

Revised Timeline Summary for MHEC Review 01.20.22
 NCHEMS will begin work on this project in February 2022.

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						
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					
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	XX				
Develop recommendations to improve MHEC structure and process					XX	XX				
Submit draft report							XX			
Revisions to draft report							XX			
Presentation to Maryland groups								XX		
Bi-monthly progress reports			XX		XX		XX			

Project Plan

In carrying out the services requested by the Maryland General Assembly's Department of Legislative Services, NCHEMS will start with an examination of the policies and procedures used by MHEC to review academic program proposals. In part drawing on its knowledge of other states' approaches to program review and approval, NCHEMS will also create a format for the criteria used to determine program duplication issues. This format will draw on the conceptual framework for describing institutional missions—a framework that includes disciplines and levels of programs offered, the characteristics of the students served, and unique institutional features (e.g., Land Grant status, etc.). During the same timeframe, we will also review relevant Maryland state statutes and regulations.

As early as possible upon execution of the contract, NCHEMS will schedule an initial meeting with project managers at the Department of Legislative Services. This meeting will be an opportunity to get acquainted with one another, discuss project expectations and role assignments (e.g., scheduling necessary meetings), ensure that the project plan is well constructed to meet the requirements of the work, plan for routine communication, identify data we will require to inform the work and who can supply those data, and generally to ensure that the project gets off to a smooth start. NCHEMS will also have a similar meeting with leaders at MHEC, along with MHEC staff who hold responsibility for oversight of its program review function (or this can be arranged as a joint meeting, at the Department's discretion).

During February 2022, we will request MHEC's historical data on academic program reviews. In our experience we will have to work with the staff there to assure the data we receive is in a useable format. In March 2022, the NCHEMS team will analyze and organize that information to assess the criteria utilized by MHEC in the program approval process and to evaluate MHEC's structure and capabilities—including staffing, documentation of institutional missions, and capacity to assess workforce needs.

Also in February, NCHEMS will gather written information about the internal policies and practices regarding academic program review and approval that are used at Maryland's public 4-year institutions. That is, the review process used for each institution's governing board prior to requesting an MHEC review. These will be compiled in a format that could allow for comparisons.

In March and/or April NCHEMS will send two teams of researchers to conduct interview and hold focus groups with stakeholders throughout Maryland. The researchers/interviewers will include Sally Johnstone, Alvin Schexnider, Brian Prescott, and Sarah Torres Lugo. These listening sessions will use the same question sets to guide each session, though we do not intend to follow a strict protocol. The sessions will take place on the public 4-year campuses or in a conference room at the Department of Legislative Services office in Annapolis. In addition to interviews with campus constituencies, NCHEMS will partner with each campus and with MHEC to identify and help bring together relevant employer and community stakeholders. The focus of these conversations will be to reveal leading issues related to the practice and policies of program review in place and to understand them from the perspective of multiple

stakeholders, including both public and private institutions across different sectors. Of particular interest will be how those practices impact institutions' abilities to fulfill their mission, meet labor market needs, and serve their communities and students. Specific examples of successful (and unsuccessful) program approval submissions will be sought. NCHEMS team members will also interview University System of Maryland academic affairs staff to gain their perspectives on their role in the program approval process as well their comments on the MHEC practices and procedures. During these trips, the NCHEMS team will also meet with the project management team at the Department of Legislative Services to provide an opportunity for face-to-face discussion about progress and observations to-date, as well as with MHEC leaders and staff whose input on current activities and capacity will be important to gather.

During March, April, and May, we will gather information about academic review processes and structures from seven states. The states will include Louisiana, Ohio, Virginia, Alabama, South Carolina, Arkansas, and Mississippi. NCHEMS suggests these states as providing useful comparisons because each has at least one public HBCU and because they share similarities in terms of their higher education governance structures with Maryland. The same template developed to capture MHEC's processes, procedures, structures, program duplication policies, and costs for comparisons will be used to compile and organize information from these additional states. NCHEMS will also gather information about staff roles and responsibilities related to program review in these states to inform recommendations about staffing opportunities in Maryland. Analyzing this information will serve as a basis for identifying common features, issues, and best or promising practices.

During April and May NCHEMS will use the process it has used in other states to assess MHEC's capacity to assess the labor market demand for new programs. Does it have its own well-developed capacity, or does it rely on analyses performed by individual campuses or the University System? We will also evaluate how MHEC gathers and uses information regarding future demands so the agency can be responsive to the changing employment demands in Maryland. The NCHEMS team will include senior consultants (previous NCHEMS staff members) who have developed the models used to evaluate state workforce demands and have made recommendations on the need for new programs in other states.

In May NCHEMS will analyze the structure of MHEC with an emphasis on how well it can meet State and federal laws for comprehensive programs reviews. The NCHEMS team will include senior researchers who have extensive experience in evaluating similar offices in other states. This analysis will form the baseline for the development of recommendations for improvements in MHEC's structure and processes.

All of the foregoing tasks will inform the development of a draft report, which will address the following likely topics:

1. Background on the origins of the project, legislation, etc.
2. The conceptual structure utilized to describe institutional missions and frame discussions of appropriateness of new programs at individual institutions. This

conceptual structure identifies the factors to be considered in determining whether or not a program should be approved.

3. Link to the program review activities at MHEC to state strategic goals
4. Overview of current policies and practices governing program review in Maryland
 - a. State level
 - b. Internal institutional approaches
5. Summary of and themes from stakeholder engagement activities
6. Comparison of Maryland practices with other, similarly situated states
 - a. Goals and authority
 - b. Processes and procedures
 - c. Staffing capacity
7. MHEC's capacity to incorporate labor market data in the program review process.
8. Conclusions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the MHEC program approval process
9. Recommendations concerning necessary changes to structure, policies, and practices and organization and utilization of staff.

Following the submission of the draft report in July 2022, NCHEMS will work with the Department of Legislative Services to determine what revisions or clarifications may be needed. During July, NCHEMS will incorporate that feedback into the final report, which will be completed by August 1, 2022. In past engagements with states, NCHEMS is sometimes asked to come back to the state to offer face-to-face testimony or sessions with stakeholders. If that is the case, we would plan to do that during the month of August before the contract ends September 1, 2022.