

**DATE:** July 28, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Revision of THEC Policy A1.0 (*New Academic Programs: Approval Process*) and Policy A1.1 (*New Academic Programs*)

**ACTION RECOMMENDED:** Approval

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** Tennessee Code Annotated §49-8-101 as amended by Public Chapter 3, Acts of 2010 (1<sup>st</sup> Extraordinary Session) requires that “the board of regents, in consultation with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, shall establish a comprehensive statewide community college system of coordinated programs and services to be known as the Tennessee community college system.”

**Delegation of Final Approval of New Community College Programs to the Tennessee Board of Regents.** The proposed revisions to THEC Policy A1.0 (*New Academic Programs: Approval Process*) and Policy A1.1 (*New Academic Programs*) are designed to support the development of the “Tennessee community college system” as directed by the Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010.

The proposed revisions will delegate THEC’s statutory authority for approving new community college certificates and associate degrees to the TBR. The proposed A0.1 and A1.1 policy modifications delegate, but do not abdicate, THEC responsibility for ensuring that programs meet documented need and evidence highest quality.

The THEC policy revisions require that TBR meet the quality standards of THEC A1.0 and A1.1 as a condition of the delegated authority for final approval of new programs. The proposed revisions will also allow a new program TBR approves for one community college to be approved for other TBR community colleges, should they wish to meet the same quality and resource standards. This universal approval and replication will apply only to those programs TBR approves after the Commission sanctions THEC A1.0 and A1.1 policy revisions.

The rationale for the proposed revisions is to create a unified community college system identity for the thirteen-member TBR community college sector as a coordinated service entity responding to work force training needs. A condition of the delegated authority is that the TBR will maintain the THEC practice of prompt evaluation and approval of new certificates and associate programs meeting A1.0 and A1.1 standards.

**THEC Authority for Monitoring All Community College Programs.** THEC expressly does not delegate to the TBR its authority for conducting post-approval review and evaluation of all community college academic degree programs and certificates, whether currently listed on the THEC Academic Program Inventory or those approved by TBR after approval of delegated

authority. All community college programs will be monitored and reviewed through the THEC Post-Approval Monitoring process, the annual evaluation of program productivity, and the program quality assurance requirements of the THEC Performance Funding program.

**PROPOSED – EFFECTIVE AS OF:** August 1, 2011

**Section Title:** Academic Policies

**Policy Title:** New Academic Programs: Approval Process

**Policy Number:** A1.0

1.0.10 **Scope and Purpose.** In accordance with Chapter 179 of the Legislative Act creating the Higher Education Commission in 1967, the Commission has the statutory responsibility to review and approve new academic programs, off-campus extensions of existing academic programs, new academic units (divisions, colleges, and schools) and new instructional locations for public institutions of higher education in the State of Tennessee. These responsibilities shall be exercised so as to:

- promote academic quality
- maximize cost effectiveness and efficiency to ensure that the benefits to the state outweigh the costs and that existing programs are adequately supported
- fulfill student demand, employer need and societal requirements
- avoid and eliminate unnecessary duplication to ensure that proposed programs cannot be delivered through collaboration or alternative arrangements
- encourage cooperation among all institutions, both public and private

These expectations for program quality and viability are underscored by Tennessee Code Annotated §49-7-202 as amended by Chapter 3, Acts of 2010 (1<sup>st</sup> Extraordinary Session). This Act directs public higher education to:

- A. Address the state's economic development, workforce development and research needs;
- B. Ensure increased degree production within the state's capacity to support higher education; and
- C. Use institutional mission differentiation to realize statewide efficiencies through institutional collaboration and minimized redundancy in degree offerings, instructional locations, and competitive research.

**Program Review Criteria** -- In order to ensure that these responsibilities are optimized, the Commission strenuously considers the following criteria in order to maximize state resources:

**Need** – evidence of program need that justifies institutional allocation/reallocation of state resources (See A1.1.20I New Academic Programs).

**Program Costs/Revenues** – evidence should be provided that program costs will be met from internal reallocation or from other sources such as grants and gifts. Institutional commitment should be consistent with the centrality and level of priority as described in the program proposal and projected on THEC Fiscal Projection form (Attachment A).

**Quality** – evidence should be provided that assessment, evaluation, and accreditation criteria (A1.1.20M) are being met.

1.0.20 **Schedule.** The Commission will normally consider proposals for new programs, extensions of existing academic programs, academic units, and instructional locations at each regularly scheduled Commission meeting.

1.0.30 **Action.** Commission action on a given proposal must follow approval by the governing board and may take one of four forms:

- approval
- disapproval
- conditional approval
- deferral

Conditional approval may be granted in special cases. This type of approval is reserved for programs for which the need is temporary. Conditional approvals will identify a date that the program must be terminated.

1.0.40 **Funding.** Evidence must be provided on forms for approval of new academic programs relative to internal reallocation and other sources such as grants and gifts must be validated. The Commission will approve no special start-up funding (See 1.0.10, Program Costs/Revenue).

1.0.50 **Early Consultation/Notification.**  
Upon consideration by an institution to develop a proposal for a new program, governing board staffs must provide the Commission staff with a copy of that institution's letter of intent to develop a program proposal. The letter of intent should be in the format provided as Attachment B, and the THEC Financial Form (referenced as Attachment A in A1.0.10) should accompany it. Programs that institutions intend to develop should be consistent with and reference institutional mission, the state master plan for higher education, and campus master plan or the academic plan. A thorough early assessment of program justification is necessary for programs requiring Commission approval in order to identify issues relative to the need for the program, program duplication, accessibility through collaboration or alternative means of delivery (distance education), source of start-up funds, and the need for reviews by external consultants.

Upon consultation and approval to proceed, governing board staffs must share all relevant documents in a timely fashion with the Commission staff leading up to the submission of the final proposal at least two weeks prior to notification of being placed on the agenda for consideration by a governing board (See also 1.1.20A in Policy A1.1 - New Academic Programs). THEC delegates the TBR the authority to approve community college Letters of Intent to Plan associate degrees and certificates.

1.0.60 **Articulation/Transfer.** Upon consideration of a new degree program, evidence must be provided to ensure adherence to the requirements of Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-7-202 as amended by Chapter 3, Acts of 2010 (1<sup>st</sup> Extraordinary Session) requires that “an associate of science or arts degree graduate from a Tennessee community college shall be deemed to have met all general education and university parallel core requirements for transfer to a Tennessee public university as a junior. . . .” Admission into a particular program, school, or college within the university, or into the University of Tennessee, Knoxville shall remain competitive in accordance with generally applicable policies.

- (1) The forty-one (41) hour lower division general education core common to all state colleges and universities shall be fully transferrable as a block to, and satisfy the general education core of, any public community college or university. A completed subject category (for example, natural sciences or mathematics) within the forty-one (41) hour general education core shall also be fully transferrable and satisfy that subject category of the general education core at any public community college or university.
- (2) The nineteen (19) hour lower division AA/AS area of emphasis articulated to a baccalaureate major shall be universally transferrable as a block satisfying lower division major requirements to any state university offering that degree program major.

1.0.60A **Credit Hours to Degree.** The Commission recommends that credit hour requirements for new and existing undergraduate academic programs shall not be substantially more than 120 hours for baccalaureate degrees or 60 hours for associate degrees without justification. The principle intent is to reduce the time and costs of earning a degree for individual students and taxpayers and, over time, improve graduation rates and increase the higher educational attainment levels of Tennesseans. This excludes programs with accreditation or licensure requirements.

1.0.60B

**Announcements.** Announcements of plans for new academic programs, extensions of existing programs, new academic units, and/or new instructional locations must await Commission approval, prior to implementation.

1.0.70A

**Delegated Authority for Final Approval of New Community College Programs (Associates and Certificates) to the Tennessee Board of Regents.** Tennessee Code Annotated §49-8-101 as amended by Public Chapter 3, Acts of 2010 (1<sup>st</sup> Extraordinary Session) directs that “the board of regents, in consultation with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, shall establish a comprehensive statewide community college system of coordinated programs and services to be known as the Tennessee community college system.”

Notwithstanding anything in this policy to the contrary, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, in accord with Chapter 3 and toward the establishment of the unified and comprehensive community college system, delegates authority to the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) for final approval of new community college associate degrees and certificates. THEC also delegates final approval authority to TBR for the replication of a certificate or associate program approved for one community college (after August 1, 2011) at other TBR community colleges. TBR final approval is subject to the following conditions:

- (1) The criteria for review and accountability (especially justification of need and documented sufficiency of resources and faculty to support the program) set forth in THEC Policies A1.0 (New Academic Programs – Approval Process) and A1.1 (New Academic Programs) must be the basis for the TBR review and approval of new and replicated certificates and associate programs.
- (2) The TBR will provide a monthly summary report to THEC of all community college program actions approved by the TBR, including community college Letters of Intent to Plan associate degrees and certificates, community college associate degree program and certificate approvals, associate and certificate substantive curricular changes, community college associate degree major and concentration name changes, and associate, concentration, and certificate terminations.
- (3) The TBR will provide program proposals and financial projection forms for all TBR-approved associates and certificates as baseline data for THEC Post-Approval Monitoring.
- (4) THEC will list all TBR-approved community college associate and certificate programs and reported changes on the State Inventory of Academic Programs;

1.0.70B

**THEC Authority for Post-Approval Monitoring of All Community College Programs.** THEC expressly does not delegate to the TBR the authority for the post-approval review of community college associate and certificate programs set forth in A1.1.30 and A1.1.30A-C (New Academic Programs). All TBR community college programs listed on the THEC Inventory of Academic Programs will be subject to the following THEC monitoring and evaluation:

- (1) Community college associate degree programs and certificates are subject to THEC annual reporting through Post Approval Monitoring of programs for the first three years after implementation and annual productivity evaluations of programs in operation more than three years;
- (2) Community colleges will participate in all components of the THEC Performance Funding Quality Assurance Program, and associate and certificate programs will be evaluated according to Performance Funding program review standards.

Approved: April 22, 1988  
Revised: January 29, 1997  
Revised: November 14, 2002  
Revised: January 27, 2011

**Section Title:** Academic Policies

**Policy Title:** New Academic Programs

**Policy Number:** A1.1

- 1.1.10 **Programs Subject to Approval.** New academic programs requiring Commission approval are those that differ from currently approved programs in level of degree or major offered, as reflected in the institution's catalog and the Commission's academic inventory, subject to specified provisions. In the interest of minimizing duplication of effort and institutional document development, THEC will accept for review the program proposal in the program proposal formats required by University of Tennessee and Tennessee Board of Regents system policies, provided these formats address criteria named in 1.1.20A through 1.1.20P below. All program proposals must include THEC Financial Projections form (Attachment A).
- 1.1.10A **Non-degree and non-certificate programs.** Commission approval is not required for non-degree and non-certificate programs, such as those offered at Tennessee Technology Centers.
- 1.1.10B **Certificates.** The Commission approval for a TBR community college certificate program is not required. Commission approval is required for an undergraduate certificate at universities only when the program consists of at least 24 semester hours.
- 1.1.10C **(Reserved)**
- 1.1.10D **Name Changes.** Renaming an existing program without an essential change in the originally approved curriculum does not require Commission approval; planned large-scale curriculum change in a program without a name change does require Commission approval.
- 1.1.10E **Reconfigurations.** A reconfiguration of existing programs without an essential change in the originally approved curriculum and without a net gain in the number of programs (e.g., a consolidation of two programs into one) does not require Commission approval.
- 1.1.10F **Sub-majors.** Additions, deletions, and revisions of sub-majors (options, concentrations emphases, tracks, etc.) without an essential change in the originally approved major curriculum do not require Commission approval.

- 1.1.10G **Notice.** Before governing board consideration of the changes described in Provisions 1.1.10A - 1.1.10F above, a two-week notice should be given to the Commission staff. In the event the staff interprets the proposed change as one requiring Commission approval, prompt arrangements will be made to discuss the proposed change with the institution and its governing board staff for a determination of applicable policy.
- 1.1.10H **Special Areas.** For programs at baccalaureate or higher level in program areas where annual THEC statewide and institutional degree production analyses indicate there is great potential for unnecessary program duplication, no additional programs may be submitted for approval without exceptional determination of need. Such need must be demonstrated to and approved by governing board and Commission staff before the proposal or development of any new programs in these three areas.
- 1.1.20 **Criteria for Review.** The criteria set out in Provisions 1.1.20A - 1.1.20Q will generally be used in reviewing new program proposals. However, the stringency of individual criteria will depend on the specific program, and, in particular circumstances, other criteria may be added at the time of notification (See 1.0.050 New Academic Programs: Approval Process).
- References to provisions of certain institutional policies, such as overall admissions standards, do not mean that such policies need to be approved by the Commission.
- 1.1.20A **Mission.** Proposed new programs must adhere to the role and scope as set forth in the approved mission of the institution.
- 1.1.20B **Curriculum.** The curriculum should be adequately structured to meet the stated objectives of the program, and reflect breadth, depth, theory, and practice appropriate to the discipline and the level of the degree. The undergraduate curriculum should ensure General Education core requirement commonality and transfer (where appropriate) of 19-hour pre-major paths. The curriculum should be compatible with accreditation, where applicable, and meet the criteria for articulation and transfer (See A1.0.60 (New Academic Programs: Approval Process)).
- 1.1.20C **Academic Standards.** The admission, retention, and graduation standards should be clearly stated, be compatible with institutional and governing board policy, and encourage high quality.
- 1.1.20D **Faculty.** Current and/or anticipated faculty resources should ensure a program of high quality. The number and qualifications of faculty should meet existing institutional standards and should be consistent with external standards, where appropriate.

- 1.1.20E **Library Resources.** Current and/or anticipated library and information technology resources should be adequate to support a high quality program and should meet recognized standards for study at a particular level or in a particular field where such standards are available.
- 1.1.20F **Administration/Organization.** The organizational placement and the administrative responsibility for the program should be clearly defined and designed to promote success of the program.
- 1.1.20G **Support Resources.** All other support resources--existing and/or anticipated, should be adequate to support a high quality program. This would include clear statements of clerical personnel or equipment needs, student advising resources, and arrangements for clinical or other affiliations necessary for the program.
- 1.1.20H **Facilities.** Existing and/or anticipated facilities should be adequate to support a high quality program. New and/or renovated facilities required to implement the program should be clearly outlined by amount and type of space, costs identified and source of costs. (Facility Master Plans F4.1)
- 1.1.20I **Need and Demand.** Evidence should be provided that a proposed new program contributes to meeting the priorities/goals of the institution's academic or master plan, why the institution needs that program, and why the state needs graduates from that particular program.
- Student Demand. Evidence of student demand, normally in the form of surveys of potential students and enrollment in related programs at the institution, should be adequate to expect a reasonable level of productivity.
- Employer Need/Demand. Evidence of sufficient employer demand/need, normally in the form of anticipated openings in an appropriate service area (that may be national, regional, or local), in relation to existing production of graduates for that service area. Evidence may include the results of a need assessment, employer surveys, current labor market analyses, and future workforce projections. Where appropriate, evidence should also demonstrate societal need and employers' preference for graduates of the proposed program over persons having alternative existing credentials and employers' willingness to pay higher salaries to graduates of the proposed program.
- 1.1.20J **No Unnecessary Duplication.** Where other similar programs may serve the same potential student population, evidence should demonstrate that the proposed program is in accord with the

institution's THEC-approved distinct mission, is sufficiently different from the existing programs or that access to the existing programs is sufficiently limited to warrant initiation of a new program. The proposal should explain why it is more cost effective or otherwise in the best interests of the State to initiate a new program rather than meet the demand through other arrangements. (e.g., collaborative means with another institution distance education technologies, Academic Common Market, and consortia).

- 1.1.20K **Cooperating Institutions.** For programs needing the cooperation of other institutions (including government, education, health, and business), evidence of the willingness of these institutions to participate is required.
- 1.1.20L **Diversity and Access.** The proposed program will not impede the state's commitment to diversity and access in higher education (Post *Geier*). A statement should be provided as to how the proposed program would enhance racial diversity.
- 1.1.20M **Assessment/Evaluation and Accreditation.** Evidence should be provided to demonstrate that careful evaluation of the program being proposed would be undertaken periodically. Information must be provided to indicate the schedule for program assessments or evaluations, (including program evaluations associated with Performance Funding) those responsible for conducting them, and how the results are to be used. Where appropriate, professional organizations that accredit programs should be identified and any substantive change that may require a SACS review should be indicated.
- 1.1.20N **Graduate Programs.** New graduate programs will be evaluated according to criteria set forth in this policy, as these criteria are informed by the principles supported by the Tennessee Council of Graduate Schools and best practices in the disciplines.
- 1.1.20O **External Judgment.** The Commission staff may, in consultation with the governing board staffs, determine that review by an external authority is required before framing a recommendation to the Commission. Consultants will normally be required for new graduate programs. Consultants will not normally be required for new undergraduate and certificate programs, but there may be exceptions in cases of large cost or marked departure from existing programs at the institution.
- 1.1.20P **Cost/Benefit.** The benefit to the state should outweigh the cost of the program. Institutions should, in the program proposal, estimate the effect on funding caused by the implementation of the program. Detailed costs should be provided on forms required for consideration of new undergraduate and graduate programs

(See 1.0.10, Program Costs/Revenues). These details should include reallocation plans, grants, gifts or other external sources of funding/partnerships. The THEC Financial Projection form (Attachment A) must accompany the proposal.

- 1.1.30 **Post Approval Monitoring.** During the first five years (three years for pre-baccalaureate programs) following approval, performance of the program, based on goals established in the proposal, will be evaluated annually. At the end of this period, Commission staff will perform a summative evaluation and present the summary to the Commission annually. This summative evaluation will include, but not be limited to, enrollment and graduation numbers, program cost, progress toward accreditation, library acquisitions, student performance, and other goals set by the institution and agreed to by governing board and Commission staff. As a result of this evaluation, if the program is deficient, the Commission may recommend to the governing board that the program be terminated. Copies of such recommendation will be forwarded to the Education Committees of the General Assembly. The Commission may also choose to extend this period if additional time is needed and is requested by the governing board.
- 1.1.30A **Schedule.** At the January Commission meeting the Commission will review post approval reports on programs that have recently received approval.
- 1.1.30B **Unfulfilled Productivity.** Institutions with programs that fall markedly short of projected goals as approved in program proposals, must submit, through their governing boards, an explanation of the shortfall and a discussion of the future expectations to accompany annual program progress reports.
- 1.1.30C **Further Action.** The Commission may request the governing board to take action on any program that is performing significantly below projections.
- 1.1.40A **Delegated Authority for Final Approval of Community College Programs (Certificates and Associates) to the Tennessee Board of Regents.** Notwithstanding anything in this policy to the contrary, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission delegates authority for final approval of community college associate degrees and certificates of any credit-hour requirement to the TBR subject to the conditions outlined in Policy A1.0.70, New Academic Programs: Approval Process.
- 1.1.40B **THEC Authority for Post-Approval Monitoring of All Community College Programs.** Notwithstanding anything in this policy to the contrary, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission expressly does not delegate to the TBR the authority for the post-approval monitoring and evaluation of community

college associate and certificate programs as required in A1.0.70B,  
A1.1.30, A1.1.30A – C (New Academic Programs).

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