



SHEEO

STATE HIGHER EDUCATION EXECUTIVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

STATE-LEVEL PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW

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SEPTEMBER 2021



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) for providing the opportunity to work on this project. A huge debt of gratitude goes to David Tandberg and Dustin Weeden for their insightful direction on the drafts; this final version would not have been nearly as clear or complete without their input. A special thanks to Kelsey Heckert for assistance with the data as well as to the systems around the country that provided the underlying data. Appreciation goes to everyone at SHEEO who assisted with every stage of the process. This work was made possible by the support of [Lumina Foundation](#). Any errors, omissions, and/or unintentional misrepresentations are, of course, my own.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Statewide higher education governing and coordinating boards have long been involved in academic planning, academic program review, and academic program approval. Although changes to state regulations and funding reductions since the mid-1990s have led to some weakening of academic program approval and review processes, higher education boards continue to be involved in these activities. In fact, 59% of the higher education governing boards and 22% of the higher education coordinating boards participating in a 2019 SHEEO survey are involved in all three aspects.

A detailed analysis of the templates that statewide boards require institutions to use during the program approval and review processes reveals the role these processes play in ensuring academic quality and ensuring that state resources are used wisely. For both program approval and review, numerous elements from the templates are evidence of the role that the processes play in ensuring academic quality. These elements include measures for curriculum, students, and faculty as well as requirements for facilities, libraries, accreditation, and external review. For both program approval and review, the following elements from the templates are evidence of the role that the processes play in ensuring that state resources are being used wisely: cost, duplication, employer need/demand, relationship to state workforce needs, student demand for the program, and other need/demand. *Tables 2 and 3* provide examples of common and innovative elements used in the program approval and review processes.

Because most statewide boards are involved in academic program approval and review processes, the boards should take steps to continue to improve their processes. Specifically, statewide boards should ensure that templates exist for both processes and make the templates publicly available to provide transparency. Providing templates and making them publicly accessible is a good start; however, the templates should be a way to guide institutions to think about whether they are ensuring academic quality and ensuring that resources are used wisely.

Students often attend an institution to enroll in a specific program, and those programs have a tremendous impact on the likelihood that an individual student will successfully earn a credential. Therefore, individual programs play a key role in diversifying our colleges and universities and addressing existing equity gaps. However, many programs have serious equity gaps by race/ethnicity and gender. Therefore, individual programs ought to have articulated plans for attracting, enrolling, and graduating underrepresented students and other minoritized student populations. They should also be required to disaggregate their enrollment, completion, and other student outcomes measures by race/ethnicity and gender.

INTRODUCTION

Program approval and review, planning, and budgeting are the three major responsibilities typically held by statewide higher education coordinating and governing boards (Barak, 2007). Program approval involves making determinations about proposed academic programs, while program review refers to evaluation of existing academic programs. Program approval and review have always been issues of importance for the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO). The first SHEEO meeting in 1954 addressed program approval and review as one of the main topics on the agenda, and the issues discussed included “the allocation of programs to institutions working to distinguish between appropriate and unnecessary duplication” (Lingenfelter, 2018, p. 22).

THE HISTORY OF STATE-LEVEL PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW

State higher education systems and boards developed in the period between the late 19th century and the end of World War II with an early imperative to prevent unnecessary duplication of academic programs and activities. After World War II, statewide boards responded to rapidly expanding enrollments by developing new academic programs, institutions, and branch campuses. Attention soon turned from planning for massive growth to policy issues around effectiveness such as the creation, location, evaluation, or elimination of programs. By 1972, state higher education was focused on eliminating unnecessary duplication (especially in the public sector), ensuring mission differentiation, and regulating new academic programs, campuses, and branch campuses (Lingenfelter, 2018; McGuinness, 2016).

From 1972 through the mid-1980s, inflation and reduced state funding changed the emphasis of state education policy to efficiency concerns such as using existing capacity effectively and containing costs. As a result, several states increased the authority of statewide boards to identify programs with low enrollments or degree production and, in some cases, to close underperforming programs. By the mid-1990s, a significant change in the state role put the focus on outcomes by mandating institutional accountability through assessment of student learning; in addition, state regulations for approval of academic programs were weakened. In response to the Great Recession, reduced funding of state agencies led to further weakening of academic program approval processes (Lingenfelter, 2018; McGuinness, 2016). Nonetheless, higher education boards remain involved in program approval and review.

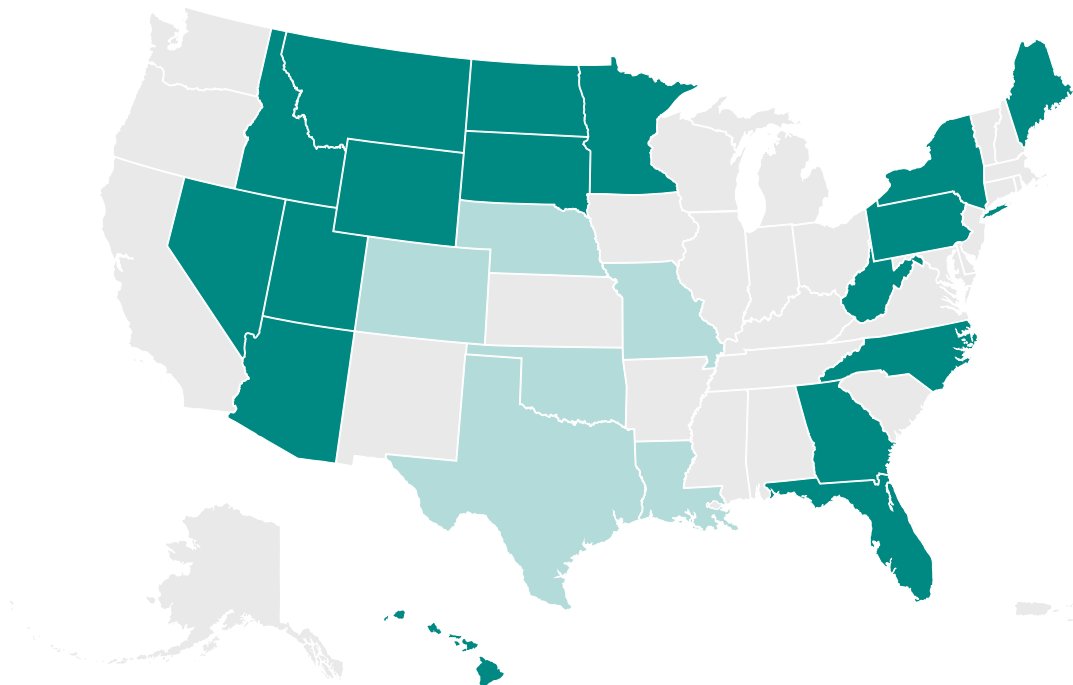
THE STATE OF STATE-LEVEL PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW TODAY

According to the 2019 SHEEO survey related to the functions of higher education boards, many governing boards are involved in academic planning (20 of 29, 69%), program review (24, 83%), and program approval (21, 74%); however, three governing boards (10%) are not involved in academic planning, program review, or program approval. Of the 29 governing boards in the SHEEO survey, 17 governing boards (59%) are involved in academic planning, program review, and program approval.

Fewer coordinating boards are involved in academic planning (10 of 32, 31%), program review (23, 71%), and program approval (20, 63%). Seven coordinating boards (22%) are not involved in academic planning, program review, or program approval. Of the 32 coordinating boards in the SHEEO survey, seven (22%) are involved in all three aspects.

Figure 1 shows the states in which the 17 governing boards and seven coordinating boards are involved in academic planning, program review, and program approval. The governing boards are in dark teal, while the coordinating boards are in light teal.¹

FIGURE 1
BOARDS THAT ARE INVOLVED IN ACADEMIC PLANNING, PROGRAM REVIEW, AND PROGRAM APPROVAL



1. The data and boards represented in this map are drawn from SHEEO's 2019 membership survey. Dark teal shows states in which the governing board does academic planning, program review, and program approval. Light teal shows states in which the coordinating board does academic planning, program review, and program approval. Boards in the states that are in gray may do either academic planning, program review, or program approval; these boards may also do some combination but not all three.

PURPOSES AND ROLE OF THE STATE-LEVEL PROGRAM APPROVAL PROCESSES

The current purposes of program approval are included in the policies of the statewide boards. For instance, the policies for the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education “recognize the primary role of institutional faculty, administrators, and governing boards in initiating and recommending needed changes in educational programs. The institutional faculty is the discipline experts responsible for developing and teaching the curriculum. The institutional administrators and governing board view the proposed program in light of the institution’s priorities. The State Regents provide the system perspective and their review should add to the evaluation process. The State Regents consider the statewide capacity for each new program request as well as linking academic planning with resource allocation. The State Regents also must ensure that requests and mandates are applied consistently” (3.4 Academic Program Approval, Revised June 27, 2019). The primary purposes for the academic program approval policy include maintaining and enhancing the quality of instruction, research, and public service; responding to existing and emerging technological, social, cultural, scientific, business/industry, and economic needs; providing a variety of high-quality opportunities for intellectual growth; making programs reasonably accessible to academically qualified citizens; and utilizing the state’s and institutions’ resources effectively and efficiently (3.4 Academic Program Approval, Revised June 27, 2019).

The Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education ensures that new academic programs align with the Montana University System strategic plan and the campus mission; that there is convincing evidence of student demand, employer demand, or societal need; that the program avoids unnecessary duplication and cannot be delivered more efficiently through collaboration; that the projected benefits to the state outweigh the costs; and that the institution can deliver the program to an acceptable degree of quality within existing and projected resources (Policy and Procedures Manual Policy 303.1 Academic Program Proposals, Revised November 22, 2019). Similarly, the Louisiana Board of Regents requires that proposals for new academic programs consider how the program is related to the existing role, scope, and mission of the institution; what the program will contribute to the well-being of the state, region, or academy; and whether the program duplicates existing or related programs at other institutions (Policy 2.05 Guidelines for the proposal of a new academic program, September 2011).

The most common purpose of program approval has consistently been ensuring quality. Of the 45 boards that assessed new programs in 2006, more than half (58%; 26 of 45) cited quality improvement/maintenance. The boards listed myriad other purposes: 22 (49%) noted the need and/or demand for program, 18 (40%) mentioned the consistency with mission/role, 18 (40%) cited avoiding duplication, 14 (31%) mentioned the effective use of resources, 11 (24%) noted cost effectiveness, five (11%) said consistency with institutional and/or state plans, and four (9%) chose consumer protection. Three states each cited accountability, workforce need, maintain a coordinated system, improve coordination, and improve/provide access. (Barak, 2007).

Statewide governing boards take different approaches to program approval. According to a 2006 survey of state boards, there was “no single common approach to program approval among the forty-eight (48) state boards responding to this part of the survey. Some boards do not assess any new programs. Some boards assess and/or approve all new program offerings at all degree levels (associate degrees through graduate level) at most institutions. Others assess and/or approve only some degree levels and only some of the institutions under their purview” (Barak, 2007, p. 9).

PURPOSES AND ROLE OF THE STATE-LEVEL PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESSES

As with program approval, the purposes of program review are set out in the policies of the statewide boards. For example, the Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education requires each campus of the Montana University System to review all of its programs at least once every seven years “to ensure program quality and effective stewardship of resources” (Policy and Procedures Manual Policy 303.3 Program Review, Revised March 4, 2016). Similarly, the University of Wyoming’s administrative policy on academic program review (APR) specifies that the review process “provides an opportunity for the institution and faculty to examine the quality of their academic programs as a whole, to affirm ways that the program is working well, and to implement improvements. APR is also a mechanism for demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement and thus meet accreditation requirements” (Approved 7/3/2018). The Idaho State Board of Education explicitly provides that the “goals of program review are: (a) maintenance and enhancement of the quality of instruction, research, and public service efforts, (b) assurance of the postsecondary education system’s responsiveness to changing societal and state needs, (c) promotion of effective and efficient management of the state’s resources, and (d) assist the institutions in defining how effective their programs are” (Policy Section III, Subsection H. Program Review, August 2007). The South Dakota Board of Regents specifies that “program reviews assist in the continuous improvement of educational program quality. Institutional program reviews involve stakeholders and analyze past performance as a way to inform present and future decision-making. The review process should integrate strategic planning, budgeting, regional and specialized accreditation process, and student-learning outcome assessment” (Academic Affairs Guidelines 4.2 Institutional Program Review Guidelines, Reviewed November 2017).

The 2006 survey of state boards found that “program review activities range from no reviews, to monitoring institutionally conducted reviews, to the actual conducting of the reviews” (Barak, 2007, p. 11). Of the 41 boards that conducted some reviews of existing programs, 29 boards or board designees (71%) prepare reports and/or recommendations, 25 boards (61%) require periodic reporting of institutionally based reviews, 25 boards (61%) delegate the actual conducting of reviews to the institution, 25 boards or board designees (61%) select the programs, 21 boards (51%) require student outcome assessments, 13 boards or board designees (32%) participate in site visits, and 12 boards or board designees (29%) select the consultants (Barak, 2007).

The schedule for program review was typically every five to seven years. For 33 (69%), all programs must be reviewed periodically (every five to seven years) while 22 (46%) review on a periodic schedule (5-7 years) and/or on the basis of triggers such as low productivity, high cost, state need, and duplication (productivity reviews). The boards still focus on unnecessary duplication (Barak, 2007, p. 11).

The purposes for program review as of the 2006 survey were “improving program quality (either individually or collectively), improving student learning, improving teaching, improving overall accountability, and identifying weak programs for either improvement or elimination” (Barak, 2007, p. 12). The major criteria for evaluating existing programs were essentially the same in 2006 as in earlier surveys: student demand for program (37 of 41, 90%), quality indicators (32, 78%), employer need/demand for program or its graduates (31, 76%), relationship to state workforce needs (28, 68%), relationship to state and/or institutional strategic plans (27, 66%), cost indicators (26, 63%), duplication which was usually defined as unnecessary (25, 61%), and reallocation of resources (12, 29%).

CHANGING NEEDS FOR PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW

Barak (2007) found that “(t)he general purposes, major criteria and basic process components used today by most boards are essentially the same as those identified in 1978” (p. 14). Many states were considering changes, and Barak (2007) posited that such changes may “reflect either dissatisfaction with the current policies or the need for further modifications to meet changing needs” (p. 14).

As of 2006, the top reasons for possible changes for program review and program approval reflected the lack of a consistent approach across systems. Nine states strengthened the relationship of program review and program approval with overall strategic planning efforts. Nine states simplified or improved the efficiency of program review and program approval processes.

Seven states shifted some or all responsibility for actually conducting program review and/or program approval to the institutions, while most retained a summary reporting responsibility to the state boards. Shifting responsibility from the state level was part of a larger effort to decentralize responsibilities to the institutional level as well as being a cost-saving strategy for the state boards because conducting the reviews is expensive. An additional rationale was a feeling “that faculty ownership in the reviews would be enhanced if the locus of the reviews was at the institutional level” (Barak, 2007, p. 15).

Seven states strengthened program review and program approval processes. Six states improved cooperation in program planning with other sectors/agencies. Six states improved the relationship of program review and/or program approval with workforce and economic development (Barak, 2007, p. 15).

Today there is a growing need for individual programs to help address equity gaps in postsecondary education. Students often attend an institution to enroll in a specific program, and those programs have a tremendous impact on the likelihood that an individual student will successfully earn a credential. Therefore, individual programs play a key role in diversifying our colleges and universities and addressing existing equity gaps.

However, many programs have serious equity gaps by race/ethnicity and gender. The gaps begin with which students enroll in which fields. The gender gap in STEM fields² is well established, with 35.5% of men and 17.0% of women at public four-year institutions in 2015-16 enrolling in STEM programs (Espinosa et al., 2019). Gaps also exist by race/ethnicity. Asian students were more likely to enroll in STEM fields than other fields (40.7% of Asian students enrolled in STEM), as were Hispanic students (22.4% of Hispanic students enrolled in STEM), while Black students were more likely to enroll in other applied fields³ (20.9% of Black students enrolled in other applied fields). By comparison, Black students were less likely to enroll in STEM fields (17.7%) and Asian (8.8%) and Hispanic (17.6%) students were less likely to enroll in other applied fields (Espinosa et al., 2019). These gaps are also present when looking at completion rates: Of Asian students who earned bachelor’s degrees in 2016, 34.7% earned degrees in STEM fields, and 9.0% earned degrees in other applied fields, while 12.6% of Black students who earned degrees in 2016 did so in STEM fields and 21.9% earned degrees in other applied fields (Espinosa et al., 2019).

2. STEM fields include computer and information sciences, engineering and engineering technology, biological and physical sciences, science technology, math, and agriculture.

3. Other applied fields include personal and consumer services; manufacturing, construction, repair, and transportation; military technology and protective services; architecture; communications; public administration and human services; design and applied arts; law and legal studies; library sciences; and theology and religious vocations.

Therefore, individual programs ought to have articulated plans for attracting, enrolling, and graduating underrepresented students and other minoritized student populations. They should also be required to disaggregate their enrollment, completion, and other student outcomes measures by race/ethnicity and gender.

STRENGTHS OF THE CURRENT PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW PROCESSES

Preventing unnecessary overlap and duplication has been cited as a major advantage of program approval (Barak, 2007, p. 4, quoting Glenny, 1959). Sustained state program approval has “resulted in a much reduced level of unnecessary duplication at least in some states. The use of institutional mission, role and scope statements, the emphasis on state-level and institutional strategic planning and the requirements related to workforce and economic development have all helped improve the effectiveness of program approval. It is much easier to eliminate program duplication by disapproving a proposed program than it is with an existing program with commitments to faculty, staff, equipment, budgets and loyal alumni” (Barak, 2007 p. 16).

Although program reviews are expensive and time-consuming, “there is evidence that effective program reviews can be highly beneficial by focusing attention on needed academic reforms, emphasizing student learning outcomes, by improving program effectiveness with modifications to programs and organizational structures, by providing greater levels of accountability, and improving consumer protection” (Barak, 2007, p. 16).

AUTHORITY OVER PROGRAMS AT PUBLIC, PRIVATE, AND PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS

Some boards have authority over programs not only at public institutions but also at private and proprietary institutions. For example, the Regents of the University of the State of New York (USNY) have specific authority over all higher education institutions (Education Law Section 214, 2020). As part of its authority, the Regents of USNY (through the Commissioner) require that institutions register all degree programs before the program is offered to students (8 CRR-NY 52.1, 2020).⁴ Institutions are required to submit information showing “evidence of careful planning. Institutional goals and objectives of each curriculum and of all courses shall be clearly defined in writing, and a reviewing system shall be devised to estimate the success of students and faculty in achieving such goals and objectives. The content and duration of curricula shall be designed to implement their purposes” (8 CRR-NY 52.1, 2020). Standards for the registration of curricula include detailed expectations for resources, faculty, curricula and awards, admission, and administration (8 CRR-NY 52.2, 2020). For instance, the resources component requires the institution to have sufficient financial resources to carry out its mission as well as to provide classrooms, faculty offices, laboratories, libraries, and equipment to support instruction, research, and student performance (8 CRR-NY 52.2, 2020). The Commissioner may deny registration if the curriculum does not comply (8 CRR-NY 52.1, 2020).

4. USNY is the state board of education for the state of New York. The actual work of program approval is carried out by the Office of Higher Education in the New York State Department of Education.

TEMPLATES FOR PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW PROCESSES

Some statewide boards have developed templates for program approval and review processes that must be used by institutions. Ten governing boards and six coordinating boards that are involved in academic planning, program review, and program approval provide a publicly accessible template for either program approval or review. *Table 1* below provides hyperlinks to the templates.

TABLE 1

TEMPLATES FOR PROGRAM APPROVAL AND PROGRAM REVIEW

STATEWIDE BOARD	BOARD TYPE	TEMPLATE LINK
University System of Georgia	Governing	Program Approval
		Program Review
Idaho State Board of Education	Governing	Program Approval
Louisiana Board of Regents	Coordinating	Program Approval
University of Maine System	Governing	Program Approval
Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development	Coordinating	Program Review
Montana University System Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education	Governing	Program Approval & Review
Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education	Coordinating	Program Approval & Review
Nevada System of Higher Education, System Administration	Governing	Program Approval
State University of New York System Administration	Governing	Program Approval
University of North Carolina General Administration	Governing	Program Approval
North Dakota University System	Governing	Program Approval
Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education	Coordinating	Program Approval & Review
South Dakota Board of Regents	Governing	Program Review
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board	Coordinating	Program Approval
		Program Review
State Council of Higher Education for Virginia	Coordinating	Program Approval
University of Wyoming	Governing	Program Approval & Review

The following sections analyze the templates of three governing boards and three coordinating boards in detail to evaluate the role that program approval and review processes play in ensuring academic quality and ensuring that state resources are used wisely. Additional detail about these six boards is available in *Appendix A*.

ROLE THAT PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW PROCESSES PLAY IN ENSURING ACADEMIC QUALITY

For both program approval and review, numerous elements from the templates are evidence of the role that the processes play in ensuring academic quality. These elements include measures for curriculum, students, and faculty, as well as requirements for facilities, libraries, accreditation, and external review. Additional quality elements address the relationship to the state-level strategic plan and the connection to the institutional mission and strategic plan.

MEASURES FOR CURRICULUM, STUDENTS, AND FACULTY RELATED TO QUALITY IN PROCESSES FOR PROGRAM APPROVAL

Measures for curriculum, students, and faculty related to quality in processes for program approval are included in the templates for the University System of Georgia, the Idaho State Board of Education, the University of Maine System, the Louisiana Board of Regents, and the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development.

A new template for program approval in the University System of Georgia⁵ requires institutions to include the number of credit hours required to graduate as well as whether the program will be offered on-campus and online, off-campus and online, or hybrid. Proposals must also include enrollment projections for the next four academic years, with actions that will be taken if projected program enrollment is not realized in the second year. A recruiting plan including how the program will be marketed to adult, underrepresented, and special populations of students must be included.

Institutions in the University System of Georgia must provide detailed information about learning outcomes such as indicating how specific occupational skills and knowledge, skills, and abilities for associate and bachelor's programs are related to the program learning outcomes as well as demonstrating a link between learning outcomes and career-ready competencies from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (critical thinking/problem solving, oral/written communication, teamwork/collaboration, digital technology, leadership, professionalism/work ethic, career management, global/intercultural fluency). In addition, institutions must explain how learning outcomes for the program will be assessed and include a curriculum map for the upper division or major curriculum. One of the most innovative features in the University System of Georgia template for new programs is the requirement that proposed undergraduate programs identify which high-impact practices (first-year experience, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments/projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, ePortfolios, service/community-based learning, internships, capstone courses/projects) will be embedded into the program, how the high-impact practice will be embedded, and the point at which the high-impact practice will be offered or required.

The template for program approval used by the Idaho State Board of Education requires an assurance of quality. Specifically, quality considerations are addressed through questions about the curriculum and its delivery (credit hours, curriculum, additional requirements such as comprehensive exams or senior thesis), intended learning outcomes (what students will know, be able to do and value or appreciate), and assessment plans (process to evaluate if students are achieving the intended student learning outcomes and to ensure that findings will be used to improve the program; direct and indirect measures to assess student learning; timing and frequency of assessment).

The template for program approval used in the University of Maine System requires institutions to provide an outline of required and/or elective courses, to address the development of new courses, and to explain any experiential learning opportunities for students (e.g., independent study, clinical experience, research experience, apprenticeship, field practicums, etc.). The template also has

5. The new template for academic program approval in the University System of Georgia was launched on January 4, 2021 (Presentation on Academic Program Authorization and Review, University System of Georgia, November 30, 2020).

a section on program assessment and evaluation that requires the institution to describe the assessment methodology that will be used to evaluate the student learning outcomes and to explain how such data will be used to improve the program.

The template for program approval used by the Louisiana Board of Regents requires institutions to address issues of quality through the description of the program curriculum (i.e., required courses) and any special requirements such as internships, comprehensive examination, thesis, or dissertation. The template also addresses quality through the faculty analysis by asking about present rank; the institutions granting degrees; involvement in research, extension, and other activities and the relationship of these activities to the teaching load; and areas of specialized competence related to the new program, publications and their nature as well as direction of theses and dissertations for graduate program faculty. An administration analysis related to any special departmental strengths and/or weaknesses and how the proposed program will affect them must be included. The institution must describe the program concept, including its purpose and objective, and provide a list of learning outcomes for the proposed program (what students are expected to know and be able to do upon completion of the program). Institutions must map out the proposed curriculum, including course credits and contact hours (if applicable); identify any incremental credentials and/or concentrations within the degree; and describe the plan for developing and offering new courses as well as any special program requirements (e.g., internships, comprehensive exam, thesis, etc.).

The review criteria for new degree programs used by the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development are quite detailed. New degree programs must “be based on existing strengths of the public institution rather than be composed entirely of new courses.” The proposed program must provide “a carefully planned and systematic program of study” that is “demonstrably consistent with program objectives and intended student learning outcomes.” The template for routine review includes sections for student preparation (special admissions procedures or student qualifications that exceed regular university admissions, standards, e.g., ACT score, completion of core curriculum, portfolio, personal interview, etc.; specific population to be served) as well as student and program outcomes (special skills specific to the program; performance on national and/or local assessments). There are detailed criteria related to faculty resources, including minimal educational attainment for faculty, faculty workload, and the use of adjunct faculty, and the template for routine review addresses faculty characteristics such as degree status or training; expectations for professional activities, special student contact, teach/learning innovation, and student and program outcomes (special skills specific to the program; performance on national and/or local assessments). The template for routine review also addresses program structure (total credits for graduation; residency requirements; general education; courses, major requirements, and free elective credits; requirements for thesis internship, or other capstone experience; any unique features such as interdepartmental cooperation).

REQUIREMENTS FOR FACILITIES AND LIBRARIES RELATED TO QUALITY IN PROCESSES FOR PROGRAM APPROVAL

Both the University System of Georgia and the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development include criteria related to libraries and facilities in program approval. The criteria for program approval used by the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development includes library resources (qualitative and quantitative factors related to the number, quality, and currency of library holdings as well as access to interlibrary loans) and

physical facilities and instructional equipment (adequate to support the program and space for classrooms, staff and faculty offices, and laboratories). In addition, the administrative structure “should not be unduly cumbersome or costly and ideally, fit into the public institution’s current administrative structure. If administrative changes are required, they should be consistent with the organization of the public institution as a whole and necessitate a minimum of additional expense in terms of personnel and office space.”

REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCREDITATION RELATED TO QUALITY IN PROCESSES FOR PROGRAM APPROVAL

Institutions must address accreditation in Georgia, Idaho, Louisiana, and Missouri. For the University System of Georgia, institutions must describe disciplinary, regional (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges), and other accreditation requirements. For the Idaho State Board of Education, the template for program approval requires an assurance of quality. Specifically, institutions must address “how the institution will ensure the quality of the program” and must describe “the institutional process of program review. Institutions must “describe applicable specialized accreditation and explain why” the institution will or will not seek accreditation. For the Louisiana Board of Regents, the template for program approval must address issues of quality through the accreditation analysis (the name of any available accrediting agency or agencies, requirements for accreditation, and how the criteria will be achieved). For the Missouri Department of Higher Education, the institution must also provide a description of any applicable accreditation requirements and the institution’s plans for seeking accreditation. The review criteria for new degree programs must “reflect the requirements of any accrediting or certifying body if the public institution elects to apply for accreditation or certification.”

REQUIREMENTS FOR EXTERNAL REVIEW RELATED TO QUALITY IN PROCESSES FOR PROGRAM APPROVAL

External review for new programs is required by the University System of Georgia, the Louisiana Board of Regents, and the Missouri Department of Higher Education. The University System of Georgia requires proposals for new doctoral programs to be reviewed by at least three external and one system reviewer from aspirational or comparative peer programs.

The Louisiana Board of Regents provides guidelines for external reviewers to use when evaluating a new program proposal. These guidelines ask for “your professional review of a graduate program proposal, and your observations and recommendations to build a quality degree program.” Many of the specific questions are related to quality. For instance, questions related to quality are included in the sections for program design (whether the proposed breadth of course offerings represent a broad, well-integrated knowledge of the discipline; whether the requirements for curriculum, research, etc., are appropriate for a program of high quality), students (whether enrollment projections are realistic; whether there is an adequate supply of qualified students in the area; whether there is enough financial support budgeted to attract able students; whether the standards for admission and for measuring performance are clear and reasonable), faculty (whether the department has sufficient faculty strength and stability to successfully launch and maintain this program; the evaluator’s impression of the caliber of the faculty’s research and publications; whether the faculty is generally recognized nationally, e.g., by appointment to national honorary bodies, committee work, editorial service, or by other recognition; whether there is any indication of excellence in teaching and mentoring), and accreditation (whether there is appropriate information on specialized, programmatic

accreditation presented). There are also questions for general assessment, comments, and suggestions related to quality (whether the proposed program is realistic and what the program's notable strong and weak points are).

For the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development, a complete proposal for a new degree program must include evidence of the institution's capacity to launch the program in a high-quality manner. The institution must have "an external review conducted by a team including faculty experts in the discipline to be offered and administrators from institutions already offering programs in the discipline and at the degree level proposed. The review must include an assessment of the offering institution's capacity to offer the new program in terms of general, academic, and student service support, including faculty resources that are appropriate for the program being proposed (e.g., faculty credentials, use of adjunct faculty, and faculty teaching workloads)."

REQUIREMENTS TO SUPPORT THE STATE-LEVEL AND INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN IN PROCESSES FOR PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW

The University System of Georgia, the Louisiana Board of Regents, the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development, and Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education require that proposals for new academic programs support the state-level strategic plan. Nebraska's Guidelines for Submitting Proposals for New Instructional Programs specify that the institution must explain "how this program would enhance relevant statewide goals for education. This explanation may strengthen a program proposal, bolstering information regarding need and demand, or ameliorating concerns about unnecessary duplication."

The University System of Georgia, the Idaho State Board of Education, the University of Maine System, the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development, and Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education require that proposals for new academic programs support the institution's vision and/or strategic plan. The Louisiana Board of Regents' template for the letter of intent to develop a new program requires an explanation of "why this program is an institutional priority at this time" as well as how it will further the institution's mission and "increase the educational attainment or quality of life of the people of Louisiana."

On the program review side, Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education and the University System of Georgia require that programs be consistent with the institutional role and mission. The University System of Georgia and Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education also require program review to include the institution's strategic plan.

MEASURES FOR CURRICULUM, STUDENTS, AND FACULTY RELATED TO QUALITY IN PROCESSES FOR PROGRAM REVIEW

The template for program review used by the University System of Georgia is extensive and includes multiple measures of quality expressed through numerous metrics for undergraduate and graduate student inputs and outputs as well as metrics for faculty.

The measures for student inputs in undergraduate programs are standardized test scores (number of students taking the ACT or SAT) and a freshmen index calculated using high school GPA and ACT/SAT scores. Institutions may also provide other indicators (e.g., entry scores or GPA into a degree program such as nursing, business, education) as well as a campus-determined indicator (examples include number of students and distribution, average ability of students

and distribution, standard testing measures, incoming grade point average). The measures for student outputs in undergraduate programs are the average exit scores or pass rate on national/state exams for licensure, the average graduating major GPA or cumulative GPA for the academic year, the employment rates of graduates, and the rates of admission into graduate programs. Institutions may also provide a campus-determined indicator (examples include completion and continuation rates, completer satisfaction, employer satisfaction, attrition rates, starting salaries, stakeholder satisfaction, undergraduate student learning outcomes, and competencies).

The measures for student inputs in graduate programs include the average graduate and/or undergraduate GPA for admitted and enrolled students as well as standardized test scores (number of students taking the GRE, GMAT, LSAT, MCAT). The institution may also include campus-determined indicators (examples include number of students and distribution, average ability of students and distribution, standard testing measures). The measures for student outputs in graduate programs are the average exit scores on national and state licensure and/or certification exams or average pass rate, graduating major or stand-alone GPA scores, and external quality assurance (e.g., professional accreditation, surveys, market rankings). Institutions may also include campus-determined indicators (examples include completion and continuation rates, completer satisfaction, employer satisfaction, attrition rates, starting salaries, graduate student learning outcomes, and competencies).

The measures for faculty are the number of terminally degreed faculty in the department (regardless of whether the faculty teach in the program), the number of non-terminally degreed faculty in the department (regardless of whether the faculty teach in the program), the total amount of sponsored research funding awarded for the academic year, the total amount of other external funds for program support for the academic year, the number of peer-reviewed publications for the academic year, the number of faculty research fellowships awarded in the academic year, and measures of external quality assurance (e.g., professional accreditation surveys, market rankings). The institution may also provide campus-determined indicators (examples include meeting the requirements of the parent institution for undergraduate education and graduate research and doctoral education).

ROLE THAT PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW PROCESSES PLAY IN ENSURING THAT STATE RESOURCES ARE BEING USED WISELY

For both program approval and review, the following elements from the templates are evidence of the role that the processes play in ensuring that state resources are being used wisely: cost, duplication, employer need/demand, relationship to state workforce needs, student demand for the program, and other need/demand.

ELEMENTS RELATED TO COSTS IN PROCESSES FOR PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW

There is extensive evidence that states are paying attention to the costs associated with adding new programs. The University System of Georgia, the Idaho State Board of Education, the University of Maine System, the Louisiana Board of Regents, the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development, and Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education require that proposals for new academic programs address physical resources, library resources, personnel, and revenue. Physical resources include existing equipment, space, lab instruments, or computers, as well as additional space requirements, if any, including renovations. Library resources include existing personnel and space available for the program and costs for any needed

library resources or any new equipment, as well as a plan for acquisition and implementation. Personnel costs include instructional, support, and administrative personnel available for the program; costs for any needed personnel and a description of necessary faculty workload adjustment; and instructional capacity for additional sections of existing courses or new courses offered. Some states such as the University of Maine System and the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development specifically include employee benefits as part of personnel costs. Revenue costs include reallocation of existing state appropriated funds, new ongoing state appropriations needed; donations, federal grants, other grants, contracts; and student fees.

Institutions in the University System of Georgia must specify whether new or renovated facilities will be needed in the next four years. Start-up costs, ongoing costs, and funding sources must be provided for new construction, renovations, purchases, and leases. The impact of construction or renovation on existing programs and campus activities, as well as plans for how disruptions will be mitigated must be included. An explanation of how facilities needs are related to accreditation must be provided. The University of Maine System requires an explanation of the extent of cooperation with other programs (both on the initiating campus and other campuses), and Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education strongly encourages the sharing of resources (specifically, telecommunications and instructional technologies) with other institutions of higher education. The Louisiana Board of Regents addresses costs associated with accreditation and travel and cost savings from the use of open educational resources; in addition, the system focuses on resources available to support student success, such as student supports. The Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development asks about program outcomes, such as the number of graduates per year.

The Idaho State Board of Education, the University of Maine System, the Louisiana Board of Regents, and Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education also require a multiyear business plan addressing planned FTE enrollment, projected revenues, and estimated expenditures. Sources of revenue include tuition and/or fee income; grant and/or contract support; other philanthropic support; and public-private partnerships. The Idaho State Board of Education asks for an explanation of the fiscal impact of any proposed discontinuance (i.e., salary savings, reassignments). The University of Maine System addresses any required marketing expenses and whether the program will be considered for differential tuition. If differential tuition is recommended, a rationale must be provided.

For program review, the University System of Georgia and Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education address costs. The University System of Georgia establishes performance measures and benchmarks related to fiscal sustainability and the stewardship of state resources, while Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education requires evidence of the efficiency of the program. Measures addressing costs include student credit hours, faculty FTE, instructional FTE, student credit hours/faculty FTE, student credit hours/instructional faculty FTE, and the number of degrees and awards.

ELEMENTS RELATED TO DUPLICATION IN PROCESSES FOR PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW

Preventing duplication of academic programs is one of the most well-established and long-standing considerations for academic program approval. The University System of Georgia, the Idaho State Board of Education, the University of Maine System, the Louisiana Board of Regents, the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development, and Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education require institutions to address duplication issues when adding new programs; however, the precise definition of duplication varies.

Some institutions must address duplication issues in other states. For instance, the Idaho State Board of Education requires institutions to identify similar programs offered within the state and the region by both in-state or bordering state institutions: In cases in which a proposed program is similar to another program offered by another Idaho public institution, a rationale about why the duplication is a net benefit to the state as well as an explanation for why it is not feasible for the existing programs to fulfill the need for the proposed program must be provided. The Louisiana Board of Regents requires institutions to list similar programs in neighboring states if the proposed program is at the graduate level. Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education requires institutions to consider similar offerings in their geographic service area, in other areas of the state, or the region, as well as student exchange programs offered by other educational entities, such as the Midwestern Higher Education Compact. For graduate and professional programs, institutions must identify similar programs offered in contiguous states that would be reasonably accessible to Nebraska residents.

Some institutions are only required to address duplication issues within the system. For example, institutions in the University of Maine System must describe similar programmatic offerings in the system and the extent to which collaboration with the proposed program could be provided using multi-campus delivery.

The Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development differentiates between baccalaureate-level programs and programs at other levels. Duplication is ordinarily not considered an issue for proposed programs in basic liberal arts and sciences at the baccalaureate level, while unnecessary duplication is a concern in graduate, technical, and professional programs which meet special labor market needs. To determine whether a program is an inappropriate duplication, MDHEWD considers the following factors (in descending order of priority): the relevance of existing programming; the availability of alternative educational delivery systems; the extent of student demand; state or regional workforce demand; and access considerations such as geographic availability, student population served, and cost of instruction.

Some public systems, such as the Louisiana Board of Regents, require institutions to address duplication of similar programs offered at both public and private institutions. Institutions must present an argument about how the new program will be distinct from existing offerings. Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education requires institutions to identify other similar programs offered in the state by public or private institutions.

For program review, Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education requires institutions to ensure that the program does not constitute unnecessary duplication of similar programs offered by other postsecondary institutions in Nebraska or through interstate agreements.

ELEMENTS RELATED TO EMPLOYER NEED/DEMAND IN PROCESSES FOR PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW

Institutions are required to pay attention to employer need/demand when adding new programs. The University System of Georgia, the Idaho State Board of Education, the University of Maine System, the Louisiana Board of Regents, the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development, and Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education require institutions to address employer need/demand. New programs may document workforce demand for graduates by presenting specific programmatic requests from potential employers. Both the University of Maine System and Idaho State Board of Education require institutions to explain whether the proposed program is in response to a specific industry need or workforce opportunity.

Requests for new programs must generally be backed by data establishing employer need/demand. The University System of Georgia requires institutions to provide national and state employment projections for occupations related to the program; technical skills related to the occupations; knowledge, skills, and abilities related to the occupations; average salary for the occupations (one and five years after graduation); and job outlook for program graduates. In addition, the University System of Georgia requires institutions to identify partners that they are working with to create a career pipeline with the program. Examples of partners include high schools, career academies, other institutions (both inside and outside the system), employers, community partnerships, and professional associations.

New programs in the University of Maine System must document workforce demand for graduates by using data such as Maine Department of Labor findings or Burning Glass workforce projections. The Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development relies on personnel and employment projections prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Missouri Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, and professional/trade associations, as well as surveys of potential employers about numbers of anticipated vacancies and training requirements. Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education utilizes surveys/studies regarding workforce needs of business, industry, and employers, job and educational advancement opportunities for graduates, and the potential for the program to contribute to economic development. The Louisiana Board of Regents requires institutions to indicate state, regional, and national need in the field for more graduates if a new graduate program is requested.

Institutions also must consider employer need/demand in program review processes. The University System of Georgia requires institutions to explain workforce/occupational need and demand as part of program review. Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education requires institutions to provide evidence of the need for the program in the state of Nebraska and at the institution.

ELEMENTS RELATED TO STATE WORKFORCE NEEDS IN PROCESSES FOR PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW

Institutions are required to pay attention to state workforce needs when adding new programs. The University System of Georgia, the Idaho State Board of Education, the University of Maine System, the Louisiana Board of Regents, the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development, and Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education require institutions to address state workforce needs.

The Idaho State Board of Education requires institutions to provide verification of state workforce needs based on state and national Department of Labor research on employment potential; institutions must indicate total projected annual job openings (including growth and replacement demands in the regional area, the state, and nation) using data that can be validated and no more than two years old. New programs in the University of Maine System must be supported by detailed market analysis findings conducted in consultation with campus or system institutional researchers. New program requests to the Louisiana Board of Regents must outline how the program is essential for the well-being of the state/region/academy, including considerations such as the contribution to economic development and current or evolving needs within the state or region. Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education evaluates the extent to which the program will contribute to the economic development of the state by providing skilled employees or services for businesses located in the state or by attracting high-quality firms to the state.

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development requires a rigorous analysis demonstrating a strong and compelling workforce need for the program with a connection to the current and future workforce needs of the state. While public institutions must clearly demonstrate and document demand and/or need for the program in terms of meeting present and future needs of the locale and the state, MDHEWD recognizes that state needs are a part of broader national needs. In addition, requests for new programs must provide students with external learning experiences to increase the probability that they will remain in the applicable geographic area after graduation.

Only the University System of Georgia requires institutions to explain workforce/occupational need and demand as part of program review.

ELEMENTS RELATED TO STUDENT DEMAND FOR THE PROGRAM IN PROCESSES FOR PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW

Student demand for the program is another factor that institutions must address when adding new programs. The Idaho State Board of Education, the Louisiana Board of Regents, the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, and Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education address student demand. Student demand is most commonly established using survey results. The Louisiana Board of Regents also examines the number of students enrolled in component courses or closely related minors and concentrations. The Idaho State Board of Education asks institutions to provide information about student interest in the proposed program from inside and outside the institution.

Institutions also must consider student demand in program review processes. The University System of Georgia requires institutions to explain multiple measures of viability related to student demand, including the number of students who have applied to be admitted, the number who have been admitted, and the number currently enrolled in the program as part of program review. Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education requires institutions to provide evidence of the demand for the program by students, and community colleges must provide five years of data on student credit hours, student credit hours/faculty FTE, and the number of degrees and awards.

ELEMENTS RELATED TO OTHER TYPES OF NEED/DEMAND IN PROCESSES FOR PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW

Some states consider other types of need/demand when assessing the need for new programs. For instance, the University of Maine System, the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, and Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education consider societal needs for the program in addition to education and economic needs. The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development specifies that some programs may be desirable on the basis of their cultural contribution or social value or potential to serve student interests independent of labor market or demand considerations. Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education points out that "programs, such as those in selected liberal arts, humanities, or fine arts disciplines, may be justified because they offer individual and societal benefits that may be independent of labor force or market demand. Those programs may provide benefits to the state by instilling in citizens a capacity for advanced learning, by providing a source of new knowledge, by advancing understanding of the fundamentals of civilizations, by enhancing the quality of life through literature and the fine and performing arts, or by other similar outcomes."

None of the systems analyzed included other types of need/demand as part of program review.

MEASURES OF QUALITY, CAPACITY, AND WISE USE OF RESOURCES

As discussed, a careful review of the templates used by higher education boards in the program approval and review processes provides ample evidence of the attention these boards continue to pay to quality, capacity, and the wise use of state resources. *Tables 2 and 3* summarize some of the elements considered in the program approval and review processes. Many of the measures of quality and good stewardship of state funds in these tables are common to multiple templates, evidencing broad agreement on their utility. Other elements are examples of innovative, insightful metrics used by statewide boards to evaluate programs. *Table 2* provides measures related to quality, while *Table 3* includes measures related to wise use of resources. Most metrics are associated with both program approval and program review; any metric associated only with program review is indicated in parentheses.

Statewide boards may decide not to include every item listed in *Tables 2 and 3*. Rather, these metrics are offered as a suite of options for agencies to consider as they reevaluate and improve their processes. It is critical that agencies do not develop overly burdensome processes that prohibit new programs and stifle innovation. In that regard, agencies may want to examine their current program approval and review processes and requirements to determine if any elements are anachronistic or unnecessary. Any elements that no longer serve a useful purpose ought to be eliminated. As technology and educational practices continue to evolve, agencies should establish a regular review of their program approval and review requirements to ensure that the overall processes continue to advance their goals and remain current and efficient.

TABLE 2
MEASURES OF QUALITY

MEASURES OF QUALITY	EXAMPLES
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of credit hours • Mode of delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – On-campus and online – Off-campus and online – Hybrid • Elective credits • Courses included in program • Special requirements such as internships and capstone experiences • Plan for developing new courses • Enrollment projections and action plan if enrollment targets are not met by the second year • Recruiting plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How will program be marketed to adult, underrepresented, and special populations of students • Intended learning outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How specific occupational skills, knowledge, and abilities are related to program learning outcomes – Demonstrated links between learning outcomes and career-ready competencies from the National Association of Colleges and Employers – How learning outcomes will be assessed – Curriculum map for upper division or major • High-impact practices embedded in the program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Examples: First-year experience, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, diversity/global learning • Assessment plans • Opportunities for experiential learning
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions requirements that exceed regular university admissions • Plan for ensuring equity and diversity • Performance on national and/or local assessments • Undergraduate student input measures—disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender (program review) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Standardized test scores – Freshman index (high school GPA, ACT/SAT scores) • Undergraduate student output measures—disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender (program review) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Pass rate on national/state licensure exams – Employment rates – Enrollments – Completions – Graduation rates – Time to credential • Graduate student input measures—disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender (program review) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Average GPA for admitted and enrolled students – Standardized test scores • Graduate student output measures—disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender (program review) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Average pass rate – Enrollments – Completions – Graduation rates – Time to credential – External quality assurance measures such as market rankings

MEASURES OF QUALITY	EXAMPLES
Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present rank • Institution granting degree • Research • Areas of specialized competence • Publications • Direction of theses/dissertations • Use of adjunct faculty • Amount of sponsored research funding awarded for the academic year (program review) • Number of peer-reviewed publications for the academic year (program review)
Facilities and Libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom space • Labs • Number, quality, and currency of library holdings • Access to interlibrary loans • Minimize additional space needs
Accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of accreditation requirements • Applicable specialized accreditation requirements • Plans to seek accreditation and rationale • Plan to meet accreditation criteria
External Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Appropriate curriculum for a high-quality program – Adequate supply of qualified students in the area – Faculty generally recognized nationally – The program's notable strong and weak points • External review team must include faculty experts in the discipline • External review team must include administrators from institutions already offering the program
Support for State Strategic Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the program enhances statewide educational goals • Need/demand statewide • Avoidance of unnecessary duplication • How the program will increase the educational attainment and quality of life for the state's residents
Support for Institutional Strategic Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How program furthers the institution's mission • Explanation of why program is a current priority for the institution

TABLE 3
MEASURES OF CAPACITY AND WISE USE OF STATE RESOURCES

MEASURES OF RESOURCE USE	EXAMPLES
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Existing equipment, space, lab instruments, computers – Any necessary renovations – New facilities needed – Start-up costs, ongoing costs, and funding sources for new construction, renovations, purchases, and leases – Impact of construction or renovation on existing programs and campus activities and plans to mitigate disruptions – How the need for facilities is related to accreditation • Library resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Existing space and personnel – Costs of needed additional resources – Acquisition and implementation plan • Personnel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Instructional, support, and administrative personnel available for the program – Costs for needed personnel – Description of faculty workload adjustment – Instructional capacity for additional sections – Employee benefits • Revenue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reallocation of existing state funds – New ongoing state appropriations needed – Donations, federal grants, other grants, contracts – Student fees – Cooperation with other programs – Sharing of resources with other institutions • Other cost considerations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cost of accreditation and travel – Savings from use of open educational resources – Multi-year business plan requirement – Fiscal impact of any proposed discontinuance – Required marketing expenses – Differential tuition • Fiscal sustainability and stewardship of state resources (program review) • Evidence of program efficiency (program review) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Student credit hours/faculty FTE – Number of degrees and awards
Preventing Duplication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify similar programs offered in the state and the region and provide rationale for net benefit of the duplication and explanation of why existing programs do not fulfill needs • Identify similar graduate programs in neighboring states • Identify similar programs in institution’s geographic service area, other areas of the state, the region, and student exchange programs such as compacts • Identify similar programs within the system and opportunities for collaboration through multi-campus delivery • Consider potential duplication in graduate, technical, and professional programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Relevance of existing programming – Availability of alternative educational delivery systems – Extent of student demand – State or regional workforce demand – Access considerations such as geographic availability, student population served, and cost of instruction • Identify similar programs at both public and private institutions • Identify similar programs at other programs in the state or offered through interstate agreements (program review)

MEASURES OF RESOURCE USE	EXAMPLES
Employer Need/Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific requests from potential employers • Specific industry need or workforce opportunity • Data proving demand such as state labor department findings, Burning Glass projections, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, professional trade association projections, potential employer surveys about anticipated vacancies • Average salary for occupations related to the program, one and five years after graduation • Identify partners the institution is working with to create a career pipeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – High schools – Career academies – Other institutions – Employers – Community partnerships – Professional associations • Potential of program to contribute to state economic development • State, regional, and national need • Occupational need and demand (program review)
State Workforce Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of state workforce needs • Total projected annual job openings which can be verified with data less than two years old • Detailed market analysis findings • How is program essential to well-being of the state/region/academy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Contribution to economic development – Current or evolving needs in state/region • How will program attract high-quality firms to the state • Program must provide students with external learning experiences to increase probability they will remain in the area after graduation
Student Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey results showing student demand • Number of students enrolled in component courses or closely related minors and concentrations • Information about student interest in the program from both inside and outside of the institution • Number of students who have applied, number admitted, number currently enrolled (program review)
Other Types of Need/Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Societal needs for the program • Cultural contribution or social value of the program • Potential to serve student interests independent of labor market demand • Broad benefits to the state <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Instilling a capacity for advanced learning in citizens – Providing a source of new knowledge – Advancing understanding of the fundamentals of civilizations – Enhancing quality of life through literature and the fine and performing arts

Tables 2 and 3 do not provide an exhaustive list of elements, but these tables may provide a good starting point for any statewide board considering developing a template or improving its existing program approval or program review processes. Few statewide board activities are as critical to ensuring the quality and importance of a system’s higher education offerings as program approval and review. Statewide boards can use a well-designed, comprehensive template and set of required elements to guide institutions in developing and maintaining the best possible programs.

Developing a template should be based on the experience of other statewide boards. Instead of starting to work on a template from scratch, statewide boards should, and often do, reach out to SHEEO for assistance. In October 2020, SHEEO distributed an information request related to program approval and review that included a request for specific metrics used in the process. Many statewide boards provided detailed responses that will be of great value to other boards developing templates.

In response to the October 2020 request, the University of Hawai'i System provided a list of quantitative indicators for program review that might be useful for other boards to consider. These indicators are granular and include definitions in some cases. The list of indicators is shown in *Appendix B*. The University of Hawai'i System pointed out that not every indicator will work for every campus. Statewide boards should consider providing flexibility for institutions to tailor the indicators used in both the program approval and program review processes. One option for such flexibility would be allowing institutions to provide data to supplement the list of required elements.

CRITICISMS OF STATE-LEVEL PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW

For the initial authorization of programs, a 1991 survey of state boards found issues related to the identification of “unnecessarily duplicative” programs” as well as “the relationship of new programs to state and institutional planning; belief that the length of time required for program approval was considered to be ‘too long’; and the difficulty of lay boards making program decisions when political or emotional pressures are brought to bear.” (Barak, 2007, pp. 7-8).

For the review of existing programs, a 1991 survey of state boards found issues related to “the costs of the reviews, time required to complete the reviews, resources required to support the review efforts, and the heavy workload associated with the use of outside consultants. In addition, state-level reviews were often negatively perceived by the institutions because of unfavorable recommendations that sometimes resulted from the reviews, institutional costs and the institutional discomfort resulting from program modifications and discontinuance.” (Barak, 2007, p. 8).

CONCLUSION

Statewide boards have historically been, and are likely to continue to be, involved in academic program approval and review processes. These processes are incredibly complex and require balancing issues of quality and cost. Although most statewide boards are involved in academic program approval and review processes, they can take steps to continue to improve their processes. Specifically, statewide boards should ensure that a template exists for the processes and make the template publicly available to provide transparency. While 17 of the governing boards (59%) and seven of the coordinating boards (22%) participating in a 2019 SHEEO survey are involved in academic planning, program review, and program approval, only 10 of the governing boards and six of the coordinating boards provide a publicly accessible template for either program approval or review.

Providing templates and making them publicly accessible is a good start; however, the templates should be a way to guide institutions to think about whether they are ensuring academic quality and ensuring that resources are used wisely. In other words, the templates should encourage continuous improvement and should be more than a checklist. While this recommendation may seem simple, it is likely that developing, adopting, and implementing the templates will be an arduous process. Among the challenges that institutions face when putting assessment practices into place are faculty hoping that assessment is a passing fad, faculty treating assessment like a task to check off a to-do list, faculty submitting the report then never looking at the report again, faculty turning in the same report from the last review, faculty not getting any feedback on the report from the administration, having the chair complete the assessment rather than having a discussion including the faculty, complaining about the template, and failing to provide incentives for meaningful participation (Eggleston, 2020).

In addition to developing a template and making it publicly available, statewide boards should pay particular attention to equity issues during program approval and review so that equity goals are balanced with the goals of quality and wise use of state resources. They can begin to do this by requiring individual programs to have articulated plans for attracting, enrolling, and graduating underrepresented students and other minoritized student populations. The plans should address which students are less likely to enroll in certain fields; for example, STEM fields should have articulated plans for how to attract, enroll, and graduate female and Black students because those students are less likely to enroll in STEM fields. In addition, statewide boards should require programs to collect and disaggregate their measures of enrollment, completion (graduation rates as well as time to degree), and other student outcomes (credits attempted, credits earned, retention, participation in high-impact practices, etc.) by race/ethnicity and gender.

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

For the University System of Georgia (USG), the Board of Regents is authorized to add degrees (Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-3-32, 2019). The steps in academic program review include an annual academic forecast, a program proposal, and finally, board review and approval (Presentation on Academic Program Authorization and Review, University System of Georgia, November 30, 2020). The purpose of the annual academic forecast is to notify the System office of which new programs will be proposed, to gain initial feedback from the System office on proposed new programs, to alert other USG institutions of programs to be requested, and to identify any collaboration opportunities. (Presentation on Academic Program Authorization and Review, University System of Georgia, November 30, 2020). A new template for academic program approval was launched on January 4, 2021 (Presentation on Academic Program Authorization and Review, University System of Georgia, November 30, 2020). New degree programs must be “recommended by the President of the institution and the Chancellor and approved by the Board of Regents” (Policy 3.6.1 Creation of Academic Programs).

The program review process at USG is quite detailed. Under Policy 3.6.3 Comprehensive Academic Program Review, “Each USG institution shall conduct comprehensive program reviews for Career Associates, Associate degrees with a designated major, bachelor degrees and graduate degrees. Consistent with efforts in institutional effectiveness and strategic planning, each USG institution shall develop procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of its academic programs to address the quality, viability, and productivity of efforts in teaching and learning, scholarship, and service as appropriate to the institution’s mission. Institutional review of academic programs shall involve analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, and institutions must demonstrate that they make judgments about the future of academic programs within a culture of evidence. Planning and conduct of academic program reviews shall be used for the progressive improvement and adjustment of programs in the context of the institution’s strategic plan and in response to findings and recommendations of the reviews. Adjustments may include program enhancement, maintenance at the current level, reduction in scope, or, if fully justified, consolidation or termination.”

IDAHO STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

For the Idaho State Board of Education, each institution must “establish and maintain policies and procedures, following the guidelines of the Board and subject to Board approval, for evaluating existing programs and new program proposals.” The “review of new and existing programs will be integrated with the state-level academic and career technical planning and budgetary processes and where possible in concert with accreditation self-study and on site review by the accrediting body” (Policy Section III, Subsection H. Program Review, August 2007).

Program approval is “a collaborative process which includes the Board, Board staff, the institutions, faculty, external advisory groups, regional and specialized accreditation bodies, and other stakeholders.” Institutions are required to “establish internal program review processes and procedures” for developing proposals. Prior to proposals coming to the Board for review, they

must “be reviewed by the Council on Academic Affairs and Programs (CAAP)” using a template developed by the Board’s Chief Academic Officer. CAAP makes “recommendations to the Instruction, Research, and Student Affairs (IRSA) committee on instructional programmatic matters and related policy issues” (Policy Section III, Subsection G. Postsecondary Program Approval and Discontinuance, December 2019).

Proposals must be completed for “certificates of 30 credits or more; associates, bachelors, masters, specialist, and doctoral degrees; instructional and administrative units. Proposals requiring new state appropriations shall be submitted to the Board for review prior to or concurrently with submission of an institution’s annual budget request.” Proposals for all programs must “include identifiable learning outcomes and competency measurements for graduates” (Policy Section III, Subsection G. Postsecondary Program Approval and Discontinuance, December 2019).

Proposals for doctoral programs “require an external peer review. The external peer-review panel shall consist of at least two (2) members and will be selected by the Board’s Chief Academic Officer and the requesting institution’s Provost. Board staff will notify the institution in writing whether it may proceed with the external peer-review process. External reviewers shall not be affiliated with a public Idaho institution. The review shall consist of a paper and on-site peer review, followed by the issuance of a report and recommendations by the panel. Each institution shall provide the panel with a template developed by the Board’s Chief Academic Officer. The peer reviewer’s report and recommendations will be a significant factor of the Board’s evaluation of the program” (Policy Section III, Subsection G. Postsecondary Program Approval and Discontinuance, December 2019).

The goals of program review for the Idaho State Board of Education “are: (a) maintenance and enhancement of the quality of instruction, research, and public service efforts, (b) assurance of the postsecondary education system’s responsiveness to changing societal needs, (c) promotion of effective and efficient management of the state’s resources, and (d) assist the institutions in defining how effective their programs are” (Policy Section III, Subsection H. Program Review, August 2007).

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MAINE

For the University System of Maine, institutions should focus on “the orderly development of new academic programs, review of existing programs, and the elimination of programs no longer fulfilling a priority need consistent with the University of Maine System and the individual university missions” (Policy Section 305.1 Program Approval, Review, & Elimination, July 2019). For new programs, “academic units are encouraged to continuously explore innovative programming that can serve the needs of the discipline, students and State of Maine. To that end, programs should align to: a. the mission and goals of the submitting university(ies); b. need for the program; c. availability of resources for program support; d. appropriate delivery modalities to best provide educational access and service to students” (Procedure Section 305.1 Academic Program Approval, July 2019).

Undergraduate majors, graduate degree programs, and advanced certificates of study have a four-step approval process: (1) program request, (2) submission of program proposal, (3) University of Maine System evaluation, and (4) Chancellor and Board of Trustees action. In the first step, the program request is “submitted to Provost(s) with a written description and rationale for a new program in 250 words or less. Such requests must briefly mention the findings of a market

analysis consultation with campus or UMS institutional researchers.” The request may be provided to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA) and Chief Academic Officers Council (CAOC) (Procedure Section 305.1 Academic Program Approval, July 2019).

The second step may begin after “approval of a program request from the Provost and the VCAA office.” The program proposal must be “evaluated through the originating university’s normal curricular process(es).” The proposal must address program objectives and content and must provide “evidence of program need (to include the detailed findings of the market analysis conducted in consultation with campus or UMS institutional researchers, or other relevant programmatic information).” Program resources and total financial considerations must be included, and program evaluation must be addressed (Procedure Section 305.1 Academic Program Approval, July 2019).

The third step begins once the campus evaluation is completed. The “University of Maine System evaluation is initiated by submission of the proposal by the university President to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs” who sends the proposal to members of the Chief Academic Officers Council (CAOC) for evaluation. Based on CAOC input, the VCAA may recommend approval to the Chancellor, refer the proposal to the President’s Council, seek external review from disciplinary experts, provide the institution with critiques and suggestions for revision, or provide the institution with a written rationale for rejection. The fourth step occurs only when the VCAA recommends approval of the program. In these cases, the Chancellor recommends programs to the Board of Trustees for review and approval (Procedure Section 305.1 Academic Program Approval, July 2019).

In the University System of Maine, “program review must be institution-based and reflect an institution’s mission and capacity. Program review should focus on student outcomes and should support a systematic and broad-based approach to the assessment of student learning focused on educational improvement through understanding how and what students are learning in their academic program” (Procedure Section 305.3 Academic Program Review, January 2008).

Program reviews are based on established time frames: “within five years for new programs and at least every seven years for continuing programs, unless a shorter interval is deemed necessary for specified conditions resulting from a review. The schedule should allow for flexibility and can change to coordinate with the timing of reviews by specialized accrediting bodies. University-level processes should be developed for programs less than degree-level” (Procedure Section 305.3 Academic Program Review, January 2008).

For each institution, the Chief Academic Officer submits an annual report to the Vice Chancellor that summarizes program review activity, including “reviews in progress, reviews completed in the past year, an executive summary of the results of completed reviews and actions taken as a result of those reviews.” After review, the Vice Chancellor “will recommend that the Chancellor accept the reviews and the recommendations in the final report and initiate any appropriate action(s), or recommend that the Chancellor discuss the review documents with the university President and examine possible future actions” (Procedure Section 305.3 Academic Program Review, January 2008).

At the university level, the program review process should include a self-study by the unit; a report by external reviewers based on a review of the self-study, additional materials, and a site visit; and a final report by the university. The self-study includes a rationale for the program, a five-year summary of program enrollment (number of majors and number of graduates),

enrollment numbers by course section, the number of full-time faculty equivalents, budgets, and an assessment of progress made on any recommendations from previous program reviews. In addition, the "self-study should address the quality of the faculty and the methods used to ensure that quality (such as post-tenure review practices). The quality and appropriateness of the curriculum should be examined, with attention to such matters as student outcomes assessment and pluralistic perspectives. In addition, the self-study should discuss the relation of the program to the university mission" (Procedure Section 305.3 Academic Program Review, January 2008).

The final report from the university should include information about how the program enhances the mission of the university, the value of the program to the state and the nation, and budget implications based on the self-study and the external review. The final report should include recommendations for future action as well as actions taken as a result of previous reviews. If a program had few graduates over a period of years as well as low course section enrollments, consideration should be given to whether the program should be continued (Procedure Section 305.3 Academic Program Review, January 2008).

The University of Maine System encourages program review and accreditation assessments to be held at the same time where possible and appropriate; as such, professional accreditation processes may substitute for appropriate components to the final report (Procedure Section 305.3 Academic Program Review, January 2008).

LOUISIANA BOARD OF REGENTS

For the Louisiana Board of Regents, program approval occurs in two steps: a letter of intent followed by a proposal. The letter of intent serves to "inform the Board of Regents of a campus' plan to develop a new academic program and allow the Board to decide whether the planning should continue." The letter of intent is distributed to the "Statewide Council of Chief Academic Officers for review and comment," which provides "feedback including support, recommendations, or detailed challenges to the program concept 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" (Policy 2.04 Letter of Intent for Projected New Academic Programs, September 2011).

Criteria for assessing a letter of intent include whether the program is consistent with the existing role, scope, and mission of the institution as well as whether the program is "essential for the well-being of the state, region, or academy, indispensable to fulfilling critical educational needs of the State, or able to demonstrably promote economic development in the State." The proposed program cannot "unnecessarily duplicate a program at another public institution of higher education in Louisiana," plus the "institution must commit to allocate adequate funding to initiate and sustain the new program" (Policy 2.04 Letter of Intent for Projected New Academic Programs, September 2011).

If the Board of Regents approves the letter of intent, the institution may submit a proposal for program approval. Criteria for proposals include the relevance to the existing role, scope, and mission of the institution; contribution to the well-being of the state, region, or academy; program duplication (existing/related programs at other institutions); and institutional commitment to appropriately fund the proposed program. The proposal includes a description and a justification of the need as well as information about students, faculty, library and other special resources, facilities and equipment, administration, and accreditation (Policy 2.05 Guidelines for the proposal of a new academic program, September 2011).

Program review for the Louisiana Board of Regents is a streamlined process. The Board periodically reviews and evaluates “program quality and productivity at all levels” (Policy 2.06 Board of Regents Review of Existing Academic Programs/Units).

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development operates through the Coordinating Board for Higher Education (Revised Statutes Section 173.005(2), August 2018). The Coordinating Board for Higher Education considers program changes by public and independent institutions of higher education in the state (Rule 6 CSR 10-4.010 Academic Program Approval, May 2019).

The program approval process follows one of three paths: (1) staff review, (2) routine review, and (3) comprehensive review. Staff review is used for “minor changes to existing academic programs and the addition of some certificates” while routine review is used “for new academic programs that are not minor, but do not constitute a significant change in an institution’s current role, scope, or mission.” Programs that follow the routine review path must clearly fall within the institution’s mission and not unnecessarily duplicate an existing program in the applicable geographic area. The program must build on existing programs and faculty expertise, and the cost to launch the program must be minimal and within the institution’s current operating budget. Comprehensive review is reserved for new academic programs that fall outside an institution’s approved mission as well as programs that will require “substantial costs to launch and sustain,” engineering programs at the bachelor’s level or above, doctoral programs at non-University of Missouri institutions, and education specialist degrees (Rule 6 CSR 10-4.010 Academic Program Approval, May 2019).

The coordinating board also recommends consolidation or elimination of programs to the governing board of the institution if it is “in the best interests of the institutions themselves and/or the general requirements of the state” (Revised Statutes Section 173.030, August 2014). Degree programs at public institutions must meet degree-level thresholds or face additional review. Such review is triggered for Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, or baccalaureate programs that produce fewer than an average of 10 graduates over the three previous years, for master’s and education specialist programs that produce fewer than an average of five graduates over the three previous years, and for doctoral programs that produce fewer than an average of 3 graduates over the three previous years (Existing Statewide Academic Program Review website).

NEBRASKA’S COORDINATING COMMISSION FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

For Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, program review is one part of its overall responsibility of coordinating higher education “to provide compliance and consistency with the comprehensive statewide plan and to prevent unnecessary duplication.” Governing boards of public institutions are “responsible for assuring the quality and effectiveness of programs offered by their institutions” while the Commission sets criteria to ensure that the programs offered meet educational needs, assure efficiency, and avoid unnecessary duplication. However, any criteria must “not infringe on the prerogative of the governing boards to make decisions on the quality of staff and the design of curriculum.” The criteria for program

approval include centrality to the role and mission of the public institution; consistency with the comprehensive statewide plan; evidence of need and demand; and adequacy of resources to support proposed new programs (Nebraska Revised Statutes 85-1414 Programs, 2012).

Public institutions are encouraged to submit “a list of instructional programs that are under consideration by the institution and that are in an early stage of planning” to Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education. “The purpose of the preliminary notification is to provide an opportunity for the Commission to offer comments to the institution regarding potential state-level issues for consideration during the planning of the proposed program (Rules and Regulations Title 281, Section 004.01 Preliminary notification, June 2000).

The governing board must submit a proposal to the Commission using a format prescribed by the Commission. “Following consultation with the governing board, the Commission may require, as a condition of approval, and as evidence of need and demand, that a new program not constitute unnecessary duplication and that it meet minimum performance standards established by the Commission. The Commission may require an institution to submit a periodic status report until the conditions are satisfied. If the program does not meet the performance standards, the Commission shall review the program and may continue or withdraw the approval of the program” (Rules and Regulations Title 281, Section 004.02 Review process, June 2000).

Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education acknowledges that multiple “parties share responsibility for the authorization of new instructional programs and new organizational units within public institutions in Nebraska, including the public colleges and universities, their governing boards, and the Commission. Goals common to the parties who authorize new programs are quality and the assurance of efficiencies in the use of institutional and state resources. Each party in the authorization process, however, emphasizes different aspects of a new instructional program or organizational unit. Each party in this process must be aware and respectful of the special emphasis and needs of the others. Effective review of proposals for new programs will result in stronger institutions and increased accountability to state government and the general public” (Guidelines for Submitting Proposals for New Instructional Programs, November 2008). The criteria for review of new programs include centrality to the role and mission, evidence of need and demand, adequacy of resources, avoidance of unnecessary duplication, and consistency with the Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education (Rules and Regulations Title 281, Section 004.04 Criteria for review of new instructional programs, June 2000; Education Guidelines for Submitting Proposals for New Instructional Programs, November 2008).

For Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, program review is another component of its overall responsibility of coordinating higher education. “The primary purposes of the review of existing programs are to provide evidence of ongoing need and demand for existing programs and to assist the Commission to exercise its responsibility to authorize continuation of the program or to discontinue the program” (Rules and Regulations Title 281, Section 006 Review of existing programs, June 2000).

The process for program review is “established by the commission in consultation with the governing boards or their designated representatives which, to the extent possible while still allowing for timely review by the commission, shall coincide with institutional review and accreditation cycles. In reviewing existing programs, the commission may make use of nonconfidential information and conclusions provided by accreditation processes supplied to the commission by the institutions.” The same criteria are used for program approval and

program review: centrality to the role and mission of the public institution; consistency with the comprehensive statewide plan; evidence of need and demand; and adequacy of resources to support proposed new programs (Nebraska Revised Statutes 85-1414 Programs, 2012).

The Commission publishes “a schedule for review of existing programs on a seven year cycle. Institutions may follow this schedule or propose an alternative schedule for Commission acceptance” to align with “internal institutional review or accreditation reviews.” Institutions must provide evidence of an established program review process, the need for the program in the state and at the institution, the demand for the program by students, the efficiency of the program, and a justification if the program is below minimum performance standards. Institutions may provide additional evidence such as data for number of completers if not measured by the number of awards given. The Commission provides a format for program review; however, the institution may use its own review form. (Guidelines for Review of Existing Instructional Programs, June 2019).

APPENDIX B

QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS IN PROGRAM REVIEW FOR UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

INDICATOR	DEFINITION
Number of majors	
Student semester hours (SSH) taught	
FTE course enrollment	SSH divided by 15 for undergraduate-level and 12 for graduate-level courses
Percent of SSH divided by FTE disaggregated by majors in the program, majors in the college, and other majors; number of class sections offered	
Average class size and average fill rates for all courses including face-to-face courses and distance delivered courses	Average class size: total student registrations divided by the number of classes offered Average fill rates: student registrations divided by maximum course registrations
FTE faculty by tenure, tenure track, and other ranks	
Student-faculty ratio for tenure, tenure track, and other ranks	Student-faculty ratio: FTE course enrollment divided by FTE faculty
Completion measures	Number of degrees earned by majors; time to degree
Retention rates	
Average credits earned at graduation by major	
Budget allocation	
Budget allocation per SSH	

SOURCE: University of Hawai'i System response to SHEEO Information Request dated October 21, 2020

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