



**DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
**MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**Victoria L. Gruber**  
Executive Director

February 21, 2022

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr., Governor  
The Honorable Bill Ferguson, President of the Senate  
The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones, Speaker of the House of Delegates

Lady and Gentlemen:

Chapter 41 of 2021 (Section 3) requires the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) to contract with a consultant to study the capacity and capability of the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to conduct academic program reviews under current policies and practices and any new policies or practices established as a result of Chapter 41. DLS is required to submit an interim report to the Governor and General Assembly on the progress of the study followed by a final report by September 1, 2022.

DLS posted a request for proposals on its website on September 27, 2021. The scope of services included a variety of areas for the consultant to examine including:

- evaluating MHEC's policies, procedures, and process for reviewing academic program proposals, including on-campus and online programs, including an assessment of criteria used to determine unreasonable and unnecessary program duplication;
- attaining and evaluating relevant academic program approval data from MHEC;
- interviewing representatives from the various segments, institutions, and other stakeholders;
- identifying obstacles in the current academic program review process;
- surveying and summarizing academic approval policies, procedures, and processes at other states, identifying best practices;
- examining MHEC's ability to evaluate workforce development needs related to academic program approval process;

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr., Governor  
The Honorable Bill Ferguson, President of the Senate  
The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones, Speaker of the House of Delegates  
February 21, 2022  
Page 2

- analyzing MHEC's current academic program review staff and responsibilities, recommending an appropriate configuration of a new unit with the addition of 10 new staff members; and
- providing recommendations to improve the academic program review process to ensure it is an objective and efficient process.

The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) was selected by DLS on November 22, 2021. NCHEMS has done similar work in several states recently, including Ohio and Virginia. The contract was signed in January 2022 and NCHEMS began work on February 1, 2022. According to the study's timeline (see **Appendix 1**), NCHEMS will submit bimonthly progress reports. DLS will post these reports on its website in order to keep interested stakeholders informed about the status of the study. A draft report will be submitted to DLS in June 2022, with a final report to be submitted in July 2022. The contract includes opportunities for NCHEMS to present the final report to legislative committees, MHEC, and other groups in August through October 2022.

We look forward to working with NCHEMS on this study and providing useful analysis and recommendations that can support higher education in Maryland. If you have any questions or comments about this project, please contact me.

Sincerely,



Victoria Gruber  
Executive Director

VLG/mpd

cc: Senator Guy Guzzone  
Senator Paul Pinsky  
Senator Nancy King  
Delegate Maggie McIntosh  
Delegate Ben Barnes  
Ms. Amelia Chasse Alcivar  
Mr. Keiffer Mitchell  
Ms. Sally Robb  
Mr. Jeremy Baker

**Appendix 1. National Center for Higher Education Management Systems  
2022 Timeline to Complete MHEC Study**

Task	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct
Hold virtual meeting to review expectations and activities		XX								
Review MHEC policies, procedures, structure, and process for academic review		xx	xx							
Review of relevant state statutes and regulations		xx	xx							
Evaluate 5-year performance history for MHEC academic approval			xx							
Review MD's 4-year institution's academic review process		xx	xx							
Interviews with stakeholders on academic review process		xx	xx	xx						
Identify obstacles to MHEC academic review process				xx	xx					
Analysis and benchmarking of other states' academic review processes (LA, OH, VA, AL, SC, AR, MS)		xx	xx	xx	xx					
Evaluate MHEC capacity to evaluate workforce and market demand for future and current academic programs				xx	xx					
Analyze MHEC's current structure (with 10 more FTE) to meet State and federal laws for comprehensive academic reviews					xx					
Develop recommendations to improve MHEC structure and process					xx	xx				
Submit draft report						xx	xx			
Revisions to draft report						xx	xx			
Presentation to Maryland groups								xx	xx	xx
Monthly progress reports		xx		xx		xx			xx	