

**PROGRAM REVIEW**  
**Fairmont State Board of Governors**

Program with Special Accreditation  Program without Special Accreditation

Date Submitted March 2010

Program Regents Bachelor of Arts Degree  
Degree and Title

**INSTITUTIONAL RECOMMENDATION**

The institution is obligated to recommend continuance or discontinuance of a program and to provide a brief rationale for its recommendation:

- 1. Continuation of the program at the current level of activity;
- 2. Continuation of program with corrective action (for example, reducing the range of optional tracks or merging programs);
- 3. Identification of the program for further development (for example, providing additional institutional commitment);
- 4. Development of a cooperative program with another institution, or sharing courses, facilities, faculty, and the like;
- 5. Discontinuation of the Program

**Rationale for Recommendation:**

The Regents Bachelor of Arts degree is firmly grounded in state guidelines. The degree provides the option for adult students to use work and life experiences, as well as credits earned at previous institutions to earn a degree. The flexibility of the program is valuable to busy adult students and the RBA Today option to the current Regents Bachelor of Arts degree will afford students even more flexibility. With statewide recruitment for this new program, the RBA degree will most likely see additional students enrolling in the program. With a new president at Fairmont State University and with additional advising support for the program, the program is certain to grow and provided opportunities for many West Virginia students.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person preparing report:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Dean

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of President:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Chair, Board of Governors:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Executive Summary for Program Review

Name and degree level of program

Regents Bachelor of Arts degree

External reviewer(s)

Program Advisory Committee consists of School Deans and Academic Chairs as they comprise the Academic Affairs Council. An annual report on the RBA program is submitted to the Council and discussions of any concerns takes place there. Open communication between Deans, Chairs, Coordinators, and the RBA advisor is encouraged and conducted as needed. On a larger level, the RBA Program at Fairmont State University receives statewide support from the other state RBA coordinators. This group meets with the State RBA Coordinator who monitors the program at the Higher Education Board Office.

Synopses of significant findings, including findings of external reviewer(s)

Fairmont State University needs to identify a coordinator for the degree program and provide more consistency with the degree. Currently, one advisor meets with students; however, a coordinator needs to be identified so that there may be more recruitment for this program.

Plans for program improvement, including timeline

Fairmont State University will be participating in the RBA Today program that is scheduled to begin fall 2010 and will increase the number of advisors who work with the program.

RBA Today is an enhanced version of the Regents Bachelor of Arts degree that for many years has provided baccalaureate degree opportunities to working adults who want to improve their skills, advance in their careers, or reach the goal of achieving a degree without putting their lives on hold. The format of the RBA Today continues the underlying elements of the Regents Bachelor of Arts, but adds new curricular areas of emphasis and allows participants the flexibility of online learning and Fast Track courses.

Identification of weaknesses or deficiencies from the previous review and the status of improvements implemented or accomplished

Weaknesses identified from the last review included the lack of personnel and the lack of adequate space. The RBA program is being moved into the Academic Advising Center and will have additional personnel to assist with RBA students; a new director will be appointed.

### Five-year trend data on graduates and majors enrolled

Regents Bachelor of Arts	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Total
Majors	82	73	76	57	66	57	68	479
Graduates	68	51	42	60	45	43	38	347

### Summary of assessment model and how results are used for program improvement

Outcomes and assessments have been identified for all courses at Fairmont State University. Since the Regents Bachelor of Arts degree uses courses from other programs, the course outcomes and assessments will fall under those guidelines. All of this information is housed in TaskStream and is available for all courses.

Data on student placement (for example, number of students employed in positions related to the field of study or pursuing advanced degrees)

From the “Graduate Follow Up” surveys:

- 1] Good mix of male and females, predominantly white, non-hispanic... generally in the 35-50 age ranges, otherwise late 20-s.
- 2] The “Reflecting back on overall education experience ... “ item gives me some real concern with the number of unsatisfactory and very unsatisfactory, but the limited to FSU / benefits seems to show some positives.
- 3] Salaries are expected for WV and higher than the relative per capita.
- 4] Employment is a mix of public/private/educational sectors ... mostly all in WV
- 5] Very mixed on current job satisfaction and longer range opportunities
- 6] A few indicate graduate work/studies.

Final recommendations approved by governing board

Identification of the program for further development

# PROGRAM REVIEW

FAIRMONT STATE UNIVERSITY OR PIERPONT COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE	
Program:	Regents Bachelor of Arts Degree
School:	Academic Affairs
Date:	March 2010

## Program Catalog Description:

The Regents Bachelor of Arts Degree Program (RBA) is designed to offer adult students the opportunity to complete a bachelor's degree with flexibility. This degree presents an opportunity to recognize a student's maturity as well as the unique demands of work and family commitments. The program offers students the opportunity to fully utilize previous college credits, military experiences, and work related and life learning experiences. This nontraditional degree is open to adults who are at least four years past high school graduation; in addition, the degree targets those who have completed from one to three years of study in an accredited college or university, but who have not yet finished a baccalaureate degree. The RBA Degree Program parallels the level of academic quality seen in more traditional bachelor degree programs. The program is not intended for students excluded from other academic programs for reasons of poor academic quality. The integrity and viability of the RBA Degree Program is of critical importance. The policies and guidelines, credit awards, and requirements are subject to review and revision at least twice a year during the statewide Coordinators' Meetings. Special subcommittees are appointed yearly to review and reaccredit existing awards and programs.

The RBA Degree can be individually tailored for those students who need a bachelor's degree to re-enter the work force; those preparing for career advancement; those who have an associate degree for which there is no corresponding baccalaureate degree available to them; those who wish to pursue graduate school; or those who seek intellectual development and personal fulfillment. Many students identify themselves with at least two or three of these needs and goals.

## VIABILITY (§ 4.1.3.1)

### Enrollments

Regents Bachelor of Arts	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Total
Majors	82	73	76	57	66	57	68	479
Graduates	68	51	42	60	45	43	38	347

### Liberal Studies Requirements Met

Students must complete 128 semester hours comprised of 36 general education hours (communications, humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, mathematics or computer applications), 40 upper division hours, and 52 elective hours. Another option allows for an area of emphasis in institutionally sanctioned program areas of study with the completion of a minimum of 15 hours of upper division, graded coursework, with a minimum grade of “C” in each class.

- Communications – 6 hours
- Social Sciences – 6 hours
- Natural Sciences – 6 hours
- Humanities – 6 hours
- Mathematical Sciences or Computer Applications – 3 hours
- Other – 9 hours

### Assessment Requirements

Since the RBA Program does not have a designated major or minor, there is much flexibility and variety of course selection that a standard means of academic assessment that might be used in other degree programs cannot be applied. Students are assessed upon application to the RBA Program and apprised of any special requirements that must be met. Course placement testing is conducted in writing, math. If needed, developmental course work is completed. Designing an individualized program of study for an RBA student is part of the educational goal. Assessment of the quality of the design and its fit to the student is realized when the student is successful in its completion. Students may take as long as they need to complete their study; only those files which show no activity for more than five years are removed.

- Students often return to college with out-of-date courses. They are individually assessed and advised to audit or repeat those courses with technical or retention sensitive elements, such as math, computer applications, accounting principles, foreign languages, in order that they may successfully move toward graduation and have solid prerequisite knowledge for upper level course work. These recommendations are re-assessed and recorded in the student file at midterm and at the end of the semester.
- Completion of the 36 hours required for general education requirements and the 40 hours of upper level course work required indicates mastery of essential skills. For those students who retain or initiate a new area of study, clearly their achievement in that “major” cluster of classes demonstrates mastery. The ongoing one-on-one advising opportunities for RBA students with the advisor favorably impact the outcomes for students and the program.
- A program worksheet is kept in each student’s academic folder. Academic monitoring of satisfactory progress is notes, emails or memos to the student retained, and agreements or suggestions about portfolio work included in the records. This file is reviewed before scheduling of classes and after each semester of course work is completed. It is updated prior to any advising session that occurs in person or by email or phoned. A graduation audit is conducted two semesters prior to graduation and directly following graduation to ensure requirements are met and the degree is earned.
- Program quality and integrity are assessed through initial portfolio review conducted by the faculty advisor. Good communication between Deans, Chairs, and the RBA advisor helps to strengthen the expectations and the outcomes of the student portfolio efforts. Over the past several years, the number of portfolio submissions for credit has diminished. However, more rigorous standards and guidelines have been set. Personal advising sessions on portfolio construction and a careful selection of courses to challenge are now being required. Fewer portfolios are returned without some credit awarded as a result of these quality controls.
- In-state RBA Coordinator meetings occur twice a year at which time program concerns and issues are addressed. Established standard credit awards (CEC) are reviewed and revised as needed or as scheduled. Meeting agendas focus on program quality and integrity; transfer issues, institutional policies that impact the RBA Programs, prospective CEC awards under review. Subcommittees are formed as needed to address any large scale issues that will need recommendation for action to the state Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC).
- The RBA Today program has initiated much discussion about the Regents Bachelor of Arts degree during the past year. This has given institutions across the state the opportunity to evaluate their individual RBA programs..

### Adjunct use

The RBA Programs does not have specified faculty. The degree utilized courses taught throughout all the curricula offered by Fairmont State University; in the West Virginia State Universities and Colleges; and in other accredited institutions of higher learning throughout the country. Students in this degree program have access to full time, part time, and adjunct faculty employed by Fairmont State University and Pierpont Community & Technical College.

### Graduation/Retention Rates

Regents Bachelor of Arts	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Total
Graduates	68	51	42	60	45	43	38	347

Retention Calculations for RBA First-time Students					
Fall	Cohort Size of RBA First-time Freshmen	Count of this Fall Cohort Retained until Next Fall IN the RBA Program	RBA FT Program Retention Rate	Count of this Fall Cohort Retained until Next Fall at FSU	PCTC Retention of RBA FT Cohort
2003	1	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
2004	2	1	50.00%	1	50.00%
2005	3	1	33.33%	1	33.33%
2006	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
2007	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
2008	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
6-Yr Mean	1.00	0.33	27.78%	0.33	27.78%
Retention Calculations for RBA Transfer-In Students					
Fall	Cohort Size of RBA Transfer-In Student	Count of this Fall Cohort Retained until Next Fall IN the RBA Program	RBA Transfer-In Retention Rate	Count of this Fall Cohort Retained until Next Fall at FSU	PCTC Retention of RBA Transfer- In Cohort
2003	9	4	44.44%	4	44.44%
2004	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
2005	12	4	33.33%	5	41.67%
2006	4	3	75.00%	3	75.00%
2007	11	3	27.27%	5	45.45%
2008	8	3	37.50%	4	50.00%
6-Yr Mean	7.33	2.83	43.51%	3.50	51.31%

#### Previous Program Review Results

Recommended to continue at the current level.

### ADEQUACY (§ 4.2.4.2)

Program Requirements:

Liberal Studies	32-42	__36 hrs	6 hours of communication 6 hours of social science 6 hours of natural science 3 hours of math and/or computer science 6 hours of humanities
Major	32-65	____hrs	Although specific Areas of Emphasis are not required in the Fairmont State University RBA program, students' individualized programs of study often reflect at least one area of focus. Students are encouraged to work toward knowledge and skills that will enhance existing careers, prepare them for changing career fields, or facilitate entrance into graduate programs.
Electives	min 21	____hrs	A total of 40 hours of upper division hours are required.
TOTAL	max 128	_128 hrs	
Programs not meeting the above requirements must request a continuation of their exception with a justification below:			

Faculty Data

The RBA Programs does not have specified faculty. The degree utilized courses taught throughout all the curricula offered by Fairmont State University; in the West Virginia State Universities and Colleges; and in other accredited institutions of higher learning throughout the country. Students in this degree program have access to full time, part time, and adjunct faculty employed by Fairmont State University and Pierpont Community & Technical College. The role of faculty portfolio evaluator is open to assignment by the School Deans, Chairs or coordinators. All faculty members have access to Fairmont State faculty development programs, faculty evaluation procedures, and faculty merit review.

## Accreditation/national standards

The Fairmont State University RBA program meets the standards set by the state RBA Degree Program.

### Entrance Standards

Students enrolled in the RBA Program must meet the same admissions standards as all students admitted to Fairmont State University. Also;

- Applicants must have been graduated from high school four years or more prior to enrollment in the program.
- If applicants possess a GED, they must be four years past the time their high school class graduated.
- Readmits and transfers applying to the RBA must be four years past high school graduation and/or eligible to return to their prior transfer institution.
- Applicants to the RBA cannot have earned a previous baccalaureate degree.
- After admission to the RBA program, students are subject to the academic requirements of the RBA degree and to the general grading practices as outlined in the University catalog.

### **NECESSITY (§ 4.1.3.3)**

Were existing campus-based options viable, more adults would be engaged and would have already re-enrolled. Fortunately, West Virginia has a degree option that is targeted to adult students - the Regents Bachelor of Arts (RBA). During the last 10 years, nearly 8,000 West Virginians have received the RBA degree - the most productive in terms of numbers of graduates in the state. By combining the Adult Learner initiative with the Regents Bachelor of Arts, returning students will find a convenient and adult-friendly degree model for pursuing their education. To that end, West Virginia, through its public colleges and universities, is initiating a new, flexible and affordable baccalaureate degree completion program that will provide working-age adults wishing to return to college the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree. The initiative, targeted to adults who have some college experience but have never completed a degree, will provide new pathways to a degree, will utilize alternative delivery methods, compressed learning periods and adult-focused services.

### CONSISTENCY WITH MISSION (§ 4.1.3.4)

The Regents Bachelor of Arts Degree is a program that is consistent with the mission of Fairmont State University. The reasons adult students return to college vary, but whatever the reason, returning to college is a smart move. Some seek to develop workplace skills, others want professional growth, and some just want to complete a college degree and realize a dream that started 10, 20, 30 or even 40 years ago. They may have experienced a life-changing event, such as marriage, divorce, or relocation, dropped out of college for financial reasons, or departed for academic reasons. But they all realize that getting a college degree changes a person's life and can open the way to many new opportunities. In fact, college graduates will earn about \$1 million more than high school graduates during their lifetimes. And earning a college degree will bring other benefits, including:

- Boosting new job prospects
- Enhancing better opportunities for promotions
- Developing an expanded knowledge base and new perspective for work and life
- Opening doors to further advanced education following completion of a degree
- Influencing college and career decisions of family, friends, and co-workers

Attainment of a bachelor's degree will give each returning student a competitive advantage in the market place and provide the necessary skills and knowledge valued by employers in business, government, and organizations.

#### Signatures and Recommendations

The required sheet with signatures and recommendation should be used as a cover sheet.