
Initial Institutional Approval Process: Bard College

Overview of the Report

This agenda item responds to the request by the COA for information on the timeline and process for initial institutional approval by the Commission of Bard College. This report was requested to provide context and background for members of the COA prior to consideration of the program approval for Bard College's educator preparation programs.

Staff Recommendation

This information is for information only.

Background

Information was presented at the August 2011, October 2011, and December 2011 Commission meetings related to Bard College's application for initial institutional approval. At each of those meetings, the Commission consistently found significant gaps in the institution's response to and practices in implementing standards and declined to grant initial institutional approval. At the March 2012 Commission meeting, as directed by the Commission, Bard College returned with an update as to the manner in which the institution has addressed concerns and questions raised by the Commission at previous meetings. At that time, the Commission granted initial institutional approval with the following two conditions:

- 1) A full site visit would be conducted of Bard College's operations in California in the Fall of 2012; and
- 2) Bard College would not begin operations of new educator preparation programs without first being granted program approval by the COA.

The Commission's Initial Institutional Process

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 accreditation 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 December 2010. The agenda item may be found at: (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2010-12/2010-12-6E.pdf>). Provided below is the information on the Initial Accreditation process.

The prospective program sponsor prepares a complete program proposal that responds to all 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.), Common Standards and appropriate Program Standards. Once compliance has been established, the application is brought before the Commission for *initial institutional approval*. The proposal is considered to be the application for accreditation.

Initial Accreditation is a two-stage process:

1. The proposal is reviewed for compliance with the appropriate preconditions (such as regional accreditation [or governing board approval], identification of position responsible for program oversight, non-discrimination procedures, completion of a needs assessment, involvement of practitioners in the design of the program, and agreement to provide information to the Commission) and presented to the Commission for initial institutional accreditation action. If the proposal meets the Commission's requirements, the prospective program sponsor will be recommended for initial accreditation.
2. If the Commission acts favorably on the proposal, it will be forwarded to the COA for further action. The program sponsor's responses to the credential program standards for each program the institution (sponsor) wishes to offer are reviewed by Commission staff and panels of expert advisors 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 COA for initial program accreditation.

Once granted initial accreditation, the institution will then come under the continuing accreditation procedures and will participate in the regular accreditation cycle for on-site reviews.

Currently, agenda items are brought before the Commission when an institution or other sponsor that has not previously been declared eligible to offer educator preparation programs elects to submit a program proposal for approval.

Specifics Related to the Bard Proposal and Timeline of Actions Taken

Bard College submitted a complete response to the Commission's Preconditions and Common Standards in February 2011. Consistent with Commission policy and practice, the responses to the preconditions were reviewed by Commission staff and were determined to be in compliance with the adopted Preconditions. The written response to the Common Standards and supporting documentation were reviewed by individuals from the Board of Institutional Reviewers (BIR) and were found in July 2011 to meet the Common Standards.

In August 2011 and October 2011 agenda items were presented to the Commission that included a recommendation that Bard College be granted initial institutional approval by the Commission. Consistent with the Commission's current policy for initial institutional approval, this recommendation was based on two factors: (1) a finding by a team of peer reviewers from the Commission's Board of Institutional Reviewers that Bard College met the Commission's Common Standards, based on the review of documentation submitted by Bard College; and (2) a determination by Commission staff that Bard College was in compliance with the adopted Preconditions.

However, because the institution had enrolled candidates and provided coursework and fieldwork to these candidates prior to being approved by the Commission and accredited by its Committee on Accreditation, the Commission expressed concern about Bard’s institutional capacity and the veracity of its documentation in response to preconditions and Common Standards. In addition, testimony from candidates about their experiences in the first year program raised questions about how well the institution was meeting Common Standards 5 and 6 related to admissions and advisement. Consequently, the Commission declined to approve Bard College as a potential program sponsor at that time and asked staff to provide additional information at a future meeting.

The issue of initial institutional approval for Bard College was further discussed by the Commission at the December 2011 meeting. At that meeting, a presentation by an official from Bard College described the college’s plans to address the concerns expressed by two program graduates and by the Commissioners at the prior Commission meetings. One of the two former students, who addressed the Commission in October, provided further comment at the December meeting. The Commission again declined to approve the institution’s application for initial institutional approval and requested that Bard College implement the plans described by the college’s representative. The Commission requested that Bard College return to the Commission at the March 2012 meeting to report on its progress in implementing the planned activities discussed at the Commission meeting.

The following table includes a summary of information that has been provided to the Commission at previous Commission meetings and the links to that information.

Item	Link
August 2011 Agenda Item <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precondition Review Worksheet (Appendix A) 	http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2011-08/2011-08-3D.pdf
October 2011 Agenda Item <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bard Response to Standards • Bard Response to Preconditions • Bard Precondition Supplement 	http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2011-10/2011-10-3D.pdf <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2011-10/2011-11-3D-standards.pdf • http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2011-10/2011-11-3D-preconditions.pdf • http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2011-10/2011-11-3D-preconditions-supplement.pdf
December 2011 Agenda Item, includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcript of Completers Statement from October 2011 meeting (Appendix A). • Response from Bard of Topics Addressed by Completers at October 2011 meeting (Appendix B). 	http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2011-12/2011-12-5E.pdf

Item	Link
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Augmented Initial Institutional Approval Precondition Worksheet (Appendix C) • Initial Common Standard Reviewer Feedback Summary (Appendix D) • August 2011 Correspondence to 2012 Bard Candidates (Appendix E) • October 5, 2011 E-mail from Dean Campbell to 2011-12 candidates • Statement from Director Finkelstein regarding October 7, 2011 meeting with Current Bard Students (Appendix G) • Bard MAT Organizational Chart (Appendix H) • Updated Precondition 8 (Appendix I) • Letter from the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (Appendix J) • Response from Middle States Commission on Higher Education regarding Bard College’s Regional Accreditation Status (Appendix K) <p>Agenda Insert, includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated Precondition #5 • Letters from School Districts and Educational entities 	<p>http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2011-12/2011-12-5E-insert.pdf</p>
<p>March 2012 – Summary of all past agenda items on this topic as well as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation submitted by Bard College regarding activities it had undertaken since the December 2011 Commission meeting • Letters from Two Program Completers • External Report from Mark Baldwin, Retired Dean, CSU San Marcos 	<p>http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2012-03/2012-03-agenda.html</p>

March 2012 Commission Meeting

As requested, Bard College presented information on action taken to address the concerns raised by the Commission in previous meetings. In addition, an external report written by Mark Baldwin, Retied Dean from the California State University system was provided for information. One of the two former candidates who spoke at previous meetings addressed the Commission. This information is available at the link listed above as is the audio recording of the meeting.

Ultimately, the Commission voted to grant initial institutional approval to Bard College with the following two conditions:

- 1) A full site visit would be conducted of Bard College’s operations in California in the Fall of 2012; and

- 2) Bard College would not begin operations of new educator preparation programs without first being granted program approval by the COA.

After the initial institutional approval by the Commission, Bard College was asked by staff to provide a couple of options for site visit dates in late September or early October. Staff has also begun to identify veteran BIR members to request as site visit team members. If the COA moves forward to approve the programs at the April meeting, staff will confirm site visit dates and begin to move forward with that process.

Pending Program Proposals

Bard College's application to offer Single Subject Preparation Programs originally included English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and History/Social Studies. Prior to consideration of the initial institutional approval in 2011, the institution notified staff that it was withdrawing its proposal for Mathematics and Science. These two programs then were not moved forward with reviewers and had not been reviewed.

Just prior to the March 2012 Commission meeting, the institution communicated with the Commission staff that if it received initial institutional approval, it would submit documentation for approval of the Single Subject programs in Mathematics, Science, and Music. Commission staff communicated and the institution readily acknowledged that only after a review of these three program areas determined they were aligned to standards would they be added to the COA agenda for consideration and possible action. The standards response for these three areas was received on March 23, 2012. They are currently in the review process. If and when these three program proposals are deemed to be aligned with standards will they be placed on the COA's agenda for consideration and possible action.