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Action

Educator Preparation Committee

Initial Institutional Approval – Stage II: Eligibility Requirements for Relay Graduate School of Education

Executive Summary: This agenda item presents, as part of the Initial Institutional Approval process, Relay Graduate School of Education’s responses to the Eligibility Requirements for consideration and possible approval by the Commission.

Recommended Action: That the Commission review the responses to the Eligibility Requirements and determine if the institution may move forward in the Initial Institutional Approval process.

Presenters: Hart Boyd and Poonam Bedi, Consultants, Professional Services Division

Strategic Plan Goal

II. Program Quality and Accountability

- b) Effectively and efficiently monitor program implementation and outcomes and hold all approved educator preparation programs to high standards and continuous improvement through the accreditation process.

Initial Institutional Approval – Stage II: Eligibility Requirements for Relay Graduate School of Education

Introduction

As part of the Initial Institutional Approval (IIA) process, a prospective program sponsor, Relay Graduate School of Education, has submitted responses to the Eligibility Requirements for consideration and possible approval by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (Commission). Relay Graduate School of Education (GSE) is a non-profit institution of higher education based in New York and accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). Relay GSE is proposing three preliminary credential programs:

- Preliminary Multiple Subject
- Preliminary Single Subject
 - English
 - Mathematics
 - Science
 - Social Science
- Preliminary Education Specialist*
 - Mild/Moderate

**Approval of this program will be contingent upon the implementation of the new Education Specialist standards.*

Approval of Stage II allows an institution to move forward to Stage III in which Common Standards and Preconditions will be submitted for review. Approval of Stage II does not authorize the institution to offer an educator preparation program that leads to a credential or license.

Background

California law provides the Commission with the authority to accredit institutions to offer programs that lead to a credential to serve as an educator in California's public schools. Among other responsibilities, Education Code section 44372(c) sets forth the Commission's responsibility to rule on the eligibility of an applicant for initial accreditation for the purpose of offering a program of educator preparation.

The Commission requires that an institution seeking to offer new educator preparation program(s) must first be approved for initial accreditation as a new program sponsor and must do so by completing the Commission's IIA process. At the December 2015 Commission meeting, the Commission approved a new IIA process requiring the satisfactory completion of five approval stages as part of the Strengthening and Streamlining Accreditation project. Updates to the IIA process were subsequently approved during the February 2017 Commission meeting. A chart detailing the five stages of the IIA process is provided on the following page.

This agenda item presents for consideration one institution of higher education seeking to become a program sponsor. It is an important reminder that approval of the institution for Stage II does not permit the institution to offer the proposed programs. In addition, although there is important information about the proposed programs contained in the submission for Stage II, review of the Common Standards and applicable program Preconditions and standards have not yet occurred.

Relay Graduate School of Education

Relay GSE seeks IIA in order to offer the following programs through both an intern pathway and a student teaching residency pathway:

- Preliminary Multiple Subject
- Preliminary Single Subject
 - English
 - Mathematics
 - Science
 - Social Science
- Preliminary Education Specialist
 - Mild/Moderate

Relay GSE is also proposing to offer a dual credential option for candidates seeking both a general credential (either Preliminary Multiple Subject or Preliminary Single Subject) and an education specialist credential (Preliminary Education Specialist: Mild/Moderate).

Summaries and excerpts of Relay GSE's responses to the twelve [Eligibility Requirement Criteria](#) are provided below. [Relay GSE's full response](#) is also available. Criteria 1 through 9 have been reviewed by staff, with a recommendation of aligned. Criteria 10, 11, and 12 have been summarized for the Commission's review and consideration.

Five Stages of the Initial Institutional Approval Process

Relay Graduate School of Education is seeking approval of Stage II as highlighted in the chart below.

IIA Process	Stage I	Stage II	Stage III	Stage IV	Stage V
Action	Prerequisites	Eligibility Requirements	Preconditions & Common Standards	Program Standards	Provisional Site Visit
Purpose	Ensures legal eligibility of institution in California Ensures institution understands requirements of Commission's accreditation system	Ensures that institution has capacity to sponsor effective programs	Ensures institution meets all relevant preconditions Ensures institution meets all Common Standards	Ensures all proposed programs meet all relevant program standards	Program operates for 2-4 years and hosts a provisional accreditation site visit
Requirements	Institution must: 1. Have legal eligibility 2. Attend Accreditation 101 with institutional team	Submit responses to: • 12 Eligibility Criteria	Submit responses to: • Preconditions • Common Standards	Submit responses to: • Program Standards	Institution must: • Collect data • Host provisional site visit
Reviewed By	Staff	Staff	Preconditions: Staff Common Standards: BIR	BIR	Site Visit Team & COA
Authority	Staff	Commission	Commission	COA	Commission
Decision	Determine Eligibility for Stage II	Eligibility: 1. Grant 2. Deny	Provisional Approval: 1. Grant 2. Deny	Program(s): 1. Approve 2. Deny	1. Grant Full approval 2. Retain Provisional Approval with Additional Requirements 3. Deny Approval
IIA Status*	Not Approved	Not Approved	Provisional Approval**	Provisional Approval***	Full Approval

*At conclusion of stage

**Institutionally-approved but cannot offer programs

***May begin offering approved program

Criterion 1 through 9

In accordance with the Commission adopted process for determining eligibility for Initial Institutional Approval, Eligibility Criteria 1-9, as follows, includes a staff review and recommendation.

Criterion 1: Responsibility and Authority

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- Relay GSE is proposing to offer the following programs:
 - Preliminary Multiple Subject
 - Preliminary Single Subject
 - English
 - Mathematics
 - Science
 - Social Science
 - Preliminary Education Specialist
 - Mild/Moderate
- The Dean of Relay Online, Dr. Alice Waldron, will serve as the Unit Head and will be responsible for ongoing oversight of all educator preparation programs. Dr. Waldron will continue to report to the Provost, Dr. Maya Weatherton, who sits on Relay GSE's Executive Team and reports to Relay GSE's President, Dr. Mayme Hostetter, who, in turn, reports directly to the Board of Trustees.
- The Director of California Educator Preparation Programs will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of all educator preparation programs and will report to Dr. Waldron.
- The Manager of California Certification will be responsible for credentialing, data collection, and reporting for each of Relay GSE's proposed programs. The Manager of California Certification will report directly to the Director of California Educator Preparation Programs. Relay GSE asserted that they expect that candidates for the Manager of California Certification role will be physically located in California and deeply familiar with California licensing rules and regulations. They also expect to hire a dedicated California partnership leader based in the state. Additionally, Relay GSE expects that, given the potential large, diverse talent pool in California, they may attract additional faculty and administrative staff to join the institution.
- Relay GSE has submitted a complete organizational chart that indicates each proposed program will be offered through Relay Online. "Relay Online" is an internal team at Relay GSE that oversees the delivery of online programs, not a separate corporate entity. Relay GSE is chartered as an institution of higher education in New York state, and institutionally accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Relay does not operate any branch campuses with independent governance, or budgetary and hiring authority. Relay GSE does not have any affiliation or partnership with any for-profit entity for the purpose of delivering degree- or non-degree granting coursework.

- Relay GSE assures that the duties related to credential recommendations will be performed only by employees of Relay GSE and that these individuals will take part in the Commission training related to the recommendation process.

Criterion 2: Lawful Practices

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- A non-discrimination policy for the Relay GSE's employees is provided in the Relay Employee Handbook and on the institution's website.
- A non-discrimination policy for the Relay GSE's candidates is provided in the Relay Student Handbook and Academic Programs Guide and on the institution's website.

Criterion 3: Commission Assurances and Compliance

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- Relay GSE provided assurances, signed by the President of GSE, that state the institution:
 - a) Will comply with all preconditions;
 - b) Will submit all data reports and accreditation documents;
 - c) Will cooperate in an evaluation of the program by an external team or monitoring of the program by Commission staff;
 - d) Will participate fully in the Commission's accreditation system and submission timelines; and
 - e) In the event the program closes, will offer the program and meet all adopted standards until the candidate completes, withdraws, is dropped, or is admitted to another program.

Criterion 4: Requests for Data

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- The Manager of California Certification is identified as the qualified officer responsible for reporting and responding to all requests for data within timeframes specified by the Commission.

Criterion 5: Grievance Process

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- Relay GSE has provided a grievance process which will be accessible to all candidates and applicants in the Student Handbook and Academic Program Guide.
- Relay GSE notes that upon enrollment, all candidates will register for and be required to complete the Canvas orientation module, GEN-101: Orientation and Student Resources. As a part of this course, candidates will review the Student Handbook and Academic Program Guide, including important institutional policies such as the student grievance policy. Students will complete a check for understanding quiz on institutional policies, and at the

completion of the orientation module, candidates will be required to sign an acknowledgement stating that they have reviewed and understand the policies contained within these documents.

Criterion 6: Communication and Information

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- Relay GSE's has a public-facing website that will be accessible to the public without the requirement of log-in information. This website includes information about Relay GSE's mission, governance, and administration.
- Information regarding admission to the proposed programs will be made available on the Relay GSE's admissions webpage and program-specific admission requirements for California will be made available on the Relay Support Center webpage that provides access to state-specific requirements. The Support Center is accessible without a log-in and provides links to handbooks, policies, frequently asked questions, and other resources for current and potential students and staff. General admission requirements will also be made available in the Student Handbook and Academic Program Guide. Further information about the proposed programs will be made available through marketing materials such as recruitment brochures. A sample brochure was provided as an example in the submission.

Criterion 7: Student Records Management, Access, and Security

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- Relay GSE candidates will have access to requesting official and unofficial transcripts by completing a form online. Transcript requests will be processed daily and sent as requested, electronically or by mail, by the candidate.
- Relay GSE states that all electronic student records are currently stored on secure, industry-standard Web-based servers with a student information system (SIS) hosted on Amazon Web Services (which includes multiple backups). However, Relay GSE is in the midst of implementing a new student information system, Anthology, that will change the cloud services holding the student data. The institution still expects their response to this criterion will remain the same such as specific permission levels for staff depending on job functions.
- Paper copies of student records are secured in locked cabinets in Relay GSE's New York City office and electronic transcripts are stored in a physical server secured in a locked room in the same office. Relay asserts that data security and retention policies are reviewed and adjusted, as necessary, throughout each year.

Criterion 8: Disclosure

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- As noted in the beginning of this item, Relay GSE proposes to offer all four preliminary credential programs through an intern pathway and a student teaching residency pathway.

- Relay GSE’s response to this criterion also notes that instruction for the proposed educator preparation programs in California will be delivered online. Coursework will be a blend of 60% synchronous and 40% asynchronous online learning experiences and fieldwork will be completed in a partner local education agency in conjunction with virtual seminars and coaching with Relay GSE faculty. Faculty will observe candidates in-person or remotely. Relay GSE faculty members, including Relay Online faculty, are located throughout the country. If a faculty member assigned as a supervisor to a California candidate is geographically proximate to the candidate, they may agree to in-person supervision, consisting of observations in the candidate’s TK-12 classroom and feedback meetings with the candidate and their site supervisor.
- All prospective placement schools will be screened to ensure candidates are exposed to school settings that reflect the diversity of California’s public schools.
- As part of the submission, Relay GSE provided letters of intent from the following LEAs who seek to partner with the institution for the purposes of providing fieldwork:
 - ACE Charter Schools (four schools serving grades 5-12 in San Jose)
 - Alpha Public Schools (four schools, three are K-8, one is 9-12, in San Jose)
 - Education for Change (six schools in the Fruitvale/Oakland area)
 - Navigator Schools (three K-8 schools, two in Gilroy, one in Hollister)
 - Westlake Charter School (K-8 school in Natomas)
- Relay GSE also provided a letter of support from the Small School Districts Association (SSDA). Relay GSE claims they will be well-positioned to establish clinical partnerships with LEAs in underserved rural communities, many of whom are represented in the SSDA.
- Relay GSE states that they do not intend to partner with any outside organizations to provide direct educational services to candidates. Test preparation materials for California licensure exams from outside vendors, however, may be provided by the institution to candidates although Relay GSE states these are additional resources that will not be required for program completion.

Criterion 9: Veracity in all Claims and Documentation Submitted

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- An assurance signed by the President of the Relay GSE has been submitted attesting to the veracity of all statements and documentation submitted to the Commission; the letter also attests to an understanding that a lack of veracity is a cause for denial of Initial Institutional Approval.

Criterion 10, 11, and 12

In accordance with the Commission approved process for determining eligibility for Initial Institutional Approval, [Eligibility Criteria 10-12](#) include a staff summary of the institution's submission, but do not include a staff recommendation.

Criterion 10: Mission and Vision

- Relay GSE's mission is to teach teachers and school leaders to develop in all students the academic skills and strength of character needed to succeed in college and life.
- Relay GSE's vision is to become the place where a new generation of continuously improving, mission-driven individuals can fulfill their destiny in the world's greatest profession.
- Relay GSE seeks to offer the following programs:
 - Preliminary Multiple Subject
 - Preliminary Single Subject
 - English
 - Mathematics
 - Science
 - Social Science
 - Preliminary Education Specialist
 - Mild/Moderate
- Relay GSE plans to offer the proposed programs through one of two pathways:
 - **Student Teaching Residency:** Candidates will be in the classroom of an experienced teacher who serves as their Resident Advisor and site-based supervisor for a full school year. The 600-hour clinical practice requirement and four-week solo student teaching requirement will be met through a gradual on-ramp to greater teaching responsibility that is carefully aligned with graduate coursework and supported by faculty and school-based supervision.
 - **Intern:** Designed for beginning teachers who will be leading a TK-12 classroom as a teacher of record while completing the preparation program. Clinical experience will take place in the Intern candidate's classroom, with the support of a faculty supervisor and a school-based mentor who will guide the candidate in preparing for and reflecting upon their teaching. As required by the Intern Preconditions, Relay GSE asserts that candidates will receive a minimum of 144 hours per year of supervised general support and 45 hours per year of English learner support and candidates will be observed by their supervisor a minimum of six times per semester for the duration of their enrollment in the preparation program.
- Relay GSE measures TK-12 student outcomes through a combination of three constructs:
 - academic achievement
 - social-emotional learning
 - student experience

This conception of TK-12 student outcomes is supported by a growing body of research, that demonstrates the interconnected nature of academic achievement, social and emotional well-being, and a positive and affirming school experience. By focusing on all

three outcomes simultaneously, Relay GSE aims to equip its candidates to support their TK-12 students' holistic growth and achievement in service of their academic and life goals.

- Relay GSE asserts that through performance-based assessments, candidates will demonstrate proficiency with Relay GSE competencies, the California Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs), and subject-specific competencies and standards as well as demonstrate the ability to positively impact their own TK-12 student outcomes.
- Relay GSE notes that its curriculum will be conceptualized through the following three integrated areas of teacher development:
 - Culturally responsive and inclusive practices
 - Content knowledge
 - Pedagogy
- Relay GSE's curriculum will be grounded in a set of four evidence-based competencies – which are aligned to the California Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs) which in turn are aligned to the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) – that define the knowledge, skills, mindsets, and dispositions of effective teaching that drive TK-12 students' academic and social-emotional development.
 - Building a culturally responsive and inclusive learning environment
 - Understanding content and curriculum
 - Teaching all learners
 - Beliefs and mindsets
- Relay GSE notes that it will be committed to preparing candidates who can work effectively with the full range of California's TK-12 students and states that fostering diversity and inclusion is critical to achieving its mission of educational excellence and equity.
- Relay GSE states that it is deeply committed to partnering closely with TK-12 schools to develop a pipeline of strong, diverse teachers—especially in high-needs grades and subjects. Relay GSE further notes that at a time when there is an acute need nationally—and in California specifically—for more educators whose race and ethnicity reflect the TK-12 student population, that 69 percent of Relay GSE's total student body identify as people of color.

Criterion 11: History of Prior Experience and Effectiveness in Educator Preparation

- Relay GSE is a non-profit institution that was chartered by the Board of Regents of the State of New York in 2011. Relay GSE received regional accreditation in 2012 from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). Additionally, Relay GSE received approval to offer its Masters of Arts in Teaching and Masters of Arts in Teaching in Special Education by the MSCHE and began offering these programs online in 2018. The institution was granted full accreditation for its initial and advanced level programs by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) in 2020.
- Relay GSE has received state-level approval to operate across ten states including Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Texas, in addition to Washington D.C. Also, the institution does not operate any educator preparation programs outside of the United States.

- In 2018, Relay GSE became a State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) participating institution. Additionally, Relay GSE noted that SARA participation serves as an indicator that an institution has been determined to have the capacity and resources to offer distance education programs in SARA member states and territories.
- Relay GSE is an institution that previously sought IIA. Relay GSE came before the Commission at its October 2016 meeting seeking approval for Stage II. They were the second institution to go through the new IIA process that was approved by the Commission at its December 2015 meeting and then subsequently revised in February 2017. Relay GSE's Stage II Eligibility Requirements were denied by an 8-3-1 vote.
- Relay GSE offers a professional development program for school leaders and their managers called the California Instructional Leadership Professional Development Program (CA-ILPD). This has been in operation since 2017 and Relay's submission indicates that they have engaged over 600 school leaders across charter schools and districts in California in this non-credit bearing, non-licensure program.
- In 2019, Relay GSE partnered with Alpha Public Schools to offer an online MAT program, not leading to licensure, to a cohort of six teachers located in the state of California.
- Relay GSE provided five years of data for enrolled candidates, completers, hiring rates, and alumni surveys on employment across all their educator preparation programs. Candidate enrollment ranged between 790 – 2050 in the past five years, with an average enrollment of just under 1700. Relay GSE stated in its submission that 86 percent of Relay residents have been hired as lead teachers by institution's partners.
- Relay GSE notes that during a time of significantly declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs across the country (a decrease of 39% from 2010 to 2017), and similarly declining numbers of program completers (a decrease of 31%), enrollment in Relay GSE's teacher preparation programs has grown by an average of 28% per year between 2015 and 2019. Relay GSE's program completion rates have also steadily increased, with an average growth rate of 46% per year for the same cohorts.
- Relay GSE states that it will engage with its clinical partner LEAs to establish mutually agreeable expectations for candidate entry, preparation, and completion, with coursework and fieldwork being aligned to the TPEs as demonstrated by the Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA). Relay GSE notes that it will prioritize shared responsibility for candidate supervision and continuous improvement and will consider TK-12 schools as full partners in this work. Relay GSE notes that it has initiated this work with prospective partners by convening a focus group and conducting individual interviews with representatives from LEAs across California. Additionally, Relay GSE intends to launch a California Advisory Committee, with representatives from partner LEAs. To date, Relay GSE has documented interest from eleven potential committee members and intends to formally launch this committee upon approval for Stage III of the IIA process.
- Relay GSE has posted the third-party invitation for comments on the Relay GSE's website where the public and all stakeholders can access it. No comments have been received at this time.

- As required by this criterion, staff researched the possibility of any additional available information relevant to the Relay GSE's application for IIA and reviewed found none. Staff also reviewed the 2020 CAEP report in which all standards were found to be met.

Criterion 12: Capacity and Resources

- As evidence of capacity and resources, Relay GSE has provided a copy of its most recent audited budget dated 2019-20 as well as a copy of a proposed operations budget for its education unit.
- Relay GSE has also detailed within its submission the facility resources that will be available for its candidates. Relay GSE will be offering the proposed educator preparation programs through its Relay Online campus. Candidates will complete coursework – which will include synchronous and asynchronous components – online. Canvas will be the learning-management system by which candidates can access coursework, upload assessments, view their progress, and communicate with faculty. Within Canvas, the communication tool, Studio, is used between instructors and candidates to provide time-coded comments on footage from clinical placements. This allows candidates to specifically note areas where faculty can provide targeted feedback. Candidates will build up a personal library of teaching videos, with internal course feedback, through their time in the program.
- During synchronous classes, candidates also engage with course material via Nearpod. Faculty use Nearpod to present slides, poll candidates, have candidates post on live virtual discussion boards, engage candidates with short videos, and integrate other technology (e.g., Google suite tools, simulations, etc.) as needed. The online technology orientation for candidates will cover commonly used technology tools in synchronous classes. In addition, when a faculty member introduces a new tool during a synchronous session, they will explicitly teach candidates how to use the tool, according to Relay GSE's submission.
- Additionally, within the submission document, Relay GSE has identified the job responsibilities and minimum qualifications for the program personnel and instructional support. Relay GSE's personnel and instructional support will consist of the following:
 - Relay Online's Dean
 - Assistant Professor
 - Assistant Professor of Practice
 - Director of Residency
 - Adjunct Instructors
 - Director, California Educator Preparation Programs
 - Manager, California Certification
 - Teaching Assistant
- Relay GSE operates, and will continue to operate, with a national shared services model, based out of its home office in New York City and supported by staff who work both out of the NYC office as well as remote home offices throughout the country. Relay GSE states that its services teams will continue to work together to provide student services to prospective and enrolled candidates and program completers.

- Relay GSE notes that the following national teams will support California candidates prior to, during, and post-enrollment: Office of Admissions and Enrollment (OAE), Alumni Affairs, Library Services, Registrar's Office, Student Financial Services (SFS), and Technology.
- As Relay GSE provided letters of intent from the following LEAs who seek to partner with the institution for the purposes of providing fieldwork:
 - ACE Charter Schools (four schools serving grades 5-12 in San Jose)
 - Alpha Public Schools (four schools, three are K-8, one is 9-12, in San Jose)
 - Education for Change (six neighborhood schools in the Fruitvale/ Oakland area)
 - Navigator Schools (three K-8 schools, two in Gilroy, one in Hollister)
 - Westlake Charter School (K-8 school in Natomas, outside Sacramento)
- In the event that Relay GSE is unable to continue to provide the proposed educator preparation programs, a Teach Out Plan will be implemented.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Commission consider the responses to the Eligibility Requirements submitted by the Relay Graduate School of Education and grant eligibility.

Granting eligibility would allow Relay GSE to move forward to Stage III of the IIA process in which responses to the Preconditions and the Common Standards are submitted for review. Approval of Stage II will not authorize Relay GSE to offer an educator preparation program that leads to a credential.

If the Commission grants Eligibility, it may identify topics that it will be looking for in Stage III. If the Commission denies Eligibility, it may identify what it sees as missing in the current submission in the event the institution decides to continue to work toward institutional approval.

Next Steps

Staff will take appropriate next steps based on the Commission's action.