

From Proposal to offering a New Curriculum: The Path through Iowa State University & the Iowa Board of Regents Approval Process

Introduction

The process required to move a curriculum proposal generated by a department or interdepartmental unit through to final approval from the Iowa Board of Regents requires multiple steps. The full process can require 8-12 months depending on the timing of approvals and subsequent meetings, including the Board of Regents annual meeting schedule. This document was designed to provide an overview of the curriculum development process and includes content from the [ISU Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee website](#), the [ISU Faculty Handbook Section 10.8](#), the [Academic Programs section](#) of the Senior Vice President and Provost website, and the [Iowa Board of Regents website section 3.6 Academic Program Planning Approval](#).

The curriculum development process at Iowa State University is governed by the Faculty Senate. At the university level, the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee (FSCC) considers proposals for new curricula, changes to existing curricula, and discontinuations of curricula. Additional information on specific aspects of the curriculum review process may be found in the governance documents of specific colleges and departments. An important aspect of the curriculum approval process is documentation of consultation with any academic programs that may be affected by the change, and this includes both University of Iowa and the University of Northern Iowa as the two other Regent Institutions. The [Iowa Board of Regents Form A](#) is used to create the curriculum proposal. The form is available on both the Board of Regents website and the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee website.

Table 1 from the ISU Faculty Handbook Section 10.8 outlines the approvals required for multiple types of curricula additions or changes. Not all changes require approval from the Board of Regents; only a new major, a name change to a major, and merging of majors require Board of Regents approval.

Figure 1 represents the sequential approvals required for the three curricular changes that require Board of Regents approval (New Major, Name Change, Merged Majors). All other curricular changes (graduate & undergraduate new minor/certificate, name changes to minor/certificate/specialization, and merged minors/certificates/specializations) do not require Board of Regents approval and will be implement following university processes after approval from the President.

Created by:

Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee and the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost
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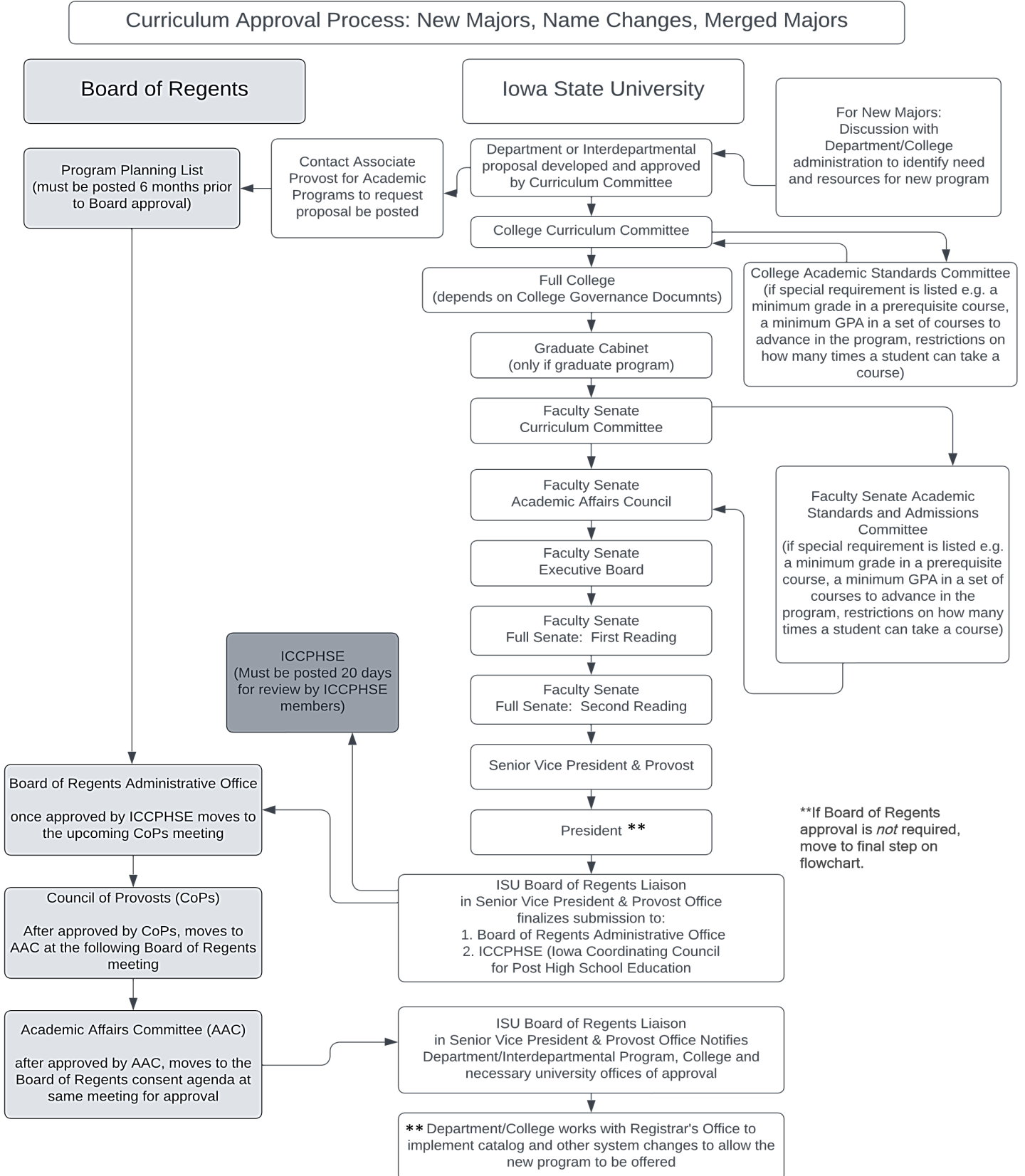
Table 1. Faculty Handbook Section 10.8

Action Item	Department or Interdepartmental Program	College	Graduate Faculty Cabinet	Faculty Senate	SVPP / President	Board of Regents
Majors						
New Major	Yes	Yes	Yes, if graduate program	Yes	Yes	Yes
Name change	Yes	Yes	Yes, if graduate program	Yes	Yes	Yes
Merged majors	Yes	Yes	Yes, if graduate program	Yes	Yes	Yes
Undergraduate Certificates and Minors						
New certificate or minor	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Name change of certificate or minor	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Merged certificates or minors	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Graduate Certificates, Minors, and Specializations						
New certificate, minor, or specialization	Yes	Yes*	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Name change of certificate, minor, or specialization	Yes	Yes*	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Merged certificates, minors, or specializations	Yes	Yes*	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Concurrent bachelor/master's degrees						
New concurrent degree	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Name change concurrent degree	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

*Refers to Graduate College only, through the Graduate Curriculum Committee.

Table updated August 2024.

Figure 1. Flow chart showing the sequential process of a proposal that requires Iowa Board of Regents approval.



Flowchart updated August 2024.

ISU Best Practices in Developing a Curriculum Proposal

Interdisciplinary Programs

Interdisciplinary programs, across multiple departments and even multiple colleges, are essential to meeting the needs of our modern world and the interests of today's students. However, these types of programs need to clearly lay out the structure for their management and governance and ensure input and representation from all involved.

If a new program (major, minor, or certificate) is interdisciplinary, a governance document should be created and submitted to the Associate Provost for Academic Programs (which is existing Faculty Handbook policy). Once approved, this will be posted on the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee website.

This document should detail who will be part of a "curriculum committee" for that program and include representation from all of the colleges/departments involved. One "managing" college should be identified. One faculty member should serve as the Chair of the curriculum committee (this position can rotate) and that person is in charge of coordinating with the managing college to administer the program each year. Once this governance document has been reviewed by all of the partners involved (including college Deans, department chairs and the Associate Provost for Academic Programs), proposal forms for a new interdisciplinary program only need to be approved by the managing college's curriculum committee (not multiple colleges). Members of the interdisciplinary curriculum committee are responsible for representing the interests of their respective departments.

The governance document template and examples are posted in the [Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee website](#).

Letters of Support

Letters of support from the University of Iowa and the University of Northern Iowa are not required ([Form A](#)). However, consultation with the Regents Universities as well as relevant Iowa State University college(s) and department(s) that will be impacted is required and must be summarized in section 5.b. of Form A. This must be included in the Form A before approval at ISU will be granted.

Departments or programs are encouraged to solicit and include letters of support from industry partners that support the case for workforce needs and career opportunities for graduates. Include these letters in an appendix with the rest of the proposal documentation.

ISU Best Practices cont.

Promoting the New Program

Once a proposal has received final approval at ISU, the Associate Provost for Academic Programs will forward the proposal to the Board of Regents (BoR) Administrative office and it will move through approval by the BoR Council of Provosts, then by the full Board. Once fully approved, the Associate Provost will formally notify campus and the program can begin being promoted. In unique circumstances, permission can be granted from the Associate Provost to promote a new program after approval by the Council of Provosts with the clarification that it is pending full Board of Regents approval.

Offering the New Program

Before a newly Board of Regents approved program can be offered the following must occur: all courses, including new courses, listed in the program must be approved; all courses listed in the program must be in the ISU Catalog; all program courses must be entered into Workday (student information system) so students can register for courses and an academic plan can be completed for the program; and the appropriate code identified via the code book is assigned to the program. Once these steps are completed by the department and college curriculum committees and the Registrar's Office, the program can be offered. The Registrar's Office will endeavor to have these steps completed so the program may be offered in the next catalog following Board of Regents approval.

Note: There is a potential that additional external approvals will be required before students can enroll in the program. These additional approvals could delay offering the program by a year or more. Examples include:

1. If the program is a significant departure from traditional degree programs, there is a possibility that the program will need to be approved by the Higher Learning Commission before students can enroll in the program.
2. If the new program creates a new 'degree' name (e.g. Master of Real Estate instead of Master of Science in Real Estate), the program will not be available for international students until the program is approved and added to Homeland Security's the list of allowable degrees for international student enrollment.

Iowa Board of Regents:

Additional Context on Academic Program Planning and Approval

Section 3.6 Academic Program Planning Approval is from the Iowa Board of Regents website. Section A describes the Board's process for new program approval which is illustrated through the gray boxes in Figure 1 of this document.

Section B outlines the Board's principles and standards for program duplication and should be consulted when considering developing a new academic program at Iowa State University.

3.6 Academic Program Planning Approval

A. New Program Approval

- i. No action shall be taken by the institution on any proposed programs until the new program is approved by the Board of Regents. This includes hiring new faculty, securing facilities, developing curriculum, or advertising the program.
- ii. The Board Office shall maintain a program planning list that includes the name and educational level of proposed programs that are currently undergoing an institutional review and are likely to be submitted for program approval by the Board of Regents within the year. Proposed programs shall be on the program planning list for at least three months prior to the submission of **Form A** to the Board Office.
- iii. The Council of Provosts shall review the proposed program planning list at each meeting.
- iv. An institution planning a new or expanded academic program shall first submit the program proposal to the Board Office using the format developed by the Board Office (**Form A**), including accreditation requirements and viability; and verified practicum, internship, or similar sites.
- v. An institution planning a new or expanded academic program shall submit the appropriate information to the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post High School Education (ICCPHSE) using the prescribed format. All proposals submitted to the Board Office shall include the action taken by the ICCPHSE.
- vi. The Board Office will ensure that the program proposal is on the agenda for the next appropriate meeting of the Council of Provosts. The proposal shall be reviewed by the Council of Provosts considering the following key criteria:
 - a. Need/demand in Iowa for the proposed offering;
 - b. Duplication/unnecessary duplication resulting from implementing the proposed offering;
 - c. Costs, reallocations, long-term resource needs of the proposed offering;
 - d. Appropriate facilities and equipment;
 - e. Projected sustainability;
 - f. Quality of the proposed offering; and
 - g. Alignment with the university's mission and the Board's and the institution's strategic plans of the proposed offering.
- vii. After reviewing the program proposal, the Council of Provosts shall take action regarding the program proposal.
- viii. With a favorable recommendation from the Board Office and the Council of Provosts, the Board Office will place the program proposal on the agenda for the next appropriate meeting of the Board of Regents' Academic Affairs Committee.

The Committee shall review the proposal and recommend action by the Board of Regents or take other action as it deems appropriate.

- ix. The institution will implement the proposed program consistent with the approved authorization.

B. Principles and Standards for Program Duplication

- i. The Board of Regents, State of Iowa, recognizes that program overlap or duplication cannot be evaluated in absolute terms. Some duplication is desirable, appropriate, and essential. Other duplication is inappropriate.
- ii. Policy decisions concerning the appropriateness of new programs or the expansion of existing programs that appear to duplicate activities in other institutions shall be based on such considerations as the following:
 - a. Personnel, facilities, and equipment adequate to establish and maintain a high-quality program;
 - b. Current and future student demand;
 - c. Adequate employment opportunities for graduates;
 - d. Evidence of collaboration with another Regent university already offering the same program;
 - e. Enhancement of other programs already in place at the university;
 - f. Consistency with the institutional mission;'
 - g. Location/delivery mode of propose program;
 - h. Similar offering(s) at other colleges in Iowa.

Resources

ISU Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee website:

<http://www.facsen.iastate.edu/councils/academicaffairs/curriculum>

ISU Faculty Handbook:

<https://www.provost.iastate.edu/faculty-success/faculty-handbook>

Iowa Board of Regents website section 3.6 Academic Program Planning Approval:

<http://www.iowaregents.edu/plans-and-policies/board-policy-manual/36-academic-program-planning-approval>