accreditation action. Accreditation with conditions may apply to institutions seeking initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation.
- ***Probationary accreditation.*** Probationary accreditation means accreditation for a set period of time, not to exceed two years, during which the institution shall come into compliance with standards for accreditation through corrective action. During this period, the institution provides documentation of compliance with standards, particularly all standards that were not met at the time of the Regents action. A follow-up visit by Department staff and/or peer reviewers may be required following provision of a required report. Probationary accreditation is only available to institutions seeking renewal of accreditation.
- ***Denial of accreditation.*** The institution does not meet standards for institutional accreditation and cannot reasonably be expected to meet those standards within two years. Denial of accreditation may apply to institutions seeking initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation.