

Board of Governors

Development of 2004 Legislative Issues

January 22, 2004

Issue: Criteria for Program Approval; New Degree Authorization; Exceptions to 120 Credit Hours to Degree

Issue Summary: Authority for creation of criteria for new degree programs, for program authorization, and for exceptions to credit hours to degree for community college baccalaureates needs to be clarified.

Background: Section 1004.03, F.S., stipulates that (1) criteria for new degree programs at state universities are to be approved by the State Board of Education, and that (2) criteria for new community college programs [intended to mean new baccalaureates] are to be approved by the State Board of Education.

Certain criteria for new degree programs at state universities are provided in this statute, including avoiding unnecessary duplication, consistency with “state master plans adopted by the State Board of Education,” and retaining an institution’s appropriate emphasis on undergraduate education. The statute provides for further criteria to be developed. Such criteria have been adopted by the State Board of Education as well as by the Florida Board of Governors. The reference to adherence to consistency with state-level master planning is appropriate; however, the consistency needs to be between individual university strategic plans and the strategic plan of the Florida Board of Governors. This consistency will, in turn, help to ensure the success of the State Board of Education’s strategic imperative relative to postsecondary education.

With respect to criteria for program authorization at community colleges: (1) the statute should be clarified so as to refer to baccalaureates only, and (2) as such, the Florida Board of Governors, representing the State University System, has a vested interest in those criteria and, accordingly, should be involved in their creation or amendment in collaboration with the State Board of Education.

Section 1001.02(2)(w), F.S., provides authority to the *State Board of Education* to authorize new degree programs at state universities at the professional and doctoral level. This authority now resides with the Florida Board of Governors. Elsewhere (s. 1001.74, F.S.), authority for authorizing baccalaureates and masters programs is provided to individual university boards of trustees. Neither statute addresses the approval of Specialist degrees, which needs to be clarified

if the statutes are retained. A determination may be made by the Florida Board of Governors as to whether to continue such provision.

Section 1007.25(8), F.S., stipulates that, "A baccalaureate degree program shall require not more than 120 semester hours of college credit, including 36 semester hours of general education coursework, unless prior approval has been granted by the State Board of Education.

While it is clearly appropriate that this statute needs to reflect that exceptions to the 120 credit hour limitation be approved by the Florida Board of Governors for programs in the State University System, the statute also needs to reflect that any consideration of exceptions for community college baccalaureates needs to be a collaborative process between that Board and the State Board of Education.

Staff Recommendation: Regarding program approval (s. 1001.02, F.S.), new degree authorizations (s.1004.03, F.S.), and exceptions to 120 credit hours to degree (s.1007.25, F.S.), amend the cited statutes to clarify powers and duties of the Florida Board of Governors and the collaboration between the Board of Governors and the State Board of Education, as discussed above.