

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Academic Affairs

NO.: AAC 18-37

COMMITTEE DATE: June 12, 2018

BOARD DATE: June 19, 2018

REVOCATION OF THE DEGREE GRANTING AUTHORITY OF WHEELLOCK COLLEGE

MOVED: The Board hereby revokes the legal authority of **Wheelock College** to operate and grant degrees in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts retroactive to May 31, 2018.

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

Contact: Patricia A. Marshall, Ph.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success
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Background

Wheelock College (Wheelock) is a private, non-profit college with a primary location in Boston, MA. Wheelock was founded in 1937 as the Wheelock School, which focused on training young women as nursery school, kindergarten, and elementary education teachers. It became Wheelock College in 1941, and changed its articles in 1952 to expand to admit men and offer other, non-education degree programs.

In June 2017, reports surfaced in the press that Wheelock was exploring discontinuing its undergraduate programs and selling campus property in order to stabilize and improve its financial situation. In response, BHE staff reached out to Wheelock to provide guidance on closure procedures and requirements. In late August 2017, Wheelock representatives informed the Department that Wheelock was entering into formal merger discussions with Boston University (BU). The proposed merger with BU would result in the creation of the Wheelock College of Education and Human Development at BU and the corresponding closure of Wheelock as a separate educational institution.

Projected financial losses propelled Wheelock to look for options that would allow it to continue to educate students in some fashion. It undertook a multi-month strategic planning process with its board of trustees and an outside consultant and determined that affiliation with a larger institution of higher education presented the best approach to preserving Wheelock's mission. Wheelock issued an RFP and selected BU as the respondent that would best continue Wheelock's identity and educational mission. The terms of the merger provided for many of Wheelock's programs to be moved to BU and/or merged with existing BU programs, such that all Wheelock credits would transfer to BU and the interruption for Wheelock students' education would be limited. The cost of attendance and housing for Wheelock students will remain at Wheelock levels, and financial aid packages were similarly honored. All tenured Wheelock faculty were offered employment at BU. For students whose programs did not align with programs at BU, Wheelock entered into transfer agreements with institutions that did offer those programs and worked on an individual basis with Wheelock students to assist with placement and transfer. The merger was finalized at midnight on June 1, 2018. At that time, Wheelock enrolled 596 students.

Throughout the closure process, Wheelock worked closely with BHE staff to ensure compliance with state requirements related to the closure of the College. The required Letter of Intent was submitted on October 11, 2017, and the final and complete Notice of Closure documentation was submitted to BHE staff on May 24, 2018. BHE staff has been working with Wheelock to finalize the closure plan since the submission of a first draft on December 8, 2017. All submissions have been deemed thorough and complete.

In compliance with M.G.L., c. 69, §30A and 610 CMR 2.10, a public hearing regarding the closure of Wheelock was held on May 30, 2018 at the Department of Higher Education, Room 1401, One Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board revoke the authority of Wheelock College to operate and grant degrees in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts retroactive to May 31, 2018.