



To: Vermont State Board of Education; Heather Bouchey, Interim Secretary of Education; Cassandra Ryan, Director of Regulatory Compliance

From: Vermont Higher Education Council Certification Review Committee

Date: June 26, 2023

Subject: Recommendation on Renewal of State Certification for Northeast Baptist College

Our recommendation is guided and driven by the purpose of the review process, which is to provide a vehicle that protects the integrity of the higher education authorization process in Vermont and offers assurances to the public that a college has both seriousness of purpose and resources to carry out its work.

Northeast Baptist College (NEBC) has continued to make improvements in staffing, operational policy development, student services, physical facilities, and academic programs. Still, concerns remain regarding financial viability and certain financial/personnel compensation practices of the College.

The Vermont Higher Education Council (VHEC) Certification Review Committee, informed by the visiting team's report, recommends continuation of authorization for NEBC to operate as a higher education degree-granting institution in Vermont **for four additional years and to continue offering the new Masters programs**. NEBC has operated successfully and has been following its mission since the last Certification Team visit five years ago in 2018.

The recommendation to continue authorization for four years should be made contingent on NEBC providing the Agency annual reports on the following:

1. A teach-out plan, including a signed agreement with another institution (or multiple) which would accept NEBC students in the case of closure and also safeguard and retain all transcripts and alumni records. *It is our understanding that NEBC now has a signed MOU for teachout. VHEC suggests that the State Board request a copy of that signed agreement for review and record keeping purposes.*
2. An Enrollment Plan and a Fundraising Plan including financial expectations over a 3-year time period;
3. Copies of submitted Annual 990 tax forms;
4. Copies of approved annual external audited financial statements with accompanying opinion letter and response. *At the time of its 2018 Review, NEBC was not yet receiving audited statements, but have begun receiving them this year.*
5. Progress made on the extent to which back salaries stated in employment contracts are honored and paid;
6. On alternate years starting in 2024 a report on progress made regarding launch of the graduate programs and implementation of the assessment plan.

Although, as stated, NEBC has made improvements overall and endured during a challenging time in higher education, VHEC continues to be concerned about aspects of NEBC's finances, including the fact that some faculty and staff are essentially operating as volunteers. We feel this is an area that the Agency of Education and the State Board of Education should continue to evaluate through its monitoring of the annual reports that NEBC is being asked to send to the Agency.