



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0023

JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI
GOVERNOR

SUSAN A. GENDRON
COMMISSIONER

EXHIBIT: #VI.A.

TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Susan A. Gendron, Commissioner*

DATE: November 18, 2009

SUBJECT: Consideration of the Review Team Report Concerning the Application from Maine Media College for Reaffirmation of its Master of Fine Arts Degree as Required by Enactment of LD 318 during the 124th Legislature, First Regular Session

BACKGROUND: With enactment P&SL 1995, Chapter 68, S.P. 682 – L.D. 1747, *An Act to Authorize the Maine Photographic Workshops to Grant Degrees* authorized Rockport College, formerly known as Maine Photographic Workshops, located in the Town of Rockport, County of Knox to confer the Associate in Arts and the Master of Fine Arts degrees. Legislative authorization was granted during the 117th Maine Legislature, second regular session, 1996 with such authorization becoming effective July 4, 1996.

20-A MRSA, Chapter 409, §10712, requires that the State Board of Education terminate the authority of an educational institution to confer degrees when any of the following has occurred: 1) discontinuance of instruction; 2) sale of stock; 3) sale or lease of assets; and/or 4) merger, consolidation, or reorganization. The Department of Education was advised, March 6, 2007, that, on March 3, 2007, the Maine Media Workshops (MMW), a not-for-profit corporation, acquired from Mr. David Lyman the working assets of the Maine Photographic Workshops (MPW), the International Film and Television Workshops, and Rockport College. This acquisition involved the transfer of all of the College's voting stock.

Given the transfer of the College's voting stock, during its April 11, 2007 meeting, the Maine State Board of Education voted to terminate the degree-granting authority of Rockport College to confer degrees under the ownership of the Maine Photographic Workshops. The new owner secured Articles of Incorporation through the Office of the Secretary of State, retained the Rockport College name, programming, and facilities and sought temporary approval from the State Board to confer degrees under the name of Rockport College.

Title 20-A MRSA, Chapter 409, § 10703 provides that the State Board may grant an applicant use of the term "college" in its name until the earlier of: the expiration of the academic year; or the applicant is authorized by the Legislature to grant degrees in accordance with §10704. §10703 also provides that the State Board may extend or renew temporary approval for not more than two years.

Through the vehicle of a letter to Commissioner Gendron, dated March 6, 2007, the owners of the Maine Media Workshops, d.b.a. as the Maine Photographic Workshops requested that the State Board of Education grant temporary approval, permitting the use of the name Rockport College. Because the Maine Media Workshops would need to be granted authority to confer degrees under an Act of the Legislature, the period of temporary approval being sought was for the next six months of the academic year 2006-2007 and for the academic year 2007-2008. It was felt that this action would permit the acquisition of Legislative authority, during the second session of the 123rd Legislature, to confer the Associate of Arts and the Master of Fine Arts degrees as Rockport College, under the ownership of the Maine Media Workshops.

Legislative authority was not sought during the second session of the 123rd Legislature and the State Board's grant of temporary approval lapsed in June, 2008. In June and July 2008 the Department was informed that the Rockport College Board of Trustees was exploring the feasibility of a name change; the name Rockport College was not seen as reflecting the primary mission and work of the institution. The College's Board subsequently voted to change the name from Rockport College to Maine Media College. College administration was advised that the authority to confer academic degrees had lapsed and that it would be necessary to seek and secure Legislative degree-granting authority, under new ownership and under a new name, as soon as possible.

LD 318, *An Act Regarding Rockport College (Emergency)*, was introduced and enacted during the 124th Legislature, first regular session. With emergency designation, the act became effective on the date of its signing. The act acknowledges the name change from Rockport College to Maine Media College and authorizes Maine Media College to confer the degree of Master of Fine Arts through June 30, 2010. The Act required that, prior to June 30, 2010, the College undergo a reassessment of the Master of Fine Arts degree through the vehicle of a program review team utilizing the State Board's degree-granting standards as found in 20-A, Chapter 170, *Standards For Evaluating Requests For Degree-Granting Authorizations And For Out-Of-State Postsecondary Institutions Seeking To Offer Academic Credit Courses/Programs In Maine*. The Board approved Review Team conducted the on-site visit on August 12, 2009. Review Team's report of findings has been compiled for receipt by the State Board of Education during its October 14, 2009 meeting. Consideration of this matter will be an agenda item for the Board's November 11, 2009 meeting. With favorable Board action, a memorandum of transmittal to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs will be compiled for Joint Standing Committee deliberation and potential Legislative action during the 124th Legislature, second regular session.

RECOMMENDATION: That the State Board of Education accept the Maine Media College Review Team report of findings and recommend to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural affairs, that Maine Media College, located in Rockport, Maine, be granted continuing authorization to award the Master of Fine Arts degree.

*Prepared by Harry Osgood,
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