

MEMORANDUM

TO: Patrick Halliday
FROM: Clare O'Shaughnessy, Staff Attorney
SUBJECT: ROPA Approval Process and SNHU CTE Application
DATE: August 12, 2019

1. You have requested a legal opinion on behalf of the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE) regarding permissible actions given the letter from Vermont Technical College President Patricia Moulton, dated June 3, 2019 who expressed concerns regarding the dilution of cohorts in the CTE certification process and questions regarding the quality and suitability of approving an on-line platform on the apprenticeship-based route in use in Vermont.
2. It is my understanding the VSBPE approved the application of SNHU to go through the ROPA process at its last meeting, and Agency staff have begun the review process.
3. As to the original question as posed, under its rules the VSBPE Rule 5922, “[a] teacher preparation program or alternate route *shall be approved* if all of the following criteria are met:
 - a. Provider insures that candidates have the necessary content and pedagogical knowledge to help all students learn and to create learning experiences that make the content area accessible and meaningful to learners.
 - b. Provider uses valid and reliable methods to systematically evaluate candidates’ knowledge and performance competencies, to monitor candidates’ progress’ and to acquire data that is used in making programmatic improvements. This includes follow-up studies of graduates and those who have hired recent graduates.
 - c. Provider and PK-12 partners collaborate to ensure high-quality field experiences where candidates demonstrate effective teaching and take responsibility for student learning
 - d. Provider ensures that programs and candidates have the resources to meet Vermont’s Core Teaching and/or Core Leadership Standards as well as the endorsement requirements. (Emphasis added.)
4. The review process/ROPA visit will determine if SNHU’s program will meet the above criteria. Once the program meets criteria, the VSBPE *shall* approve the program per the rules. However, the question is whether this rule’s mandatory approval when applied specifically to CTE certifications will lead to an “unintended consequence,” which would be contrary to the intent of the VSBPE’s rules as a whole—in this case, the desire of the board for quality programming of CTE teachers. *See* VSBPE 5951.
5. The unintended consequence could be the dilution of cohorts via the apprenticeship alternate route to licensure for career and technical educators as suggested by the

Vermont Technical College's President in her letter and essentially whether this is a closed market given required employment by a tech center and approval of the professional learning plan by the tech center director.¹ Further, the long standing contract Vermont Tech's CTTEP has with the Vermont Association of Career & Technical Directors to provide teacher education services, as representing the *status quo* of CTE certifications, may be considered by the board, but would require adequate data.

6. The VSBPE may wish to obtain such data to inform its decision-making separately from the site review of SNHU's CTE program to determine if the concern of dilution of cohorts and the impact on quality of program offerings in Vermont merits consideration and requires the board to consider waiving the rule to require approval.
7. Further examination of the current status of CTE licensure process (and numbers of potential students) is necessary given the claim allowing another approved education program in the state will dilute the pool of teacher-candidates in Vermont and will as a consequence dilute the quality of the educational offerings.
8. These concerns are separate and distinct from concerns about the quality of educator preparation offered in a hybrid on-line format which may or may not have implications to CTE which are beyond the scope of this memorandum.
9. Recommendation: VSBPE invite the Vermont Association of Career & Technical Director's to give their opinion on the impact of allowing another CTE teacher education program into VT and the whether dilution of the teacher-candidate pool may impact education quality. The longstanding contractual issue is also outside the scope of this memorandum, but the VSBPE could solicit historical information and feedback on the state of this process for obtaining high-quality CTE licensed teachers in Vermont.

¹ It is not clear from the application that SNHU's program will only be offered online physical presence in Colchester.