



To: Higher Education Committee
From: John L. D'Agati *John L. D'Agati*
Subject: Renewal of Institutional Accreditation: Bramson ORT College
Date: December 9, 2013

Authorizations:

JL D'Agati
SUMMARY

Issue for Decision

Should the Board of Regents grant renewal of accreditation to Bramson ORT College?

Reason(s) for Consideration

Required by State regulation.

Proposed Handling

This question will come before the Higher Education Committee at its December 2013 meeting, where it will be voted on and action taken. It will then come before the full Board at its December 2013 meeting for final action.

Procedural History

On October 24, 2013, the Regents Advisory Council on Institutional Accreditation (RAC) met to consider the accreditation renewal application of the College. RAC's recommendation is hereby transmitted to the Board of Regents for consideration and final action.

Background Information

Bramson ORT College is a Regents-chartered independent institution offering registered degree programs leading to an associate's degree (an A.A.S or A.O.S) in: Business, Health Related Professions (principally Medical Assisting and Pharmacy

Technician), Computer and Information Sciences, Electronics Technology, Paralegal, and Graphic, Game and Web Design. The College also offers certificates and diplomas in these areas. The College was granted a provisional charter by the Board of Regents in 1978 under the name Bramson ORT Training Center. In 1996, the institutional name was changed to Bramson ORT College, reflecting the evolution of the institution from specific vocational training to include the broader educational purposes of a college.

Prior to 2000, the Department conducted accreditation and registration functions simultaneously. In 2000, the accreditation function was separated from program registration. Bramson ORT applied for continued accreditation by the Regents in 2000. Renewal of accreditation was deferred for two years during which time the college submitted progress reports addressing concerns raised in the review process. In December 2002, accreditation was renewed for ten years with reports due in January 2004 and a mid-point self-study due in 2007. In 2012, the College indicated its intention to seek a renewal of accreditation.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Regents take the following accreditation action regarding Bramson ORT College:

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Probationary accreditation for a period of two (2) years, including distance education, with quarterly progress reports submitted to the State Education Department and a return peer review visit after one (1) year demonstrating significant steps to remedy the findings of non-compliance and ensuring that all standards for accreditation are satisfied within the two (2) year probationary period.

Board of Regents members 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.

Attachment

Information in Support of Recommendation

Peer Review Visit

In preparation for a visit by a peer review team, Bramson ORT College prepared a self-study following the requirements for self-studies in the *Handbook of Institutional Accreditation*. On April 9-10, 2013, a team of peers (Team) approved by the Department, along with Department staff, conducted a site visit to the College to assess compliance with the standards for institutional accreditation. During the visit, the Team interviewed faculty, administrators, staff, Trustees, and students; visited classes; reviewed course syllabi and student work; examined student and faculty folders; examined administrative records and policy statements; and assessed physical facilities, library resources, and instructional equipment. In its report the Team made a total of 29 recommendations.

The Team found the College to be in compliance with standards addressing institutional mission; admissions; consumer information; and requirements addressing Title IV and teachout.

The Team found the College to be out of compliance with the following accreditation standards (as defined under section 4-1.4 of Regents Rules): assessment of student achievement; programs of study; faculty; resources; administration; support services; and requirements addressing complaints and public disclosure.

The Department transmitted the team's draft report to the College. As required by Regents Rules, the College had 30 days to prepare a written response correcting factual errors and addressing any other aspect of the report. The College's response contained several proposals for corrective action described in future terms.

The draft Team report, Bramson ORT College's response, and the Department's preliminary recommendation for accreditation action became the final compliance review report.

Based on the College's self study, the Team's report and the College's response, the Department found that the institution was out of compliance with the standards for institutional accreditation in significant areas of assessment, faculty and resources. The persistence of similar issues cited in the previous accreditation report was noted. The College's response did not include specific plans sufficient to suggest that the institution could reasonably be expected to meet the standards within two years. As a result, the Department recommended denial of accreditation.

Regents Advisory Council on Institutional Accreditation (RAC) Review

As required by Subpart 4-1 of the Regents Rules, the Department transmitted the final compliance review report for consideration by RAC. (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.")

Bramson ORT College was invited to submit additional written material for the RAC to consider. On October 3, 2013, the College submitted a progress report outlining steps taken to advance all recommendations made in the Team's report. The material included an outcomes assessment plan detailing a roadmap for a systematic and ongoing process that will help to ensure that the campus will come into compliance with the quality standards within the required two year period. In addition, facility and resource issues will be addressed through the lease of additional space. Faculty participation in governance and curricular matters is strengthened by the formation of a targeted committee structure.

On October 24, 2013, RAC met to consider Bramson ORT College's application. In a public meeting, it met with representatives of the College, a member of the peer review team, and Department staff. Bramson ORT presented information on concrete actions taken since the site visit to address compliance issues noted in the Team report. A consultant credentialed in higher education administration hired since the visit spoke on his efforts to assist the College in creating and implementing a Campus-wide Outcomes Assessment Plan. RAC members discussed their observations and asked questions of the institution. The Council then voted unanimously to recommend Bramson ORT College for probationary accreditation, as follows:

Probationary accreditation for a period of two (2) years, including distance education, with quarterly progress reports submitted to the State Education Department and a return peer review visit after one (1) year demonstrating significant steps to remedy the findings of non-compliance and ensuring that all standards for accreditation are satisfied within the two (2) year probationary period.

Commissioner's Review

Neither Bramson ORT College nor the Deputy Commissioner for Higher Education appealed RAC's recommendation. Therefore, pursuant to Subpart 4-1, the Commissioner adopted the Council's recommendation as his 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 preaccreditation.

(q) *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.4-5)

At a regularly scheduled public meeting, the Board of Regents considers the Commissioner's findings and recommendation and makes the final determination on accreditation action. The Department's accreditation staff, including the review coordinator, will be available as a resource. 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; customarily it is not for a period of less than five 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 for deficiency cited in the Regents accreditation action. Accreditation with conditions may apply to institutions seeking initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation.
- **Probationary accreditation.** The institution is in partial compliance with institutional accreditation standards and may reasonably be expected to meet accreditation standards within no more than two years. 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 may apply only 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.