

**AGENCY OF EDUCATION
Montpelier, Vermont**

TEAM: School Finance/Postsecondary Approvals

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education grant renewal of Northeastern Baptist College's (NEBC) Certificate of Approval to offer credit-bearing courses and Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority for associate and bachelor programs and approve the addition of the master's level programs in Biblical studies (Applied Theology, Advanced Applied Theology, and Biblical Exegesis in Old or New Testament) for a period of four (4) years commencing upon the date of State Board of Education's approval and contingent on NEBC providing the Agency of Education annual reports on the following:

1. An Enrollment Plan and a Fundraising Plan including financial expectations over a 3-year time period.
2. Copies of submitted Annual 990 tax forms.
3. Copies of approved annual external audited financial statements with accompanying opinion letter and response.
4. Progress made on the extent to which back salaries stated in employment contracts are honored and paid.
5. On alternate years starting in 2024 a report on progress made regarding launch of the graduate programs and implementation of the assessment plan.

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education grants renewal of Northeastern Baptist College's (NEBC) Certificate of Approval to offer credit-bearing courses and Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority for associate and bachelor programs and approve the addition of the master's level programs in Biblical studies (Applied Theology, Advanced Applied Theology, and Biblical Exegesis in Old or New Testament) for a period of four (4) years commencing upon the date of State Board of Education's approval and contingent on NEBC providing the Agency of Education annual reports on the following:

1. An Enrollment Plan and a Fundraising Plan including financial expectations over a 3-year time period.
2. Copies of submitted Annual 990 tax forms.
3. Copies of approved annual external audited financial statements with accompanying opinion letter and response.
4. Progress made on the extent to which back salaries stated in employment contracts are honored and paid.
5. On alternate years starting in 2024 a report on progress made regarding launch of the graduate programs and implementation of the assessment plan.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 16 V.S.A. § 176 and 176 a
State Board Rule: 2240 et seq

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The State Board of Education is responsible for issuing Certificates of Approval and Certificates of Degree-Granting Authority, or both, to applicant postsecondary schools whose objectives, programs, and resources, including personnel, curriculum, finances, and facilities, are found to be adequate and appropriate for the stated purpose and for the protection of students and the public interest. Northeastern Baptist College (NEBC) submitted all requested materials and was reviewed in accordance with State Board of Education Rule 2243.

Northeastern Baptist College is not accredited by an entity recognized by the US Department of Education. NEBC received initial SBE approval prior to January 1, 2015; therefore, per SBE Rule 2243.3, accreditation is not required for NEBC to be eligible for renewal.

Per SBE Rule 2243.7, the State Board of Education may grant renewal of a certificate of approval and or degree granting authority for a period not to exceed five years.

Title 16 VSA§176(h) requires that the Board obtain the advice of the Vermont Higher Education Council, Incorporated (VHEC) before acting on applications for Certificates of Degree-Granting Authority. As such, the Agency contracted with VHEC to conduct a review of the application and advise the SBE on its recommendation.

In its report and memo to the SBE and the Agency dated May 1, 2023, VHEC's Certification Review Committee recommended four (4) year approval with conditions for NEBC's application. Agency of Education staff agrees with VHEC's recommendation.

VHEC's full report and recommendation is attached.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: There are no fiscal impacts to the Agency of Education or the State of Vermont beyond the staff time necessary to process the request and formulate this recommendation to the State Board. That cost has been partially offset by Northeastern Baptist College's payment to the agency of a \$7,500 fee.

STAFF AVAILABLE:

Cassandra Ryan, Director of Regulatory Compliance and Risk Management