



**TO:** The Honorable Members of the Board of Regents

**FROM:** William P. Murphy *William Murphy*

**SUBJECT:** Permission to Operate: New Brunswick Theological Seminary

**DATE:** December 29, 2022

**AUTHORIZATION(S):** *Betty M...*

**SUMMARY**

**Issue for Decision (Consent Agenda)**

Should the Board of Regents approve the renewal of New Brunswick Theological Seminary (NBTS) permission to operate in New York State to offer courses from its Master of Arts (M.A.) in Pastoral Care & Counseling and its Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree program at St. John's University in Queens for a five-year term?

**Reason(s) for Consideration**

Required by State statute and State regulation.

**Proposed Handling**

This issue will come before the Full Board for action at its January 2023 meeting.

**Procedural History**

Pursuant to section 3.56 of the Rules of the Board of Regents, NBTS applied for permission to continue to offer courses toward the M.A. in Pastoral Care & Counseling and the M. Div. degree programs at St. John's University in New York.

In November 1984, the Board of Regents granted permission for NBTS to offer courses in New York State. Since that time, NBTS has operated at the St. John's University Queens campus under the terms of a written agreement. The stated purpose of the agreement is "to promote ecumenical cooperation in graduate theological education."

In January 2018, the Board of Regents voted to renew NBTS's permission to offer courses from the M.A. in Pastoral Care & Counseling, the M.A. in Ministry & Community Leadership, and the M.Div. program for the period of January 1, 2018, through December 31, 2022. In 2019, NBTS discontinued the M.A. in Ministry & Community Leadership but continued to offer courses from its other two authorized New York programs.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, in March 2020 all students enrolled in the New York program were transitioned to distance education. For the 2021-2022 academic year, these students were offered the opportunity to remain online or enroll in a hybrid delivery format. The New York program students all opted to remain online. NBTS is approved to offer distance education to students located in New York State under the terms and conditions of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA).

During the upcoming term approval, NBTS will evaluate whether to continue operating its New York location, given students' continued interest in distance education. The institution will remain in contact with Department staff regarding the status of its New York operations.

### **Background Information**

Founded in 1784, NBTS is a teaching institution of the Reformed Church in America, with a primary campus in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The institution trains students from a variety of denominations for ministry and is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools and Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

During the most recent approval period, the two New York programs have had a total of thirty-two students enrolled, and seventeen degrees have been awarded. NBTS has had no formal complaints in relation to the offering of these programs.

Students may complete a portion of their degrees at the New York location. The remainder of the coursework can be taken at the NBTS main campus in New Jersey, through distance education, or by enrolling as a visiting student in courses offered by St. John's Department of Theology and Religious Studies.

The Agreement of Academic Cooperation with St. John's University provides the NBTS program with two classrooms, physical space, and administrative assistance for NBTS's director, academic and career advisement to supplement that provided by NBTS, student mailboxes, and parking. NBTS students in the New York program will have access to St. John's University library, its wireless internet services, reserve materials, and information literacy instruction. NBTS provides interlibrary loan service and remote access to its library.

## **Related Regents Items**

April 2015: [Renewal of Permission to Operate in New York State: New Brunswick Theological Seminary](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/meetings/Apr%202015/415brca5.pdf)  
(<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/meetings/Apr%202015/415brca5.pdf>)

January 2018: [Renewal of Permission to Operate in New York State: New Brunswick Theological Seminary](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/118brca5.pdf)  
(<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/118brca5.pdf>)

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board of Regents take the following action:

VOTED: That the Board of Regents renew New Brunswick Theological Seminary's permission to offer courses from its M.A. in Pastoral Care & Counseling and M.Div. degree programs on the campus of St. John's University in Queens. This permission, effective retroactively to January 1, 2023, is granted for a period beginning January 1, 2023, and extending through December 31, 2027.

## **Timetable for Implementation**

Subsequent renewals of this permission to operate, if sought, will be subject to the terms of section 3.56 of the Rules of the Board of Regents. If New Brunswick Theological Seminary seeks to renew its permission to operate after its current term, it must notify the Department no later than December 31, 2026.