

# **Academic Planning and Degree Program Proposals**

*(Revised January 2022)*

The Louisiana Constitution of 1974 gives the Board of Regents the responsibility to approve, disapprove, or modify all existing and proposed degree programs and administrative units of Louisiana's public colleges and universities. Institutional academic plans and individual degree program proposals are designed to ensure the Board has adequate information to make decisions regarding the inventory of academic programs among the state's public postsecondary institutions. An institution's degree program inventory, and all requested changes to the inventory including the addition of new programs, must fit within the role, scope, and mission of the institution and align with the needs of students and the state.

All new degree programs at the associate's level and above require Board of Regents approval. New programs undergo the following two approval processes:

1. Institutions first indicate an intention to propose a new degree program through the annual academic planning process.
2. Institutions must then submit a detailed program proposal for each new program that is included in the Board approved academic plan.

Both the annual academic plan and each individual program proposal submitted after approval of the plan will undergo rigorous review by Regents staff and will be circulated to Chief Academic Officers statewide for review and comment.

## **Academic Planning**

The purpose of institutional academic planning is to facilitate the efficient statewide coordination of academic degree program offerings. The annual academic planning process provides the opportunity for collaboration among institutions, encourages innovation in program design to meet employer and student needs, and minimizes unnecessary program duplication.

Each year, institutions must submit an updated three-year academic plan using the Regents template. Plans will include:

- An executive summary that describes recent and future efforts to meet statewide attainment goals through student support, engagement with business and industry, collaboration with other institutions, efforts to close equity gaps, and other activities aligned to the goals of the current Board of Regents Master Plan for Higher Education.
- A comprehensive list of intended degree program and academic unit additions, terminations, reconfigurations, and consolidations, with relevant details for each. Intended new degree programs must be designed to support the wellbeing of the state by meeting the needs of students, industry, and academia and must fall within the existing role, scope, and mission of the institution.

Academic plans shall be submitted to Regents after appropriate review and approval at the system level.

Plans will then be circulated to Chief Academic Officers and labor market representatives statewide for review and comment. Feedback from the statewide review may include support, recommendations, or substantive feedback to the proposed program based on need, mission, or duplication. Staff will attempt to resolve challenges through discussion among interested parties; unresolved issues will be presented to the Board for a final decision.

Changes to academic plans outside the annual academic planning process must be submitted to Regents for review according to the procedures outlined in academic planning guidelines. Changes to plans for the current year must undergo review by Chief Academic Officers statewide and receive Regents' approval.

### **Degree Program Proposals**

A full program proposal may be submitted to Regents any time after the program concept has been approved, as part of the academic planning process or through the off-cycle approval process as described in academic planning guidelines.

All new degree programs at the associate's level and above – including certificate programs – require Board of Regents approval. Proposals for new programs must be submitted using the appropriate Board of Regents proposal forms and must include all information required in the form. Before submission to Regents, proposals should be reviewed by other institutions within the system and approved by the management board according to system policy. Approved new degree programs are required to submit regular progress reports until the program demonstrates sustainability and meets accreditation requirements.

Program proposals for non-certificate programs including at the associate's, baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels, will be circulated to Chief Academic Officers statewide for review and comment. The proposing institution is responsible for addressing issues and concerns raised during the Chief Academic Officer review and identified by Regents staff before consideration for approval by the Board of Regents.

**Proposals for all graduate degrees (master's and doctoral) and for highly technical and/or selective baccalaureate degrees require review by an external consultant.** External reviewers are selected by Regents staff according to external review guidelines. External evaluations will be conducted as desk reviews and do not require on-site visits. The cost associated with an external review of proposed programs will be paid by the proposing system and/or institution. Regents staff will manage the external review process and coordinate with campus staff for the reviewer's payment and final submission of the report.