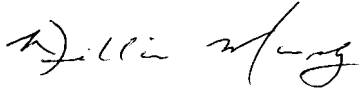


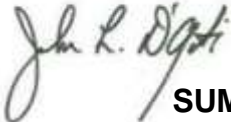



**TO:** Higher Education Committee

**FROM:** William P. Murphy 

**SUBJECT:** D'Youville College: Master Plan Amendment to Offer a Program Leading to an Associate in Arts (A.A.) in Liberal Arts and Sciences Studies

**DATE:** March 4, 2021

**AUTHORIZATION(S):**    
**SUMMARY**

### **Issue for Decision**

Should the Board of Regents approve a Master Plan Amendment authorizing D'Youville College to offer a program leading to an Associate in Arts (A.A.) in Liberal Arts and Sciences Studies?

### **Reason(s) for Consideration**

Required by State statute.

### **Proposed Handling**

This question will come before the Higher Education Committee at its March 2021 meeting, where it will be voted on and action taken. It will then come before the Full Board at its March 2021 meeting for final action.

### **Procedural History**

D'Youville College submitted a proposal to register a program in Liberal Arts and Sciences Studies leading to an Associate in Arts (A.A.) degree. A Master Plan Amendment is required because this would be the College's first program at the associate degree level. Pursuant to Section 137 of Chapter 82 of the Laws of 1995, the Department solicited input from degree-granting institutions in the Western New York region concerning the proposed Master Plan Amendment. Pursuant to that statute, upon the request of three degree-granting institutions, on January 13, 2021, the Board of Regents conducted a public hearing concerning the proposed Master Plan Amendment.

## **Background Information**

D'Youville College ("D'Youville" or "the College") is a Regents-chartered, independent college in the Western New York region. The College currently offers registered programs in a variety of disciplines that lead to degrees at the baccalaureate, masters and doctoral levels.

D'Youville submitted a proposal to register a program in Liberal Arts and Sciences Studies leading to an Associate in Arts (A.A.) degree. The College's description of the program (attached) states that the program would be targeted to a specific cohort of students who face "...barriers posed by limited English proficiency, insufficient academic preparation, financial hardship and lack of access to transportation." The Department completed an academic review of the proposed program and determined that it meets the standards for registration set forth in the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education.

The proposed program would be the College's first program at the associate degree level, therefore, a Master Plan Amendment, approved by the Board of Regents, is required in order for the Department to register the program. Section 137 of Chapter 82 of the Laws of 1995 requires that the Department ensure regional consultation and solicit comments from other higher education institutions in the region concerning proposed master plan amendments. The Board of Regents is required to conduct a public hearing concerning the proposed Master Plan Amendment if an affected institution requests such a hearing. Four Western New York region institutions initially objected to the proposed Master Plan Amendment and requested that the Board of Regents conduct a public hearing concerning D'Youville's proposed Master Plan Amendment.

Prior to conducting the required public hearing, the Department requested that D'Youville College engage with the institutions that objected to the proposal in an attempt to seek a resolution. That engagement did not result in a resolution. The Department then proposed a restricted/limited Master Plan Amendment that would permit D'Youville College to offer the specific A.A. program in Liberal Arts and Sciences Studies but would not permit the College to seek to register and offer additional associate degree programs without going through the Master Plan Amendment process again at that time. D'Youville College agreed to the restricted/limited Master Plan Amendment proposal, as did a fourth Western New York college that had originally objected to the proposal. That College then removed its objection and request for a public hearing concerning the D'Youville proposal. Trocaire College, SUNY Erie Community College, and SUNY Niagara Community College maintained their objections and their requests for a public hearing.

On January 13, 2021, the Board of Regents held the required public hearing, via Zoom Conferencing. Vice Chancellor T. Andrew Brown and Co-Chair of the Regents Higher Education Committee, Kathleen Cashin, served as the Regents Hearing Panel. Regent Catherine Collins, who represents the Judicial District on the Board of Regents and serves as Co-Chair of the Regents Higher Education Committee, also participated in the hearing. The table below identifies the individuals who provided written and oral

testimony, written testimony only, and a post-hearing submission, as well as a brief summary of their main points in support of or opposition to the application.

An audio and video recording of the public hearing and copies of the hearing record were made available to the Board.

<b>Written and Oral Testimony was Provided By:</b>	<b>Summary of Main Points</b>
<p>Lorrie Clemo, Ph.D. President, D'Youville College</p>	<p>The proposed A.A. in Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences Studies program provides an academic option to students who might not otherwise pursue higher education. The College already has partnerships with high schools that allow students to earn college credit. By the time they graduate from high school, they can be only one semester away from earning an associate degree from D'Youville if the College could award the degree. The A.A. degree is a foundation to further higher education and provides more general, introductory courses that help students explore their strengths and interests, especially high-needs students from vulnerable backgrounds and communities. The West Side of Buffalo has become the home to refugees who have settled in the area, and it makes sense that D'Youville is an "institution for these students to call home." While there are many colleges and universities in Western New York, there are few options that are tailored to the specific and unique needs of refugee students who face distinctive barriers and often drop out or fail due to situations beyond their control. The proposed program would be offered in a cohort model, allowing the students to form a strong community and feel comfortable in the college environment. Additional services and assistance, as well as financial aid that leaves them debt-free for the A.A. program, will be incentives to retention and success.</p>
<p>William D. Reuter Interim President, SUNY Erie Community College</p>	<p>Opposed. There is no need or demand for the proposed program. The proposed program would have a negative impact on SUNY Erie CC. There are multiple colleges in the area that offer associate degrees in liberal arts and sciences and are not only capable of meeting the existing need but have also experienced enrollment declines. Demographical data evidences a continued decline in high school graduates in the next few years, which will leave even more capacity at existing programs to serve the students targeted by the proposed program. SUNY Erie CC's tuition is even more affordable than D'Youville's and SUNY Erie CC participates in the same financial aid programs that D'Youville does. Erie CC has three campuses situated to serve the needs of students in the area. Erie CC provides transportation assistance and shuttle buses between campuses. Erie CC has various college preparatory programs for students who are not</p>

<b>Written and Oral Testimony was Provided By:</b>	<b>Summary of Main Points</b>
	ready for college-level coursework. Erie CC has a strong transfer relationship with area four-year institutions, including D'Youville. There would be a negative impact on area Community Colleges, as enrollment and revenue would decline, negatively impacting resources to other Erie CC programs.
Bassam M. Deeb, Ph.D. President, Trocaire College	Opposed. The proposal does not provide justification for why access to the potential students needs to be expanded. There are many existing A.A. programs in Liberal Arts at other area colleges already. Those institutions are well suited to work with the challenges faced by the students in the target communities. Other colleges, including Trocaire, are on major transportation lines and routinely enroll students from those areas, so transportation is not a significant barrier. Approval of this program will have a negative impact on other colleges in the area; loss of tuition could have grave consequences. Duplication of programs that already exist at other colleges would not promote value to the community or promote community partnerships. Approval of this Master Plan Amendment "opens the gates" for D'Youville to offer additional associate level programs, causing further harm to other colleges. No guarantee that completion of an Associates program at D'Youville will launch someone into the workforce more swiftly. Completion of an A.A. degree in Liberal Studies does not easily provide significantly higher earning potential. D'Youville has not met the threshold of demonstrating need for the program.
William Murabito, Ph.D. President SUNY Niagara Community College	Opposed. D'Youville's claim that the prospective students for the program are not well served by other higher education options is not true. College preparatory and access programs exist in the region, and Community Colleges are known for investment in offering services for underprepared students. Offering associate degree programs would change D'Youville's mission. Community Colleges have lower tuition than D'Youville, making them a more viable choice for low-income students. The claim that graduates of the proposed program would be prepared to enter the workforce more swiftly and with higher earning potential is unsubstantiated. Programs in liberal arts don't meet industry needs for trained workers in technology and finance. Provided proposed alternative solutions that D'Youville should undertake that would not negatively impact other colleges. Decreasing high school populations and enrollment competition in Western NY are already problematic. Don't need to create an over saturation of associate degree programs in liberal arts.

<b>Written and Oral Testimony was Provided By:</b>	<b>Summary of Main Points</b>
David Hills Associate Superintendent Buffalo Public School District (joined by Gregory Lodinsky, Principal of Leonardo da Vinci High School)	Supportive. Leonardo da Vinci H.S. is co-located on the campus of D'Youville College and is a racially and culturally diverse learning community on the Lower West Side of Buffalo. This would be a logical expansion of access to higher education at a college with a history in the community. High school students are already able to earn college credits by participating in courses at D'Youville but cannot currently earn an associate degree at D'Youville; this program would permit students who are familiar with and comfortable with the College to continue their education, earn a degree and transition into additional degree programs or the workforce.
Sr. Mary McCarrick Chief Operating Officer Diocese of Buffalo	Supportive. Immigrant and refugee students need nimble and affordable education. This often means flexible class schedules that accommodate jobs and family responsibilities, easily accessible locations, support services, including English as a new language, tutoring, and advisement in a cohort model. The proposed program was developed to meet the needs of students from diverse communities who are often first-generation, low-income students.
Gina Burkhardt President & CEO Buffalo Center for Arts & Technology	Supportive. The proposed program would serve a significant need of the youth in the community and eliminate barriers that prevent them from transitioning to and completing higher education, which can include limited resources, lack of transportation, unemployment, food insecurities, abuse, and violence.
Sarah Marino, PT, DPT D'Youville College Alumna	Supportive. D'Youville College provided her with a supportive, community environment with a diverse student body from all walks of life. Independent colleges should be able to offer students a full range of programs from associates through doctoral level programs to aid students in the transition from one level to another. Enabling students to move through their entire post-secondary education at one institution, in which they are familiar and comfortable, will support those students' success.
Albert D. DeCiccio, Ph.D. Coordinator, Mary G. Walsh Writing Ctr., Professor of English Salem State University (Mass.)	Supportive. The proposed program advances the College's mission to serve and care for new American families in the West Side of Buffalo. It will serve as a pathway to further study and to entry-level/mid-level career options. It is designed to expand access and educational opportunities to underserved high school graduates in the immediate neighborhood of the College, including several refugee groups.
Cameron Airhart Emeritus Professor of History and Retired Dean of Houghton College	Supportive. Was a consultant on the proposed D'Youville program and is a resident of the West Side of Buffalo. Supports the proposed program because of its unique ability to help West Side students. The student are high

<b>Written and Oral Testimony was Provided By:</b>	<b>Summary of Main Points</b>
	risk, and the design of the program as a cohort model with small classes, local transportation, tutoring, and books will “maximize perseverance” by the students, and the tuition structure and financial aid will allow them to finish the program without debt. The intentional design of the program for these students makes it different than other programs at other colleges where perseverance by these students is low.

<b>Written Testimony Only Was Submitted by:</b>	<b>Summary of Main Points</b>
Natalie Hoyos Buffalo West Side Resident	Supportive. There is a need for more accessible post-secondary educational opportunities in the West Side community. Increases in immigrant and refugee students bring the need for more specialized educational programming in the community. D’Youville College has a record of serving the community and is trusted by the community, which is important for first-generation U.S. college students.
Bishnu Waiba D’Youville College Student	Supportive. Sophomore at D’Youville College; immigrant student from Nepal. Wishes that the proposed A.A. program had been available to him, as it would have helped him academically and provided academic support, as well as exposing him to different fields of study before deciding what field of study to pursue.

<b>Joint Further Submission Subsequent to Public Hearing by:</b>	<b>Summary of Main Points</b>
<p>Bassam M. Deeb, Ph.D. President, Trocaire College</p> <p>William D. Reuter Interim President, SUNY Erie Community College</p> <p>William Murabito, Ph.D. President SUNY Niagara Community College</p>	<p>Opposed. They did not anticipate that D’Youville College would solicit members of the public to speak in favor of the proposal at the public hearing. They believe that some of the speakers did not “appropriately disclose their connection to D’Youville College” before or during their testimony. They did not have an opportunity at the hearing to address or refute comments made by other speakers. (Their responses to individual speaker’s comments is included in the written document which is part of the hearing record.) They do not believe that the “threshold of need” has been met for approval of this proposal.</p> <p>Despite the limited nature of the Master Plan Amendment, they believe that this proposal will be the beginning of a series of requests from D’Youville College for additional associate degree programs.</p>

The Regents Hearing Panel and Regent Collins will share their views on the issues and consideration that emerged from the hearing with the members of the Higher Education Committee, who will ultimately make a recommendation to the Full Board on this application.

**Related Regents Items**

N/A

**Recommendation**

The Department recommends that the Board of Regents adopt one of the following options:

Option 1

VOTED: That the Board of Regents disapprove a Master Plan Amendment authorizing D'Youville College to offer a program leading to the Associate in Arts (A.A.) degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences Studies; or

Option 2

VOTED: That the Board of Regents approve a Master Plan Amendment authorizing D'Youville College to offer a program leading to the Associate in Arts (A.A.) program in Liberal Arts and Sciences Studies and to award the degree to students who complete that program.

**Timetable for Implementation**

If the Board of Regents votes to adopt Option 1 (above), D'Youville College's application for a Master Plan Amendment will be permanently closed and the program will not be registered.

If the Board of Regents votes to adopt Option 2 (above), the Department will register the Associate in Arts (A.A.) program to D'Youville College.

Attachment

## ABSTRACT

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D'Youville College proposes its first associate degree, an Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts & Sciences Studies, to expand access and enhance equity of educational opportunity. The proposed program is designed to meet the unique needs of underserved high school graduates in Buffalo and will be offered in a cohort format with comprehensive academic and social support. The proposed AA program aligns with D'Youville's mission of service, and D'Youville's strategic plan priority of Expanding Educational Opportunity through new programs and community partnerships.

Prospective students for this program include Buffalo Public School graduates who are not well served by other higher education options due to barriers posed by the limited English language proficiency of the students and their families, insufficient academic preparation, financial hardship, and a lack of access to transportation. The D'Youville Associate of Arts program will serve students from nearby Buffalo Public high schools including Leonardo da Vinci PS 212 (located on D'Youville's campus), Lafayette, Riverside, and International Preparatory, which are in the three poorest zip codes (14213, 14207, 14201) out of the 81 zip codes in Western New York. The educational needs are made more compelling by the presence of large populations of new Americans and refugees among residents between the ages of 15 and 24.

The projected full-time enrollment in the Associate of Arts program during its first year is 15 students. Each entering cohort will be capped at 20 full-time students, with a projected total of 38 students by year 5, accounting for attrition or deceleration. Part-time students are not anticipated. Admissions requirements for this program align with the requirements for the institution overall (80 high school g.p.a. and 980 SAT/19 ACT), although standardized test scores are optional for the AA, and applications will be reviewed holistically to account for the unique circumstances of this population (e.g., English language proficiency, or periods without schooling due to family migration).

The Associate of Arts program can be offered within existing faculty, staff and space resources, including a dedicated classroom with adjacent communal study space and tutoring space. The program will be run with existing full- and part-time faculty, which is feasible with a student/faculty ratio of 11:1 and additional enrollment capacity in some academic programs in the liberal arts and sciences. A full-time recruitment and student support coordinator has already been hired. Existing support services at the college include a Learning Center with intensive English Language tutoring, along with tutoring support for other academic subjects, and 24/7 online tutoring at no cost to students. The Student Success Center offers a coordinated support team for each student with a professional academic advisor, a career coach, and a faculty mentor. In addition, a new advocacy center will open in fall 2019, along with a new Active Learning Center, funded by a competitive grant from Steelcase, at the intersection DaVinci high school lobby and the college.

This program will be offered in a cohort model, with students taking their courses together in a learning community with targeted wrap-around services. The curriculum includes at least 45 credits in the Liberal Arts and Sciences, complemented by courses that promote exploration of purpose and professions, and courses with computing and communication skills for the workplace. The Associate of Arts degree is flexible enough to provide students with clear pathways toward the baccalaureate degree through courses that count toward general education requirements of all existing D'Youville degree programs.

The Western New York region faces a current shortage of 3000 skilled workers in the WNY manufacturing sector, and comparable shortages of entry-level workers in the health, retail, technology, and finance sectors. These positions require solid academic preparation in reading, writing, critical thinking, math that the Associate in Arts will provide, thereby enabling AA graduates to move into these positions. D'Youville already offers 300 courses annually to DaVinci High School students, and the new Associate of Arts will allow a seamless and efficient transition into newly designed health professions pathways at D'Youville. The opportunity for electives and internships in students' 4<sup>th</sup> semester, along with guidance from the Office of



Career Engagement, will support AA graduates' seamless transition to further study or the work force. Students who complete their studies with an associate's degree may enter the work force more swiftly and with higher earning potential, with the option to return to D'Youville or another institution in the future to continue their studies to earn a bachelor's degree or beyond. This program offers additional value to the community by serving as an off ramp for degree completion for students in any academic program at D'Youville who are unable to continue their education for work, family or academic reasons.