



TO: The Honorable the Members of the Board of Regents

FROM: William P. Murphy *William Murphy*

SUBJECT: Regents Authorization to Award Degrees: State University of New York at Buffalo, Doctor of the Science of Law (J.S.D.) Degree

DATE: July 2, 2020

AUTHORIZATION(S): *Sharon L. Tabor*

SUMMARY

Issue for Decision (Consent)

Should the Board of Regents authorize the State University of New York at Buffalo to offer its first Doctor of the Science of Law degree?

Reason(s) for Consideration

Required by State statute and State regulation.

Proposed Handling

The question will come before the Full Board at its July 2020 meeting, where it will be voted on and action taken.

Procedural History

The State University of New York at Buffalo (University at Buffalo) has submitted a proposal for a Doctor of the Science of Law (J.S.D.) degree. Board of Regents authorization is required as the award will be the first research doctorate in law for the University at Buffalo and the State University of New York.

Background Information

The State University of New York at Buffalo seeks Regents Authorization to allow it to offer its first Doctor of the Science of Law degree. Regents authorization is required because the award for the proposed program represents the first Doctor of the Science of Law degree program at the University of Buffalo and the State University of New York.

The proposed J.S.D. degree will build on existing programs at the University of Buffalo's School of Law, including the Doctor of Law (J.D., 1887); the Master of Laws (LL.M, 2003); and the Bachelor of Laws (LL.B., 2018). The proposed program also leverages the resources of the University at Buffalo's Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy, the Criminal Law Center, the Human Rights Center, the Cross-Broder Legal Studies Center, and the Jaeckle Center for Law, Democracy and Governance. Currently, only private institutions in New York State offer the J.S.D. degree.

The J.S.D. degree is the doctoral-level degree for practice in legal research. The proposed J.S.D. degree will prepare students who have already earned an LL.M. degree as well as either a J.D. or an LL.B. degree to do substantial legal scholarship. Students will address legal issues from theoretical, comparative, topical and interdisciplinary policy perspectives. Students will explore law in its social context from a comparative perspective; understand the different schools of prominent legal theory; apply these theoretical approaches to the analysis of legal problems and institutions; understand and critically assess the full range of modern research methods used in legal scholarship; and identify and master those methods. After graduation, students will fill positions at international law schools and on the staff of global organizations such as the United Nations.

The proposed J.S.D. program builds on the strengths of the University at Buffalo's highly interdisciplinary faculty known for their comparative study of civil litigation, criminal law and regulation, as well as international human rights, trade, and environmental laws. University at Buffalo faculty are experienced in explicating legal doctrine, theory, process, and institutions and in applying interdisciplinary research approaches to law, including anthropological, historical, literary, philosophical, political, and sociological approaches. Approximately one-half of the faculty has significant experience and research engagement in international and transnational law and institutions.

The University at Buffalo Law School plans for an international recruitment program with growth to a steady state of twelve (12) students by year five (5). The J.S.D. will be attractive to international students, many of whom cannot acquire the training and credentials required for academic appointment in their own countries. In this sense, the program's success will help diversify the global legal academy. The proposed program will give students the deep domain knowledge skills needed to navigate an increasingly complex global environment. Once operational, the proposed program will be reviewed by the American Bar Association, as per its Standards for Approval of Law School.

Offering a J.S.D. program fits well with the mission and strategic priorities of the University at Buffalo and the State University of New York to raise the academic profile of graduate students, while strengthening its international presence. The development of a J.S.D. program will provide students and faculty with additional opportunities to engage with international and national communities through legal scholarship.

The program meets program registration standards.

Related Regents Items

N/A

Recommendation

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

VOTED: That the Board of Regents authorize the State University of New York at Buffalo to award the Doctor of the Science of Law (J.S.D.) degree.

Timetable for Implementation

If the Board of Regents authorizes the Doctor of the Science of Law (J.S.D.) degree at the State University of New York at Buffalo, the Department will register the proposed program.