

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Academic Affairs

NO.: AAC 16-37

COMMITTEE DATE: June 7, 2016

BOARD DATE: June 14, 2016

**REVOCATION OF SCHOOL OF MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS DEGREE GRANTING
AUTHORITY**

MOVED: The Board hereby revokes the legal authority of **School of the
Museum of Fine Arts** to operate and grant degrees in the
Commonwealth of Massachusetts effective July 1, 2016.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 69, Section 30 et seq.

Contact: Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D.,
Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

Background

The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (SMFA) is a division within the Museum of Fine Arts (Museum). After a two year planning process, it was decided that SMFA would affiliate with its long time educational partner, Tufts University. SMFA faced a period of declining enrollment that is consistent with trends in higher education for small art schools. A two-year comprehensive planning process led to a repositioning of the SMFA where it was decided that SMFA should be part of an organization whose primary mission is post-secondary education.

On December 22, 2015, the Museum and Tufts University (Tufts) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to outline provisions for transferring the operations of SMFA to Tufts. The Museum's Board of Trustees voted to confirm closure of SMFA on February 25, 2016. On March 23, 2016 both institutions entered into an Asset Acquisition Agreement to transfer SMFA from the Museum to Tufts. BHE staff members were in dialog with SMFA since late 2015 and a completed Notice of Closure was submitted to the Commissioner on April 21, 2016.

SMFA and Tufts have been partners since the 1940s, when they jointly developed a Bachelor of Science in Art Education. In 1956, SMFA and Tufts began offering a joint Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, and in 1960, a Master of Fine Arts degree. SMFA has provided all studio instruction and Tufts, all academic instruction. Studio art courses were taught on the SMFA campus and liberal arts courses, on the Tufts campus. A shuttle bus was provided so that students were able to commute between campuses. This long-standing partnership means that many operational and curricular matters related to this acquisition are in place.

As of July 1, 2016 (subject to regulatory approvals and the fulfillment of closing conditions), Tufts is expected to legally acquire SMFA. The endowment and certain physical assets will transfer from the Museum to Tufts. Structurally, SMFA will become a school within Tufts' School of Arts and Sciences. Students enrolled at SMFA, including new Fall-2016 students, will automatically become students at Tufts. The two relevant accrediting bodies, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) and the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) have been notified. On April 4, 2016, Tufts submitted an application for substantive change to NEASC, which detailed its rationale for incorporating SMFA into its academic and student services programs.

In order to accomplish the merger, SMFA has requested that the Board of Higher Education revoke SMFA's degree granting authority on Tuesday, June 14, 2016 with an effective date of July 1, 2016.

In compliance with M.G.L., c. 69, § 30A and 610 CMR 2.10, a public hearing regarding the closure of SMFA was scheduled on May 26, 2016, 2016 at 10:30 AM Room 1401, One Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108. No member of the general public was in attendance.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board revoke the authority of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts to operate and grant degrees in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts effective July 1, 2016.