



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

To: Higher Education Committee

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

Subject: Initial Institutional Accreditation: The New Community College at CUNY

Date: December 3, 2012

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SUMMARY

Issue for Decision

Should the Board of Regents grant accreditation to The New Community College at CUNY?

Reason(s) for Consideration

Required by State regulation.

Proposed Handling

This question will come before the Higher Education Committee at its December 2012 meeting, where it will be voted on and action taken. It will then come before the full Board at its December 2012 meeting for final action.

Procedural History

In spring 2008, the Chancellor of The City University of New York (CUNY) initiated a process for developing a model for a new CUNY community college. This decision was predicated on projected growth in student enrollment at CUNY's six community colleges and the belief that a community college structured differently from the more common conventional college might better address the persistent challenges of improving graduation rates and preparing students for further study and job readiness.

In February 2011, the Department received CUNY's petition for a master plan amendment for The New Community College and a request to register eight programs leading to the Associate in Arts (A.A.), Associate in Science (A.S.) and Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) degrees. The Department participated in CUNY's own November 1-2, 2010 peer review visit and analysis of the Team's findings to determine the institution's readiness to operate as an associate degree-granting institution. The response to the Team's findings addressed all issues of concern.

The New Community College's broad justification is the needs of society. Its mission is to give students, especially those traditionally underserved in higher education, an academic foundation to persist and complete their programs of study and attain their degrees so that they can enter the workforce or a baccalaureate program. Its goal is a graduation rate that is triple the rate of the other CUNY community colleges while serving a student body very similar to theirs in terms of race and ethnicity, gender, income, and family circumstances.

At its February 28, 2011 meeting, the CUNY Board of Trustees approved the establishment of the new community college effective March 1, 2011.

On June 21, 2011, the establishment of The New Community College at CUNY was approved by the New York State Board of Regents.

On September 20, 2011, Governor Andrew Cuomo approved an amendment to the long-range master plan of The City University of New York, authorizing the establishment of The New Community College – CUNY's seventh community college and the University's first new college in more than four decades.

In June 2012, the CUNY Board of Trustees approved the *New Community College Interim Governance Plan*.

On July 19, 2012, The New Community College applied for initial institutional accreditation by the Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education pursuant to Subpart 4-1 of the *Rules of the Board of Regents*. It submitted its institutional self-study on August 1, 2012.

On August 20, 2012, The New Community College officially began classes with its inaugural class of 305 students in the Summer Bridge Program.

On August 20-23, 2012, the Department conducted a peer review visit to The New Community College to assess compliance with the standards for institutional accreditation. The Department issued its final report on the application for accreditation in October 2012. On November 28, 2012, the Regents Advisory Council on Institutional Accreditation voted unanimously to recommend that the Board of Regents grant accreditation for a period of five years with the condition that the institution submit an interim report at the end of three years. Neither the College nor the Deputy Commissioner of Higher Education appealed the recommendation to the Commissioner.

Background Information

On June 21, 2011, the Board of Regents approved an amendment to the long-range master plan of The City University of New York authorizing the establishment of The New Community College in Manhattan and authorizing the College to offer initially associate degree programs in six discipline areas of business, the health professions, the humanities, the physical sciences, engineering, and the social sciences. Currently The New Community College has registered programs leading to associate degrees in eight content areas of study, which includes:

- Associate in Arts (A.A.) in Business Administration, Human Services, Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Urban Studies;
- Associate in Science (A.S.) in Environmental Science; and the
- Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) in Energy Services Management, Health Information Technology and in Information Technology.

The New Community College has deferred offering the registered programs in Environmental Science and Energy Service Management until enrollments grow sufficiently to support additional majors.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Regents accredit The New Community College at CUNY for a period of five years, with the condition that the institution submit an interim report at the end of three years confirming effective implementation of program plans and student outcomes, including student persistence, graduation rates, and transfers to four-year baccalaureate programs in their field of study.

Regents 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, The New Community College at CUNY (NCC) submitted a self-study following the requirements for self-studies in the *Handbook of Institutional Accreditation*. On August 20-23, 2012, 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 a member of the CUNY Board of Trustees, Vice Chairperson Philip Berry; the CUNY Chancellor, Matthew Goldstein; University Dean for the Executive Office and Enrollment, Robert Ptachik; The New Community College faculty, administrators, staff, and students; reviewed course syllabi and curricula, catalogs, faculty handbooks; examined student and faculty folders, administrative records and policy statements; visited classes, and toured and assessed physical facilities, library resources, and instructional equipment. The peer review team shared observations and clarified any uncertainties related to the application and triangulated their findings with other team members. Particular attention was given to the documentation of evidence related to the institution's commitment to program effectiveness, student learning outcomes and promoting student achievement and program completion rates.

The Team found that the College was in compliance with the majority of standards. The New Community College was not able to submit student outcomes data at the time of the Team visit, given that it occurred on the second day of opening its doors to the first cohort of 305 students enrolled in the Summer Bridge Program (anticipated acceptance of 300 students).

The Team made the following recommendations grounded in four standards:

Standard: Assessment of Student Achievement

Finding: The Team found that the institution is not in compliance with this standard.

Recommendations:

1. Provide a data sample of Academic Program Assessment Plan student learning outcomes and any additional program-level data collected (surveys, test scores, etc.) in order to evaluate program college effectiveness).
2. Provide graduation rates and job placement rates by cohort when available.

Standard: Programs of Study

Finding: The Team found that the institution is not in compliance with this standard.

Recommendations:

3. NCC should assure that credit is granted only to students who achieve course objectives.
4. NCC should revise the *College Bulletin* to reflect the changes reported in the NCC Core Curriculum (*Revised Pathways Proposal*, May 2012) regarding the City Seminar I & II courses.

Standard: Consumer Information: Financial Aid and Refunds; Instructional Programs, Facilities, Calendar and Faculty

Finding: The Team found that the institution is not in compliance with this standard.

Recommendations:

5. Include estimated costs of books, supplies, housing and food in the College Bulletin and related publications.
6. Include a comprehensive and explicit policy statement on withdrawals and refunds in the College Bulletin and the Student Handbook.

Standard: Student Complaints

Finding: The Team found that the institution is not in compliance with this standard.

Recommendation:

7. The College needs to establish a policy that requires maintaining records of formal student complaints for a minimum of six years after final disposition.

Other Standards:

The Team found the NCC to be in compliance with the remainder of the Institutional Accreditation Standards.

The Department transmitted the team's draft compliance review report to the College, providing it 30 days to prepare a written response correcting factual errors and addressing any other aspect of the report. The College accepted the draft report's recommendation. The institution's responses are comprehensive and include evidence and plans to address the Team's findings. As noted in recommendations one through three, the Team found the Standards on Assessment of Student Achievement and Program of Study to be out of compliance because as a new institution that opened its doors to students two days prior to the visit, it was not able to provide data on student outcomes.

The College has plans and resources in place to address these standards, and it is committed to the implementation of the assessment plan under the leadership of faculty with expertise in assessment and ePortfolios. Plans include data collection and analysis, to be followed by program improvements based on assessment outcomes. Resources and assessment systems are in place and are supported by The City University of New York Central Administration. With regard to the Student Complaints standard, because the College is part of the CUNY system, it follows established CUNY Procedures for Handling Student Complaints as outlined in the College Catalog. However, per Regents Rules, § 4-14(j), the Team was not able to confirm that policies are in place that require the maintenance of records of formal complaints and their dispositions for a period of six years after final disposition.

The Team's recommendations, numbers four through seven, are of a non-academic nature and reflect ongoing development and changes in publications, such as the College Bulletin which is undergoing information updates regarding program courses, estimated costs, explicit policies on withdrawals and refunds, and the maintenance of student records. Nevertheless these required publication components are reflected in CUNY's Central Administration policies.

A strong component of support services is the Summer Bridge Program which assists students in the transition from high school to college. The program offers comprehensive information that includes admissions, financial aid, registration, content and purpose of degree programs, student mentoring, internships and academic and personal support that continues throughout the student's course of study.

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

Based on the self-study, the site visit team's report and the College's response, the Department found the institution in acceptable compliance with the standards for institutional accreditation, and recommended to the Regents Advisory Council "accreditation, for a period to be determined by the Regents Advisory Council, with the condition that the institution submit annual reports that address accreditation standards to confirm effective implementation of program plans and outcomes, including student persistence, graduation rates and transfers to four-year baccalaureate degree programs."

Regents Advisory Council (RAC) Review

As required by Subpart 4-1 of the Regents Rules, the Department transmitted the final compliance review report for consideration by the Regents Advisory Council on Institutional Accreditation. (The 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.")

On November 28, 2012, the Advisory Council met to consider The New Community College's application. In a public meeting, it met with representatives of the College, the chair of the peer review team, and Department staff. RAC members discussed their observations and asked questions of the institution. The Council then voted unanimously to recommend The New Community College at CUNY for accreditation, as follows:

Accreditation for a period of five years with the condition that the institution submit an interim report at the end of three years.

Commissioner's Review

Neither The New Community College at CUNY nor the Deputy Commissioner for Higher Education appealed the Advisory Council'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.