



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

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**In the Matter of**

**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS  
AND COLLEGES, COMMISSION ON TECHNICAL  
AND CAREER INSTITUTIONS**

**Docket No. 07-25-0**

**Accrediting Agency  
Recognition Proceeding**

Respondent.

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**DECISION OF THE SECRETARY**

This matter comes before me on appeal by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Technical and Career Institutions (CTCI) of the May 30, 2007 recommendation of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (Advisory Committee) that I deny CTCI's application for continued recognition as a nationally recognized accrediting agency pursuant to Section 496 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA), 20 U.S.C. 1099b (2005). For the reasons set forth below, I defer a decision on CTCI's application for recognition.<sup>1</sup>

By statute, to participate in Federal student financial assistance programs, postsecondary institutions and programs must be accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the Department. Accreditation ensures that schools provide basic levels of quality in their educational programs. To continue to be recognized, all recognized accrediting agencies must periodically reapply for renewed recognition. In reviewing CTCI's most recent application for continued recognition, the Advisory Committee recommended that I deny CTCI's petition for continued recognition because of CTCI's noncompliance with various criteria for recognition established pursuant to the Higher Education Act.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 34 C.F.R. § 602.35(b)(3).

<sup>2</sup> 20 U.S.C. § 1099b.

CTCI argues that instead of adopting the Advisory Committee's recommendation, I should grant its petition for continued recognition for a period of 18 months.<sup>3</sup> In CTCI's view, the Advisory Committee's recommendation is unwarranted because the recommendation is at odds with the Department's long-standing practice of not withholding renewed recognition from an accrediting agency based primarily on areas of noncompliance that are not substantive. According to CTCI, the Advisory Committee primarily identified areas of noncompliance that involved procedural and documentation or record-keeping deficiencies. In response to CTCI's appeal, the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE) argues that I should reject both the Advisory Committee's recommendation and CTCI's position. Instead, according to OPE, a deferral of the decision on whether to renew CTCI's recognition is warranted. In support of its position, OPE concedes that it agrees with the Advisory Committee that there are areas "of noncompliance [that] actually are quite substantive" rather than merely procedural or record-keeping matters. But, according to OPE, CTCI already has undertaken actions that show that the agency likely will be in full compliance with recognition criteria within 12 months, and that a 12-month deferral of a final decision "would keep recognition of [CTCI] in place for the benefit of its accredited schools until a final decision on renewal is reached."

I am persuaded by OPE's arguments. A deferral of a final decision on CTCI's recognition is better-suited to the circumstances of this case. A deferral provides the least disruptive alternative to schools and students who would be affected by CTCI's sudden loss of recognition. More to the point, the record in this case contains abundant indications that, as pointed out by CTCI, the areas of noncompliance or deficiency do not warrant immediate loss of recognition. To the contrary, the changes already implemented by CTCI support CTCI's position that CTCI will be able to demonstrate or achieve compliance and effective performance before a deferral expires. Accordingly, I defer a decision on CTCI's petition for renewed recognition for a period not to exceed 12 months.

## **ORDER**

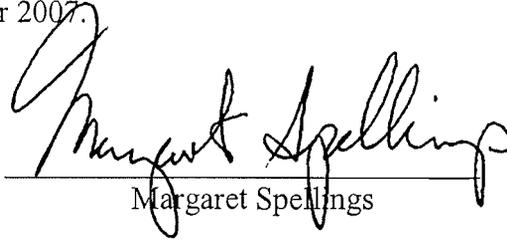
IT IS HEREBY ORDERED That a decision on the continued recognition as a nationally recognized accrediting agency of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Technical and Career Institutions shall be deferred for a period not to exceed 12 months from the date of this decision,

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<sup>3</sup> The Department's staff report submitted to the Advisory Committee recommended granting CTCI continued recognition for a period of 18 months.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED That the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Technical and Career Institutions demonstrate compliance with the criteria cited in the Department staff analyses in a report that the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Technical and Career Institutions shall submit to the Office of Postsecondary Education on or before June 2, 2008.

So ordered this 21st day of December 2007.



Margaret Spellings

Washington, D.C.

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