
3D

Action

Educator Preparation Committee

Initial Institutional Approval – Stage II: Eligibility Requirements for Reach University

Executive Summary: This agenda item presents, as part of the Initial Institutional Approval process, Reach University's responses to the Eligibility Requirements for consideration and possible approval by the Commission.

Recommended Action: That the Commission review the responses to the Eligibility Requirements and determine if the institution may move forward in the Initial Institutional Approval process.

Presenter: Frances Kellar, Consultant, Professional Services Division

Strategic Plan Goal

Educator Preparation and Advancement

- **Goal 1.** Education preparation programs hold candidates to high standards and adequately prepare them to support all students by using culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining practices in equitable, inclusive, and safe environments.
 - A. Set and uphold rigorous standards for educator preparation programs
 - C. Enact a rigorous accreditation process that ensures programs meet standards and are effective in preparing educators for public schools

Initial Institutional Approval – Stage II: Eligibility Requirements for Reach University

Introduction

This agenda item presents for consideration one institution of higher education seeking to become a program sponsor through the Initial Institutional Approval (IIA) process. The institution, Reach University, seeks IIA in order to offer Preliminary Multiple Subject and Single Subject credential programs (with Intern pathways) and Teacher Induction. Reach University has submitted responses to the Eligibility Requirements and relevant Preconditions for consideration and possible approval by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (Commission). Reach University is a private, non-profit university headquartered in Oakland, California with program satellites in six states including Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Texas. In California, Reach University currently offers only graduate education programs. Additionally, Reach University partners with Alternatives in Action (AIA), a Commission-approved program sponsor in the preparation of AIA's interns. Approximately 350 graduate students and 2,500 undergraduate students are projected to enroll in degree earning programs at Reach University for the 2025-26 academic year.

Approval of an institution for Stage II does not permit the institution to offer an educator preparation program that leads to a credential or license. Approval in Stage II allows an institution to move forward to Stage III in which Common Standards will be submitted for review and the institution brought before the Commission again at that time. In addition, although there is important information about the proposed program contained in the submission for Stage II, review of the Common Standards and applicable program Preconditions and standards will occur in subsequent stages. Please see the table on page three of this item for more information about the five stages of the IIA process.

Background

California law provides the Commission with the authority to accredit institutions to offer programs that lead to a credential to serve as an educator in California's public schools. Among other responsibilities, Education Code section 44372(c) sets forth the Commission's responsibility to rule on the eligibility of an applicant for initial accreditation for the purpose of offering a program of educator preparation.

The Commission requires that an institution seeking to offer new educator preparation program(s) must first be approved for initial accreditation as a new program sponsor and must do so by completing the Commission's IIA process. A table detailing the five stages of the IIA process is provided on page three of this item.

Reach University

Reach University seeks Initial Institutional Approval to offer three program(s):

- Preliminary Multiple Subject (with Intern pathway)
- Preliminary Single Subject (with Intern pathway)
- Teacher Induction

Summaries and excerpts of Reach University's responses to the twelve *Eligibility Requirement Criteria*, two *Initial Program Preconditions*, and *General Precondition #9: Faculty and Instructional Personnel Participation*, are provided in this item. Reach University's full response can also be referenced here for [Eligibility Requirements](#), [Initial Preconditions](#) including [Precondition 9](#). Criteria 1 through 9 have been reviewed by staff and a recommendation has been provided. Criteria 10, 11, and 12 have been summarized for the Commission's review and consideration. All relevant Preconditions have been reviewed by Commission staff and have been determined to be met.

Five Stages of the Initial Institutional Approval Process

Reach University is seeking approval of Stage II in order to be eligible for Stage III as highlighted and italicized in the chart below.

IIA Process	Stage I - Prerequisites	<i>Stage II – Eligibility</i>	Stage III – Provisional Approval	Stage IV – Initial Program Approval	Stage V – Full Approval
Purpose	Ensures legal eligibility of institution in California Ensures institution understands requirements of Commission’s accreditation system	<i>Ensures that institution has capacity to sponsor effective programs</i>	Ensures institution meets all Common Standards	Ensures all proposed programs meet all relevant program standards and program-specific preconditions	Program operates for 2-4 years and hosts a provisional accreditation site visit
Institutional Requirements	Must: 1. Have legal eligibility 2. Attend Accreditation 101 with institutional team	<i>Submit responses to:</i> • <i>12 Eligibility Criteria</i> • <i>Initial Program Preconditions</i> • <i>General Precondition #9</i>	Submit responses to: • Common Standards	Submit responses to: • Program-Specific Preconditions • Program Standards	Institution Must: • Collect data • Host provisional site visit
Reviewed By	Staff	<i>Staff</i>	BIR	Preconditions: Staff Program Standards: BIR	Site Visit Team & COA
Authority	Staff	<i>Commission</i>	Commission	COA	Commission
Decision	Determine Eligibility for Stage II	<i>Eligibility:</i> 1. <i>Grant</i> 2. <i>Deny</i>	Provisional Approval: 1. Grant 2. Deny	Program(s): 1. Approve 2. Deny	1. Grant Full Approval 2. Grant Full Approval & Remand to COA to Address Stipulations 3. Continue Provisional Status for 1 Year to Address Stipulations 4. Deny Approval
IIA Status*	Not Approved	<i>Not Approved</i>	Provisional Approval**	Provisional Approval***	Full Approval

*At conclusion of stage **Institutionally approved but cannot offer programs ***May begin offering approved program

Criterion 1 through 9

In accordance with the Commission's adopted process for determining eligibility for Initial Institutional Approval, Eligibility Criteria 1-9, as follows, includes a staff review and recommendation.

Criterion 1: Responsibility and Authority

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- Reach University is proposing to offer Preliminary Multiple Subject and Single Subject (with Intern pathways) and Teacher Induction programs.
- Reach University has submitted a complete organizational chart that indicates the Preliminary Multiple Subject, Preliminary Single Subject, and Teacher Induction programs will be housed within the Division of Graduate Studies.
- Laelena Brooks, Director for Preliminary Multiple Subject and Single Subject Programs, will be the program coordinator who will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the program.
- Dr. Christina Koon, Director for Teacher Induction, will be the program coordinator who will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the induction program.
- Program Directors Brooks and Koon will report to Dr. Kana Wong, Dean of Graduate Studies. Dr. Wong will be the Unit Head responsible for ongoing oversight of all educator preparation programs.
- Reach University assures that the duties related to credential recommendations will be performed only by employees of Reach University and that these individuals will take part in the Commission training related to the recommendation process.
- Reach University has identified Elizabeth Olson as the individual who will be responsible for credential recommendations for the respective programs.

Criterion 2: Lawful Practices

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- A non-discrimination policy for the institution's **employees** is provided in the evidence. It is available in the employee handbook.
- A non-discrimination policy for the institution's **candidates** is provided in the evidence. It is provided in the candidate handbooks for both graduates and undergraduates, the university catalog, program flyers, in program orientation materials, and on the website.

Criterion 3: Commission Assurances and Compliance

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- Reach University provided a statement of assurance signed by Dr. Kana Wong, Dean of Graduate Studies, that states the institution:
 - a) Will comply with all preconditions,
 - b) Will submit all data reports and accreditation documents,

- c) Will cooperate in an evaluation of the program by an external team or monitoring of the program by Commission staff,
- d) Will participate fully in the Commission's accreditation system and submission timelines, and
- e) In the event the program closes, will offer the program and meet all adopted standards until the candidate completes, withdraws, is dropped, or is admitted to another program.

Criterion 4: Requests for Data

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- Dr. Kana Wong, Dean of Graduate Studies, is identified as the qualified officer who will be responsible for reporting and responding to all requests for data within timeframes specified by the Commission.

Criterion 5: Grievance Process

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- Reach University has provided a grievance process which will be accessible to all candidates and applicants in their respective program handbooks and orientation materials. It is also available on the institution's website.
- Candidates will be informed of the grievance process at the time of orientation.

Criterion 6: Communication and Information

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- Reach University's webpage will be accessible to the public without the requirement of log in information.
- Reach University will include the mission, governance, administration and admission procedures on its website and in all relevant handbooks, fieldwork requirements, and coursework.
- Information will be made available through program syllabi, orientation materials, and the website.

Criterion 7: Student Records Management, Access, and Security

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

Reach University ensures that candidates will have secure, ongoing access to transcripts and academic records through its Office of the Registrar, which maintains compliance with FERPA and relevant California and federal regulations.

Candidates can request official transcripts, which verify academic units and program completion, by following instructions on the Reach University website. Reach University

adheres to FERPA guidelines, guaranteeing candidates the right to access and receive copies of their academic records. All candidate records are securely stored in Reach University's Student Information System (SIS):

- Current SIS: Jenzabar (active through 2026), with password protection and role-based access.
- Upcoming Student Information Systems: Salesforce Rio (fully implemented summer 2025), which adds single sign-on (SSO) and multi-factor authentication (MFA) for enhanced security.
- Both systems are cloud-based and hosted on secure servers (IBM for Jenzabar and AWS for Salesforce Rio).

Criterion 8: Disclosure

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- All programs at Reach University will be delivered online to provide access to working adult learners in underserved communities across the institution's breadth of operation across the country. Candidates build professional capital and community of practice through job-embedded learning at the site of their employment and through synchronous online tutorials and lectures.
- Reach University does not utilize—nor does it plan to utilize—any external organizations to provide direct educational services in its programs; all instruction is provided by qualified faculty vetted and employed by the university.

Criterion 9: Veracity in all Claims and Documentation Submitted

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- An assurance signed by Dr. Kana Wong, Dean of Graduate Studies, has been submitted attesting to the veracity of all statements and documentation submitted to the Commission. The letter also attests to Reach University's understanding that a lack of veracity is a cause for denial of Initial Institutional Approval.

Criterion 10, 11, and 12

In accordance with the Commission approved process for determining eligibility for Initial Institutional Approval, Eligibility Criteria 10-12 include a staff summary of the institution's submission, but do not include a staff recommendation.

Criterion 10: Mission and Vision

- Reach University's mission aims to help schools grow their own highly effective teachers and leaders while advancing equity in underserved urban and rural communities. The university emphasizes inquiry-based instruction and job-embedded, accessible degree pathways. Its vision to ensure that job-embedded higher education is available to all, so that skill and effort – not privilege – drive opportunity.
- At the graduate level, Reach University's mission and vision reflect a strong focus on lifelong learning, educator empowerment, inquiry-driven practice, and student-centered instruction—all rooted in relationship-building, reflection, and retention. These values are operationalized across the proposed programs via drafted Program Statements; each aligned with California's Standards for the Teaching Profession.
- Reach University states that it demonstrates a deep institutional commitment to equity, with one of its four Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) being "equity orientation" seeking to actively address systemic inequities in education. This ILO is assessed and improved annually.
- All Reach University programs, including the undergraduate Bachelor in Arts in Global Education, integrate job-embedded, inquiry-based learning designed for working adults through debt-free, grow-your-own pathways. The institution states that these programs support underserved communities by preparing educators who reflect the demographics of the students they serve, embodying the institution's broader vision for equitable access and transformative education

Criterion 11: History of Prior Experience and Effectiveness in Educator Preparation

- Reach Institute for School Leadership was created in 2006 by local public school administrators in the East Bay area in order to provide support and develop school teachers and leaders in the Bay Area.
- In 2014, Reach Institute for School Leadership partnered with a charter school, Bay Area School of Enterprise to support interns. In recent years, Bay Area School of Enterprise, the Commission-approved program sponsor, changed its name to Alternatives in Action (AIA) and their partnership has continued. AIA delivers Preliminary and Clear Administrative Services, Teacher Induction, and Intern credential pathways (Multiple and Single Subject). The partnership with AIA includes a formal MOU, shared staff roles, coordinated oversight, and a well-defined reporting structure.

- In 2017 Reach University was created and became accredited by WASC Senior Commission of Senior Colleges and Universities. Once Reach University received WASC accreditation, it became eligible to apply to be a program sponsor.
- Reach University maintains ongoing data collection, including candidate satisfaction surveys and Institutional Learning Outcome (ILO) tracking (inquiry, equity, integration, and collaboration). Data dashboards and structured reflection processes are used to inform programmatic improvements.
- Reach University's Bachelor of Arts in Global Education (BAGE), launched in 2020–2021, is approved for licensure in Arkansas and Louisiana. The Louisiana Department of Education conducted a formal review of the program in 2024, and Reach University is actively addressing areas for improvement through enhancements to communication, data systems, residency support, and professional development.
- Additionally, Reach University offers a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies (BALS) for classified school employees in seven states.
- Candidate satisfaction surveys show overall positive experiences in both the graduate and undergraduate programs. Alumni tracking efforts are in progress, with plans to contract with Lightcast to enhance employment outcome data.
- Reach University has posted the third-party invitation for comments on the institution's website where the public and all constituencies can access it. No comments have been received at this time.
- As required by this criterion, staff researched the possibility of any additional available information relevant to Reach University's application for IIA and found none.

Staff would like to emphasize the importance of Reach University seeking approval as a Commission program sponsor. Since becoming a WASC accredited institution of higher education, Reach University has played a large role in the intern program operated by Alternatives in Action, a Commission-approved program sponsor. While the Commission has no specific language about how partnerships must be structured, it is understood that only a Commission-approved institution may offer educator preparation programs leading to a California credential. As such, Commission staff reminded Reach University that Alternatives in Action remains the official Commission-approved program sponsor and therefore AIA, not Reach University, has required responsibilities and duties including oversight of all program coursework and fieldwork. Commission staff have specified to Reach University that communications and documentation must reflect this fact and represent to the public, candidates, and partnering employers accurately to avoid misleading statements about the program. Reach University has stated that it understands this is necessary and has made efforts to take corrective action when and where needed. It is critical that Reach University continue to be diligent about the accuracy of its communications, particularly about what entity is the Commission-approved sponsor until and if the Commission approves the institution as a program sponsor and the COA approves the proposed programs for operation during a provisional period.

Criterion 12: Capacity and Resources

- As evidence of capacity and resources, Reach University has provided a copy of its most recent audited budget dated February 2025 as well as a copy of a proposed operations budget for its education unit.
- Reach University has also detailed within its submission the facility resources that will be available for its candidates. These include private cloud-based data systems connected to either Sonisweb Student Information System (to be replaced by Salesforce in 2025) or Canvas as the Learning Management System. As an online university, Reach University has developed a digital campus with these secure measures in mind.
- Additionally, within the submission, Reach University has identified the job responsibilities and minimum qualifications for the program personnel and instructional support. Reach University's personnel and instructional support will consist of the following:
 - Christina Koon, Director of Teacher Induction Program
 - Laelena Brooks, Director of Intern Credential Program
 - Elizabeth Olson, Graduate Academic Operations Coordinator & Credential Analyst
 - Pam Vandekamp, Associate Professor
 - Stephanie Moore, Director of Graduate Academic Support & Operations
 - 10 mentors, adjunct faculty
 - 1 Intern/MAT Program Supervisor Coordinator
 - 2 onsite mentors
 - 3 Intern Program Faculty
 - 1 Field Supervisor, Special Projects
 - 1 Subject-Specific Pedagogy Adjunct Instructor
 - 1 Intern Teaching and Learning Coordinator
 - 2 coaches, adjunct
 - 1 Professor of Practice
 - 1 Academic Support and Field Supervisor
- For the purposes of fieldwork, Reach University is partnering with local education agencies in the area.

Initial Program Preconditions

(1) Demonstration of Need:

To be granted initial program accreditation by the Committee on Accreditation, the program sponsor must demonstrate the need for the type of program in the service area in which it will operate or a need for educators prepared through the specific program delivery model.

Proposals must include data on the number of individuals currently serving on less than full credentials, where available, in the service area of the proposed program, projected need based on a needs analysis, and affirmations from employers with their anticipated hiring need for individuals with the planned credential.

Meets Precondition: Yes

How Institution Meets the Precondition:

Reach University notes that data found on the Commission on Teacher Credentialing's Educator Supply data website, along with Data Quest, finds that:

- Preliminary teaching credentials, a key indicator of new teachers entering the profession, began to decline in 2021-22 with 16% fewer preliminary credentials issued compared to 2020-21 and a near 11% decline in preliminary credentials issued in 2022-23. This suggests a decrease in the number of candidates entering the profession and presenting an opportunity to recruit professionals to enter the teaching profession and adjust the persistent teacher shortage in California.
- In teacher induction, Reach University notes a 12% increase in the number of candidates enrolling and completing induction. This suggests an increase in the number of working professionals needing to clear their preliminary teaching credential as Reach University seeks to offer a program to meet the needs of early career educators.
- There is an increase in the estimated number of teachers needed, according to Reach University's internal market research, suggesting that the demand for teachers is increasing. In a report shared as part of Reach University's Initial Preconditions submission, the institution highlights its efforts to meet the teacher shortage in California's Central Valley, one of the state's most populated regions. Reach has chosen to focus its partnership efforts for their proposed preliminary preparation programs in this area due to the high number of teachers serving on less than full credentials. Reach University also seeks to be an induction partner with local education agencies in the Central California region where induction programs may not be readily available for those in need of this formative professional development support.

Additionally, Reach University's internal market research illuminated that some counties have limited, or no induction program options, requiring new teachers to seek programs outside their home regions. This underscores the importance of geographically accessible induction programs, like the one proposed to be offered by Reach University. Additionally, the report indicates rising program costs, with a range of \$1,000 to \$8,000 per year, highlighting the demand for a more affordable option such as the one Reach University seeks to offer.

(2) Collaboration in Program Design and Implementation:

To be granted initial program accreditation by the Committee on Accreditation, the program sponsor must demonstrate evidence of collaboration between institutions of higher education, employers of credentialed educators, and TK-12 practitioners in the design of the program. This evidence must include verification that the partners will share authority and responsibility for the implementation and continuous improvement of the proposed educator preparation program as negotiated in the partnership agreement.

Meets Precondition: Yes

How Institution Meets the Precondition:

Reach University has previously collaborated with a variety of constituent groups, such as mentors, partner school coordinators, site leaders, to design and refine the programs currently

offered through the partnership with Alternatives in Action, the current recommending agency. Reach University seeks to review and continue to build on these existing partnerships to ensure the highest quality of education preparation programs to be offered in California.

Reach University's identified partners for collaboration in the program design include representatives from Reach University; City College of San Francisco; employers of credentialed educators from Lighthouse Community Public Schools, KIPP Public Schools, and Alameda County Office of Education; and TK-12 practitioners from Bay Area public schools.

Additionally, the Local Education Agency (LEA) agreement outlines the expectation that a leader from each LEA will participate in a Reach University-led Partnership Advisory Committee. The committee will include the superintendent or their designee from each partnering LEA, along with Reach University's Program Director and an advisory facilitator from Alternatives in Action. Faculty and staff from other institutions of higher education and TK-12 practitioners may also participate in meetings to provide leadership and oversight. The committee will convene regularly to gather feedback and insights for enhancing process and systems with each program, and to contribute to the development and oversight of new programs.

General Precondition 9

(9) Faculty and Instructional Personnel Participation

All faculty and instructional personnel employed by colleges and universities who regularly teach one or more courses in an educator preparation program leading to a credential, shall actively participate in the public school system at least once every three academic years, appropriate to their credential area. Faculty who are not in the Department, School or College of Education are exempt from this requirement. Reference: Education Code Section 44227.5 (a) and (b).

This precondition applies only to colleges and universities. Local Education Agencies do not need to address this precondition.

Meets Precondition: Yes

How Institution Meets the Precondition:

Reach University notes that all Reach University faculty and instructional personnel who regularly teach one or more courses in educational preparation programs leading to a credential actively participate in the public school system at least once every three academic years, appropriate to their credential area. Examples of how this requirement will be met, include the following forms of participation:

- Teaching in K-12 public schools
- Coaching/mentoring of public school teachers
- District/network directors of curriculum/achievement
- Facilitating professional development/workshops in various public schools

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Commission consider the responses to the Eligibility Requirements and relevant Preconditions submitted by Reach University and grant eligibility.

Granting eligibility would allow Reach University to move forward to Stage III of the IIA process in which responses to the Common Standards are submitted for review. Approval of Stage II will not authorize Reach University to offer an educator preparation program that leads to a credential or license, such as the proposed Preliminary Multiple Subject credential, Preliminary Single Subject credential, and Teacher Induction programs.

If the Commission grants eligibility, it may identify topics that it will be looking for in Stage III.

If the Commission denies eligibility, it may identify what it sees as missing in the current submission in the event the institution decides to continue to work toward institutional approval.

Next Steps

Based on the Commission's action, staff will take appropriate next steps related to the option chosen.