

June 2011

Proposed Changes to Program Approval and Review Process

Executive Summary

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) is responsible for overseeing state higher education resources, a role which includes the approval of new programs and review of existing programs. As stewards of state resources, the Board members must be able to assess the need for each program as well as the quality of the program. The Board must also avoid unwise duplication of programs while ensuring access to a variety of programs throughout the state to meet residents' and the state's needs.

The current program approval and review process, while effective, could be more streamlined and efficient. A lighter touch on program *approval* that focuses more closely on the need for the program from student, employer, and the state's perspective could be coupled with a new program *review* process that would provide useful follow-up information about whether programs are growing effectively, where we have a sufficient number and mix of program offerings, and where expansion is desirable.

The proposed change to the *Program Approval and Review Policies and Procedures* would:

- 1) Require advance planning notice for new degree program development, and alignment of initial proposed program requests with the budget process
- 2) Make changes to the two-step degree approval process to streamline the process
- 3) Reduce reporting requirements for contracts to offer programs with community and technical colleges
- 4) Ease and clarify approval requirements for established programs offered at new locations (including online delivery)
- 5) Establish a new policy for extension of programs to locations outside of Washington (including international sites)
- 6) Establish a formal process for dealing with conflicting demand evidence and concerns about program duplication (for new degree programs and extensions)
- 7) Establish criteria for reestablishing suspended programs
- 8) Reduce requests to institutions for data through use of enhanced Public Centralized Higher Education Enrollment System (PCHEES) reporting

- 9) Streamline efforts to ensure the HECB Approved Program Data System remains complete and up to date
- 10) Reduce program review requirements for detailed reporting on program need and transition to a rolling, systematic review of programs, according to a common schedule.

Introduction

The governing boards of the public higher education institutions (e.g., Board of Regents, Board of Trustees) are charged with developing new degree programs and assessing the academic quality of the curriculum, evaluating the capacity of the institutions to offer programs efficiently, and using resources wisely.

The HECB has statutory responsibility for approving baccalaureate and graduate degree programs and off-campus facilities offered by the public four-year institutions (and, in instances where required by statute, the public two-year institutions). The HECB implements its statutory authority through the policies outline in the 2005 *Program and Facility Approval Policies and Procedures* as amended in 2009 and 2010.

The HECB will approve new baccalaureate and graduate degree programs and off-campus facilities that align with and/or implement the *Strategic Master Plan* priorities and respond to the state's needs.

Board approval will be based on evidence that the program or off-campus facility is likely to:

- Support the unique role and mission of the institution(s)
- Foster high-quality programs that enable students to complete their studies in a reasonable amount of time
- Meet state and/or regional student, employer, and community needs
- Provide access for diverse student populations
- Demonstrate that the need is commensurate with the costs to be incurred and represents an effective use of fiscal resources
- Be free from unnecessary program duplication

In addition, the *System Design Plan*, approved by the Board in November 2009 and endorsed by the 2010 Legislature in SSB 6355, calls for a focus on “expand on demand” for both short- and long-term growth in higher education. The Plan represents a philosophy that is responsive to student, community, and employer demand. To align with this philosophy, the Board's program approval and review policies need to place greater emphasis on demand for programs and their “fit” with the campus mission, and regional and state needs. Changes in the HECB's program approval and review processes, which are broadly defined in RCW 28B.72.230, will help realize the intent of the *System Design Plan*.

Campus Feedback

As part of the *System Design Plan* implementation, HECB staff visited 13 campuses during the months of May through July 2010, including all public baccalaureate institutions, several branch campuses, independent institutions, and community colleges. The purpose of these visits was to gather information directly from campuses about their short- and long-term plans for growth. In addition, we asked for feedback on our policies and procedures to identify ways in which we could better meet the needs of the institution and the state with the ultimate goal of better serving students.

During these visits we heard support for the direction of the *System Design Plan*, including greater emphasis on local and regional demand, an inclusive process to review applied baccalaureate degrees at the community and technical colleges, a formal process for dealing with conflicting demand evidence and concerns about program duplication, and a streamlined program review process.

In response to these issues, staff have identified several key changes in program and facility approval policies discussed below. The proposed changes to program approval and program review were discussed at the Education Committee meetings in January and March 2011 respectively, and provided to the Board and stakeholders. Staff accepted feedback from January through May 2011 and met twice with the Interinstitutional Committee for Academic Program Planning (ICAPP) members by phone and in person to discuss the changes. The proposed policy revisions described on the following page reflect feedback from Board members, stakeholders, and discussions with institutional representatives.

Program Approval

The current *Program and Facility Approval Policies and Procedures*, adopted by the Board in September 2005, responded to statutory direction from the 2004 Legislature to place greater emphasis on student, employer, and community demand for degree programs. The Board modified program approval policies in 2009, clarifying definitions and allowing a new abbreviated approval process for moderate degree changes. In November 2010, additional modifications addressed the approval of applied baccalaureate degrees offered by community and technical colleges, which were removed from “pilot” status by the Legislature as part of SSB 6355. The Board adopted a collaborative approval process with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges in November 2010 (resolution 10-31).

As indicated above, the *System Design Plan* calls for a focus on “expand on demand” for both short- and long-term growth in higher education. To align with this philosophy, the Board’s program approval and review policies need to place greater emphasis on demand for programs and their “fit” with campus mission, and regional and state needs.

Changes to the HECB’s Program Approval Process

To implement a program approval process that is less bureaucratic and places more emphasis on demand, staff are proposing changes in existing policies and procedures. These include the following:

- 1) Advance planning notice for new degree program development, and alignment of initial proposed program requests with the budget process
- 2) Changes to the two-step degree approval process:
 - a. HECB initiated program development - a streamlined approval process in which the HECB may request proposals for programs to meet an identified regional or state need
 - b. Changes to the curriculum review process
 - c. Definition of faculty qualifications
 - d. Changes to the moderate degree change process
 - e. A procedure to address concerns about insufficient need or unnecessary program duplication
 - f. Regular, published deadlines for submission and review
- 3) Reduced reporting requirements for contracts to offer programs with community and technical colleges
- 4) A change to the policy for extensions of programs within Washington
- 5) A new policy for extensions of programs to locations outside of Washington (includes international sites, does not include online delivery)
- 6) Establishing criteria for reintroduction of suspended programs.

Advance Planning Notice for New Degree Program Development and Alignment with Budget Requests

To help the HECB plan more efficiently for new programs, institutions would be asked to:

- Provide early information about planned programs. Institutions would submit a very brief description (100 words) of programs they intend to propose during the biennium during even numbered years on the same schedule as the proposed institutional budgets.
- In odd numbered years, institutions would provide an updated list of program additions and deletions for the second year of the biennium along with their supplemental budget materials.

Rationale: In our effort to streamline the approval process in 2005, we lost a key planning document that helped us anticipate program growth and direct system growth.

Prior to 2005, institutions submitted plans outlining programs for which they intended to seek approval over the next two years. The procedure was replaced with the current planning notice procedure because accepting pre-proposals in batches every two years appeared unresponsive to emergent needs. However, the unintended consequence was that staff and the Board lost the higher-level overview of programs institutions were submitting. This loss of perspective changed the Board's ability to make strategic decisions about programs, to one of making more incremental decisions that lacked the broader institutional and system level context.

While the HECB no longer receives advance notice of planned programs on a regular schedule, the institutions have maintained an informal process to share plans for new programs through the "ICAPP grid," which includes the expected timeline proposal for submission. Formalizing this existing planning process would improve staff's ability to anticipate program approval volume and consider individual proposals in a larger context. Linking the collection of these plans to the budget cycle would help inform budget recommendations, including the need for planning monies and additional resources. Finally, linking plans to the budget would enable the HECB to better understand the planned growth of the institutions over the biennium.

Changes to the Two-step Approval Process

The current Planning Notice of Intent (PNOI) requirement would be eliminated and replaced by a two-part approval process (see flow chart in Appendix A). Part 1 of the degree approval process would document the need for the program and alignment with institutional mission, and address any program duplication concerns. In Part 1, institutions would submit a proposal cover sheet similar to the current cover sheet and a narrative that includes the following sections of the current proposal outline:

- Relationship to Institutional Role, Mission, Program Priorities, and the *Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education*
- Documentation of need for the program
- Relationship to programs at other institutions documenting there will be no unnecessary duplication of existing programs.

Staff would post Part 1 of the proposal for public comment and review the feedback from the comments and the proposal to determine whether need justifies further development of the program proposal. If need does exist, the institution would submit the remaining elements of the proposal as Part 2. Institutions would not re-submit need information already submitted in Part 1 and Part 2 would not be subject to another formal public comment period (though of course stakeholders could still provide comments to staff during the review period or to the Board members at either the HECB Education Committee or full Board meetings).

Rationale: The current process fosters a duplication of effort (and generates some confusion) for institutions. Under the current two-step approval process, staff assess demand twice. The first time is a cursory assessment of demand to determine whether additional planning is warranted, followed by a second, more detailed analysis that occurs when the full proposal is submitted. In practice, institutions are doing a great deal of demand analysis at the time of the PNOI. Positioning demand analysis earlier in the review process would allow time for thorough discussion and negotiation when concerns about demand are raised.

HECB initiated program development

Under current state law and policy, the HECB periodically conducts an analysis of state higher education needs that takes into consideration student, employer, and community demand. As described above, the shift in philosophy that came out of the *System Design Plan* was to move toward more proactive planning for regional and state-wide needs by the HECB. To that end, HECB staff would engage in more in-depth analysis of demand for particular programs and develop requests for proposals for institutions to meet identified needs. Because demand would already be established, institutions submitting a proposal to the HECB would not need to document demand for the program. Part 1 of the application would focus on meeting identified needs and relationship to mission and program strengths. HECB staff, with advice of an advisory panel (when appropriate) would select the program deemed best able to meet identified needs and forward that proposal to the Education Committee and full Board for approval.

Changes to the curriculum review process

The staff review will place less emphasis on program curriculum than in the current process. Staff already rely heavily on external reviewer comments to affirm curricular quality. A good deal of staff effort, however, is currently spent on analysis of program curriculum and reviewer comments. As part of the changes to program approval, HECB staff will spend far less time re-analyzing this information. HECB staff will rely on the external reviewers' content area expertise to assess whether a program demonstrates a coherent design with appropriate breadth, depth, and sequencing of courses (including prerequisites). In addition, reviewers will be asked to comment on student learning outcomes, program and student assessment, and whether the degree title is consistent with the curriculum offered and clear to students.

If staff have concerns or if the reviewers' feedback conflict, then staff may request that the institution seek additional review of the program, or staff may solicit a review from an expert independent of the institution.

Staff will continue to review institutions' plans for program-specific accreditation, faculty qualifications (discussed further below), student and program assessment plans, and plans for transfer and articulation.

Rationale: HECB staff are not experts on curriculum and currently rely heavily on external reviewers for feedback on program quality, depth, and breadth. The intent of this change is to reduce the number of follow-up questions between the HECB staff and program planners by asking for a thorough review from content experts, and more readily engaging additional content experts when concerns are identified.

Define faculty qualifications

The current policies and procedures do not define faculty qualifications. In general, staff analysis has been based on a general working definition of appropriate degree level and critical mass of permanent faculty. The revised policy would require that faculty:

- Be professionally prepared and graduates of accredited institutions
- Be sufficient in number and kind, and in the proportion of part- and full-time positions to sustain rigorous courses, programs, and services
- In general, faculty teaching at the baccalaureate level must be prepared at least one level higher than the degree they are preparing students for. Faculty teaching in graduate and professional programs must have an appropriate terminal degree.

Rationale: In a few instances, questions of faculty qualifications have arisen during the program approval process. For the public sector, neither the HECB nor the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) has established clearly defined faculty qualifications. While, there is general agreement about typical faculty qualifications, we find that use of a definition would provide greater guidance to institutions and stakeholders. This approach has worked well in our degree authorization standards (WAC 250-61-100).

Changes to the moderate degree change process

The Moderate Degree Change policy was adopted by the Board in March 2009. Since approval of the policy, the Board has acted on 12 Moderate Degree Change proposals. The majority of these changes have involved little or no new resources and relatively minor changes to curriculum. Changes include:

- Conversions of existing degree options, specializations, or concentrations to degrees (e.g. conversion of options within a BA degree to separate BA degrees)
- Consolidation of two or more existing degrees into a single new degree (e.g. consolidation of two separate Ph.D. degrees into a single Ph.D. degree)
- A change in eligibility for consideration with a new definition of an “established program.”

Under the revised policies and procedures, approval of these moderate changes would be delegated to HECB staff. As with the current policy, a program could be referred to full proposal review, if the change is more than “moderate” or if concerns arise during the review or comment period.

Currently, a program can apply for a moderate degree change after five graduating classes. The revised policy would allow changes after three graduating classes and refer to a newly defined “established program,” which includes programs that have graduated students for at least three years and have received professional accreditation (if such accreditation has significant implications for students or graduates including, but not limited to, implications for licensure).

The revised policy also allows for the use of the moderate degree change process for changes in the level of an existing degree program’s degree designation (e.g. upgrading a professional bachelor’s degree to a master’s degree in response to a requirement by a licensing authority) or changes that do not fall into an explicitly defined category but represent a similar kind of reasonable, moderate change. In these cases, the institution, in consultation with HECB staff, may still submit the proposal using the moderate degree change format. However, the proposal would be reviewed by the Education Committee then taken to the full Board for approval.

Rationale: In many cases programmatic changes do not represent a significant change to the program curriculum, faculty resources, or student population. For example, conversion of an existing option to a major usually involves the same faculty, very few if any additional new courses, and typically draws the same types of students. Because such programmatic changes represent a low risk of state resources, Board action is an unnecessary step.

A procedure to address concerns about insufficient need or unnecessary program duplication

When institutions (public or private) raise concerns about program duplication that are not satisfied through staff discussion and analysis, HECB staff would take the following steps to resolve concerns:

- HECB staff would first ask institutions to attempt to resolve the issue among themselves
- If unsuccessful, HECB staff would facilitate a discussion between the parties at the HECB office in Olympia
- If the parties are still unable to resolve the issues, HECB staff would take the matter to the Education Committee of the Board, which could resolve the issue at that time or refer the matter to the full Board for action.

Rationale: While uncommon, there are instances where concerns about a program are raised and greater input and discussion is required. The current policies do not provide for a dispute resolution process so these have been handled on a case-by-case basis. The goal of this change is to provide a process for concerns to be addressed in a fair and consistent manner.

Regular, published deadlines for submission and review

Deadlines for submitting Part 1 (demand) and Part 2 (full proposal) would be published for the biennium. HECB staff will review programs proposals on a quarterly basis.

- Part 1 is due approximately six months prior to the Board meeting at which the proposed program is to be considered.
- Part 2 is due approximately three months prior to the full Board meeting at which the proposed program is to be considered.

Moderate degree changes would be submitted approximately six months prior to the Board meeting at which the proposal would be reviewed. This is to allow for referral to the full proposal process if necessary without delaying planned implementation. HECB staff will provide a calendar of program approval deadlines for the biennium when budget guidelines are released. The calendar will be updated with HECB Education Committee and full Board meetings, when they are available.

Rationale: Developing clear and consistent deadlines will benefit all parties. The deadlines will ensure that the HECB is able to dedicate necessary staff resources to ensure timely consideration of new program proposals. Clear timelines also help institutions and faculty set potential start dates, consider faculty and staff resources, and other critical issues in program planning and implementation. The change would also help ensure that stakeholders have ample time to comment on programs.

Reduced Reporting Requirements for Contracts to Offer Programs with Community and Technical Colleges

Currently, the HECB is required to approve certain contracts between public and private institutions and community and technical colleges to deliver programs and/or collaborate in program delivery under two separate policies (see sections A-9 and A-10 of the current policies and procedures). In both instances, authority for approval is delegated to HECB staff. Also, in both cases the collaborating programs are already subject to approval by the HECB through program approval or degree authorization. The current requirement causes a good deal of confusion, and in some cases, duplication of effort. The proposed change to the policies would reaffirm that programs offered at a given site are subject to appropriate approvals but would remove the requirement that HECB review the actual contracts in advance. Rather, the HECB would ask for a notification of the agreement and a copy of the final contract.

Rationale: The change affects two policy areas. The first deals with approval of agreements between community or technical colleges and selected public baccalaureate institutions related to a pilot program authorized in statute (RCW 28B.50.820). The status of the pilot program does not change, but funding outlined in the pilot is expanded outside the pilot program. The second policy is related to partnerships between community and technical colleges and private institutions (RCW 28B.76.230). In both cases, other approval requirements for programs operating on a community college campus already exist, and additional approval of the contract represents a duplication of effort. However, notification of the agreement does provide an important check to ensure approval or authorization procedures are being followed.

A Change to Policy for Extensions of Programs within Washington

For recently approved programs and the first program delivered to a specific location, there is no substantive change in policy except for programs offered out of state.

For established programs to be delivered to existing teaching sites, centers, or campuses, the institution would submit a notification informing the HECB of the title of the program, delivery mechanism and locations, anticipated FTE, and implementation date. Notices would be subject to a 30-day comment period. If concerns are raised during the comment period, HECB would work with parties to resolve concerns. Otherwise, the program could be implemented following the comment period.

“Established Programs” are those programs that have graduated students for at least three years and have received professional accreditation (if such accreditation has significant implications for students or graduates including, but not limited to, implications for licensure).

Rationale: The current policy and procedures creates an unnecessary regulatory burden. Most of the extensions to off campus locations are not controversial and eliminating the approval step is intended to encourage institutions to provide more programs off campus and use alternative forms of delivery.

A New Policy for Extensions of Programs to Locations Outside of Washington (includes international sites, does not include online delivery)

While it is clear that there can be a value to extending programs outside the state of Washington, the regular criteria for approval does not address the primary issues related to these types of programs. For extensions outside the state of Washington, the extension proposal must include a fully developed plan for program delivery, including both a staffing plan and a financial plan. This delivery plan must satisfactorily demonstrate that the program will be self-sufficient and generate at least enough revenue to cover all operating and start-up costs. This plan must also be reasonably specific about faculty workload (including teaching and other work) and compensation, and describe the roles and compensation of staff hired to support the program. It must also disclose the impact on students in Washington of diverting faculty effort abroad. Specifically, the plan must demonstrate the following:

- The proposed program extension will support the institution’s mission and institutional priorities.
- The program extension will directly or indirectly benefit students in Washington.
- Student enrollment demand is sufficient to support the program as a self sustaining activity.
- The extended program will meet all requirements and follow all academic policies applicable to its in-state parent program.

- The extended program and the institution offering it will comply with all applicable regional and professional accreditation requirements, including, but not limited to those outlined in the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) [Operational Policy A-7 \(http://www.nwccu.org\)](http://www.nwccu.org).
- The extended program will adhere to the admission standards in effect for its parent program.
- Faculty teaching in the extended program will have qualifications comparable to faculty teaching in the parent program.
- Appropriate facilities and student services will be provided. (Note: proposals involving acquisition or lease of major off-campus facilities must include the information required by Policy B.)
- The full direct and indirect costs (including operating and start-up costs) of the extended program will be recovered through tuition and fees charged to its students or from a risk pool or other fund not financed through state taxes.

Rationale: State law (28B.76.230) requires that program approval be based up on demonstrated student, employer, and community needs and be consistent with the *Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education*. The policy for programs delivered outside of the state are intended to ensure that the program being offered would have local benefits consistent with this requirement.

Establish Criteria for Reintroduction of Suspended Programs

Under current policy, the Board is notified when programs are discontinued or suspended. The notification includes basic information about the program, rationale for the elimination, provisions for current students to complete their studies, and disposition of the program's state resources. For suspended programs the policy is silent on procedures for reinstating the program. The revised policy will establish a time limit to reinstate a suspended program. Programs that have been suspended may be reinstated within six years by submitting a notification letter to the HECB that includes the following information:

- Degree title
- CIP number
- Date of suspension
- Date of reinstatement
- Anticipated enrollment in Year 1 and full enrollment
- Location(s)
- Rationale for reinstatement

After six years, institutions would be required to submit a new degree program proposal to reinstate the program.

Rationale: The intent is to ensure that programs remain current and are provided adequate resources to effectively serve students, the community, and employers. A program that has been on hold for over six years would (most likely) no longer have students nor appropriate faculty or

other resources. The requirement that these programs go through the regular new degree approval process is to ensure that the program meets current student, employer and community needs, offers a curriculum consistent with the current trends in the field, and has appropriate faculty and other resources to deliver the program effectively.

Proposed Changes to Approval of Off-campus Facilities and Addition of Approval of Change of Mission

The HECB's *System Design Plan* lays out a detailed approach for the approval of new facilities as well as mission changes. The existing approval policies need to be modified to align with the *System Design Plan*, as described below.

Guiding Principles for System Expansion and Optimization

Seven principles provide a framework to maximize degree production capacity from the current higher education system while also providing a way to facilitate new expansion.

1. The interests and needs of current and future students should be one of the primary considerations in deciding whether, and how, to expand or revise higher education services.
2. Investments in higher education should advance the state's economic vitality, innovation, and job growth, including meeting the high demand needs of the state.
3. Washington should restore and further invest in its higher education system to preserve and build upon its excellence and productivity and optimize opportunities for future generations.
4. Major new investments in expansion to meet the *HECB Strategic Master Plan* degree goals should first leverage existing missions, institutions, partnerships, collaborations, and educational delivery models.
5. Washington should place an early emphasis on policies that will raise educational attainment in underserved populations and underserved regions of the state.
6. Incentives for innovation in outreach, access and completion, and alternative program delivery should be developed.
7. Washington should invest in online and hybrid instructional delivery to transform higher education so that it is better positioned to respond to changing technological, cultural and economic forces, improve the efficiency and quality of higher education, and provide greater access for all students, particularly those place-bound and geographically isolated.

Proposals for Major Expansion

Proposals for major expansion would be subject to a new review process by the state and HECB. This process can be locally driven or HECB-initiated. (see Chart B in Appendix B).

Locally-Driven

In a locally-driven proposal, institution(s) and/or the community would identify under-served areas or populations or high demand program areas to be targeted for expansion and submit a proposal to the HECB documenting the scope of the project and its ability to “expand on demand.” The HECB would evaluate the proposal and make a recommendation to the Legislature.

Each proposal would be evaluated using the Guiding Principles for the *System Design Plan* listed above and the following criteria:

- The specific scope of the project (e.g. large vs. small capital investment needs, number of FTE, and programs)
- Sustainable financial plan
- Response to the state and regional economic/workforce needs
- Extent to which existing resources are leveraged
- Short-term goals: current FTE to support the proposed programs/institutions/innovations, and five-year projections
- Long-term goals: plans to accommodate expected growth over the next 20 years
- Extent to which new or existing partnerships and collaborations are part of the proposals
- Feasibility of any proposed innovations (three-year programs, joint facility use, technology, alternative calendar, etc.) to increase degree production.

HECB-Initiated

A second path for major higher education expansion would be a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process initiated by the HECB. The HECB would identify under-served areas or populations, or high demand program areas and release an RFP to the higher education system. Proposals would be evaluated using the same process as that in the locally-driven approach, with the HECB again making its recommendation to the Legislature for approval.

In both paths, HECB-initiated or locally-driven, proposals must respond to state and regional economic development and workforce and innovation needs. But the process would also include a way to prompt innovation and new thinking in delivering higher education through a new “Fund for Innovation” to support proposals that respond to the HECB’s Master Plan priorities.

The *System Design Plan* also provided greater clarification on different levels of activity and associated investments that would indicate need to consider changes to mission or the need for additional capital investment (Chart A in Appendix C). Activity levels are defined as follows:

- ***Teaching Site:***

Teaching sites are authorized through HECB program approval, have a local focus, may be temporary or pilot sites, are typically located at a single institution, provide a limited number of programs or courses, require limited new operating funds, require no capital funds, and typically serve fewer than 150 FTE students.

- ***University Center:***

Leased or Existing Space: These centers are authorized through HECB approval, have a regional focus, may be either a transitional or a permanent space, may include multiple institutions, provide a broader array of programs, may require operating funds, require no new capital funds, and typically serve 150 – 300 FTE students.

With Capital Investment: These kind of centers are authorized through HECB approval and Legislative appropriation of funding, have a regional focus, may be either a transitional or a permanent space, may include multiple institutions, provide a broader array of programs, require new operating and capital funds, and typically serve 300 FTE students or more.

- ***System Campus:***

A new system campus must be authorized by the Legislature and its programs must be approved by HECB. It must have a statewide focus, must be a permanent space, can be a single institution that may be new, must provide an array of programs, and requires new state operating and capital funds.

There are three types of new campuses:

- Branch: typically greater than 800 FTE students
- Comprehensive: typically greater than 4,000 FTE students
- Research: typically greater than 15,000 FTE students.

Proposed Changes to Program Review

The ability to make good policy and planning decisions depends (in large part) upon good data. The proposed changes to program review will improve the ability of the HECB staff to conduct systematic reviews of college and university programs to better identify gaps by region and for the state as a whole—and do so without putting additional reporting burdens on the institutions. With these changes, the HECB will be better able to implement the strategic planning envisioned in the *System Design Plan*. The changes will also help the Board carry out its responsibility to oversee the state’s higher education resources, a role which includes the approval of new programs and periodic review of existing programs.

Program review is a critical part of the program planning process. It provides a base for assessment of program need as well as information about program quality. The current program review process, while generally informative, does not provide information in a consistent form that supports system level analysis and planning. The proposed changes to the program review process would support the revisions to the approval process described above and the statewide analysis and planning envisioned in the System Design Plan. Features of the recommended changes to the program review process include:

- Reduced data requests to institutions because data will be available through enhanced Public Centralized Higher Education Enrollment System (PCHEES) reporting, which will be able to provide the following:
 - Enrollments and completions in new programs
 - Enrollments and completions in programs under review
 - Enrollments by teaching location
- Streamlined efforts to ensure the HECB Approved Program Data System remains complete and up to date.
- Reduce requirements for detailed reporting on program need and transition to a rolling, systematic review of programs, according to a common schedule.

Current Program Review Process

Program review reports to the HECB include both new and existing programs. On a biennial basis, the institutions are required to report to the Board on the enrollment success of new and off-campus programs. The reports include a review of the status of new degree and certificate programs initiated within the previous five-year period and current degree and certificate programs offered at off-campus locations. In addition, the reports outline key academic planning activities that are not subject to Board approval, such as the renaming of programs.

The HECB also requires institutions to review existing degree programs on a cycle adopted by the institution (e.g., every five, seven, or ten years) and report to the HECB. Finally, the HECB may periodically request special reports or data related to the status of institutional programs by location.

Biennial Review of Academic Enrollments, Programs, and Locations

Every two years the HECB reviews institutions' academic enrollments, programs, and locations where programs are offered. This includes the status of new degree and certificate programs initiated within the previous five-year period, and current degree and certificate programs offered at off-campus locations. For these programs, as well as distance learning programs, institutions report average annual headcount and FTE enrollments for each of the preceding two years. Actual enrollments are then compared to the target enrollments that were outlined when the program was originally proposed. For programs with a significant enrollment discrepancy (the larger of 10 percent of projected enrollment or five FTE students), the institution must include an explanation.

As part of the biennial review, institutions also submit a Program and Facility Inventory Report that is used to maintain the currency and accuracy of the HECB Program and Facility Inventory. The report includes a listing of:

- All renamed degree and certificate programs (current program title/new program title)
- All renamed off-campus centers, teaching sites, locations (current title/new title)
- New options, specializations, or concentrations, teacher endorsements, and minors not subject to board approval
- Programs affected by the sunset provision (e.g. a planned program for which a full proposal was not received within two years of an institution's receipt of HECB permission to develop the program and/or those programs that did not enroll any students within three years of receiving HECB approval)
- Degree programs, certificate programs, options, specializations, or concentrations, teacher endorsements, and minors that are being eliminated, suspended, phased-out, and/or terminated.

Review of Continuing Degree Programs

The HECB also requires institutions to review continuing degree programs on a cycle adopted by the institution (typically every five, seven, or ten years). After completion of the internal program review, the institution submits a Continuing Program Review Report to the HECB. After five years of operation, all new programs, regardless of location or delivery type, are incorporated into the institution's continuing program review process.

The institution is responsible for determining the appropriate process and criteria for continuing degree program review. For example, similar programs offered by a single academic unit may be reviewed at the same time and incorporated into one program review. However, if program locations or delivery methods change from its last institutional review, the change must be addressed.

The Continuing Program Review Report contains the following information:

- Degree program title and CIP number
- Year of last program review

- Documentation of continuing need, including reference to the Statewide and Regional needs assessment
- Assessment information related to expected student learning outcomes and the achievement of the program's objectives
- Plans to improve the quality and productivity of the program
- Data on number of majors and degrees granted in the last three academic years for each degree program incorporated in the review; number of FTE faculty and graduate assistants that teach in the department.

At its discretion, the HECB may request additional information about specific degree programs.

Based on the information provided in the *Continuing Program Review Report*, additional information provided by the institution and/or the *State and Regional Needs Assessment*, HECB staff determines whether there is reason for the Board to consider making a recommendation to modify, consolidate, or eliminate the programs.

Proposed Revisions to the Program Review Process

The following changes to the current program review process are proposed for several reasons: provide more systematic state-wide and regional information for planning and coordination purposes (such as those described in the *System Design Plan*); provide for systematic review by major program areas (e.g., business or engineering or teacher education); improve the quality of the data for systematic program review, while not increasing the reporting burden upon institutions.

Reduced data requests to institutions because data will be available through enhanced PCHEES reporting

With the improvements underway as a result of grant funds to OFM to develop a robust Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS), much of the data we currently request from individual institutions will be directly accessible to HECB staff in a new, improved statewide PCHEES database (see Appendix D).

However, to get the level of detail we currently collect will also require completion of updates to another database - the Approved Program Data System which is housed at the HECB offices. Funds to improve the program data system are being provided through the SLDS grant also.

As part of the grant, this second database will be linked to PCHEES enrollment and completion data; but in the near term, requests for data from institutions may still be required.

Currently, the staffs of the Education Research and Data Center and HECB are working on development of the Approved Program Data System to provide a more up-to-date, accurate database of all approved public and private four-year programs and to track results by program area. Improvements will also allow the HECB to institute a new systematic program facility review process that tracks student enrollment patterns across sectors, identifies gaps in regional program delivery, and helps expand program diversity in targeted regions of the state. One of

the major benefits resulting from the proposed changes to the current program review process is that the HECB will be able to implement the planning and coordinating functions envisioned in the *System Design Plan*, endorsed by the Legislature in 2010 as SSB 6355.

Streamline efforts to ensure HECB Approved Program Data System remains complete and up to date.

Another benefit of the proposed changes is that review of existing programs can be consolidated and streamlined.

The HECB is the State Approving Agency (SAA) for degree and certificate program eligibility for Veterans' benefits. In that role, agency staff review catalogs of all public and private institutions in Washington that enroll students who receive GI Bill benefits. Through this work, the HECB has developed an extensive database of programs and program options available in Washington that is updated as new catalogs are released, typically every two years. Integrating this activity with the program review process will help keep the Approved Program Data System up to date and accurate. Building efficiencies now is critical because new regulations from the Veterans' Administration will eliminate the catalog review process. Maintaining currency of the data will require greater collaboration among staff that conducts program approval and review.

Reduce requirements for detailed reporting on program need and transition to a rolling, systematic review of programs, according to a common schedule.

Currently, as part of the program review process, institutions submit information to HECB staff on all programs reviewed through their regular institutional review process during the previous two years. Institutions submit the following items for each program included in the review:

- Degree program title and CIP number
- Year of last program review
- Documentation of continuing need, including reference to the statewide and regional needs assessment
- Assessment information related to expected student learning outcomes and the achievement of program objectives
- Plans to improve the quality and productivity of the program
- Data on number of majors and degrees granted in the last three academic years for each degree program in the review; number of FTE faculty and graduate assistants that teach in the department (see Appendix A)

In the most recent program review report (May 2010), HECB staff identified two key issues. First, while the review materials were informative; in most cases, the reviews were more detailed and internally focused than necessary for state level review. Second, because there was no common schedule for review, staff were unable to provide a statewide look at specific program areas or disciplines.

HECB staff can address both of these issues with minimal additional work from institutions. Improvements in data reported centrally to OFM and the HECB through the PCHEES data collection, and new analytical tools through ERDC (that include access to information from the Employment Security Department and the National Student Clearinghouse on student outcomes related to employment and enrollment in further education) will substantially reduce the reporting burden on institutions. Some of the database improvements necessary to eliminate institutional data requests are still in progress and will need to be phased in over time.

The following reporting requirements related to program review would be eliminated:

- Documentation of continuing need, including reference to the statewide and regional needs assessment
- Plans to improve the quality and productivity of the program.

HECB staff would reserve the right, however, to request the above information for programs that have had significant declines in enrollments or completions, programs with low enrollment to completion ratios, or programs where analysis of outcome data raises questions about demand.

HECB staff would continue to collect assessment information related to expected student learning outcomes and the achievement of program objectives on a revised schedule discussed below.

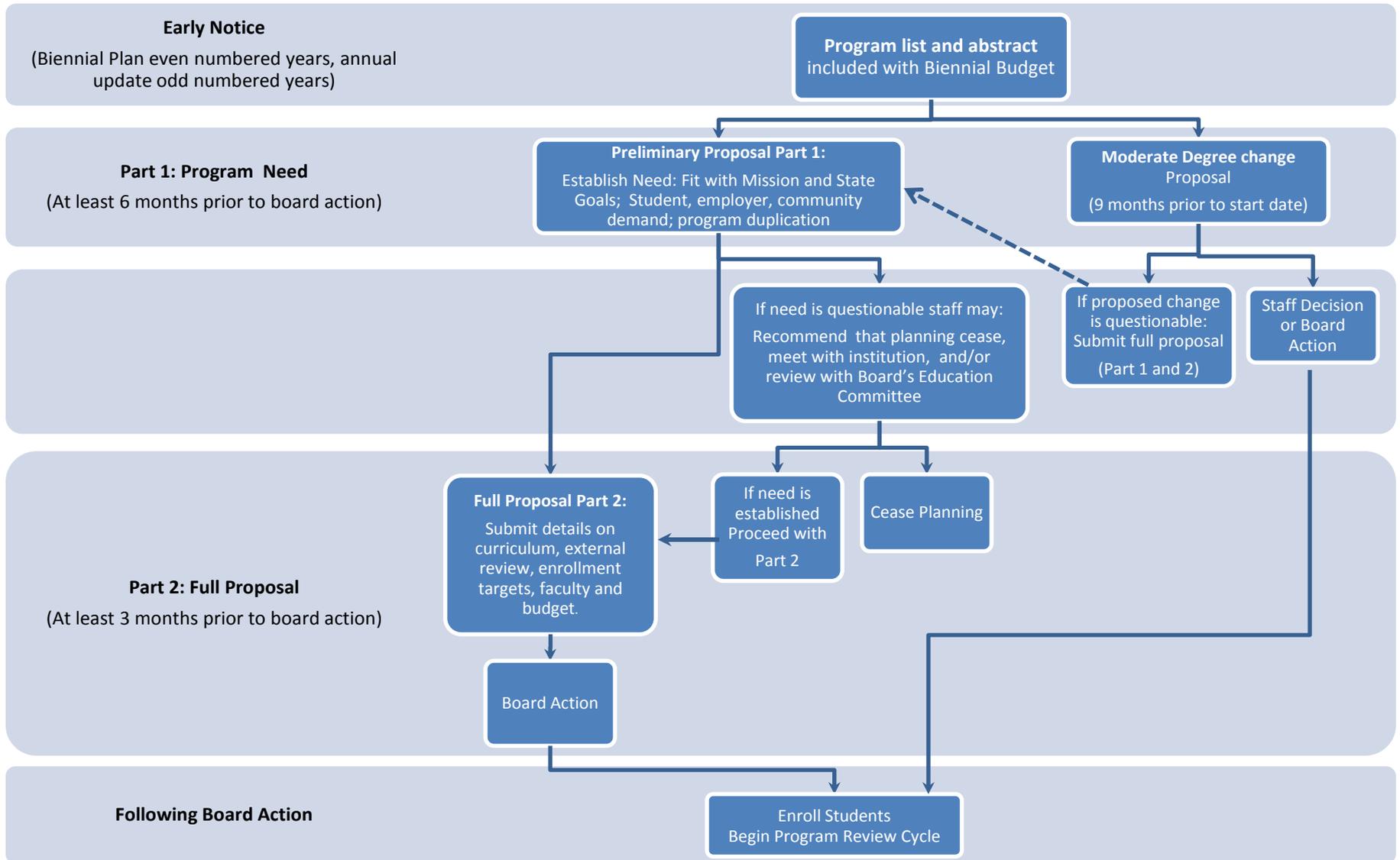
In addition to the information currently collected, HECB staff will ask institutions to submit program related information not currently specified in policy. Institutions would be asked to submit information about the status of programs related to specialized accreditation and outcomes on certification or licensing exams (where applicable). In addition, institutions have the option to submit information related to the following:

- Major new grants since the last program review
- New Licensing agreements or other technology transfer indicators
- Other program highlights/accomplishments

Moving program review to a common schedule represents a substantive change to the current process and how we think about the role of program review. Currently, reviews are received based on institutional review schedules. The revised policy does not ask institutions to revise their existing review policy or timetable. Rather, it asks for institutions to follow a common schedule for submitting program information that is based on the most recent institutional or accreditation review.

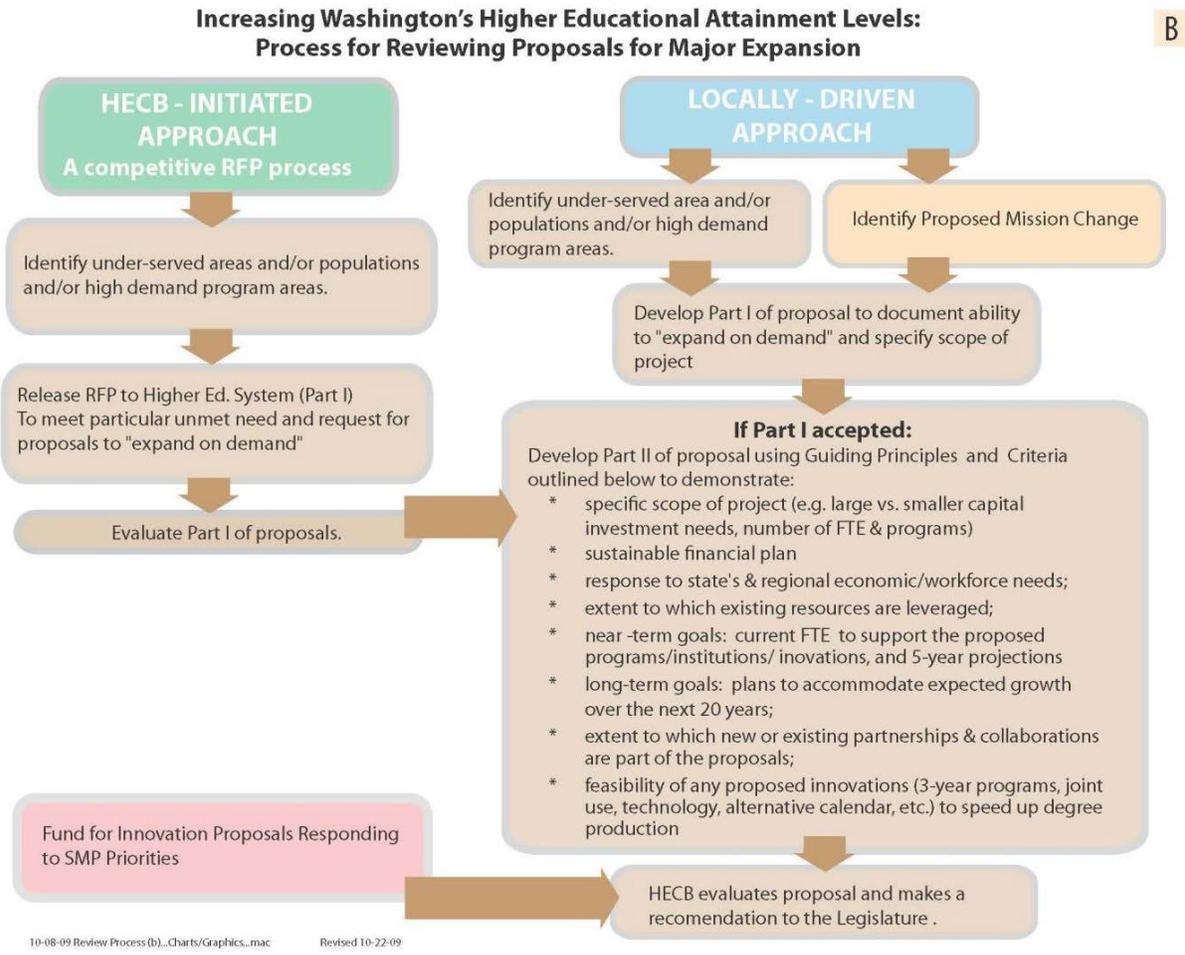
The ability to make good policy and planning decisions depends in large part upon good data. The proposed changes to program review will improve the ability of the HECB staff to conduct systematic reviews of college and university programs to better identify gaps by region and for the state as a whole - and do so without putting additional reporting burdens on the institutions. With these changes, the HECB will be better able to implement the strategic planning envisioned in the *Statewide Strategic Master Plan* and the *System Design Plan* and carry out its responsibility to oversee the state's higher education resources.

Proposed Revision to Program Approval Process and Timeline



Appendix B:

System Design "Chart B"



Appendix D

Program Review Data and Sources

Current Data Requirements	Current Source	Ideal Source
Enrollment in New Degree and Certificate Programs initiated in the past 5 years.		
Degree Title	Institutional Report	Approved Program Data System
Site	Institutional Report	PCHEES
Approval Date	Institutional Report	Approved Program Data System
Start Date	Institutional Report	Approved Program Data System (institution would need to update if changed from proposal)
FTE Year 1 of Biennium	Institutional Report	PCHEES
Projected FTE Year 1	Institutional Report	Approved Program Data System
FTE Year 2 of Biennium	Institutional Report	PCHEES
Projected FTE Year 2	Institutional Report	Approved Program Data System
Program and Facility Inventory Report		
Renamed programs	Notification Letter / Institutional Report	Notification Letter / Approved Program Data System
Renamed centers, teaching sites, and locations	Notification Letter / Institutional Report	Notification Letter / Approved Program Data System
New programs not approved by HECB (specializations, certificates, etc...) Include CIP.	Institutional Report	Institutional Report / Catalog Review
Sunset programs (in planning stage or approved but not implemented)	Institutional Report	Approved Program Data System
Terminated programs	Notification Letter / Institutional Report	Notification Letter / Approved Program Data System

Appendix D – Continued

Program Review Data and Sources

Review of continuing programs		
Program title, CIP, and narrative information	Institutional Report	Institutional Report (on a common schedule)
Number of enrollments (FTE)	Institutional Report	PCHEES
Number of Majors	Institutional Report	PCHEES
Number of Degrees	Institutional Report	PCHEES
Number of FTE Faculty	Institutional Report	Institutional Report (possibly in conjunction with cost study data)
Number of Graduate assistants teaching in the dept.	Institutional Report	Institutional Report (possibly in conjunction with cost study data)
Status of Institutional Programs by Location		
Status of Institutional Programs by Location	Special request	Most of this activity should be addressed with development of the Approved Program Data System and changes to PCHEES

Resolution No.11-13

WHEREAS, The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) is responsible for overseeing state higher education resources, a role which includes the approval of new programs and review of existing programs; and

WHEREAS, For public institutions, the HECB approves new baccalaureate and graduate degree programs and off-campus facilities that align with the *Strategic Master Plan* priorities and respond to the state's needs; and

WHEREAS, The proposed program and facility approval and review changes are necessary to implement the *System Design Plan*, approved by the Board in November 2009 and endorsed by the 2010 Legislature in SSB 6355; and

WHEREAS, The proposed changes will streamline approval for routine expansion and simplify the program review process while continuing to ensure programs are aligned with the state's needs; and

WHEREAS, HECB staff developed the proposed changes with input and feedback from the institutions and other stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, The Board's Education Committee has reviewed the proposed changes and recommends approval by the full Board;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Higher Education Coordinating Board adopts the proposed changes and directs staff to revise the *Program and Facility Approval Policies and Procedures* accordingly.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board delegates authority to the executive director to revise procedures as needed to incorporate policy changes adopted by the Board.

Adopted: June 30, 2011

Attest:

Ethelda Burke, Chair

Earl Hale, Vice Chair