





**TO:** Higher Education Committee

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

**SUBJECT:** Change in Scope of Institutional Accreditation: American Museum of Natural History - Richard Gilder Graduate School

**DATE:** December 7, 2015

**AUTHORIZATION(S):** 

### SUMMARY

#### Issue for Decision

Should the Board of Regents approve a change in the scope of institutional accreditation of the American Museum of Natural History - Richard Gilder Graduate School?

#### Reason(s) for Consideration

Required by State regulation.

#### Proposed Handling

This question will come before the Higher Education Committee at its December 2015 meeting, where it will be voted on and action taken. It will then come before the full Board at its December 2015 meeting for final action.

*Members of the Board of 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.*

#### Procedural History

The Board of Regents granted institutional accreditation to the American Museum of Natural History on November 17, 2009. The Museum's application for renewal of accreditation is pending. In the interim, the Museum has applied for a change in scope of its existing accreditation as a result of its authorization, by the Board of Regents in May 2015, to award the Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) degree. That

authorization was made in support of the Museum's first registered program to prepare candidates for teacher certification (Earth Science Grades 7-12).

### **Background Information**

A Regents-accredited institution that undergoes a substantive change must apply for a change in its scope of accreditation. Section 4.1-5(d) of the Rules of the Board of Regents defines actions that require such a change in scope, along with related processes. The Museum applied for a change in scope of accreditation for the following reasons, as defined in Regents Rules:

- it added "courses or programs that represent a significant departure from the existing offerings of educational programs...from those that were offered when the department last evaluated the institution for accreditation."
- It added "courses or programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution's current accreditation."

Specifically, in May 2015 the Board of Regents authorized the Museum to award the M.A.T. degree in support of registering a Museum program to prepare candidates for certification as Earth Science teachers. Under Regents Rules and federal requirements for accrediting agencies, the resulting establishment of the M.A.T. program represented a substantive change from the Museum's existing program, a Ph.D. (and M.Phil.) in Comparative Biology.

The purpose of the change in scope application is to document that the change does not adversely affect the institution's capacity to meet the accreditation standards defined under Sections 4-1.3 and 4-1.4 of Regents Rules.

Based on the institution's application, the Department finds that the Museum's new authority does not adversely affect the institution's ability to meet accreditation standards related to the School's mission; assessment of student achievement; programs of study; faculty; resources; administration; support services; admissions; consumer information; and related technical processes. The Museum's extensive documentation of steps to support the delivery of the M.A.T. program provides assurances that the program has been well integrated into the academic and administrative structures of the Richard Gilder Graduate School without compromising the institution's continuing compliance with accreditation standards.

The Department finds that the Museum's M.A.T. program does not adversely affect the institution's ability to continue to meet Regents accreditation standards. As a result, the Department recommends approval of the requested change in scope of accreditation for the American Museum of Natural History - Richard Gilder Graduate School.

### **Recommendation**

VOTED: That the Board of Regents approve a change in scope of the institutional accreditation of the American Museum of Natural History, in recognition of the institution's authorization to offer a Master of Arts in Teaching program.