

BRANCH CAMPUS CRITERIA

Introduction

Act 975 was passed by the 1975 session of the Arkansas General Assembly for the stated purpose of prohibiting any state-supported institution of higher education from establishing a branch campus or program without first obtaining the approval of the State Board of Higher Education. The Board was authorized to establish reasonable rules, regulations, criteria, guidelines, or standards to be followed by the institutions and the Board with respect to the planning, establishment, location, or development of any branch campus of an existing public institution.

At the same session of the General Assembly, legislation was passed which encouraged the colleges and universities to expand their service functions to the citizens of Arkansas through the provision of courses offered at off-campus locations. The interpreted meaning of the General Assembly in passing what may at first appear to be conflicting measures has been that expanded educational services to the citizens of Arkansas through the provision of courses taught at locations other than on the campus should be pursued but that the development of programs with a degree of permanence and which would require a significant and continuing commitment of funds and other resources should be a significant and continuing commitment of funds and other resources should be started only after thorough planning, a detailed determination of need, and a consideration of other alternatives.

The major problem that arises in this situation is a basis for distinguishing between a branch campus or program and an off-campus operation. In the following two sections, nine elements are considered relevant to distinguishing between the two types of programs with elaboration on each element included.

Off-Campus Operations

The following elements would generally be characteristic of an off-campus operation:

Availability of Degrees

An off-campus operation generally offers courses upon demand and does not provide for the completion of a degree at the off-campus location. Depending upon institutional policies concerning residency at the home campus, students may secure the necessary courses for a degree but this has not been by design at the off-campus operation.

Size and Scope of Offerings

Offerings are normally individual course offerings responding to a particular need in the community and are not sequential. Offerings may change considerably in both level

and field from semester-to-semester. The number of courses offered is typically limited and dependent upon the availability of faculty and a reasonable number of students.

Facilities

Facilities would usually be provided in the community at little or no cost to the institution and there would be no permanence of commitment on the part of the institution for facilities. The facilities would not be under the complete control of the institution.

Institutional Intention and Identification

It is not the intention of the institution to operate or develop the program as a separate entity. The total program is an integral part of programs provided on-campus and the off-campus location carried no separate identification.

Administration

There is no administration separate from that which administers the main campus and no permanent administrative official is assigned at the off-campus location.

Staffing

Teaching and other staff personnel are part-time and temporary or sent from the main campus. No staff is assigned permanently to the off-campus operation.

Student Services

Student services personnel are part-time and temporary or sent from the main campus. No staff is assigned permanently to the off-campus operation.

Library Services

Permanent library holdings are not assigned at off-campus locations. All library resource materials are located at other facilities in the community or are transported from the main campus.

Accreditation

Accreditation for off-campus locations is a part of accreditation of the main campus and will not be sought for the off-campus location as an operationally independent agency.

Branch Campuses or Programs

The following elements would typically be characteristic of a branch campus or program:

Availability of Degrees

It would normally be possible for students to attain degrees through attendance only at the branch campus or program.

Size and Scope of Offerings

The number of courses offered would normally be larger than an off-campus location and they would be in planned, sequential orders so that students could regularly work toward degrees.

Facilities

Facilities would normally be a part of a permanent or long-range commitment on the part of the institution. It would not be unusual for facilities to be owned by, leased by, or otherwise under the complete control of the institution.

Institutional Intention and Identification

It is the intention of the institution to operate the remote location as a separate entity and may even carry a separate designation that would identify the location.

Administration

Local operation of the remote location is under a separate and identifiable administrative unit. Administrative personnel may be assigned at the remote location on a part-time or full-time basis.

Staffing

There would be more permanence of staff at the location and some staff would be assigned there on a full-time basis.

Student Services

Regular counseling or other student services would be available at the remote location.

Library Services

Permanent library resources would be available at the remote location.

Accreditation

Accreditation would be sought for the remote location as an operationally independent operation.

Criteria for Reviewing Branch Campuses

There are basically two ways a branch campus or program can be developed. The first is through a planned development process and the other is through the gradual evolvement of an off-campus location that grows due to the demands of the geographic area it serves.

Planned Development

Establishment of a branch campus or program through planned development would result when an institution recognized a need in a community where no higher education institution existed and the development of the branch would primarily be planned as an entity to be established at a given time with all relevant services and resources provided on a planned schedule. It would not be necessary for every aspect of the branch campus or program to adhere strictly to the defined elements included in other sections of this document depending upon various situations that could exist but the defined elements would be the primary basis for evaluating the planned branch campus or program.

If an institution wished to develop a branch campus or program, it would be necessary for a proposal to be developed for presentation to and consideration by the State Board of Higher Education. Such a proposal should be prepared according to the criteria and in the format included in the document entitled Criteria and Procedures for Preparing Proposals for New Programs, which is available at the Department of Higher Education. Development of a branch campus or program in this manner would typically require the appropriation of state funds to support the program at a session of the General Assembly. Therefore, proposals for planned development of branch campuses should be submitted to the State Board of Higher Education in a manner timely to the regular appropriations process. In no case should a proposal be submitted later than the time when the appropriations request is submitted.

Gradual Evolvement

A branch campus established through a process of gradual evolvement may be quite different from one established through planned development. It is quite conceivable that an off-campus location where a full branch operation is not planned could develop through demands for services to the point that it approaches status as branch or should be reevaluated in those terms. Under these circumstances, the elements identified in the section of this document under the heading "Branch Campuses or Programs" would be applied. Any time an off-campus location meets any one of the criteria listed for a branch campus or program, that off-campus location will be reviewed by the State Board of Higher Education in terms of a branch campus or program. In this respect, the meeting of one of the listed criteria would serve as a means for identifying off-campus locations that may be moving toward or have the potential to become branch

campuses. In the review, the institutional intent and likely direction of development of the off-campus location will be given primary consideration.

Legislative Advisement

Due to the concern expressed by the General Assembly regarding the development of branch campuses or programs and the responsibility placed upon the State Board of Higher Education in this area, it will be the intent of the Board to give serious consideration to the need for additional branch campuses, the manner in which any authorized branch campuses are operated with the primary concern being the provision of high quality educational opportunities, and the related costs involved. It will also be the intent of the State Board of Higher Education to allow for input from all sources in considering proposals for branch campuses prior to the time that such a campus will be authorized. To this end, the Board will inform the Arkansas Legislative Council and the Office of the Governor of any actions that have been taken by the board on branch campuses or programs. Each action by the Board will be delayed for a period of 30 days before becoming final to allow time for any desired comment by the Legislative Council or the Governor.

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