

## STAFF ANALYSIS

### ITEM A: Approval of Application Package

#### *For Committee Action*

#### **Summary:**

The committee will consider approval of an application package, which may include (but is not limited to) application instructions and items, information about the evaluation process, information about the award selection process, and information about award levels.

#### **Background:**

Pursuant to provisions of the Budget Act of 2014, campuses seeking an award are required to submit an application to the Director of Finance no later than January 9, 2015.

A draft form of application instructions was considered at the September 16, 2014, meeting. At that meeting, committee members and members of the public offered substantive comments and proposed changes to the draft. Since then, staff has revised the draft application package based on direction from the committee at that meeting. The major revisions include:

- *Clarification on Award Selection:* The revised application package clarifies that the application is not a grant proposal to seek funding for future activities and that, instead, the program will reward institutions that are already taking actions to improve higher education. Applicants will not specify in their applications how they would use award funds.
- *Guidance Regarding Application Evaluation:* The revised application package specifies that staff will provide the committee with a ranking of the applications and with recommended award amounts based on the relative strengths of the applications. The following weights are specified for evaluating applicants' narrative responses:
  - *Context section:* 10 percent.
  - *Innovations section:* 40 percent.
  - *Sustainability section:* 35 percent.
  - *Evaluation section:* 15 percent.

Staff recommendations will be advisory and committee members will have access to all applications and will make final decisions on awardees and award amounts.

- *Clarification on Use of Award Funds:* The revised application package reiterates that the innovation awards function like prizes and that, after the committee has completed the award selection process and determined award amounts, the winners will be asked to submit a report indicating how they will use those funds. The committee expects that funds will be used for appropriate, one-time purposes that are related to the priorities of the Awards for Innovation in Higher Education program.

- *Emphasis on Equity:* The revised application package emphasizes the committee’s interest in innovations to improve outcomes for student groups that are underrepresented in higher education. Item 1 now requires applicants to describe how their goals will impact student groups who are underrepresented in higher education; Item 2 requires applicants to provide a statistical profile of the students they serve disaggregated by various student groups; a new Item 7 requires applicants to identify potential adverse effects on student groups that are underrepresented in higher education; and Item 12 requires applicants to set goals for these student groups.
- *Changes to Application Items:* The following application items were revised:
  - Item 3, which asks applicants to describe key policies, practices, and/or systems in place prior to January 10, 2014, is now included in the Innovations section, rather than the Context section.
  - Item 6 is a new item that asks applicants to describe how the changes described in their applications will impact the average cost to award a bachelor’s degree. This narrative had been embedded in Item 4 when the draft application package was presented at the previous meeting.
  - Item 7 is a new item that asks applicants to describe any risks or tradeoffs involved in the changes they are implementing and the way in which they will monitor and mitigate them.
- *New Appendix for Examples of Innovations:* The revised application package includes a new appendix for a list of examples of innovations that applicants may wish to highlight. This list was previously included in the Introduction section. This list is not exhaustive or organized in order of priority and includes a specific reference to the strategy of offering larger online courses. The appendix also specifies that the committee has expressed an interest in applicants who are using technology in creative ways.

Two additional documents are also available: (1) the revised draft application package being considered by the committee and (2) a document that tracks all the changes to the draft application package that was considered at the September 16, 2014, meeting.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Staff recommends the following action:

1. Approve the application package, including the application instructions and items, information about the evaluation process, information about the award selection process, and information about award levels. Furthermore, authorize staff to take any necessary actions or make technical edits or corrections to the application package consistent with the committee’s action.