

**THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM  
HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER INTERNAL POLICIES**

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**03.02.02.Z1.01 Approval of Substantive Changes including the Establishment of a New Academic Program**

*Approved February 7, 2007*

*Revised January 12, 2011*

Supplements System Regulation 3.02.02

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**1. OVERVIEW**

This internal policy covers the review and approval process for substantive changes, including but not limited to establishing new academic programs (i.e., academic degree or certificate<sup>1</sup>) within the Texas A&M Health Science Center.

**2. DEFINITIONS OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES**

A “substantive change” refers to any significant alteration to existing, or the addition of new, academic programs, departments, colleges/schools or institutions. Substantive changes within institutions of higher education must be approved by governing authorities (e.g., accrediting agencies, the Texas A&M University System, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) *prior to* implementation.

2.1 Substantive Changes requiring notification and/or approval by the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 2.1.1 Initiating an administrative change
- 2.1.2 Initiating an administrative reorganization
- 2.1.3 Establishing new degree programs
- 2.1.4 Reclassifying or modifying existing degree programs
- 2.1.5 Establishing cooperative or joint degree programs
- 2.1.6 Offering a degree program through the use of distance education<sup>2</sup>
- 2.1.7 Offering a degree program at an off-campus location<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Academic certificate programs (as opposed to Continuing Education Units) comprised of less than 15 semester credit hours will follow the process outlined below, but will not require approval by either the A&M System Board of Regents or the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Should the requirements from the A&M System Board of Regents or the THECB change, the revised requirements will be followed.

<sup>2</sup> As defined as using available technologies whereas students and instructors are geographically or physically removed from one another

<sup>3</sup> As defined as a program to be offered at a location other than an officially recognized campus (through statute) of the Health Science Center

## 2.2 Substantive Changes requiring Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) notification and/or prior approval

- 2.2.1 Changing the established mission or objectives of the institution
- 2.2.2 Changing the legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution
- 2.2.3 Initiating an off-campus site<sup>4</sup>
- 2.2.4 Adding or modifying courses or programs that represent a significant departure, *either in content or method of delivery*, from those previously approved
- 2.2.5 Lengthening an existing program
- 2.2.6 Initiating programs through contractual agreement or consortium
- 2.2.7 Relocating an off-campus instructional site, branch campus, or main campus
- 2.2.8 Initiating coursework or programs at a more advanced level than previously approved
- 2.2.9 Expanding a current degree level
- 2.2.10 Initiating a joint degree with another institution
- 2.2.11 Initiating a certificate program
- 2.2.12 Establishing a branch campus
- 2.2.13 Closing an existing program, off-campus location, branch campus or institution

### 3. ELEMENTS OF PROPOSAL

Before establishing a new academic program, or initiating a substantive change as outlined above, a proposal must be submitted to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs for review and approval. Each proposal must include information regarding each of the following elements with content tailored as necessary depending on the nature of the request:

#### 3.1 Needs Assessment

- 3.1.1 A demonstrated need for the proposed program or change in terms of present and future needs of the component, institution, region and state (depending on the nature of the request);
- 3.1.2 Description of how the proposed program or change would complement and strengthen existing programs or structures within the component and across the HSC;
- 3.1.3 *If* a proposed program for a new degree program represents a duplication of a similar program within the region and state, a rationale for its need;
- 3.1.4 Demonstrated student demand for the proposed new program or change to an existing program (including offering an existing program to a new location or through a new modality) and the likelihood of a sufficient critical mass of qualified applicants; and,
- 3.1.5 Critical mass of qualified faculty and staff to be available to support high quality program.

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<sup>4</sup> As defined as any location other than the recognized home campus of the institution or a location previously approved by SACS and where at least 50% of the program is to be available

If the request is for a new doctoral program, the following must be addressed as well<sup>5</sup>:

- 3.1.6 A demonstrated regional, state or national unmet need for doctoral graduates in the field;
- 3.1.7 Evidence that existing doctoral programs in Texas cannot accommodate additional students, access to existing programs is limited, or that expanding existing programs is not feasible; and
- 3.1.8 Evidence of self-sustaining and excellence in master's level program in the field and/or programs in related and supporting areas.

### 3.2 **Resources**

- 3.2.1 resources needed for the new program start-up or other proposed substantive change (e.g., administrative infrastructure, faculty and staff, facilities, equipment, library and related information technology);
- 3.2.2 information technologies and classroom support necessary to implement the proposed program or substantive change;
- 3.2.3 future expectations of financial support; and
- 3.2.4 plan for self-sufficiency.

A table summarizing the projected five-year costs and potential sources of funds must be included.

### 3.3 **Program Description**<sup>6</sup>

- 3.3.1 educational objectives;
- 3.3.2 assessment strategies to be used of student learning outcomes;
- 3.3.3 admission standards;
- 3.3.4 certificate or degree requirements;
- 3.3.5 mode of course delivery and primary location of the faculty and students involved;
- 3.3.6 effect on existing programs in the component; and
- 3.3.7 program administration.

3.4 **Governance** Information must address how the proposed academic program will fit within the organizational structure of the Health Science Center and the point of contact and responsibility for oversight and management of the proposed program.

3.5 **Evaluation** Information to include but not limited to: proposed mechanisms and timeline for periodic review; strategies for monitoring start-up expenses; sources of funds; and steps in formal accreditation process, if required.

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<sup>5</sup> Based primarily on THECB requirements for approval for new doctoral programs

<sup>6</sup> In the case of substantive changes not related to the establishment of a new academic program, this section should provide a description and rationale for the proposed change

#### **4. PROPOSAL REVIEW PROCESS**

All proposals must be reviewed and approved in accordance with existing component guidelines regarding new program review prior to submission to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Once completed, the following steps should be followed:

- 4.1 Proposals will be submitted to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs for administrative review. Additional information or edits may be required at this juncture prior to progressing through the review process.
- 4.2 Following administrative review, the proposal will be presented to the members of the HSC Academic Affairs Advisory Council and subsequently to the HSC Executive Committee for review and comment. Recommendations will be submitted to the president of the Health Science Center for final action.
- 4.3 Following presidential approval, the Vice President for Academic Affairs or president designee will be responsible for securing all necessary approvals and notifying all appropriate agencies prior to implementation of the proposed program or change. Failure to report the initiation of a new program or change (i.e., an unreported substantive change) can result in official sanctions to the institution, including but not limited to probation, fines, or loss of accreditation.
- 4.4 There may be occasions when opportunities present themselves which necessitate an expedited review. In such cases, it is at the president's discretion to modify or eliminate steps of the previously outlined review process as needed.

#### **5. PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF PENDING SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES**

As a number of approval steps are required prior to implementing any substantive changes or new programs, preliminary notification should be provided to the Vice President for Academic Affairs as soon as possible. All proposed new programs or changes will be recorded on the HSC Academic Program Planning Matrix with an anticipated timeline developed and provided to the dean's office or requesting entity. The substantive changes outlined above require PRIOR approval before implementation and may take 12 to 18 months to secure all necessary approvals depending on the nature of the request.

#### **OFFICE OF RESPONSIBILITY**

Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs