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## Action

### *Professional Services Committee*

#### **Program Approval and Initial Institutional Approval**

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**Executive Summary:** This agenda item presents one prospective program sponsor for initial institutional approval by the Commission.

**Recommended Action:** That the Commission approve the application for initial institutional approval.

**Presenters:** Teri Clark, Administrator,  
Professional Services Division

**Strategic Plan Goal: 1**

**Promote educational excellence through the preparation and certification of professional educators.**

- ◆ Sustain high quality standards for the preparation and performance of professional educators and for the accreditation of credential programs.

January-February 2008



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# Program Approval and Initial Institutional Approval

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## Introduction

This agenda item presents one prospective program sponsor for initial institutional approval.

## Initial Institutional Approval

Prior to 1995, institutions not previously approved to offer programs of professional preparation would submit a program proposal responding to the preconditions and standards of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. If the institution was accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) or another regional accrediting body and if the response to the preconditions and standards was judged to be satisfactory, the Commission voted to give approval to the institution to begin offering one or more educator preparation programs.

With the adoption of the *Accreditation Framework* in 1995, the Commission made a distinction between “initial approval of institutions” and “initial approval of programs,” as described below.

## Policies for Initial Approval of Institutions

Pursuant to California Education Code, the Commission has the authority to determine the eligibility of institutions to offer educator preparation programs and to recommend issuance of credentials to candidates completing programs of preparation. This authority also applies to other program sponsors such as school districts, who were made eligible to sponsor professional educator preparation programs through subsequent legislation.

**Education Code Section 44227 (a)** – The Commission may approve any institution of higher education whose teacher education program meets the standards prescribed by the Commission, to recommend to the Commission the issuance of credentials to persons who have successfully completed those programs.

**Education Code Section 44372** – The powers and duties of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing regarding the accreditation system shall include the following:

- (c) Rule on the eligibility of an applicant for accreditation when the applying institution has not previously prepared educators for state certification in California, pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 44227.

### **Adopted Procedures for Initial Institutional Approval and Initial Program Approval**

An institution that wishes to offer a credential program in California and that has not previously been declared eligible to offer a credential preparation program must undergo a two stage initial approval process: 1) initial institutional approval, and 2) initial approval of programs as described below. The steps in the Commission's accreditation system were described in the Study Session presented to the Commission in June 2005. The agenda item may be found at: (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2005-05/2005-05-6A.pdf>).

- 1) **Initial Institutional Approval:** The institution (program sponsor) that has not previously been declared eligible to offer credential preparation programs must submit an application to the Commission for initial institutional approval. The institution prepares a complete program proposal that responds to all preconditions, Common Standards and appropriate Program Standards. The application is reviewed for compliance with the appropriate preconditions (regional accreditation [or governing board approval], identification of position responsible for oversight, non-discrimination procedures, completion of a needs assessment, involvement of practitioners in the design of the program, agreement to provide information to the Commission, etc.). Once compliance has been established, the application is brought before the Commission for *initial institutional approval*. This stage determines only an institution's *eligibility* to offer an approved program.
- 2) **Initial Approval of Programs:** Once the Commission acts favorably on institutional approval, the *program* proposal is forwarded to the Committee on Accreditation for action. The program sponsor is required to respond to the appropriate credential program standards for each program the institution wishes to offer. These responses are reviewed by a panel of expert advisors, or in some cases, Commission staff, to determine the sufficiency of the responses. Once it is determined that the program proposal meets the Commission's program standards, the program sponsor is recommended to the Committee on Accreditation for *initial program approval*.

Once granted initial program approval, the institution is given authority to begin the program and will then come under the Commission's continuing accreditation procedures.

### **Request for Initial Institutional Approval from Oakland Unified School District**

Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) has applied to the Commission for initial institutional approval with the intent to operate a district intern program to prepare individuals for Education Specialist: Mild/Moderate Credentials. OUSD has partnered with The New Teacher Project (TNTP) to develop the intern preparation program. They describe this partnership below:

Due to persistent hard-to-staff vacancies in high-need areas, such as special education, and the challenge that new teachers are not prepared with adequate or relevant training which is necessary to be effective in OUSD classrooms, the Oakland Unified School District has decided to partner with The New Teacher Project, to establish the Oakland Practitioner Teacher Program (OPTP), a District Internship Program for Special Education Interns teaching in mild-to-moderate placements in the District. The goal of OUSD's partnership with TNTP is to

ensure that our new educators are prepared as well as possible to be effective in raising the achievement of all Oakland students. TNTP has a proven track record in partnering with high-need school districts to train and certify alternate route teachers in other states, and will bring its core beliefs and learnings to the design and implementation of OPTP. OUSD selected TNTP as a partner in this endeavor because the organization's philosophy and resulting curriculum closely parallel the district's priorities. In addition, OUSD is impressed with TNTP's experience and expertise in operating high-quality certification programs across the country. These programs, typically referred to as Practitioner Teacher Programs (PTP), were designed explicitly for alternate route candidates, and as such, have specific advantages for these teachers and the students they serve. To date, TNTP is operating the Practitioner Teacher Program in three sites across the country: Louisiana, Maryland, and Texas.

Together, OUSD and TNTP share the belief that high-quality training and preparation for alternate route candidates must be field-based, highly relevant to practice, and focused on immediately increasing participants' ability to translate their existing deep content knowledge into effective classroom practice. The proposed OPTP curriculum maps to national content standards and our instructors are outstanding current teachers with strong track records in student achievement who are tasked with making the connections between our curriculum and the classroom for their teachers. The OPTP is designed to be a "practitioner" program; every curricular and program decision stems from the question of how to best support new teachers in delivering high-quality, high-impact, standards-based instruction.

Further, OUSD and TNTP share a conviction that special needs students must be served with aggressive attention to both student capability and a sense of urgency toward academic proficiency. We believe that too often special education students are not sufficiently challenged academically, and believe that together we can create and operate a program that helps new teachers balance the needs of the child with the pursuit of academic excellence.

OUSD has submitted a complete response to the Commission's Preconditions and Common Standards. The responses to the preconditions and standards were reviewed by Commission staff and were determined to be appropriate for this first level of review. Commission action to grant initial approval will allow for the completion of the review of the education specialist program proposal. When the program proposal has met all the adopted standards, the OUSD program will be forwarded to the Committee on Accreditation for further approval.

### **Recommendation**

Based upon a determination by a review panel that the applicant has met all relevant standards and requirements, staff recommends that the Commission grant initial institutional approval to Oakland Unified School District.