**12/01/09 Memo to Presidents and Chief Academic Officers of Community, State and Technical Colleges**

**Subject: New Policies and Procedures for Academic Associate Degree, Associate of Applied Science Degree, and Certificate 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 December 1, 2009.***

## Background

For more than 30 years, the Coordinating Board has required community, state and technical colleges to submit a program proposal requesting approval to implement a new associate of applied science degree or certificate program prior to the implementation of the program at the college. The Coordinating Board considered these requests on the basis of quality standards, commitment of resources and cost effectiveness, and state and regional need at the time of submission. At the same time, colleges were allowed to award academic associate degrees without requesting approval from the Coordinating Board.

## New Associate Degree and Certificate Programs

At its October 29, 2009 meeting, the Coordinating Board adopted rules that outline the process of approval for new academic associate degree programs (Chapter 9, Subchapter J). In summary, the adopted rules permit automatic approval of a new academic associate degree program if an institution and governing board certify that the degree meets certain criteria and that recent documentation is available to support these criteria. (See New Academic Associate Degree Program Information.) Coordinating Board staff is in the process of identifying academic associate degrees that have had completers reported in the past two academic years and adding those degrees to the reporting institution's existing clearinghouse program inventory. Any new academic degree programs must be submitted for automatic approval prior to the beginning of the semester in which they are to be offered for the first time.

The Coordinating Board also adopted rules that significantly streamline the process of approval for new associate of applied science degree and certificate programs (Chapter 9, Subchapter E, Section 9.93). In summary, the adopted rules permit automatic approval of a new associate of applied science degree or certificate program if an institution and governing board certify that the program meets certain criteria and that recent documentation is available to support these criteria. (See New AAS Degree and Certificate Program Information.)

## 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. We will keep you updated as progress is made.