Missouri Department of Higher Education
Policy for the Review of Academic Program Proposals

Updated 7/11/11

1. **Introduction**

The Policy for the Review of Academic Program Proposals is an essential component for achieving the programmatic initiatives contained in the Coordinating Board's Blueprint for Missouri Higher Education regarding institutional mission enhancements, technical education, funding for results, and a telecommunications-based delivery system.

These policies and procedures will help ensure that Missouri's higher education institutions continue to offer high quality, student-centered programs that effectively serve the citizens of the state. The most efficient use of state resources requires that institutions maintain these high standards, collaborate whenever possible, and design programs that avoid unnecessary duplication in a service region. In cooperation with institutions in both the public and independent sectors, these policies and procedures have been carefully designed to further these important goals.

2. **Statutory Responsibility**

Chapter 173 of the Missouri Statutes charges the Coordinating Board for Higher Education with several responsibilities, including:

- ... approval of proposed new degree programs to be offered by the state institutions of higher education . . . (Section 173.005(1), RSMo)
- ... collect the necessary information and develop comparable data for all institutions of higher education in the state . . . (Section 173.005(8), RSMo)
- ... requesting the governing boards of all state-supported institutions of higher education and of major private institutions to submit . . . proposed policy changes . . . and make pertinent recommendations relating thereto . . . (Section 173.030(1), RSMo)
- ... recommending to the governing board of any institution of higher education in the state the development, consolidation or elimination of programs, degree offerings, physical facilities or policy changes where that action is deemed . . . in the best interests of the institutions . . . (Section 173.030(2), RSMo)

The Coordinating Board discharges these responsibilities primarily through data collection and the systematic review of proposals for new academic programs, off-site delivery of existing programs, and changes in existing programs. In the case of public institutions, the Coordinating Board approves or disapproves academic program proposals.

3. **Program Review Policies for Independent Institutions**

To maintain an understanding and appreciation of the contributions made by the independent sector, and consistent with the report on Coordinating Board for Higher Education and Independent Institution Relationships adopted by the CBHE in 1982, these policies also extend to independent institutions with the following exceptions:

- Flexibility in the application of these criteria is appropriate to accommodate the specialized mission of independent institutions and to acknowledge the differences between public and independent institutions as well as the different degrees of responsibility and authority the Coordinating Board and state have in the operation of the respective sectors.
- Proposals submitted by independent-sector institutions will be received and reviewed in the context of the statewide system of higher education. While the CBHE does not approve or disapprove programs at independent institutions, it may make pertinent comments as it deems appropriate.

Delegation of Authority and Communication with the Academic Community

The Coordinating Board's responsibilities for academic program review are delegated to the Commissioner of Higher Education. The status of the proposal submitted to the CBHE for review will be accessible on the CBHE website Upon completion of a review, action by the Commissioner will be sent directly to the institution. All actions of the Commissioner will be reported to the Coordinating Board as an information item at its next regularly scheduled meeting. Final authority for all program actions remains with the Coordinating Board.

Guiding Principles

The academic program review process must support the development of those desirable characteristics for Missouri's system of higher education that were adopted by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education in December, 1992. They include:

0. Higher education and vocational-training services of the highest quality that are truly competitive on a national and international level;
1. A coordinated, balanced, and cost-effective delivery system;
2. A range of vocational, academic, and professional programs that are affordable and accessible to all citizens with the preparation and ability to benefit from the programs;
3. Differentiated institutional missions and implementation plans, both among and within sectors, designed to meet state needs and goals with a minimum of program duplication; and
4. Systematic demonstration of institutional performance and accountability through appropriate assessment efforts.

Serving Statewide Needs

The CBHE policy on the review of academic programs seeks to accomplish the following in the context of serving statewide needs:

0. To distinguish program changes that merely need to be noted for the purpose of an accurate statewide program inventory from program changes that are substantive in nature;
1. To distinguish between programs which are being initiated at a particular institution from existing programs which are targeted for delivery to new sites;
2. To increase professional peer involvement in the review of program proposals;
3. To promote a common vocabulary and definitions for program review, while encouraging common course-naming and use of CIP classification codes;
4. To address cooperative initiatives among institutions in the delivery of higher education programs; and
5. To move requests for new academic programs, off-site delivery of existing programs, and program changes through the approval/comment process in a timely manner.

Essential Characteristics of Proposals

In general, each proposal should exhibit:

0. A good fit with institutional mission, the filling of a demonstrable need, and the best use of resources in light of the contributions of existing programs and the benefits of collaborative efforts.
1. A description of:
    a. Program structure that provides enough essential and relevant detail with which to make an evaluation;
    b. Aspects of the program that promote program quality, including accreditation potential; and
    c. Program characteristics and procedures, including performance goals, that will become the basis for follow-up reviews of all academic programs.
2. Information about program finances (for public institutions only) in a concise, consistent format for all proposals.

The policies and procedures on academic program review are intended to be rigorous but flexible enough to meet new challenges without excess regulation. The review process ensures a solid foundation for the design of quality academic programs.

Alignment with External Accreditation

Decisions to seek program accreditation remain with the institution. In disciplines for which there are established standards for program accreditation, CBHE program review will be informed by these standards. In instances when the institution is seeking program accreditation, self-studies and other relevant materials developed can be submitted in lieu of preparing separate supporting documentation.

Special Issues

. Use of Consultants: On those occasions when the evaluation of a program proposal requires special expertise, the Commissioner may recommend the services of an external consultant to assist in the process. The selection of a consultant shall be agreeable to all parties, and the cost shall be the responsibility of the sponsoring institution.

A. Programs Reviewed Jointly by the CBHE and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: An institution requesting financial reimbursement for a new program from vocational/technical funds administered by DESE must submit a proposal in the CBHE format to both agencies. In general, DESE will not consider a financial reimbursement request for a program unless it is a component of a degree or certificate program approved by the CBHE.

B. Appeals:

Public Institutions

Any of the following parties may initiate an appeal of the Commissioner's action regarding a program review:

1. The institution that submitted the original proposal;
2. Any public Missouri higher education institution that believes its interests are adversely affected by the Commissioner's decision; or
3. Any member of the Coordinating Board for Higher Education.

A letter of intent to appeal, signed by the chief executive officer of the institution, must be received by the Commissioner within thirty (30) days of the official notice of the Commissioner's decision. Regardless of the source of an appeal, all material related to an appeal must be shared with all parties associated with the proposed program. New programs may not be implemented while an appeal is pending.

All materials, including a rationale for the appeal, must be submitted to the Commissioner and the relevant parties within fourteen (14) days after a letter of intent to appeal has been filed. The rationale and the responses of the Commissioner will be placed on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled meeting of the CBHE, provided the meeting is scheduled at least fourteen (14) days after the receipt of all materials. The CBHE may refuse to hear the appeal, may resolve the issue at that meeting, or may establish a schedule for further action. All decisions of the CBHE are final.

Independent Institutions

The Commissioner will receive appeals originating from independent institutions regarding the concerns and perspectives expressed by the Commissioner to the respective institution. The resolution of such appeals will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

10.1 Requests for a New Program: General Outline

Step 1. Proposals will be posted five times per year, according to the chart below. Included in the request should be a full and complete proposal (see Specific Format for a Complete Proposal below) in two forms: (a) a hard copy, with appropriate signatures on the cover page, and (b) an electronic version, sent as an e-mail attachment. Institutions submitting proposals that involve collaborations/partnerships must include letters of support from collaborators or partner institutions. Collaborative efforts involving both public- and independent-sector institutions will be treated like public institution proposals.

For a proposal for a new academic program to be considered for approval at the CBHE meeting in:	MDHE must receive the proposal by:	The proposal will be posted to MDHE website on:
September	July 1	July 15
December	October 1	October 15
February	December 1	December 15
April	February 1	February 15
June	April 1	April 15

Step 2. An institution's request will be forwarded to the academic community by two means: First, the full proposal (minus the Financial Projections section) will be posted on the CBHE web page by the 15th of each month. Second, notice will be sent electronically to all chief academic officers.

Step 3. The academic community will have twenty (20) working days to respond to an institution's new program request by raising questions, asking for additional information, or making comments. All such questions, requests, or comments shall be in writing and directed to the "Person to contact for more information," as listed on Form NP, as well as to the CBHE Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs. Proposing institutions will have the opportunity to furnish a written response to the CBHE Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs if they choose to do so and to decide whether to withdraw or proceed with the proposal. A written response is not needed to proceed. Record files for institutions that proceed will include all comments and responses.

Step 4. Independent institutions are not required to submit financial projections except when a proposed program involves a cooperative relationship with a public institution. Once a proposal is complete, a recommendation will be sent to the Commissioner for action. The institution will be notified of the Commissioner's action, and the action will be reported to the CBHE at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

Normally, program reviews should be completed within 45 working days after being officially posted. The expected length of review is subject to adjustment due to issues that may arise during the program review process.

10.2 Specific Format Required for a Complete Proposal

A complete proposal should contain the following information in this order and numbered this way:

0. New Program Proposal Form: Please complete Form NP
1. Need:
    . Student Demand:
        i. Estimated enrollment each year for the first five years for full-time and part-time students (Please complete Form SE.)
        ii. Will enrollment be capped in the future?
    A. Market Demand:
        i. National, state, regional, or local assessment of labor need for citizens with these skills
    B. Societal Need:
        i. General needs which are not directly related to employment
    C. Methodology used to determine "B" and "C" above.
2. Duplication and Collaboration: If similar programs currently exist in Missouri, what makes the proposed program necessary and/or distinct from the others at public institutions, area vocational technical schools, and private career schools?
   Does delivery of the program involve a collaborative effort with any external institution or organization? If yes, please complete Form CL.
3. Program Structure: Please complete Form PS
    . Total credits required for graduation
    A. Residency requirements, if any

B. Courses and credits required for general education
C. Courses and credits required for the major
D. Number of free elective credits remaining (Sum of C, D, and E should equal A)
E. Requirements for thesis, internship, or other capstone experiences
F. Any unique features, for example, interdepartmental cooperation

4. Financial Projections (for public institutions only): Please complete Form FP. Additional narrative may be added as needed. If more than one institution is providing support, please complete a separate form for each institution.
5. Program Characteristics and Performance Goals: See the recommended format and issues to be addressed (Form PG). For collaborative programs, responsibility for program evaluation and assessment rests with the institution(s) granting the degree(s).
6. Accreditation: If accreditation is not a goal for this program, provide a brief rationale for your decision. If the institution is seeking program accreditation, provide any additional information that supports your program.
7. Institutional Characteristics: Please describe succinctly why your institution is particularly well equipped or well suited to support the proposed program.
8. Any Other Relevant Information:

Review Process for Off-Site Delivery of Existing Program

As a result of technology, institutions have an increased number of alternatives for delivery of certificate and degree programs to students at remote sites. These policies and procedures refer to sites that are in Missouri, and which involve primarily synchronous delivery through the use of traveling faculty, remotely located faculty, and/or the use of two-way interactive video.

This process should be used when an institution intends to provide an opportunity for students to pursue a full degree off site in Missouri or advertises a new offering to the general public in a fashion that implies that a full program will be offered in Missouri at a site remote from the main campus. For two-year institutions, the main campus is defined as the institution's taxing district.

Institutions that intend to offer programs in other states are expected to abide by the program approval policies of the host state.

11.1 Request For Off-Site Delivery Of Existing Program: General Outline

Proposals for the off-site delivery of an existing program will be posted five times per year, according to the chart below. Included in the request should be a full and complete proposal (see Specific Format for a Complete Proposal below) in two forms: (a) a hard copy, with appropriate signatures on the cover page, and (b) an electronic version, sent as an e-mail attachment. Institutions submitting proposals that involve collaborations/partnerships must include letters of support from collaborators or partner institutions. Collaborative efforts involving both public- and independent-sector institutions will be treated like public institution proposals.

For a proposal for a new residence center to be considered for approval at the CBHE meeting in:	MDHE must receive the proposal by:	The proposal will be posted to MDHE website on:
September	July 1	July 15
December	October 1	October 15
February	December 1	December 15
April	February 1	February 15
June	April 1	April 15

Step 2. An institution's request will be forwarded to the academic community by two means: First, the full proposal (minus the Financial Projections section) will be posted on the MDHE web page by the 15th of each month. Second, notice will be sent electronically to all chief academic officers.

Step 3. The academic community will have twenty (20) working days to respond to an institution's new program request by raising questions, asking for additional information, or making comments. All such questions, requests, or comments shall be in writing and directed to the "Person to contact for more information," as listed on Form OS, as well as to the CBHE Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs. Proposing institutions will have the opportunity to furnish a written response to the CBHE Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs if they choose to do so and to decide whether to withdraw or proceed with the proposal. A written response is not needed to proceed. Record files for institutions that proceed will include all comments and responses.

Step 4. Independent institutions are not required to submit financial projections except when a proposed program involves a cooperative relationship with a public institution. Once a proposal is complete, a recommendation will be sent to the Commissioner for action. The institution will be notified of the Commissioner's action, and the action will be reported to the CBHE at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

Normally, program reviews should be completed within 45 working days after being officially posted. The expected length of review is subject to adjustment due to issues that may arise during the program review process.

11.2 Specific Format Required for a Complete Proposal

A complete proposal should contain the following information in this order and numbered this way:

0. Off-site Delivery Proposal Form: Please complete Form OS.
1. Need:
    . Student Demand:
        i. Estimated enrollment each year for the first five years for full-time and part-time students (Please complete Form SE.)
        ii. Will enrollment be capped in the future?
    A. Market Demand:
        i. National, state, regional, or local assessment of labor need for citizens with these skills
    B. Societal Need:
        i. General needs that are not directly related to employment
    C. Methodology used to determine "B" and "C" above.
2. Duplication and Collaboration:
   If similar programs currently exist in Missouri, what makes the proposed program necessary and/or distinct from the others at public institutions, area vocational technical schools, and private career schools?
   Does delivery of the program involve a collaborative effort with any external institution or organization? If yes, please complete Form CL.
3. Financial Projections (for public institutions only): Please complete Form FP. Additional narrative may be added as needed. If more than one institution is providing support, please complete a separate form for each institution.
4. Program Characteristics and Performance Goals: See the recommended format and issues to be addressed (Form PG). Please submit the Program Characteristics and Performance Goals for the program at this site as well as for those of the equivalent on-campus program. For collaborative programs, responsibility for program evaluation and assessment rests with the institution(s) granting the degree(s).
5. Quality Assurance for Off-Site Programs:
    . General Oversight: Describe the manner in which this program will be managed. How does the management of this program fit within the institution's academic administrative structure?
    A. Faculty Qualifications: How do the qualifications of faculty at this site compare with those of faculty for this program at the main campus? Please also note the comparable data regarding the proportion of course-section coverage by full-time faculty at each site.
    B. Support Services: Describe how the institution will ensure that students at this site will be able to access services such as academic support, library, computing, and financial aid, as well as other administrative functions, at a level of quality comparable to that of on-campus programs.
6. Any Other Relevant Information

Web-Based Courses and Programs

On April 13, 2000, the Coordinating Board adopted the Principles of Good Practice for Distance Learning and Web-Based Courses developed by the CBHE staff and the Committee on Technology and Instruction (CTI). These principles apply for asynchronous programs delivered in an Internet, website environment, through satellite transmission or via distribution of audiovisual and/or print material.

Principles of Good Practice for Distance-Learning/Web-Based Courses
When providing courses and programs through distance-learning methods, institutions should establish standards and encourage academic integrity equivalent to those expected of courses offered in a traditional, campus-based environment. These Principles of Good Practice, adapted from the 1999 Guidelines for Distance Education by the North Central Association Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (NCA), are suggested as a guide for Missouri institutions as they develop and implement courses for, and assess their involvement in, distance education and web-based course delivery.

The intent of these principles is to encourage reflection on quality and best practices, as faculty and institutions negotiate the rapidly changing and sometimes unfamiliar territory that such courses inherently have. Institutions are encouraged to operationalize these principles in locally directed ways that result in meaningful steps toward ensuring high quality.

. Distance-learning courses and programs, including web-based courses, should maintain high academic integrity.
    - Institutions should ensure both the rigor of courses and the quality of instruction.
    - Institutions should ensure that the technology used is appropriate to the nature and objectives of each course.
    - Institutions should ensure the currency of materials, programs, and courses.
    - Each institution's distance education policies regarding ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and utilization of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourses, or other media products should be clear and in writing.
    - Institutions should provide appropriate faculty support services specifically related to distance education.
    - Institutions should provide appropriate technological and pedagogical training for faculty who teach distance education courses/web-based courses.
    - Faculty should engage in timely and adequate interaction with students and, when appropriate, should encourage interaction among students.
    - Institutions should ensure that distance-learning courses and web-based courses apply toward degrees and that there is sufficient explanation to the distance learner as to how those courses apply toward degrees.

I. Distance-learning and web-based courses and programs should be assessed and evaluated regularly.
    - Institutions should assess student capability to succeed in distance education programs and should apply this information to admission and recruiting policies and decisions.
    - Institutions should evaluate the educational effectiveness of their distance education programs and web-based courses (including assessments of student-learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction) to ensure comparability to campus-based programs.
    - Institutions should ensure that the performance of distance-learning faculty and faculty involved in providing web-based courses is evaluated in a fashion that is at least as rigorous as that used to evaluate the performance of their peers who do not teach distance-learning courses.
    - Institutions should ensure, to a reasonable extent, the integrity of student work.

II. Institutions involved in distance education and web-based instruction should ensure that students have access to adequate resources and services.
    - Institutions should have access to the equipment and technical expertise required for distance education.
    - Institutions should ensure that students have access to, and can effectively use, appropriate library resources (through traditional and electronic means), including MOBIUS, a consortium of Missouri's academic libraries.
    - Institutions should monitor whether students make appropriate use of learning resources.

- Institutions should provide laboratories, facilities, equipment, and software appropriate to the courses or programs and/or make clear to students the responsibilities they have to provide their own such equipment.
- Institutions should provide adequate access to a range of student services appropriate to support distance-learning courses and programs, including (but not limited to) admissions, enrollment, assessment, tutorials, special needs access, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, placement, and counseling.
- Institutions should provide an adequate means for resolving student complaints.
- Institutions should provide students with information that adequately and accurately represents the programs, requirements, and services available.
- Institutions should ensure that students enrolled in courses possess the knowledge and equipment necessary to use the technology employed in the program and should provide aid to students who are experiencing difficulty using the required technology.

Review Process for Program Changes

A change in an academic program needs to be submitted to the Coordinating Board for both informational and review purposes. After considering the requested changes, the Commissioner may determine that the program change should be submitted instead as a new program proposal. Program changes should be reported using the "Request Program Change" form. Please complete Form PC. Program changes that should be submitted include the following:

Program Title Change: All revisions or changes in the name of a program or its nomenclature shall be reported to the CBHE. A title or nomenclature revision that includes substantive curriculum changes may be deemed tantamount to a new program and may be referred back to the institution for resubmission as a new program.

Combination Programs: This category includes only those programs that result from a mechanical combination of two previously existing programs. Substantive curricular changes shall ordinarily be limited to the elimination of duplicated requirements. The development of interdisciplinary programs and area-study programs that use the resources of several existing programs needs to be handled through the new program approval process.

Single-Semester Certificates: Given the limited scope of this type of program, a single-semester certificate may be added or deleted simply by using the "Request for Program Change" form. The establishment of a longer program, however, should be pursued through the "Review Process for New Programs."

One-Year Certificate Programs: A one-year certificate program developed from an approved program can be reported as a program change provided the program is directly related to an approved degree program and consists predominantly of courses included in the approved parent degree program. A one-year certificate not associated with an approved parent degree program should be submitted as a new program.

Option Addition: The addition of a specialized course of study as a component of an umbrella degree program may be submitted as an option-addition program change, subject to the limitation that the Commissioner shall make a determination regarding the potential for unnecessary or inappropriate duplication of existing programs. Only in those instances in which duplication is not a problem, may the proposed option be implemented. The following general guidelines are used to distinguish a permissible option addition from a proposed new degree program.

. An option (or emphasis area) functions as a component of an umbrella degree program. As such, an option in a specialized topic shall consist of a core area of study in the major plus selected topical courses in the specialty. Although typically, the core area of study shall constitute a preponderance of the requirements in the major area of study, especially at the baccalaureate level or below, as measured by the number of required courses or credit hours, no specific percentage distribution requirement has been established.

A. A proposed option (or emphasis area) shall be a logical component or extension of the umbrella degree program. One measure of this compatibility-but certainly not the only one-would be the consonance of the proposed addition with the federal CIP taxonomy. For example, in physics, while

optics would be an appropriate option or emphasis area, astrophysics would ordinarily not be acceptable, since it is typically viewed as a branch of astronomy rather than physics.

B. The number of new courses required to implement a new option (or emphasis area) can also be a relevant consideration.

Inactive Status for Existing Programs: Programs placed on "Inactive Status" will essentially be suspended for a specified period not to exceed five years. Students in the program at the time this status is adopted will be permitted to conclude their course of study if they have no more than two years of coursework remaining, but no new students may be admitted to the program. Programs designated as "Inactive" will be noted on institutional program inventories. At the conclusion of the designated inactive period-not to exceed five years-the institution must review the program's status and may either delete or reactivate the program. In the event the institution chooses to reactivate the program, the institution will provide to the Coordinating Board satisfactory evidence that the resources necessary for the program are available and must establish performance goals for the program that are acceptable to the Coordinating Board.

Deletion of Programs: Institutions need to submit standard program-change information whenever a program or option is deleted. This same provision applies whenever two or more programs are to be consolidated into one or more new offerings.