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# 5A

## Action

### *Certification Committee*

#### **Request to Waive the Regional Accreditation Requirement for a Bachelor's Degree Needed for Certification**

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**Executive Summary:** This agenda item presents one waiver request submitted by a Local Education Agency (LEA) on behalf of a candidate who earned a bachelor's degree at a time when the institution was not regionally accredited.

**Recommendation Action:** Staff recommends that the Commission grant the waiver request for Deborah Johnston.

**Presenter:** Alyse Montgomery, Program Analyst, Certification Division

#### **Strategic Plan Goal**

##### ***I. Educator Quality***

- c) Ensure that credential processing and assignment monitoring activities accurately, effectively, and efficiently identify educators who have met high and rigorous certification standards and who are appropriately assigned.

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## **Request to Waive the Regional Accreditation Requirement for a Bachelor's Degree Needed for Certification**

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### **Introduction**

This agenda item presents a request to waive the regional accreditation requirement related to bachelor's degrees. This request has been submitted by Riverside County Office of Education on behalf of Deborah Johnston, who earned a bachelor's degree from Clarks Summit University (formerly Bible Baptist College of Pennsylvania).

### **Background**

The requirement to have a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution is found in Education Code sections 44225(a)(1) and 44259(b)(1), and is legally required for most credentials. In 1994, the Commission adopted the following policy as recommended by the Preparation Standards Committee:

Credentials which require the completion of a baccalaureate or higher degree will be granted only to individuals who have attained the baccalaureate degree or higher degree from a regionally accredited college or university.

At the June 2017 Commission meeting, the Commission authorized staff to seek regulatory amendments of Title 5, California Code of Regulations section 80457. The proposed regulatory amendments would define 'regional accreditation' and allow candidates to submit a degree for certification purposes, which was earned during a period of candidacy/preaccreditation, as long as the period of candidacy/preaccreditation immediately preceded the official regional accreditation and the degree granting institution submits written verification that the degree conferred during preaccreditation/candidacy is equivalent to a comparable degree conferred during the period of accreditation.

At the September 2017 Commission meeting, the Commission took action to waive the current regional accreditation requirement for five candidates whose degrees were conferred during the institution's candidacy. Additionally, one other candidate was approved at the October 2017 Commission meeting under the same requirements.

### **Bachelor's Degree Waiver Candidates**

Commission staff has received another official request to waive the regional accreditation requirement from Riverside County Office of Education on behalf of candidate Deborah Johnston. Ms. Johnston earned a bachelor's degree in Religious Education from Bible Baptist College of Pennsylvania on May 8, 1981 and the university was in a period of preaccreditation beginning on June 22, 1979 and gained initial accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education on February 26, 1984.

Appendix A includes all supporting documentation that has been received on behalf of Deborah Johnston in support of her request to waive the requirement to hold a bachelor's degree from a regionally-accredited university.

**Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the Commission grant the waiver request for Deborah Johnston, who has met the requirements previously approved by the Commission.

Appendix A

DEC 26 2017



**Riverside County  
Board of Education**

Jeanie B. Corral

Roy "Coach" Curtis

Bruce N. Dennis

Barbara Hale

Susan J. Rainey, Ed.D.

Elizabeth F. Romero

Wendel W. Tucker, Ph.D.

December 21, 2017

Charlie Watters, Director  
Certification Division  
Commission on Teacher Credentialing  
1900 Capitol Avenue  
Sacramento, CA 95811

Dear Mr. Watters:

This letter is to request a waiver of the requirement that a candidate hold a bachelor's degree or higher from a regionally accredited college or university for Deborah Johnston. Ms. Johnston graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1981 from Baptist Bible College, now named Clarks Summit University. Enclosed is a true copy of official transcripts showing the degree earned.

Enclosed is a copy of an email from Christina D'Argenio from Middle States Commission on Higher Education that verifies this university was in candidate status in 1979 and earned full accreditation status in 1984. Also enclosed is a letter from Allen Dreyer confirming that Ms. Johnston's degree is equivalent to a degree granted once regional accreditation was granted in 1984.

Ms. Johnston has been pulled from her teaching assignment pending outcome of this request. I support Ms. Johnston in this request, and hope to be able to put her back into her teaching assignment as soon as possible.

I am requesting this be placed on the upcoming February Commission meeting agenda.

Thank you for your consideration, and please let me know if you need any additional information or have any questions regarding the enclosed information.

Sincerely,

Dawn Taylor,  
Administrator I, Personnel Services



CC 5A-3

February 2018



December 19, 2017

To Whom It May Concern,

As the certification officer for Clarks Summit University, I have been working with one of our alumni, Deborah Johnston, as she pursues teacher certification in California. Deborah and I have been working through her records and program versions from the time she attended Clarks Summit University, then named Baptist Bible College, to determine similarities between the Elementary Education program Deborah completed at CSU and the Elementary Education program at the time CSU was accredited in 1984.

Clarks Summit University was granted Candidate status by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in June of 1979. Early in 1981, a formal self-study was initiated by the university, then full accreditation status was granted to the university in 1984.

I provided to Deborah copies of the program requirements for 1981 and 1984 from catalog records in our Registrar's Office. The records I provided to her are valid and official institutional records.

I compared the courses Deborah took with the requirements of the 1984 version of the Elementary Education program. A highlighted copy of that comparison was also provided to Deborah. My findings indicated that the program Deborah completed was equivalent to the 1984 version of the program.



Sincerely,

Allen Dreyer  
Executive Director for Administrative Services

## Jenny Teresi

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**From:** Info <info@msche.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 14, 2017 7:26 AM  
**To:** Jenny Teresi  
**Subject:** RE: Clark's Summit University - date of application for regional accreditation

Dear Ms. Teresi,

Clarks Summit University, formerly known as Baptist Bible College & Seminary, located in Clarks Summit, PA, was granted Candidate Status on June 22, 1979. Candidate for Accreditation Status indicates that an institution of higher education has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward accreditation. The institution has provided evidence that it meets all or nearly all of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's (MSCHE) standards for accreditation, and that it appears to have the potential to be granted accreditation within the five-year candidacy period allowed by the U.S. Department of Education.

Candidate Status is essentially full but temporary institutional membership in the Commission. Candidate institutions pay dues and are eligible to vote on MSCHE policies and to participate in the nomination and election of Commissioners. They may also be eligible to participate in the U.S. Department of Education's Title IV programs, as applicable.

Clarks Summit University received initial accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education on February 26, 1984 and its accreditation was reaffirmed on June 23, 2016.

For your reference I have included the links to Clarks Summit University's current Statement of Accreditation Status, <http://www.msche.org/Documents/SAS/30/Statement%20of%20Accreditation%20Status.htm>, and to the Commission's publication, *Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation*, which includes the accreditation standards that all Middle States institutions must meet.

Sincerely,

Chris

Christina D'Argenio  
Executive Assistant to the President  
Middle States Commission on Higher Education  
3624 Market Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

**From:** Jenny Teresi [mailto: ]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 13, 2017 2:40 PM  
**To:** Info <info@msche.org>

[REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Clark's Summit University - date of application for regional accreditation

Hello,

I am attempting to assist a credential candidate who graduated on May 8, 1981, from Baptist Bible College & Seminary – now Clark's Summit University – who is seeking to verify that her college was regionally accredited or in the process of seeking regional accreditation at the time of her graduating for licensure purposes in California.

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing recently took action to accept degrees from individuals whose colleges were in the process of seeking regional accreditation when their degrees were conferred and with verification from the institution that the coursework met all the graduation requirements once the institution achieved regional accreditation.

Do you know if Baptist Bible College & Seminary was in the application process for regional accreditation in 1981? They were granted regional accreditation in 1984.

Thank you for your assistance,

*Jenny Teresi*

Administrator I, Credentials Services  
Division of Personnel Services  
Riverside County Office of Education  
P.O. Box 868, Riverside, CA 92502-0868  
[REDACTED]