9/1/09 Memo to Presidents and Chief Academic Officers of Universities and Health-Related Institutions

Subject: New Policies and Procedures for Academic Program Approval and Review

This email message is sent on behalf of Dr. MacGregor M. Stephenson, Assistant Commissioner of Academic Affairs and Research, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

This new process becomes effective on September 1, 2009.

Background

For more than 30 years, the Coordinating Board has used a two-step process for approval of new academic degree programs, with preliminary authority most recently marking the first step in that process. Following preliminary authority approval, an institution would develop the resources needed for the program and submit a degree program proposal requesting final approval to implement the degree program. The Coordinating Board would consider the request on the basis of quality standards, commitment of resources and cost effectiveness, and state and regional need at the time of submission.

New Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programs

At its July 30, 2009 meeting, the Coordinating Board adopted rules that significantly streamline the process of approval for most new bachelor's and master's degree programs (Chapter 5, Subchapter C, Section 5.44). In summary, the adopted rules eliminate preliminary authority for all baccalaureate and master's-level programs with the exception of engineering programs (classified under CIP code 14). Preliminary authority is still required for engineering programs at all levels and doctoral programs. In addition, the new rules permit automatic approval of a new bachelor's or master's program if an institution and governing board certify the following:

- The program has institutional and governing board approval;
- the program complies with the *Standards for Bachelor's and Master's Programs;*
- adequate funds are available to cover the costs of the new program;
- new costs during the first five years of the program will not exceed $2 million;
- the program is a non-engineering program (i.e., not classified under CIP code 14); and
- the program will be offered by a university or health-related institution.

A new bachelor's program (including one combined with an educator preparation certificate program) or master's program that meets these criteria may be requested using the *Certification Form for New Bachelor's or Master's Degree Programs* and is automatically approved if no objections are received during the 30-day public comment

period. The institution's program inventory will be updated accordingly and a letter of approval will be sent to the institution/System. Please visit the website below as updates on these new procedures have been made. In addition, please review the *Standards for Bachelor's and Master's Programs* as the Commissioner of Higher Education has authorized several changes.

http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=E9309E5B-9070-B807-57EFABDB07994C08

All other requests for new bachelor's or master's degree programs (e.g., a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering, a Master of Arts in Criminal Justice exceeding $2 million, etc.) must be submitted using the standard *Form for Requesting a New Bachelor's or Master's Degree Program.* Please note that revisions to existing educator preparation programs do not need to be submitted to the Coordinating Board.

Review of Existing Programs

The rules adopted by the Board also include a directive to staff "to develop a process for the periodic review of existing degree programs." A review process will likely include both quantitative and qualitative measures of a program's quality and effectiveness. The Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee has recently made recommendations on measures that could be used in a review of undergraduate programs. In the near future, the Graduate Education Advisory Committee will consider measures for use in a review of master's programs. We will keep you updated as progress is made.

Other Changes

New procedures for administrative change approval and certificate program approval have also been adopted by the Board. Information on these new procedures has also been posted at the website indicated above.