

State Board of Education Rule Series 2200 Approvals Committee

Draft Meeting Minutes

Meeting Place: Virtual Teams Meeting/Video/Teleconference
Call in #: 1-802-828-7667
Conference ID: 794 189 100#
Date: January 3, 2024

Present

State Board of Education (SBE) Subcommittee Members: Tom Lovett, Jenna O'Farrell, Lyle Jepson (left at 2:56 p.m.)

Agency of Education (AOE): Cassandra Ryan, Maureen Gaidys, Deborah Ormsbee, Pat Pallas Gray

Others: Mark Ballard – President New England Baptist College (NEBC) - Rich Schneider, Gabrielle Malina, Rich Schneider, Vermont Higher Education Council (VHEC)

Call to Order/Roll Call/Amendments to the Agenda

Tom Lovett called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. There were no amendments to the agenda.

Approve Draft Minutes from the [September 6, 2023 Meeting](#)

Tom Lovett made a motion to approve the minutes from September 6, 2023 meeting. Jenna O'Farrell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Public to be Heard

There was no public to be heard.

Overview of Post-Secondary Approvals – Cassandra Ryan

Cassandra Ryan provided a review of the post-secondary approval process and what the State Board's oversight entails. The 2200 Rule Series oversees the process. Starting at 2240 is the post-secondary section. There are two types of requests "Certificate of Approval" to offer credit bearing courses, or "Degree Granting Authority," which is the Northeast Baptist College (NEBC) request at this meeting.

It also makes a difference if the school is chartered within or outside of the State of Vermont.

Renewal

Northeast Baptist College (NEBC) Renewal - Bennington

The VHEC (Vermont Higher Education Council) is contracted to do the review of applicants from a degree granting institution and offers a report to the State Board of Education. The maximum approval is five years. Approval can be between 1-5 years. Once they have submitted a timely renewal application, colleges can continue to operate until the application is taken up by the Agency of Education and forwarded to the State Board of Education. That is the case with NEBC. Their initial approval was in 2014. They were grandfathered from the new 10-year requirement that would require an accreditation process with a third party.

VHEC is not an accreditor. The VHEC process is similar to the NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) process. The criteria is very similar. As outlined by VHEC staff, the process is aligned to, but not as comprehensive as, NEASC. Their goal is to get the school ready for regional accreditation.

Rich Schneider from VHEC provided a background. NEBC is looking at a Christian higher education accreditation. Accreditation provides for federal funding opportunities. NEBC is not asking for accreditation. They are looking for certification from the State Board of Education.

The Agency of Education is responsible for following up on any follow-up conditions.

In January 2024, 60-62 students are enrolled for the spring semester. Many have already committed for fall of 2024.

There is a contingency plan in the event the President is no longer in his position. In the second 10-year plan, within five years, they will have a clear succession plan. They have an emergency plan in place in the event a life-changing event takes place. The 10-year campaign launched in August is critical to their overall plans. Currently, they are in the interview process for a development director to work alongside the President in fundraising.

There is no attestation process required in this process.

The early scholars program includes a home-school network of students. So far, there has not been a student from a public school. Grace Christian is a limited feeder program to NEBC. Families outside the community pay any course costs for their student.

President Ballard credited the State of Vermont's rigorous process for the school's ability to easily transfer credits to other colleges.

Overall, the school has had 40-50 alumni. There is an alumni network. The last week of October is alumni week. Chapel services are run by alumni.

Their goal is to exceed the standards expected of them. They worked hard to create a self-assessment process that was rigorous. They have worked diligently on program and course assessment practices.

They are pursuing accreditation as a candidate via TRACS (Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools). They anticipate success.

Fundraising is going well. They have a large number of small donors. They have one large donor and several mid-level donors. A new large capacity donor has stepped in and there are

good responses from others about the 10-year campaign. The President spent several weeks traveling to launch the effort.

They are adding coursework incrementally.

Back pay has been decreased. As the campaign progresses, the overall liability will be reduced. For the foreseeable future, back pay will not increase.

(Lyle Jepson left the meeting.)

The school uses an accrual basis for accounting and is adding to its business services staff, including contracting out to some accounting agencies. Its auditors provide reliable oversight and have made suggestions that have improved processes like reconciliation of donor gifts.

The school currently has 42 undergraduate students (eight of whom will graduate this year), 10 graduate students, 3 early scholars (with more coming), and 10 non-degree students. The student body is 52% female and 48% male.

Tom Lovette made the motion, seconded by Jenna, "That the State Board of Education renew Northeastern Baptist College's (NEBC) Certificate of Approval to offer credit-bearing courses and Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority for associate and bachelor programs and approve the addition of the master's level programs in Biblical studies (Applied Theology, Advanced Applied Theology, and Biblical Exegesis in Old or New Testament) for a period of four (4) years commencing upon the date of State Board of Education's approval and contingent on NEBC providing the Agency of Education annual reports on the following:

1. An Enrollment Plan and a Fundraising Plan including financial expectations over a 3-year time period;
2. Copies of submitted Annual 990 tax forms;
3. Copies of approved annual external audited financial statements with accompanying opinion letter and response;
4. Progress made on the extent to which back salaries stated in employment contracts are honored and paid; and
5. On alternate years starting in 2024 a report on progress made regarding launch of the graduate programs and implementation of the assessment plan.

It passed unanimously.

Adjourn

Tom Lovett moved to adjourn the meeting. Jenna O'Farrell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:12p.m.

Minutes prepared by Lyle Jepson

