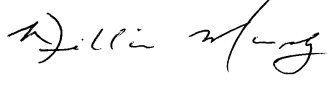





**TO:** The Honorable Members of the Board of Regents

**FROM:** William P. Murphy 

**SUBJECT:** Villa Maria College of Buffalo: Master Plan Amendment to Offer its First Master's Program

**DATE:** April 25, 2024

**AUTHORIZATION(S):** 

### SUMMARY

#### **Issue for Decision (Consent)**

Should the Board of Regents approve a master plan amendment to authorize Villa Maria College of Buffalo to offer its first master's program (Master of Science in Communication Strategy & Analysis) at the institution?

#### **Reason for Consideration**

Required by State statute.

#### **Proposed Handling**

The issue will come before the Full Board for action at its May 2024 meeting.

#### **Procedural History**

A master plan amendment is required to authorize Villa Maria College of Buffalo to offer its first program at a new level of study (i.e., first master's degree) at the institution. The program is in the discipline area of the Social Sciences.

#### **Background Information**

The proposed Master of Science (M.S.) in Communication Strategy & Analysis program would be the institution's first graduate-level program and its first fully online degree program. The proposed graduate program would require the completion of ten courses, totaling 30 credits, and could be completed in one year of full-time study.

The College asserts that the proposed program aligns with the institution's Felician mission of compassion, justice, and peace; respect for human dignity; and commitment to service. It would emphasize responsible 21st-century communication skills in an

ever-adapting environment. Graduates would be prepared to work in a variety of venues as stewards of information, having developed critical thinking skills, communication perspectives, and technical expertise.

An academic review of the proposed program was completed by the Department. The Department determined that the proposed degree program meets the standards for registration set forth in the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education. In addition, following the standard protocol, the Department conducted a canvass of degree-granting institutions in the Western region, where Villa Maria College of Buffalo is located. Of those canvassed, one objection was received, claiming that the proposed program is composed of a curriculum identical to a program at the objecting institution and would be in competition with that program. Upon review of the objection and Villa Maria's response to the objection, it was determined that the proposed program was sufficiently different from the existing program to avoid competition between the programs.

### **Related Regents Items**

Not applicable.

### **Recommendation**

The Department recommends that the Board of Regents take the following action:

VOTED: That the Board of Regents approve a master plan amendment to authorize Villa Maria College of Buffalo to offer its first master's program at the institution.

### **Timetable for Implementation**

If the Board of Regents approves the master plan amendment, the Department will register the proposed program (M.S. in Communication Strategy & Analysis) at Villa Maria College of Buffalo.