**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION**

**COMMITTEE**: Assessment and Accountability **NO**.: AAC 06-13

**COMMITTEE DATE**: June 8, 2006

**BOARD DATE**: June 15, 2006

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**MOVED**: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the request of **Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology** to award the **Associate in Science in Opticianry**.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 69, Section 30 et seq.

Contact: Aundrea Kelley, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Policy

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

June 2006

Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology

Associate in Science in Opticianry

## INTENT

Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology (BFIT) filed a petition in August 2005 seeking approval to grant associate in science degrees in opticianry, engineering, marine technology, and digital photography and imaging. Upon consideration of the Visiting Committee's general finding that the proposed opticianry program was best positioned in terms of meeting the Board of Higher Education's standards, BFIT refiled articles for the Associate in Science in Opticianry only.

The proposed opticianry program falls within BFIT's mission of educating students for technical careers and lifelong learning by offering a degree consisting of applied skills and liberal studies courses. The purpose of the proposed program is to prepare students for work at optician businesses, medical offices, and corporate eye care centers as dispensing opticians using modern technology to cut lenses and fit clients with eyeglasses and contact lenses. The proposed program aligns itself with The Opticians Association of America's recommendation that opticians should be trained at a minimum of the associate degree level. Upon graduation, student will be prepared to achieve passing scores on the National Opticians Competency Exam, National Certified Contact Lens Exam, and the Massachusetts State Practical Exam.

## INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology is located in Boston, Massachusetts, and offers a range of technical programs in industrial and engineering technologies, mostly at the associate's level. BFIT offers one Bachelor of Science degree, eight associate's degrees, and four certificate programs. BFIT serves a culturally diverse student body and enrolled 318 full-time students and 22 part-time students in the 2004-05 academic year.

Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology traces its origins to a codicil to the will of Benjamin Franklin under which a gift of 1,000 pounds sterling was bequeathed to the "inhabitants of the Town of Boston" to be loaned at interest to young and needy apprentices. In 1908, a special act of the Massachusetts General Court established the Franklin Foundation as the exclusive agent of the City of Boston in administering this gift and managing its industrial school, then called Franklin Union. The school opened its doors on September 21, 1908, offering evening courses in science and technology.

Chapter 77 of the Acts of 1953 as amended by Chapter 119 of the Acts of 1957 provides Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology with authority to award associate's,

bachelor's, and master's degrees in both science and engineering; however, BFIT's charter carries the proviso that no vote of degree-granting powers by its governing board shall be effective until the proposed program is reviewed by and receives the approval of the Board of Collegiate Authority (a statutory predecessor body to the Board of Higher Education). In 1957, the institution received approval to grant the Associate in Engineering degree; in 1983, approval was given to award the Associate in Science in Automotive Technology degree; and in 1995, the Institute was authorized to award the Bachelor of Science in Automotive Technology.

Michael Taylor assumed the position of President of Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology in July 2005. Since this time, a number of significant changes have been initiated affecting the policies and operations of the institution. For example, efforts are underway to engage in systematic academic planning and assessment; to establish more effective financial management systems and procedures; and to increase programmatic offerings.

Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology currently seeks authority to grant the Associate in Science in Opticianry degree.

## ACADEMIC AND RELATED MATTERS

The proposed opticianry program will be a two-year, day program designed to prepare students for work as dispensing opticians. The curriculum will include courses in math, science, humanities, and communication as well as hands-on and theory-based courses in opticianry. The proposed program will also emphasize experiential learning through placement at work sites such as Harvard Vanguard, Lenscrafters, 4 Eyes, Cambridge Eye, and Parelli Optical.

A partnership has been established with the Opticians Association of Massachusetts (OAM) that contributes to curriculum development, faculty recruiting, access to equipment, program marketing, sponsorship of student interns, employment opportunities for graduates and funding of scholarships for students with financial need. The partnership also will assist in building relationships with local opticians, optometrists and ophthalmologists and with the New England College of Optometry. The OAM has indicated in a memorandum of understanding that it is committed to continued support of the program beyond the start up phase.

*Admission Requirements*

All applicants must complete an application form; submit the required $25 processing fee ($50 for international students); and send official high school or secondary school records/transcripts or official GED scores. Massachusetts students who graduate in 2003 and after are required to submit proof that they have passed MCAS. Students who have not passed MCAS can take BFIT's Accuplacer Test to determine if they have an ability-to-benefit.

Applicants are encouraged, but not required to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Applicants who are native speakers of other languages must demonstrate English

proficiency for entrance. High school graduates will be required to have 4 years of high school English and 3 years of math.

*Projected Enrollments*

BFIT estimates that it will enroll 10-20 students in the first year of program operation and 20-30 students in the second and third years.

Tuition for the 2006-07 academic year will be $12,750 for associate degree programs. Per credit cost at BFIT is $531.

*Curriculum (Attachment A)*

The proposed curriculum will require a total of 69 credits with 24 being in the areas of the humanities (9), mathematics (6), natural sciences (3), and social sciences (6) and 37 credits in the area of opticianry, both hands-on and theory. Additionally, the proposed program will require 1 credit in freshman seminar, 1 credit in an externship in the summer after the freshman year, 3 credits in computer technology, and 3 credits in business management.

**RESOURCES**

*Human Resources*

The proposed program will be administered by a program chair under the direction of the Dean of the Faculty. The program chair will have administrative oversight and responsibility for matters of faculty selection and development, curriculum planning, course scheduling, and student progress. An industrial advisory committee, made up of faculty members as well as members of the Opticians Association of Massachusetts will meet regularly to advise the program faculty and make continuous assessment and improvement recommendations.

BFIT has hired a program chair who will hire two additional qualified adjunct faculty with experience in the field. The Opticians Association of Massachusetts will assist BFIT in identifying potential faculty members.

*Fiscal Resources*

BFIT stated its commitment to providing the funding required by the proposed program and estimates that the total expenses for the first year of operation to be approximately $144,000. Based upon enrollment projections, BFIT expects the proposed opticianry program to be self-supporting by its second year of operation.

*Library*

The Lufkin Memorial Library offers more than 14,500 volumes in paper and e-book formats, 80 print periodical subscriptions, and 14 electronic resources providing access to the full text of over 8,000 journals. The Library is a member of the Boston Regional Library System Consortium which guarantees students access to over 100 libraries located within the cities of Boston, Chelsea and Malden and is also a member of the New England Library and Information Network that provides interlibrary cooperation among the 500 member libraries.

Library resources in support of the proposed opticianry program will include resources to support classroom and laboratory work including trade journals and periodicals, access to specialized electronic databases, and reference and research resources. The Director of Library Services, in consultation with the program chair and faculty, will determine which resources should be purchased.

*Facilities and Equipment*

An appropriate space has been identified to house the laboratory and specialized equipment and materials. The Opticians Association of Massachusetts has assisted in the identification and reservation of equipment that will be used in the lab, and outreach is underway to industry to secure donations for other needed equipment. Beyond donations of equipment and material, BFIT expects to invest $15,000 to $30,000 to refurbish the space and pay for additional equipment.

Students will be expected to purchase an optical tool kit and a dispensing startup kit with a combined estimated cost of $950. Students will be able to include this as part of their total cost of attendance for financial aid packaging.

## EVALUATION

*Visiting Committee*

A visiting committee conducted an on-site review from December 4-7, 2005 of Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology's proposal to offer associate in science degrees in opticianry, engineering, marine technology, and digital photography and imaging. The following individuals served on the Committee: Richard Brandenburg (Chair), Professor Emeritus and former Dean of the School of Business Administration and of the Division of Engineering, Mathematics and Business Administration at the University of Vermont; Raymond Paul Dennis, Professor/Coordinator, Ophthalmic Design and Dispensing Program, Middlesex Community College, CT.; Lee Fearnside, Visiting Assistant Professor of Photography, College of the Holy Cross and Greenfield Community College; Fred J. Looft, Professor and Head, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Worcester Polytechnic Institute; Melissa Read, Dean for Curriculum and Assessment, Dean College; and Michael Swietzer, Marine Technology Department Chair, Skagit Valley College, WA. Prior to the visit, the committee examined the petition and supporting documentation submitted to the Board by the institution.

During the on-site visit, members of the Committee met with the President, Interim Dean of Faculty, Chief Operating Officer, members of the Board of Trustees including the Board Chair, Vice President of Corporate and External Relations, Dean of Students, Dean of Enrollment Services, Director of Financial Aid and Registrar, Director of Student Life, Director of Library Services, Director of Computing Services, academic Department and Program Chairpersons, faculty members including Chairs of faculty committees, prospective faculty members and a prospective program chairperson for the proposed opticianry program, students, and representatives from the Opticians Association of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Marine Trades Association.

*Findings*

The Visiting Committee's overall finding was that the four proposed associate in science degree programs initially submitted for approval—opticianry, engineering, marine technology, and digital photography and imaging—were in different stages of readiness in meeting the Board of Higher Education's standards. The Visiting Committee recommended that only the proposed opticianry program, with relatively minor changes, be approved by the Board of Higher Education. The Visiting Committee commended the current "revitalization" process currently underway at BFIT and suggested that "as new program initiatives are developed and current programs are revised, consideration should be given to ensuring that the Institute has the capacities and capabilities not just to change and start up programs but also to sustain high quality programs over time."

*Strengths*

The Visiting Committee found a number of significant institutional strengths at Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology including a strong commitment by faculty and staff to BFIT's mission and goals; regular and constructive communication and coordination among faculty and administration; and an effective student support system. The Visiting Committee also complimented BFIT's track record of success in organizing working relationships with industries such as the Pharmacy Tech Program's partnership arrangement with CVS.

In regard to the proposed opticianry program, the Visiting Committee commended BFIT's partnership with the Opticians Association of Massachusetts and the qualifications and experience of the newly-hired program chair. The Committee also predicted that because of BFIT's central location and the lack of local opticianry associate's programs, a large potential applicant pool should be available.

*Recommendations*

The Committee made a number of recommendations with respect to the proposed opticianry program in the areas of curriculum, faculty resources, and financial resources. Among the curricular recommendations, the Committee advised BFIT to consider adding a social science course and consolidating the externships into a single external practicum. The Committee also suggested that BFIT apply for membership in the National Federation of Opticianry Schools and review the Commission on Opticianry Accreditation requirements to ensure compliance at the time of application for

accreditation. Finally, the Committee suggested that BFIT consider a plan to develop evening continuing education opticianry courses.

More broadly, the Visiting Committee recognized that many important initiatives were taking place at BFIT and suggested that BFIT prepare a work plan that maps out the step-wise path to be followed over the next three years in developing and implementing assessment systems that are useful to the administration and faculty in managing education programs and gauging how overall performance compares to strategic objectives.

*Institutional Response*

BFIT amended the curriculum to include the changes suggested by the Visiting Committee. BFIT committed to joining the National Federation of Opticianry Schools upon approval of the proposed program by the Board of Higher Education and has already reviewed the Commission on Opticianry Accreditation requirements. BFIT will pursue accreditation with the COA upon graduation of its first class. Finally, BFIT will work with the Opticianry Association of Massachusetts to develop a continuing education component for the industry that will make for better utilization of the lab during the evening and weekends to provide needed professional development opportunities and meet state-mandated education requirements for the industry in Massachusetts and surrounding states.

BFIT responded that the BFIT community recognizes the need to continue to make improvements to meet its mission and will use the Visiting Committee's report to strengthen its position for its upcoming 2006 NEASC reaccreditation visit. BFIT intends to utilize both reports to inform and build upon its strategic plan over the next three to five years.

## PUBLIC HEARING

The required public hearing was held on Tuesday, May 16, 2006, at 10 a.m. in the Board of Higher Education's office. No comments were offered in opposition to the proposed program.

## STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION

After a thorough evaluation of all documentation submitted, staff is satisfied that the proposed Associate in Science in Opticianry meets the criteria set forth in 610 CMR 2.08(3) in the Degree-Granting Regulations for Independent Institutions of Higher Education accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Recommendation is for approval.

## Appendix A: Curriculum

| **First Semester** | | **19 Credits** |
|---|---|---|
| SK101 | Freshman Seminar | 1 Credit |
| EN130 | College Composition I | 3 Credits |
| CT100 | Computer Applications | 3 Credits |
| BI115 | Anatomy and Physiology of the Eye | 3 Credits |
| MA105 | Technical Math | 3 Credits |
| OP110 | Ophthalmic Optics I | 3 Credits |
| OP115 | Spectacle Finishing Lab I | 3 Credits |

| **Second Semester** | | **19 Credits** |
|---|---|---|
| EN140 | College Composition II | 3 Credits |
| MA107 | Optical Math | 3 Credits |
| SS115 | Intro to Psychology | 3 Credits |
| OP122 | Ophthalmic Design & Dispensing I | 3 Credits |
| OP123 | Ophthalmic Design & Dispensing I - Lab | 1 Credit |
| OP120 | Ophthalmic Optics II | 3 Credits |
| OP125 | Spectacle Finishing Lab II | 3 Credits |

| **Summer Semester** | | **3 Credits** |
|---|---|---|
| OP100 | Vision Care Clinical / Externship | 1 Credit |
| OP128 | Low Vision Dispensing & Mobility | 2 Credits |

| **Third Semester** | | **14 Credits** |
|---|---|---|
| OP232 | Ophthalmic Design & Dispensing II | 3 Credits |
| OP233 | Ophthalmic Design & Dispensing II - Lab | 1 Credit |
| OP230 | Contact Lens Theory I | 3 Credits |
| OP231 | Contact Lens Theory I - Lab | 1 Credits |
| OP235 | Spectacle Finishing Lab III | 3 Credits |
| SS125 | Intro to Sociology | 3 Credits |

| **Fourth Semester** | | **14 Credits** |
|---|---|---|
| OP240 | Contact Lens Theory II | 3 Credits |
| OP241 | Contact Lens Theory II - Lab | 1 Credit |
| OP244 | Ophthalmic Skills Lab I | 2 Credits |
| OP245 | Vision Assessment & Screening | 2 Credits |
| BS | Small Business Management | 3 Credits |
| HU213 | Ethics | 3 Credits |