

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION**

NO.: BHE 24-27

BOARD DATE: February 6, 2024

**APPROVAL OF LETTER OF INTENT OF NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE
TO AWARD THE ASSOCIATE IN SCIENCE IN ENTREPRENURIAL BUSINESS AND
AUTHORIZATION FOR FAST TRACK REVIEW**

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education (BHE) has evaluated the Letter of Intent of **Northern Essex Community College** to award the **Associate in Science in Entrepreneurial Business** and has determined that the proposal aligns with BHE criteria. Accordingly, the BHE authorizes the Commissioner to review the program and to make a final determination on degree-granting authority pursuant to the Fast-Track review protocol.

VOTED: Motion approved and advanced to the full BHE by the Executive Committee on 1/29/2024; and adopted by the BHE on 2/6/2024.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 9(b); AAC 18-40

Contact: Richard Riccardi, Sc.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
February 6, 2024
Northern Essex Community College
Letter of Intent
Associate in Science in Entrepreneurial Business

DEGREE TITLE ABSTRACT ON INTENT AND MISSION OF PROGRAM

The purpose of Northern Essex Community College's (NECC) proposed Associate in Science in Entrepreneurial Business is to provide a core set of business courses focused on business entrepreneurship. It is expected that students will learn the general skills required for an entrepreneurial mindset in industry or in starting a business.

The proposed Associate in Science in Entrepreneurial Business was approved by the Northern Essex Community College Board of Trustees on February 1, 2023. The LOI was circulated on October 11, 2023. No comments were received.

A. ALIGNMENT WITH MASSACHUSETTS GOALS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Address Gaps in Opportunity and Achievement in Alignment with Campus-Wide Goals

NECC reports that business is its second largest academic department, serving more than 500 students each semester. The Business department serves most students in Business Transfer and Business Management. Strong student interest in Entrepreneurial Business led NECC to work with Lightcast ¹ where it was determined that the proposed major had significant potential and demand in the region. NECC noted that the proposed program aligns closely with its campus strategic goal of Community Impact because it will leverage partnerships with local businesses to address industry and workforce needs.

The program is also expected to respond to a growing student population interested in pursuing entrepreneurial ventures. Since returning from COVID, NECC reports that the Business and Professional Studies academic center has served as a well-attended hub

¹ Lightcast is a merger of Emsi and Burning Glass Technologies. Retrieved 11/18/23 <https://lightcase.io>

for new entrepreneurs to share ideas and collaborate about experiences starting and running companies.

NECC noted that it is a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) with a current enrollments average of 47-49% Hispanic students. The college is committed to increasing access to all business programs for our Hispanic students, especially in Lawrence. This aligns both with the BHE's Equity Agenda and NECC pledge to increase the number of Hispanic residents in the city of Lawrence with college degrees. It is also expected to help NECC close equity gaps.

NECC reports that business is one of the most popular tracks for NECC's Early College program with 133 students in the Early College Business concentration in the Fall 2023 term. Of these students, forty-four are from NECC's Lawrence campus and attend Lawrence High School, which is majority Hispanic. Additional outreach and recruitment by NECC's Early College and Business & Professional Studies teams is planned for the demographically diverse population on the Lawrence campus. In addition, NECC has been scheduling existing Business Transfer and Business Management programs as day and evening (hybrid) options on the Lawrence campus. Approximately 200 MASSRECONNECT scholars enrolled in NECC in Fall 2023, increasing the number of evening sections on the Lawrence campus. The proposed program is expected to do the same. Once approved, the courses needed to complete the proposed Entrepreneurial Business degree are expected to be scheduled (day and evening) in Haverhill, Lawrence and online. Additionally, the Business Department and select members of the business advisory board are working to collaborate with the local chambers of commerce to create venues for local entrepreneurs to network, learn of NECC educational resources, and connect with mentors from the chambers.

Program or Department Supports to Ensure Student Retention and Completion

The Business and Professional Studies academic center provides students with on campus resources, advising, access to faculty, study room and computer access, which serves as a community of support and provides students with a sense of belonging. The Center was the first of five academic centers to be launched at NECC, as part of

the Integrated Student Experience (ISE) effort. The ISE is a three-pronged approach to student support, designed to increase supports and close equity gaps. It is a three-pronged approach to student services, designed to increase student sense of belonging and participation in the campus community; increase the academic structure for students, and re-engineer college structures to be coherently linked and easier to navigate. The Center serves each of these goals; the faculty are intentional in using the Center to foster a sense of belonging for students through the environment, resources, and support available in the Center.

The NECC Success Online team is reported to provide students accessing this delivery method, with resources and skills to augment their success and connection to the college. The team provides resources and skills to augment online student success as well as ensure they have a connection to the college. All students are encouraged to participate in a free Prep for Success Online facilitated training course, designed to ensure students have the tools they need be successful in their online and hybrid courses. Students can also participate in FAQ workshops (offered day, night, and online) with the NECC Library's Technology Assistance team. The online website run by the NECC Success Online team shares a variety of resources for online students, including links to Technology Assistance, the Service Desk, online tutoring, and online coaching services. NECC online students also have access to the same advising resources and technology outlined above.

Alliances and Partnerships with PK-12, Other IHE's, Community Employers

NECC's Business Advisory Board provided input on the proposed AS in Entrepreneurial Business program as the proposal was being developed. Advisors provided insight as to how they will be of assistance to the program and our students. Several advisory board members have expertise in this discipline and a complete list of advisors, and their affiliations were provided in the full Letter of Intent submitted by NECC.

The proposed program is expected to offer internships which will mean that NECC utilizes its partnerships with local businesses and through the college's Career Service

department. It is also expected that students enrolled in the existing Early College Business Pathway will be able to complete core courses in the proposed program.

As well, the proposed program is planning for internships for students through NECC's partnerships with local businesses and its own Career Services. The program utilizes its partnerships and embeds internships within current business programs. The Business Department works closely with the Career Services department to inform and recruit students by providing in-class presentations and online recruitment. NECC uses the HandShake system for employers to list openings and for students to explore internship opportunities. The Business Department has created a process to ensure that student goals are considered during the internship selection process as well as developing clear learning objectives which are communicated with the employers so that students are provided with an authentic learning experience.

As mentioned previously the Business Department has an existing pathway within its Early College program at NECC. It is planned that students enrolled in the existing Early College Business Pathway will be able to complete core courses in the proposed Marketing program.

Relationship to MassHire Regional Blueprints

A recent survey conducted by the Bank of America in October 2022, involving more than 1,300 small business owners across the United States, revealed several key insights about the state of small businesses and their outlook for the future. Approximately 66% of the surveyed small business owners expressed optimism, expecting increased revenue over the next 12 months. This figure marked a seven-year high in revenue expectations. A significant portion of respondents, accounting for 52%, indicated plans to expand their businesses in the coming year. This percentage represented a notable increase from 37% in the spring (Bank of America, 2022²). Most small business owners, totaling 83%, indicated their intention to seek funding for their businesses within the

² Bank of America. (2022, October 5). *Bank of America finds 66% of small business owners expect revenue increases over the next year; 52% plan to expand their businesses.* Bank of America. [Press release]. (<https://newsroom.bankofamerica.com/content/newsroom/press-releases/2022/10/bank-of-america-finds-66--of-small-business-owners-expect-revenu.html>).

next 12 months, reflecting a significant rise from 70% in the previous spring. Despite concerns about the possibility of an impending recession, 77% of entrepreneurs expressed confidence in their businesses' ability to weather economic challenges and survive a recession (Morris, 2022³). Additionally, a separate survey conducted by Intuit found that COVID-19 had accelerated the plans of 83% of respondents to start their own businesses. In 2022, many startups were expected to be sole proprietorships, but it was anticipated that approximately 5.6 million of these new small businesses would eventually hire employees. Furthermore, the survey indicated that 56% of 8,000 surveyed U.S. workers planned to increase their spending at small businesses over the next six months (Wish, 2022⁴). A report prepared by Emsi Burning Glass (now known as Lightcast) for NECC in August 2022 highlighted the significance of this specific industry in Massachusetts. According to the report, 74% of job openings in the state were related to this industry, underscoring its importance in the regional job market (2022⁵).

NECC expects that small business owners will leverage the optimism and expansion plans observed in the Bank of America survey to pursue growth opportunities, secure funding, and prepare for potential economic challenges. Individuals considering entrepreneurship can take advantage of the favorable conditions and support for startups, as highlighted in the Intuit survey, and explore business opportunities. Individuals seeking employment in Massachusetts may consider the industry highlighted in the Emsi Burning Glass report as a potential area for job opportunities and skill development. These findings suggest a positive outlook for small businesses and

³ Morris, C. (2021, December 20). *The small business economy is set to soar in 2022*. Nasdaq. www.nasdaq.com/articles/the-small-business-economy-is-set-to-soar-in-2022.

⁴ Wish, M. (2022, July 25). *Small business growth expected to boom despite signs of a slowing economy in 2022 and 2023*. Accesswire. <https://www.accesswire.com/709512/small-business-growth-expected-to-boom-despite-signs-of-a-slowing-economy-in-2022-and-2023>

⁵ Emsi Burning Glass. (2022, July). *Northern Essex Community College: program demand gap analysis: economic overview and review of academic programs*.

entrepreneurs in the US, with opportunities for growth, funding, and resilience in the face of economic challenges.

According to a 2020 report on regional workforce needs in Massachusetts, the top regional industry and occupational priorities in the northeast include Advanced Manufacturing; Health Care and Social Assistance; and Professional, Scientific & Technical/IT (Farkas, 2020⁶). The proposed Entrepreneurial Business degree program at NECC is intentionally designed to foster a sense of innovation in the business world, applicable across this variety of industries and career fields.

Duplication

NECC found that Bunker Hill Community College offers an Entrepreneurship Option to its AA in Business Transfer⁷ program. NECC reports that the BHCC concentration's focus is on starting and managing a business. The NECC expects that students in the proposed program will apply course learning to an entrepreneurial mindset for innovation that can be applied to self-employment opportunities and to a career in any industry.

Innovative Approaches to Teaching and Learning

NECC plans that the proposed program will provide students with an internship as an optional program elective; and that courses will be offered in multiple modalities including a 7-week online format. In addition, it is planned that several required business courses will provide students with an International Virtual Exchange⁸ experience.

⁶ Farkas, P. (2020). *Northeast regional labor market blueprint update*. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/northeast-regional-final-report/download>

⁷ https://catalog.bhcc.edu/preview_program.php?poid=48

⁸ Virtual exchange (VE), including one of its most comprehensive forms, collaborative online international learning (COIL), provides students with affordable opportunities to gain global competencies within their coursework wherever they are. It links together students and classrooms around the world through co-taught multicultural and blended online course work, bridging the physical distance between students through technological means. Retrieved 11/18/23 <https://www.aacu.org/initiatives.virtual-exchange-collaborative-online-international-learning>

B. ALIGNMENT WITH CAMPUS STRATEGIC PLAN AND MISSION

NECC reports that the business program has the second largest number of students enrolled in the college and that currently several variations exist within the program. NECC also describes that the current strategic plan identifies goals that align with the proposed program, specifically the goal to develop new degree programs and expand course offerings that are aligned with workforce demand, student interest, and community needs. Thus, expansion of the business pathway at NECC, to offer the proposed Entrepreneurial Business program is well aligned with the campus plan, industry needs and student interest.

LOI Program Goals and Objectives (Form B)

The goals of the proposed program are to accomplish the following: create an associate degree program that provides students with the opportunity to explore the more specialized and in-demand field of entrepreneurial business; create a degree program with transfer opportunities enabling students to enter at the junior level at a four-year institution; contribute to the growing demand for entrepreneurial innovation in the surrounding communities of the Merrimack Valley; and provide students with opportunities to develop professional experience in different areas of business ownership such as logistics, operations, sales, marketing, accounting.

C. ALIGNMENT WITH OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL OBJECTIVES OF INSTITUTION

Enrollment Projections (Form C)

Operational and financial projections for the A.S. in Entrepreneurial Business, including enrollment projections, are included (Form C). While NECC expects to see some students switching from other business programs initially, it is anticipated that the Entrepreneurial Business degree will draw a new population of students targeting existing and potential entrepreneurs within the local communities.

*Resources and Financial Statement of Estimated Net Impact on Institution
(Form D, Appendices)*

Resources needed for this new program are outlined in Form D. The most significant resources expected include a full-time faculty position in business serving two programs and marketing resources for the programs. The new faculty position is already budgeted in NECC's FY24 budget, although the position will not be filled until Fall, 2024.

STAFF REVIEW AND VALIDATION

Staff thoroughly reviewed the **LOI** proposing full degree-granting authority for the **Associate in Science in Entrepreneurial Business** submitted by **Northern Essex Community College**. Staff validate that the **LOI** includes all data required by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. Staff recommendation is for BHE authorization for the Commissioner to review the program pursuant to the Fast-Track review protocol.

Form A1: LOI AS Entrepreneurial Business Program Curriculum Outline

Article I. Required (Core) Courses in the Major (Total # courses required = 13)		
<i>Course Number</i>	Course Title	Credit Hours
ACC101	Introduction to Accounting I	3
ACC102	Introduction to Accounting II	3
BUS101	Introduction to Business	3
BUS102	Introduction to Entrepreneurship	3
BUS202	Entrepreneurship and Innovation	3
BUS211	Business Law	3
CIS110	Computer Application	3
COM111	Public Speaking	3
ECO201	Microeconomics I	3
ENG101	English Composition I	3
ENG102	English Composition II	3
MKT210	Principles of Marketing	3
PSY105	Organizational Behavior	3
	Sub -total Required Credits	39
Article II. Elective Courses (Total # courses required = 7)		
BUS elective/COP110 internship	Business Elective and/or Internship	3
Humanities		3
Humanities		3
Mathematics		3-4
Mathematics		4
Science		4

Science		4
	Sub -total Elective Credits	24-25
Distribution of General Education Requirements		# of Gen Ed Credits
Arts and Humanities, including Literature and Foreign Languages		6
Mathematics and the Natural and Physical Sciences		7-8
Social Sciences		8
Sub-total General Education Credits		21-22
Curriculum Summary		
Total number of courses required for the degree		20
Total credit hours required for degree		63
Prerequisite, Concentration or Other Requirements:		

Form B: LOI Goals and Objectives

Goal	Measurable Objective	Strategy for Achievement	Timetable
Create an associate degree program that allows students to explore more specialized and in demand field of entrepreneurial business.	Matriculated students will be able to navigate easily between the different business programs.	The pathways amongst the business programs will allow for clear pathways that combine general education courses and specific entry-level marketing courses giving students a glimpse of the different specializations in the digital marketing field.	Ongoing: The specialized advising at the Academic Center will provide students with focused attention. The periodic review of the program and course level objectives will allow for the program to grow with the advancement in the discipline.
Create a degree program with transfer opportunities allowing students to enter at junior level at a four-year institution	Students will fulfill all the requirements of the program specified in the program pathway.	The program was developed to ensure alignment to the Mass Transfer General Education Foundation courses.	Ongoing: The business faculty and business advisors ensure that students follow pathways and benefit from transfer articulations.
Contribute to the growing demand for entrepreneurial innovation in the surrounding communities of the Merrimack Valley.	Students will transfer to corresponding Business Administration programs at four-year colleges and/or participate in entrepreneurial activities post-graduation.	Create educational programming outside coursework to familiarize students with the field in form of presentations, experiential learning, and exposure to career pathways of the field	Ongoing: This programming will occur in the Academic Center with support of the Business faculty and community members.
Provide students opportunities to develop professional experience in different areas of business ownership	Students will enroll in the internship course to provide experiential learning in the discipline	Use the existing internship course which allows students to build their experience and resumes towards their desired specialization.	Students may enroll in the internship course in their second year of the program, after gaining foundational knowledge in first year courses.

such as logistics, operations, sales, marketing, accounting.			
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Form C: LOI Program Enrollment

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
New Full-Time	10	10	15	15	20
Continuing Full-Time	N/A	10	10	15	15
New Part-Time	10	15	20	25	25
Continuing Part-Time	N/A	10	25	45	60
Totals	20	45	70	100	120

Form D: LOI Program Budget

One-time/ Start-up Costs		Annual Enrollment				
	Cost Categories	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	Full-time Faculty <i>(Salary & Fringe)</i> <i>*Position will be split between two new business programs</i>	\$37,000*	\$37,740	\$38,495	\$39,265	\$40, 500
	Part Time/Adjunct Faculty <i>(Salary & Fringe)</i>					
	Staff					
	General Administrative Costs					
	Instructional Materials, Library Acquisitions					
	Facilities/Space/Equipment					
	Field & Clinical Resources					
	Marketing	\$3000	\$3,000	\$2,000	\$750	\$750
	Other (Specify)					

One Time/Start-Up Support			Annual Income			
	Revenue Sources	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	Grants					
	Tuition	11,250	24,375	35,625	48,750	58,125
	Fees	102,550	225,450	334,625	464,600	561,075
	Departmental					
	Reallocated Funds					
	Other (specify)					
	TOTALS	113800	249,825	370,250	469,475	619,200