

**Potential Reconsideration of Initial Program Approval
for Mills College at Northeastern University’s
Preliminary Multiple Subject Program
After Remand by the Commission
June 2024**

Overview

This item presents new information that has been remanded by the Commission for the Committee on Accreditation’s consideration and possible action, including a complaint challenging the initial program approval of a Preliminary Multiple Subject program and the institution’s response.

At its [April 2024 meeting](#), the Commission heard and discussed a complaint regarding the initial program approval for Mills College at Northeastern University’s Preliminary Multiple Subject Program. The program was approved by the Committee on Accreditation at its January 25, 2024, meeting. The complaint was brought forward by Decoding Dyslexia of California, the California Reading Coalition, and Families in Schools. The complaint letter is available in Appendix A to this item. Mills College at Northeastern University submitted a response to the complaint. The response from Mills College at Northeastern University is available in Appendix B to this item. After reviewing the matter, the Commission acted to remand the issue back to the Committee on Accreditation for consideration and possible action.

Staff Recommendation

That the COA take two actions. The first is a vote as to whether to reconsider. The COA must vote either:

- 1) To reconsider the initial program approval of the Preliminary Multiple Subject credential program proposed by Mills College at Northeastern University.
- 2) To not reconsider the initial program approval of the Preliminary Multiple Subject credential program proposed by Mills College at Northeastern University.

The Committee on Accreditation must reconsider if there is *new and relevant* evidence submitted *which may materially affect the original decision that was made*, in this case, the initial program approval of the Preliminary Multiple Subject credential program proposed by Mills College at Northeastern University.

If the COA votes to reconsider the initial program approval, it will then take into consideration the BIR report/evidence, the complaint, and the response to the complaint.

If the Committee on Accreditation votes to reconsider, then it has the following options for potential action:

- 1) Vote to sustain the prior decision of COA to grant initial program approval for the Preliminary Multiple Subject program at Mills College at Northeastern University.
- 2) Vote to reverse the prior decision of COA and deny initial program approval.

Background

Mills College, as an independent institution of higher education and Commission-approved program sponsor, began offering educator preparation in California in the 1970s. On June 30, 2022, Mills College ceased to exist as an independent Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) accredited institution. Subsequently, Northeastern University, a Boston-based institution accredited by the New England Commission on Higher Education, worked in collaboration with Mills College to continue to provide services to the Mills College community by assuming Mills College's operations. A new campus of Northeastern University was formed and called "Mills College at Northeastern University." All of Mills College's operations, facilities, and remaining faculty were assumed by Northeastern University as the controlling entity, and the new campus, Mills College at Northeastern, joined the main Northeastern University campus in its accreditation under the New England Commission on Higher Education. Being that Northeastern University did not have Commission approval to offer educator preparation programs, it was necessary for the institution go through the Initial Institutional Approval (IIA) process, and any programs it wished to offer be provisionally approved by the COA. If Northeastern University completes the IIA process, including hosting a provisional site visit at the end of its three-year provisional approval period, it will be the program sponsor and operate the proposed programs at the Mills College at Northeastern University campus in Oakland, California. At its Mills College Campus, Northeastern University is seeking initial institutional approval to offer four programs: Preliminary Administrative Services Credential, Preliminary Multiple Subject Credential, Preliminary Single Subject Credential, and Preliminary Education Specialist: Early Childhood Special Education. The COA granted provisional approval to the institution's Preliminary Administrative Services credential program at its August 2023 meeting and the Preliminary Education Specialist: Early Childhood Special Education at its October 2023 meeting. At its January 2024 meeting, the COA granted provisional approval to the institution's Preliminary Multiple Subject credential program.

On February 20, 2024, the Commission received a complaint from Decoding Dyslexia of California (DDCA), California Reading Coalition, and Families in Schools regarding the approval on January 25, 2024, by the COA for the Preliminary Multiple Subject program at Mills College at Northeastern. In accordance with the provisions of the [Accreditation Framework](#), the Commission considered this complaint at its April 18-19, 2024, meeting. A copy of the Commission agenda item; the complaint from DDCA, the California Reading Coalition, and Families in Schools; and the response to the complaint from Mills College at Northeastern University is available at this link: [Agenda Item 3C April 2024 Commission Meeting](#). (The complaint is Appendix A and the response from Mills College at Northeastern is Appendix B.) A total of nine written public comments were also received on this agenda item. These are available here: [Written Comments](#). Numerous oral comments were also made by members of the public and organizations and those may be accessed by viewing the video here: [Video of Agenda Item 3C Including Oral Comments](#).

After discussion by the Commission, the Commission considered the options that were listed in Section 5 of the [Accreditation Framework](#). These options were:

1. Investigate the basis for the concern;

2. Provide technical assistance; or,
3. Refer the concerns to the Committee on Accreditation for consideration and possible action.

During the discussion, Commissioners indicated that they did not think any procedural errors were made in the approval process, so the Commission voted to refer the concerns to the COA for consideration and possible action. This action was in keeping with the California Education Code section 44373, subdivision (c), subsection (2), which designates the COA as the body to “make decisions about the initial accreditation of new programs of educator preparation in accordance with procedures established by the committee.”

Potential COA Action

In making its determination on reconsideration, the COA may take into account only the documents and evidence available to the COA at its January 2024 meeting, which are available here: [Agenda Item 7, January 2024 COA Meeting](#), as well as the complaint and the Mills Northeastern response, which are available in [Appendix A](#) and [B](#).

Next Steps

Next steps will be determined by the action taken by the COA. If the COA votes to reconsider, the two possible actions and the next steps are outlined below.

Possible Action #1 – The Committee votes to sustain its prior decision to grant initial institutional approval for the Preliminary Multiple Subject credential program at Mills College at Northeastern University.

If the COA takes this action, the following will occur:

- a. The program continues operations and may continue to enroll candidates and implement the program.
- b. The approval date will remain unchanged as January 2024.
- c. The institution will be subject to the literacy certification process as will all other Preliminary Multiple Subject credential programs, with the modified timeline for submission of documentation for newly approved programs. Certification will be determined by the July 1, 2025 timeline established in statute.
- d. As an institution in its provisional period of initial institutional approval, a full site visit of all standards will be conducted in 2026.

Possible Action #2 – The Committee votes to reverse the prior decision of COA and deny initial program approval. If the COA takes this action, the following will occur:

- a. The institution must immediately cease to enroll students and may not offer the program.
- b. The institution may resubmit a new initial program proposal for review. Upon a determination by reviewers that all standards are aligned and preconditions met, the proposal would be brought forth for consideration and potential approval by the COA, in accordance with initial program approval procedures established by the COA.