

May 2, 2002

MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Dalton B. Floyd, Jr., Chairman, and Members, Commission on Higher Education

From: Ms. Dianne Chinnes, Chairman, Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

Consideration of Initial License Request
Beacon College and Graduate School, Columbus, GA, at Spartanburg
A.A., B.A., and M.A. in Biblical Studies, M.A. in Practical Ministry, M. Div.

Summary

Beacon College and Graduate School requests approval of an initial license to offer programs leading to the Associate in Arts, Bachelor of Arts, and Master of Arts degrees in Biblical Studies, the Master of Arts degree in Practical Ministry, and the Master of Divinity degree. The licensure application also included programs leading to the B.B.A. and B.A. in Psychology. The officials of the institution subsequently decided to defer its request for approval of those programs until delivery and staffing issues identified by the staff are resolved.

The statute under which the Commission licenses nonpublic postsecondary institutes includes an exemption for institutions whose sole purpose is religious or theological training. Because Beacon College and Graduate School desires to offer programs leading to academic degrees, it falls under the licensing authority of the Commission.

Beacon College and Graduate School is a non-profit, private, co-educational institution accredited by the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS). TRACS is recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE) and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as a national accrediting agency for Christian postsecondary institutions that offer certificates, diplomas, associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degrees, including distance learning. Beacon was founded in 1975 and gained approval to award graduate degrees in 2000. The Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission has licensed Beacon since 1997.

Beacon and Evangel Cathedral in Spartanburg have signed an agreement under which Evangel will serve as a training center at which students may complete up to 50 percent of their program requirements. The courses will be completed live on-site in Spartanburg or by distance education. Distance delivery will be live synchronous, semi-synchronous, or in archived video format. Beacon officials project that streaming video will be available by the 2002 fall semester. Beacon anticipates enrollment of 10 FTE undergraduate and 15 FTE graduate students during the first academic year. The administration expects most of those enrollments to come from Evangel Cathedral and other churches in the Greenville-Spartanburg area. The programs for which initial licensure is sought equip students for service within professional ministry. However, students will have the opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge that will allow them to serve in leadership capacities in secular vocations such as business.

An in-state teaching site director will function as the local administrator. He or she is responsible for securing adequate facilities, arranging logistics for visiting faculty, advising students concerning schedules, maintaining student records, generating financial reports, recruiting qualified faculty, and advertising. Financial aid for off-campus students will be handled through the financial aid office at the main campus.

The facilities at Evangel Cathedral include five adult education classrooms and common areas to which the students will have access including vending, kitchen and eating area. Evangel is constructing an educational/office building that is scheduled for completion in late 2002 at which time the Beacon College classes will be moved to the new facility.

In addition to local libraries, off-campus students have access to a variety of resources for research and reference. The Beacon library has holdings in excess of 22,000 volumes at the present time. The institution employs a full-time head librarian with a M.L.S. and a full-time library assistant who is in charge of supporting the library needs of all distance education and off-site teaching center students and faculty members. Beacon is an associate member of the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and subscribes to the On-Line Library Center (OCLC). Through the membership of Beacon in the Georgia Library Cooperative (GOLD) and Georgia Library Learning Online (GALILEO), students have full access to materials including interlibrary loans.

Terms are typical 16-week semesters. Some courses will be offered in an accelerated one-month format. General education courses will usually be offered in the traditional schedule over the 16-week term.

Undergraduate Programs

Admission requirements include a high school diploma or GED; three letters of recommendation; SAT or ACT scores; and a Bible content exam. If the verbal SAT is

below 430 (18 ACT English) or math SAT is below 400 math (16 ACT math), the institution requires additional testing to determine remediation needs. Students enrolling with a GPA of 1.5 through 2.0 may be admitted conditionally, with their course loads limited to six credit hours. A minimum GPA of 2.0 must be maintained for two semesters to continue the program.

Students may transfer credit for courses in which the student has made a grade of “C” or better and that are equivalent to courses in the Beacon program. Beacon does not award credit based on prior ministerial, career, or other life experience. Eighteen semester hours of credit may be awarded for prior learning assessed through Council on the Assessment of Experiential Learning (CAEL) standards. Credit for military experience is limited to 12 semester hours. Students may gain up to 15 credit hours toward an associate’s degree or 30 credit hours toward a bachelor’s degree through the College Level Examination Program (CLEP). Beacon also offers credit by challenge exam in Biblical or professional studies. Students must complete 15 credit hours for the A.A. and 30 credit hours for the B.A. at Beacon.

Students may complete the program leading to the associate’s degree in a minimum of two years and a maximum of five years, and the bachelor’s degree program in a minimum of four years and a maximum of 10 years with a minimum G.P.A. of 2.0. The program leading to the A.A. in Biblical Studies requires a total of 66 semester hours. The curriculum consists of 36 semester hours in general education, 21 hours in Biblical studies, and nine hours in professional studies. The program leading to the B.A. in Biblical studies requires a total of 132 semester hours. The curriculum consists of 36 hours in general education, 51 hours in Biblical Studies, 30 hours in professional studies, and 15 hours in electives.

The undergraduate instructors at Beacon have accredited graduate degrees in their teaching fields or a master’s degree with 18 hours in the teaching area of instruction. Faculty for the in-state site will be provided through the standing faculty of the College and through adjunct faculty.

Undergraduate tuition is \$125 per semester credit hour.

Graduate Programs

Graduate students must complete their programs within five years from beginning the first graduate course and must earn a grade point average of 2.5 or higher. Students must retake any course in which they receive a grade lower than C-. A student may not miss more than 25 percent of class time in any given course.

Graduate tuition is \$140 per semester credit hour.

Master of Arts

The admission requirements for the programs leading to the Master of Arts degree are a B.A., B.S., or equivalent bachelor's degree from an accredited institution; GRE, MAT, GMAT, or NTE scores with a minimum score in the 40th percentile within the last five years; a Bible placement exam; and three letters of recommendation. Students who hold a degree from a non-accredited institution may be admitted conditionally. A student may transfer into the program up to nine semester hours from accredited institutions.

All graduate instructors have accredited doctorates in their teaching fields or a related doctorate with a master's degree or its equivalent (36 hours of graduate work or more) in the assigned area of teaching responsibility.

Students select one of the following curricula tracks:

1) M.A. in Biblical Studies	Old Testament	12 hours
	New Testament	12 hours
	Theology	9 hours
	Biblical Languages	6 hours
	Practical Ministry	<u>3 hours</u>
		42 total
2) M.A. in Practical Ministry Pastoral Ministry	Biblical/Theological/Research	15 hours
	Practical Ministry	<u>27 hours</u>
		42 total
3) M.A. in Practical Ministry Counseling Ministry ¹	Biblical/Theological/Research	12 hours
	Practical Ministry/Counseling	<u>27 hours</u>
		42 total

Master of Divinity

The admission requirements for the programs leading to the Master of Divinity degree are a M.A. degree or its equivalent in religion, Biblical studies, ministry, or a related field from an accredited institution; three letters of recommendation; a minimum of 2.5 GPA on previous graduate work; and GRE, MAT, GMAT, or NTE scores with a minimum score in the 40th percentile within the last five years. Students who hold a graduate degree from a non-accredited institution may be admitted conditionally. Transfer credit is limited to 42 semester hours with a grade of "B" or above. Students select one of the following curricula tracks:

¹ The catalog includes the appropriate disclosure that this program is for the minister or lay-worker in counseling ministry within the church setting. It is not a professional counseling track program nor is it designed to satisfy the requirements for state and/or national licensure in counseling or related fields.

1) Master of Divinity Balanced Track		
	Bible/Theology	30 hours
	Biblical Languages	12 hours
	History	6 hours
	Missions	9 hours
	Practical Ministries, Research and Counseling	18 hours
	Electives	<u>15 hours</u>
		90 total
2) Master of Divinity with M.A. in Biblical Studies		
	Old Testament	12 hours
	New Testament	12 hours
	Theology	18 hours
	Biblical Languages	12 hours
	Church History	6 hours
	Missions	9 hours
	Practical Ministries	15 hours
	Electives	<u>12 hours</u>
		96 total
3) Master of Divinity with M.A. in Practical Ministry; Pastoral Ministry		
	Biblical/Theological	39 hours
	Practical Ministry and Ministerial Counseling	30 hours
	Biblical Languages	12 hours
	Electives	<u>15 hours</u>
		96 total
4) Master of Divinity with M.A. in Practical Ministry, Counseling Ministry ²		
	Biblical/Theological	39 hours
	Practical Ministry and Counseling Ministry	30 hours
	Biblical Languages	12 hours
	Electives	<u>15 hours</u>
		96 total

Recommendation

The Committee recommends that the Commission approve initial licensure for five years of Beacon College and Graduate School to offer in Spartanburg the programs leading to the A.A., B.A., and M.A. degrees in Biblical Studies, M.A. degree in Practical Ministry, and M.Div. degree.

² The catalog includes the appropriate disclosure that this program is for the minister or lay-worker in counseling ministry within the church setting. It is not a professional counseling track program nor is it designed to satisfy the requirements for state and/or national licensure in counseling or related fields.