



TO: The Honorable the Members of the Board of Regents

FROM: John L. D'Agati *John L. D'Agati*

SUBJECT: Unification Theological Seminary: Master plan amendment to authorize the Seminary to offer a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Degree Program in World Religions and Philosophy

DATE: February 4, 2013

AUTHORIZATION(S): *John L. D'Agati*
SUMMARY

Issue for Decision (Consent Agenda)

Should the Board of Regents approve a master plan amendment to authorize the Unification Theological Seminary to offer a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree program in World Religions and Philosophy at its Barrytown campus in Dutchess County?

Reason(s) for Consideration

Required by State regulation

Proposed Handling

The question will come before the full Board at its February 2013 meeting, where it will be voted on and action taken.

Procedural History

Master plan amendment is required because the proposed program would be the Seminary's first baccalaureate-level program.

Background Information

Unification Theological Seminary ("UTS") seeks Regents approval of a master plan amendment to offer a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree program in World Religions and Philosophy at its Barrytown campus in Dutchess County. The Seminary is currently a graduate-level institution only, offering a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) in Divinity, a Master of Religious Education (M.R.E.) in Religious Education, a Master of Arts (M.A.)

in Religious Studies, and a Doctor of Ministry (D. Min.) in Theological Studies. The proposed program would be most unique in that UTS is the only accredited institution of higher education for members of the Unification Church in North and South America as well as Europe. Master plan amendment is required because this would be the Seminary's first undergraduate degree program.

Purpose and goals: UTS's proposed Bachelor of Arts degree program seeks to provide Unificationist-affiliated youth pursuing an undergraduate college degree with an education that reflects the values and attitudes of their own faith community. The proposed Bachelor of Arts program supports the mission of UTS through providing the basics of theological and philosophical education. In addition, it supports the mission of UTS by offering a sound foundation for students to pursue graduate studies in theology and ministry.

Curriculum: The 120 credit curriculum comprises: a World Religions and Philosophy major, General Education core requirements and a Leadership Concentration, and three optional minors in Human Development and Family Studies, Media Arts and Business. The proposed program reflects the interest expressed by the Seminary's constituency, as well as the natural strengths of its resources. The optional minors also reflect market interest among a range of professional entities affiliated with the sponsoring denomination.

Faculty: A core of current and newly hired full-time faculty will teach the proposed program. Faculty members have doctoral degrees in fields related to the courses they will be teaching. In addition, there are plans to hire a total of five additional full-time faculty members over the next four years. A newly hired M.L.S. credentialed librarian will teach information literacy. She has also recently completed an M.S. degree in Instructional Design and Technology.

Admissions: The admissions requirements for the proposed undergraduate degree program will be similar to those for other undergraduate institutions. A high school diploma or GED will be required, as well as submission of an academic transcript (high school or college) and a personal essay. Official SAT or ACT scores (as well as recommendations) will be required for recent high school graduates. International applicants for whom English is not their first language must be certified in English proficiency.

Students: Most of the students attending the Seminary's undergraduate division will come from Unification Church families in the U.S., although roughly 15 percent may come from Unification families in other countries as well as families involved in other churches that work together with the Unification Church in social action ministry. Projected enrollment for the first year is expected to be approximately 60 students. The Seminary expects to enroll 226 students by the fifth year.

Academic Resources: A major renovation project has been carried out over the last two years at the Seminary in order to ready the campus for launch of the undergraduate program; this has included upgrades to classrooms, the library, dormitory rooms, and the student cafeteria. The library budget has been increased from \$28,000 to \$35,000 to support the proposed program.

Finances: The Seminary has budgeted seven million dollars in funding for renovations of the Barrytown campus and to cover faculty, staff and other expenses in the first few years while the student body is growing. The Department's Office of Audit Services conducted a review of the Seminary's audited financial statements for the year ending June 30, 2012, and indicated that over the past decade, the federal composite score has generally been in the "financially healthy" range. In addition, the Department has received correspondence from the Seminary's sponsoring denomination reaffirming its commitment to provide necessary and sufficient funds to ensure the Seminary's continuation and success.

Need: Market surveys carried out by the Seminary indicated that at least half of church respondents who expressed interest in attending the undergraduate college indicated a desire to attend graduate school, either at the graduate seminary or another graduate school. For those who wish to start a career, planned internships, field studies, and experiential learning opportunities the Seminary expects to offer will provide opportunities for employment. The Seminary has also indicated that graduates of the proposed undergraduate program would also be sought for numerous job openings within businesses and organizations affiliated with the sponsoring denomination.

Planning Review: Following its standard protocol, the Department canvassed degree-granting institutions in the Hudson Valley region. Two institutions responded: one stated that it does not anticipate any effects on its institution; the other wished the Seminary success with the proposed program.

Department Review: The Department conducted a readiness review visit to the UTS campus in Barrytown on August 21, 2012 to assess its plans to support the new degree level. The review team toured the facilities and met with administrators, faculty, staff, and two Board members. The team saw evidence that the Seminary is making a good faith effort to put in place the elements needed to admit students to the proposed undergraduate program. Subsequent to the visit, the Seminary submitted a follow-up report which included a timeline for implementing the recommendations in the report, which included the facility upgrades and further plans for faculty and staffing cited above.

The Department has determined that the proposed program meets the standards for registration set forth in the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Regents approve a master plan amendment to authorize the Unification Theological Seminary to offer a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree program in World Religions and Philosophy.

Timetable for Implementation

The amendment will be effective until February 28, 2014, unless the Department registers the program prior to that date, in which case master plan amendment shall be without term.