ACADEMIC AFFAIRS GUIDELINES

Section 2.3	Academic Programs	
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Related Form(s):		

CAMPUS GUIDE TO THE NEW GRADUATE PROGRAM APPROVAL PROCESS

As of February 2015

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1.   INTRODUCTION

This guide does not supersede South Dakota Board of Regents Policy 2.3.3 "External Review of Proposed Graduate Programs" or South Dakota Regental System Academic Affairs Guidelines. The intent is to add clarity to the multiple steps involved in receiving approval for a new graduate program. The implementation of a new graduate program requires careful consideration and planning by faculty, administration, Board of Regents staff, external consultants, and the Board of Regents, thus the process is purposely and appropriately time intensive. **If questions arise not addressed by this guide, please contact the office of Academic and Research Affairs at the Board of Regents office at 605-773-3455**.

The formal process for a new graduate program requires two separate approvals, the Intent to Plan form and the New Graduate Degree Program form. The Intent to Plan is a broad, conceptual aspect of the planning process, whereas the New Graduate Degree Program form requires specific information about curriculum and justifications for the degree. Approval of the Intent to Plan only authorizes a campus to continue with the planning process; approval of the New Graduate Degree Program form authorizes a campus to offer the program. A variety of factors impact approval of a new graduate program, including student demand, potential for academic quality, the relationship to the campus mission, documented need for such a program within the Board of Regents system, financial considerations, the avoidance of unnecessary duplication, and the potential for workforce or economic development within the state.

While the Board of Regents and Regental campuses respond to shifting needs of students, employers, and the state as quickly as possible, new graduate programs require significant planning to develop appropriate curriculum, secure resources and facilities, analyze proposals, and move through the multiple stages of approval. The planning and approval process for a new graduate program takes time, in some cases several years. In order to expedite the approval process, campuses should make careful consideration of the following points in their planning process:

A. Campuses should discuss new graduate program proposals with the System Chief Academic Officer as early as possible (when the program is still in planning stages and prior to submission of an Intent to Plan). The System Chief Academic Officer can provide guidance on a reasonable timeframe for program approval, present possible opportunities for collaboration with other system campuses, and assist in anticipating questions or concerns posed by the Executive Director, Regents, and other campuses.

B. The planning for a new graduate program should include consideration of the approval process. This includes reviewing the deadlines and dates associated Academic Affairs Council, Council of Presidents and Superintendents, and Board of Regents meetings, anticipated starting dates of the program, and understanding that a proposal may not receive consideration from the Board of Regents at the earliest meeting of eligibility. The Executive Director of the South Dakota Board of Regents determines when items are ready for Board consideration.

C. The external review process for a graduate program takes time to plan and schedule given the coordination of consultant and campus schedules. Additionally, consultants have thirty days to prepare written reports for the Board of Regents following the date of their site visits. Campuses should consider these time constraints when identifying a projected timeline for the program approval process.

2. INITIAL DISCUSSION WITH THE CAMPUS VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS/SYSTEM CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER

Those interested in developing a new graduate program on their campus should begin by discussing the program with their Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost can provide guidance relative to a realistic timeline for approval and implementation, the programming needs of the institution and Regental system, budget expectations and challenges, and strategies for preparing a sound proposal.

The Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost should contact the System Chief Academic Officer early in the development process of a new graduate program. The System Chief Academic Officer or his/her designee can provide guidance on a reasonable timeframe for program approval, present possible opportunities for collaboration with other system campuses, and assist in anticipating questions or concerns posed by the Executive Director, Board of Regents members, and other campuses.

3. COMPLETING THE "INTENT TO PLAN" FORM

The formal process for Board of Regents approval of a new graduate program by submitting an Request to Initiate and Intent to Plan for a New Program Form *(TDX Form – Credentials Required)* to the Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost. The Intent to Plan Form requires the campus to document:

A. Student interest in the program;
B. Demand for program graduates in the workplace;
C. The program's relationship to the institutional mission;
D. Related programs in the Regents' system;
E. Intent to offer the program at off-campus locations or through distance (online) education;
F. Expected resources (including financial) to operate the program;
G. Sample curricula from similar programs.

4. CAMPUS APPROVAL OF THE "INTENT TO PLAN"

The Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost evaluates and approves completed Intent to Plan forms according to individual campus policies and processes. Once the Intent to Plan has received approval through the institution's internal processes, the campus submits a copy signed by the President to the Executive Director of the Board of Regents and Board of Regents staff through the System Chief Academic Officer.

5. BOARD OF REGENTS STAFF APPROVAL OF THE "INTENT TO PLAN"

The Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost reviews the Intent to Plan with the System Chief Academic Officer and/or his/her designee. The System Chief Academic Officer may give initial approval, send the Intent to Plan back to the campus for revisions, or request additional information. Once the System Chief Academic Officer gives approval, the Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost posts the Intent to Plan on his/her university web site for review and comment by other members of the Academic Affairs Council. The Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost will notify the System Chief Academic Officer and Academic Affairs Council members when the Intent to Plan is available for review.

6. ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL APPROVAL OF THE "INTENT TO PLAN"

The Intent to Plan becomes an item for Academic Affairs Council consideration after posting to the university's website and approval by the System Chief Academic Officer. The Academic Affairs Council typically meets seven times per year and consists of the Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provosts of each of the institutions of higher education in the Board of Regents system. Board of Regents Policy 1.3.1 describes the role of the Academic Affairs Council, including the review of existing or proposed courses, programs, departments, degrees, colleges, and academic policies. The Academic Affairs Council makes recommendations to the Board of Regents through the Council of Presidents and Superintendents with regard to the quality of higher education in the state, the avoidance of duplication, and the attainment of economy and efficiency.

The System Chief Academic Officer or his/her designee introduces the Intent to Plan at the appropriate Academic Affairs Council meeting and facilitates Academic Affairs Council discussion. The Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost provides additional information to Academic Affairs Council members as needed.

The Intent to Plan moves to the Council of Presidents and Superintendents if approved by Academic Affairs Council.

7. COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS AND SUPERINTENDENTS APPROVAL OF THE "INTENT TO PLAN"

Intent to Plan requests approved by the Academic Affairs Council move to the Council of Presidents and Superintendents agenda. The Council of Presidents and Superintendents typically meets six times per year and consists of the presidents and superintendents of each institution under Board of Regents authority. Board of Regents Policy 1.3.3 describes the role of Council of Presidents and Superintendents as the senior policy advisory group in the Board of Regents system.

The System Chief Academic Officer or his/her designee introduces the Intent to Plan at the appropriate Council of Presidents and Superintendents meeting and facilitates discussion. The member of Council of Presidents and Superintendents representing the campus submitting the Intent to Plan provides additional information to other Council of Presidents and Superintendents members as needed.

The Intent to Plan moves to the Board of Regents if approved by Council of Presidents and Superintendents.

8. BOARD OF REGENTS APPROVAL OF THE "INTENT TO PLAN"

An Intent to Plan approved by the Council of Presidents and Superintendents moves to the Board of Regents for approval. The Board of Regents typically meets six times per year and consists of nine voting members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate as provided in SDCL 13-49-1. The Board of Regents may approve an Intent to Plan in one of two ways. First, the full BOR may review and approve an Intent to Plan. Second, the Board of Regents' Committee on Academic and Student Affairs (Committee A) may recommend approval, followed by the Board of Regents adoption of Committee A's reports and recommendations. Committee A has responsibility for program review and development among other responsibilities (By-Laws of the South Dakota Board of Regents 3.1.1).

The System Chief Academic Officer or his/her designee introduces the Intent to Plan at the appropriate Board of Regents or Committee A meeting. The Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost provides additional information to Board of Regents members as needed. In addition, the Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost submitting the Intent to Plan should work with the System Chief Academic Officer to have an additional person more closely involved in the preparation of the Intent to Plan document available to answer questions from Regents. Possible additional personnel include but are not limited to a department head, graduate dean, college dean, and/or program director.

Board of Regents approval of an Intent to Plan authorizes a university to continue with the formal proposal process.

9.   COMPLETING THE "NEW GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM" FORM

After Board of Regents approval of an Intent to Plan, a campus may submit a formal proposal by completing and submitting a New Graduate Degree Program Form *(Program Form 2.10)* to their Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost.

The New Graduate Degree Program Form requires the campus to document:

    A. Student interest in the program;
    B. Demand for program graduates in the workplace;
    C. The purpose of the program;
    D. The rationale for curriculum;
    E. Expected learning outcomes;
    F. Estimated enrollments;
    G. Intent to offer the program at off-campus locations or online;
    H. Resources needed to implement the program.

10.   CAMPUS APPROVAL OF THE "NEW GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM" PROPOSAL

The Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost evaluates and approves the completed New Graduate Degree Program Form according to individual campus policies and processes. Once the New Graduate Degree Program has received campus approval through the institution's internal processes, the campus submits a copy signed by the President to the Executive Director of the Board of Regents and Board of Regents staff through the System Chief Academic Officer.

11.   BOARD OF REGENTS STAFF APPROVAL OF THE "NEW GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM" PROPOSAL

The Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost reviews the New Graduate Degree Program Form with the System Chief Academic Officer and/or his/her designee. The System Chief Academic Officer may give initial approval, send the proposal back to the campus for revisions, or request additional information. Once the System Chief Academic Officer gives approval, the Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost posts the proposal on his/her university web site for review and comment by other members of the Academic Affairs Council. The Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost will notify the System Chief Academic Officer and Academic Affairs Council members when the proposal is available for review.

12.   ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL APPROVAL OF THE NEW GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM PROPOSAL

The New Graduate Degree Program Form becomes an item for Academic Affairs Council consideration after posting to the university's web site for review and comment by other members of the Academic Affairs Council (following the same procedures as the Intent to Plan). The System Chief Academic Officer or his/her designee introduces the New Graduate Degree Program Form at the appropriate Academic Affairs Council meeting and facilitates Academic Affairs Council discussion. The Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost provides additional information to Academic Affairs Council members as needed.

The New Graduate Degree Program Form moves to the Council of Presidents and Superintendents if approved by Academic Affairs Council.

13.   COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS AND SUPERINTENDENTS APPROVAL OF THE NEW GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM PROPOSAL

New Graduate Degree Program Forms approved by the Academic Affairs Council move to the Council of Presidents and Superintendents agenda. The System Chief Academic Officer or his/her designee introduces the proposal at the appropriate Council of Presidents and Superintendents meeting and facilitates discussion. The member of Council of Presidents and Superintendents representing the institution submitting the proposal provides additional information to other Council of Presidents and Superintendents members as needed.

The New Graduate Degree Program Form moves to the Board of Regents if approved by Council of Presidents and Superintendents.

14.   BOARD OF REGENTS POLICY ON EXTERNAL REVIEWS OF NEW GRADUATE PROGRAMS

The approval of new graduate programs requires an additional step not required of new undergraduate programs, an external review by independent consultant (or consultants) as established by Board Policy 2.3.3. A doctoral program requires two consultants; a master's program requires one consultant. The external review process consists of selecting appropriate consultants, scheduling a site visit, preparing supporting program documents, the site visit, the consultant's report, and, in some cases, the campus response to the consultant's report. The Board of Regents and/or the Executive Director of the Board of Regents waive the external review process only in rare circumstances.

Planning the external review can begin once the System Chief Academic Officer has approved the New Graduate Degree Program Form, it is posted for Academic Affairs Council review, and campus deems its proposal ready.

The pace of the approval process varies depending on the needs of the campus and the Board of Regents, in addition to the scheduling demands of coordinating faculty, administrators, Board of Regents staff, and external consultants. The Executive Director of the Board of Regents determines when items are ready for Board consideration and the completion of an eternal review does not mean a proposal will proceed to the Board at any specific meeting.

15.   SELECTING CONSULTANTS FOR THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

The authority for selecting consultants for the external review of a proposed new graduate program rests with the Board of Regents and Board of Regents staff under Board Policy 2.3.3. However, the campus preparing the program proposal is typically in a better position to identify potential consultants than Board of Regents staff. The campus should submit a list of five potential consultants (including contact information and short 1-2 page CVs) to the System Chief Academic Officer along with the proposal.

16.   DESIGNATING A SITE VISIT COORDINATOR

The campus shall designate one person to serve as the Site Visit Coordinator. The Site Visit Coordinator's primary function is to assist the System Chief Academic Officer or his/her designee as needed in selecting dates for the external review, scheduling meetings between the consultant and campus personnel, reserving meeting space, and communicating external review information with appropriate campus personnel. The Site Visit Coordinator should be familiar with the proposed program. In the case of two or more universities submitting a joint or collaborative proposal, each university will select a Site Visit Coordinator.

The System Chief Academic Officer or his/her designee will serve as the primary contact person between the Board of Regents staff, the campus, and the consultant(s). The Site Visit Coordinator will serve as the primary contact person between the campus and the Board of Regents staff.

17.   SITE VISIT SCHEDULE

Once the Board of Regents and Board of Regents staff have selected the consultant(s), scheduling the external review site visit should begin as soon as possible. A typical site visit requires the following appointments:

A. Brief introductory meeting between the designated Board of Regents staff member present for the site visit and the consultant(s), usually at dinner the night before or breakfast on the day of the site visit.

B. A meeting with campus leadership, such as the Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost, Dean of the School/College, Dean of the Graduate School, and in some cases, the President.

C. A meeting with department leadership (or equivalent), such as the department head, proposed program director, and/or the college or school Dean.

D. A meeting with prospective program instructors, researchers, and/or mentors, and those involved in drafting the program proposal.

E. A lunch with the consultant(s), Board of Regents staff designee, and campus personnel as determined by the university. The university is responsible for providing lunch and it can be a working lunch (part of one of the required meetings), informal, or on or off campus.

F. A facilities tour, although the importance of this meeting is dependent upon the nature of program proposed (e.g., a consultant may wish to see labs when relevant, but viewing classrooms may not produce much value in preparing a final report). Even if the tour itself is not vital to the consultant's final report, sometimes consultants are interested in seeing the campus.

G. A brief exit interview with the Board of Regents staff designee present.

H. Several short breaks throughout the day so consultants can get something to drink, use the restroom, or catch up on note taking, attend to personal calls or emails, etc.

*Note: Most meetings typically last one hour to one hour and fifteen minutes. Shorter or longer meetings may be scheduled based on individual needs at the discretion of the Board of Regents staff designee and the Site Visit Coordinator.

To create the schedule for the campus visit, the System Chief Academic Officer or his/her designee sends a sample schedule document to the Site Visit Coordinator. The Site Visit Coordinator works with the needed campus personnel to complete the schedule and returns it to the System Chief Academic Officer or his/her designee.

18. ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING PROGRAM DOCUMENTS FOR THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

External review consultants will issue their report based in part on the information they receive during the site visit and in part from the additional supporting program review documents the campus provides to the consultant.

The site visit coordinator shall collect the program review documents and post them to a web site (such as a subpage of the academic affairs web page or through the use of a site such as Dropbox). The site visit coordinator shall post the documents in advance of the site visit so as to give the consultant ample time for review (preferably a month before the visit but no later than two weeks prior to the visit).

The specific program documents varies depending upon the nature of the program; however, the following list is representative of the information campuses should provide:

A. *University/Campus Profile* (location, enrollment statistics, list of undergraduate programs, list of graduate programs, names of key administrators, brief history, etc.)

B. *College/School Profile* (name of dean, names of each department, total college enrollment, list of specific undergraduate and graduate degrees offered)

C. *Department Profile* (name of department head, list of undergraduate and graduate degrees offered, enrollment statistics, list of faculty with rank and three to five sentences describing credentials and expertise; list of support staff with titles)

D. *Curricula Vitae* from each faculty member in the department (up to ten pages maximum per person)

E. List and/or descriptions of significant resources, equipment, facilities, capabilities, and collaborations related to the proposed program

F. *Library Resources Profile*, including a list of applicable journals and databases available

G. *Grant Activity* – an Excel table of applicable grant activity covering prior three years (project title, PI/PIs, funding agency, partner names, total request, total award, project start date, status, etc.)

H. *Approved Intent to Plan* (including any appendices)

I. *New Graduate Degree Program proposal* (including any appendices)

19.   INFORMATION PACKETS FOR CONSULTANTS

The System Chief Academic Officer or his/her designee will provide the consultant with an information packet prior to the site visit. The information packet for consultants include a charge letter outlining the expectations for the consultant(s), the finalized schedule for the site visit, information regarding access to the program review documents, an overview of the campus and Board of Regents system, expenses reimbursement information, and travel and lodging information when applicable. The information packet is carbon copied to the campus Site Visit Coordinator and other relevant university leaders, such as the President, Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost, appropriate Deans, and Department Head.

20.   CONSULTANT(S) SITE VISITS

Site visits provide an opportunity for external consultants to pose questions that aid in drafting their report and to exchange ideas of best practices with campus faculty and administrators. The separate meetings provide information about the program to the consultant(s) from multiple levels of authority. The role of the Board of Regents designee at a site visit is to facilitate discussion and to add system level perspectives as needed; the core of the information exchange occurs between the consultant(s) and campus faculty and administrators. The Board of Regents designee will begin each campus meeting by introducing the process and the participants.

While the Site Visit Coordinator does not need to attend every meeting, they should be available to assist the consultant and Board of Regents staff designee as needed during the visit.

21. BOARD OF REGENTS STAFF EXIT INTERVIEW

At the conclusion of the campus site visit, the consultant(s) and the Board of Regents designee participate in a brief exit interview. Exit interviews allow consultants to provide the Board of Regents with initial perceptions of the program, seek assistance from the Board of Regents designee in acquiring additional information, and to address any immediate concerns about the program.

22. CONSULTANT'S (OR CONSULTANTS') REPORT

Consultant contracts typically stipulate a thirty-day window from the time of the site visit to completion of their final report. Consultants send both preliminary and final reports to the System Chief Academic Officer or his/her designee. The System Chief Academic Officer or his/her designee in turn emails the report to the same campus leaders carbon copied on the consultant information packet, typically including the Site Visit Coordinator and other university leaders, such as the President, Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost, appropriate Deans, and Department Head. Reports prepared by the consultant(s) are included with the agenda item prepared for the Board of Regents.

If the New Graduate Degree Program Form is on the Board of Regents agenda prior to the conclusion of the thirty days, the System Chief Academic Officer or his/her designee may ask for a preliminary report to include with the agenda item. However, use of the preliminary report is strongly discouraged in favor of scheduling the external review to allow a full and final report to accompany the agenda item prepared for the BOR.

23. RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTANT'S REPORT

Per Board of Regents Policy 2.3.3, a campus may write a response to a consultant's report and/or submit a revised proposal as needed. The response should address any significant recommendations or concerns expressed by the consultant, any significant changes to the proposed program, and identify/explain any new course requests arising out of the report. A campus that elects to prepare a response to the consultant report should submit the response to the System Chief Academic Officer and/or his/her designee. A response to a consultant's report becomes part of the agenda item prepared for the Board of Regents.

24. BOARD OF REGENTS APPROVAL OF THE NEW GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM PROPOSAL

A New Graduate Degree Program Form approved by the Council of Presidents and Superintendents moves to the Board of Regents for approval. The Board of Regents typically meets six times per year and consists of nine voting members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate as provided in SDCL 13-49-1.The Board of Regents may approve a New Graduate Degree Program Form in one of two ways. First, the full Board of Regents may review and approve a New Graduate Degree Program Form. Second, the Board of Regents' Committee on Academic and Student Affairs (Committee A) may recommend approval, followed by the full Board of Regents adoption of Committee A's reports and recommendations. Committee A has

responsibility for program review and development among other responsibilities ([By-Laws of the South Dakota Board of Regents 3.1.1](#)).

The System Chief Academic Officer or his/her designee introduces the New Graduate Degree Program Form at the appropriate full Board of Regents or Committee A meeting. The Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost provides additional information to Board of Regents members as needed. In addition, the Campus Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost submitting the New Graduate Degree Program Form should work with the System Chief Academic Officer to have an additional person more closely involved in the preparation of the New Graduate Degree Program Form document available to answer questions from Board of Regents members. Possible additional personnel include but are not limited to a department head, graduate dean, college dean, and/or program director.

Approval by the Board of Regents of a New Graduate Degree Program proposal authorizes the university to offer the graduate program. Board of Regents staff will issue a press release announcing the approval of the new program and communicate the approval to the consultant(s) involved in the external review

APPENDIX I
Collaborative Program Considerations

1. Collaboration between Regental campuses in implementing new graduate programs is encouraged when appropriate. The sharing of resources between campuses expands opportunities for delivering graduate education throughout the System. Two or more campuses may submit a single proposal for a new graduate program when their proposed programs share resources (facilities, faculty expertise, course offerings, etc.) or when they propose to offer a single program at two or more campuses.

   Example 1: A graduate program at campus A and a separate but related program at campus B share facilities, resources, and/or courses provided through distance delivery methods.

   Example 2: Campus A and campus B collaborate to deliver a single program through both campuses by sharing resources, faculty expertise, courses, and faculty expertise.

2. Collaborative graduate programs are encouraged to create a written program handbook outlining program operations, management, and the roles of and expectations for contributions from each participating campus.

3. While proposals for all new graduate programs require forethought and planning, collaborative graduate program require additional forethought and planning to ensure the roles of individual campuses are articulated and understood. The following list is representative of questions that campuses participating in collaborative graduate programs may need to consider and address during the proposal and implementation stage:

   • Is the collaborative program consistent with the mission of all campuses involved?

   • Do collaborating campuses jointly decide course delivery decisions (on-line, university centers, etc.)?

   • Will the program(s) have single program director? If so, what is the process for selecting the program director? What role does each campus play in the selection process?

   • Will each campus offer the same concentrations and specializations within the program? If not, are such decisions made jointly or by an individual campus?

   • Will the collaborating instructions form a joint steering committee to manage the program?

   • Will the collaborating campuses form a joint curriculum committee for the program?

   • Are program admission decisions made independently by each university? If so, may a student denied entry at one university seek admittance at a collaborating university? If not, what is the process for making admission decisions (and what role does each

campus play in the process)? Is there a single program application process or separate application processes for each campus?

- Will thesis or dissertation committees require members from each campus?

- Will faculty collaborate on research projects related to the program? How will this be encouraged?

- Will the campuses jointly prepare a graduate program handbook for students?

- Are the expectations for student examinations (preliminary, qualifying, and/or comprehensive) the same at each campus?

- Will each campus offer the program's core courses? Is there a process in place to determine which campus will offer specific core courses and on what schedule?

- Will the availability of funding opportunities for graduate students be equal at each campus?

- Is the program seeking accreditation from an accrediting body? Will one person coordinate the accreditation process for the entire program? What is the process for selecting the program's accreditation coordinator?

- Is each campus responsible for marketing the program on its own? (e.g., will a shared program website exist?)

- When a campus hires new faculty to teach in the collaborative program, will representatives from the other campus serve in an advisory capacity during the hiring process?