



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

JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI
GOVERNOR

SUSAN A. GENDRON
COMMISSIONER

EXHIBIT: XI.B.

TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Susan A. Gendron, Commissioner*

DATE: October 14, 2009

SUBJECT: Consideration of Request from the New England School of Communications (NESCOM) to Rename the Board Approved Bachelor of Science in Communications Degree to Reflect Actual Practice and to Comply With National Accrediting Agency Requirements

BACKGROUND: 20-A MRSA, § 10704 provides that any educational institution may confer certain degrees if it has been granted initial authority by an Act of the Legislature. The New England School of Communications (NESCOM), a corporation organized and existing under the laws of this State, was initially authorized by the Maine Legislature to confer the Associate of Science degree in 1993. Subsequently, the School was authorized by the Maine State Board of Education to award the Bachelor of Science in Communications degree in 2000. Since State Board authorization NESCOM has awarded the Bachelor of Science in Communications degree with either a Communications Technology or a Media Studies concentration.

Subsequently, NESCOM applied for and was granted national accreditation by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACCSCT) – one of the programmatic accrediting agencies recognized by the US Secretary of Education. In the process of seeking renewal of accreditation, ACCSCT has notified NESCOM that it considers the Bachelor of Science in Communications degree, by title, to be too broad to be meaningful in the marketplace given the changing demands and requirements of the communications field. Instead, ACCSCT is requiring NESCOM to delineate the degree to be awarded into its separate foci. The accrediting agency's preference is to split the Board authorized Bachelor of Science in Communications degree into two (2) degrees: Bachelor of Science in Communications Technology and the Bachelor of Science in Media Studies. The reason for doing so is to better delineate the areas of proficiency and the fields of study most recognizable by potential employers.

This dilemma was recognized by NESCOM officials at least five (5) years ago. Since then, in practice, NESCOM students have been given the choice to opt for a Bachelor of Science in Communications with a concentration in Communications Technology or in Media Studies. Changing the name of the degree to reflect this practice would bring clarity to the respective fields of study as well as enhance a better understanding as to graduates' skills, knowledge and abilities.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the State Board of Education accept the NESCOM request to rename the Board approved Bachelor of Science in Communications degree and permit NESCOM, in addition to its prior authorization to confer the Associate of Science degree, to henceforth award either the Bachelor of Science in Communications Technology degree or the Bachelor of Science in Media Studies degree.

*Prepared by Harry Osgood
Higher Education Specialist