



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

**TO:** Cultural Education Committee  
**FROM:** Jeffrey Cannell  
**SUBJECT:** Office of Cultural Education History and Program Priorities  
**DATE:** October 4, 2011  
**AUTHORIZATION(S):**

### SUMMARY

#### Issue for Discussion

A continuation of the discussion begun in September: Provide background on the history of the functions performed by the Office of Cultural Education and gather input and guidance on priorities for OCE's programs.

#### Background Information

The role of cultural education within the State Education Department began in 1844 when the State Legislature transferred responsibility for oversight of the State Library to the Board of Regents. At the time the library was a law and reference library for the use of legislators, judges, and state employees. In 1845, the legislature transferred responsibility for the State Museum, which was then known as the "State Cabinet of Natural History," to the Board of Regents. The Board of Regents obtained its first licenses to broadcast educational television services in 1953 and began chartering educational television councils in 1954. The Office of Cultural Education (OCE) itself was established by the Board of Regents in 1958 and oversight of the Library and Museum was placed within OCE. The State Archives was established in 1971 as a program in OCE.

The Board of Regents has also received responsibility for and placed within OCE external support functions including the chartering and oversight of public libraries in 1889, oversight of history and local historians through the Office of State Historian in 1911, and the support and management of local government records in 1989.

For a more detailed review of the history and organization of OCE and its components, visit <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/edocs/education/sedhist.htm>; the history of the Education Department, written in 1996, by James Folts.

#### Recommendation

The Board of Regents has overseen the growth and transformation of these functions and provided direction and guidance as the needs of the State have evolved. These institutions and functions must continue to be responsive to organizational, fiscal, technological and societal change.

The pace of change continues to accelerate. Today, the growth and expansion of institutions dedicated to organized research, rapid changes in technology and the current financial conditions require strategic priorities that will enable OCE to continue to evolve and remain relevant, useful and fiscally sustainable. Therefore, we recommend consideration of the following as the priorities for OCE, to which resources and programs will be aligned:

- Strengthen and expand OCE as a statewide institution, which will provide educational services, information resources, exhibits and public programs and other resources across the state.
- Increase and improve partnerships, collaborations and leadership with other cultural institutions statewide through coordinated programming, joint initiatives, statewide advisory committees, program leadership and standards and programs.
- Improve and expand services and programs that enhance and promote public access, public services and educational programs.
- Ensure sufficient maintenance and confirm the appropriateness of collections placed in OCE's care.