



**Testimony for the
Higher Education & Workforce Advancement Committee**

From

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As the lead administrator at the University of New Haven responsible for the planning and implementation of totally online degree programs, I am submitting testimony in support of the concept of reducing regulation of independent college academic programs based on recent UNH experience with the current State regulation requirements. I offer the following experience as an example of the additional time and effort required to obtain State approval to offer in a totally online format five master degree programs already licensed by the State and currently offered for many years as on-campus programs.

In August 2011, I joined the University of New Haven with the mandate to launch totally online degree programs beginning in the fall of 2012. I had expected the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), our regional accreditor, to require the submission of a substantive change proposal to start offering selected on-campus programs in totally online format. However, I had not anticipated the additional requirement of obtaining State of Connecticut approval for the change in delivery format.

From previous experience I knew that online launches typically need a five to six month period from the introduction of marketing efforts to the program start date to insure a successful start. With that in mind, we worked backwards from an August 2012 start date to develop a timeline of necessary activities including State and NEASC approvals. The result was a very tight timeline that left little room for any delays if we were to meet the planned Fall launch.

NEASC requires that no marketing begins until an institution receives their formal approval on any change requests. To allow for sufficient marketing time to generate qualified applicants meant that we needed to make their March 1st submission deadline in order to be on the NEASC March meeting agenda.

NEASC will also take no action on requests from Connecticut institutions until they receive a copy of the formal notification letter that the institution has received Connecticut State approval. This requirement meant that we needed to make the early February Office of Finance and Academic Affairs (OFAAA) meeting to obtain their positive recommendation to the State Board of Education for action at the Board's February meeting in the week following the OFAAA meeting. Making the February OFAAA agenda meant that we needed to submit our proposal requesting approval in early January, which in turn meant that we needed to complete the State proposal prior to the December holiday beginning mid-month.

These benchmark dates the submission of the State and NEASC proposals left me one month to get oriented to UNH and to meet all the deans and administrators to explore online degree development interest (August), six weeks to conduct and receive results from five separate market research studies (September to mid-October), and two weeks to make final decision about which degree programs showed the most promise as online programs. That left six weeks from the first of November until mid-December to collect all needed data and background materials to write two major proposals – one for the State and one for NEASC.

What we found as we reviewed the submission guidelines for the State and the NEASC proposals was that the State requirements were very similar to the NEASC requirements but with less specific data requirements. There was such a degree of duplication of the two sets of submission guidelines that we surmised that the State requirements had been drawn from the NEASC requirements. While this helped somewhat in preparation of the two proposals, it did not diminish the time needed to complete two separate proposals. With a concerted and focused effort, we completed and submitted both proposals before the University adjourned for the holidays. As a point of information related to the time invested in the collection of the needed data and the writing, the State proposal was a 42 page document and the NEASC was an 85 page document with all the required addendums.

On February 6th, the UNH request to offer five current master degree programs in a totally online format passed as consent items on the OFAAA agenda for positive recommendation to the Board of Education. We assumed that the five programs would be considered for full Board approval at their February 10th meeting, which would allow ample time to receive and forward notification of their approval to NEASC to meet their March 1st submission deadline to make the March NEASC meeting agenda. To our surprise, we learned that the five programs would not be considered until the State Board of Education's March 7th meeting. As a result, we missed the NEASC March 1st submission deadline to make the March NEASC meeting. We are now in the position of having to wait until the April 19th-20th meeting of NEASC for approval. Our marketing launch for the launch of the first program has to be pushed back until late April potentially jeopardizing a successful launch in the fall.

I share this testimony as a way to highlight the duplicative nature of the State process with the NEASC process and to emphasize the tightness of the timeframe to move from concept to launch within less than a year without any unforeseen process delays.