



The Research Bureau

WRRB Board of Directors Meeting

June 4, 2019

Gateway Park Auditorium

Keynote Speaker: Commissioner Carlos Santiago

Serving the public interest of Greater Worcester by conducting independent, non-partisan, research and analysis of public policy issues to promote informed public debate and decision-making.

Massachusetts Board of Higher Education: Current Authority and Proposed Changes



Closures and Mergers: Massachusetts Context

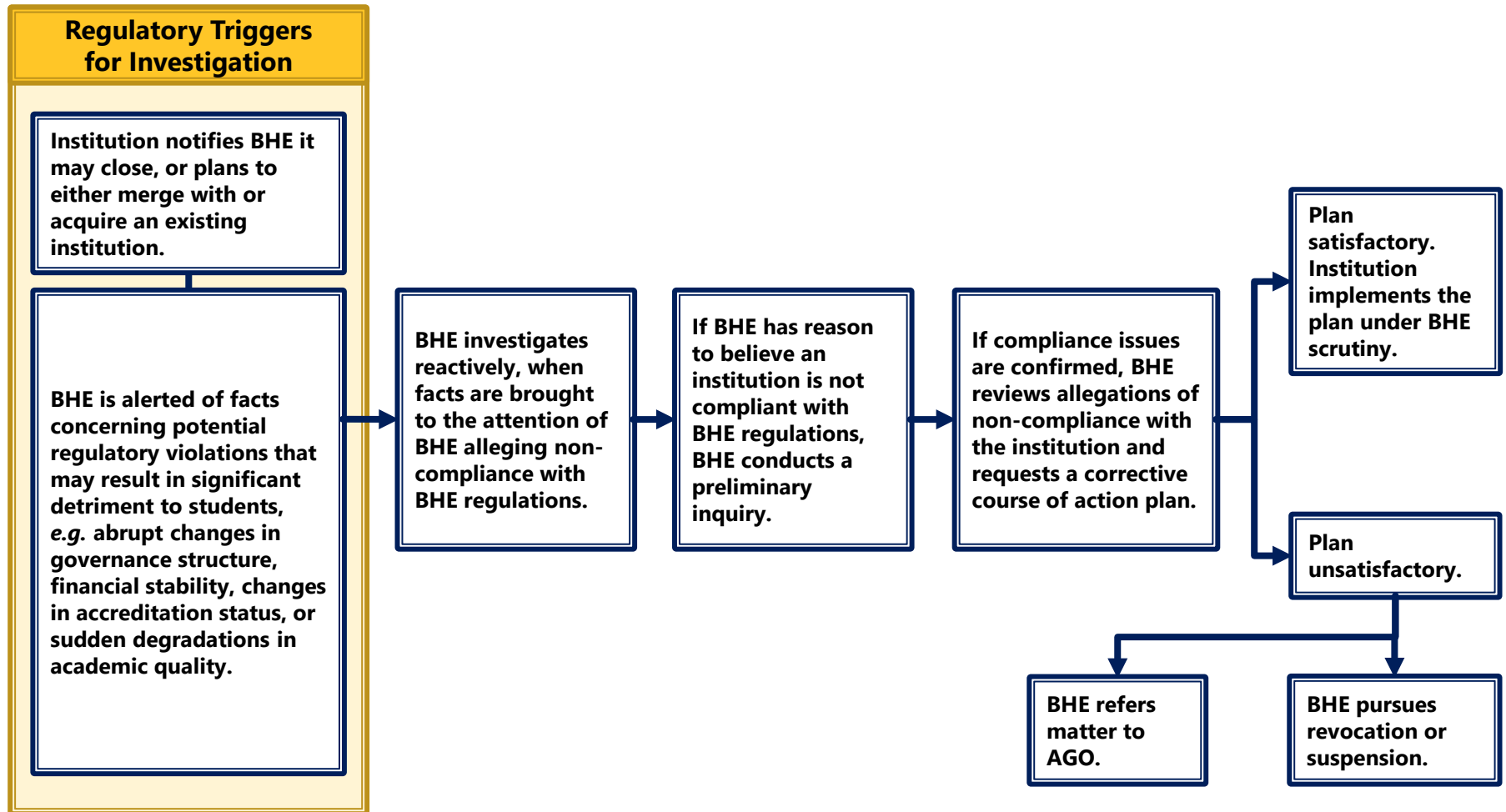
In MA: 18 closures/mergers over past 5 years

- 8 completed institutional closures
 - Sanford Brown College; Marian Court College; Le Cordon Bleu; ITT Technical Institutes; New England Institute of Art; University of Phoenix; Atlantic Union College; and Mount Ida College
- 7 completed closures due to mergers
 - School of the Museum of Fine Arts; New England College of Acupuncture; Boston Conservatory; Episcopal Divinity School; Andover Newton Theological Seminary; National Graduate School of Quality Management; and Wheelock College
- 3 pending institutional closures
 - Newbury College; Northern Vermont University; and Salter College

Current BHE authority

- **Regulatory Degree Granting Authority- Post-1943 institutions**
 - Any entity organized after 1943 that seeks to operate in MA and offers degrees/ courses leading to degree must be authorized by the BHE
 - Standards are requirements set in 610 CMR 2.00
- **State Financial Aid (\$120m annually)**
 - Voluntary participation
 - 65 private IHEs, including 20 of 21 pre-1943s, participate
 - Standards and requirements set forth in OSFA Participation agreement- including audit and renewal requirements

Current BHE Regulatory Authority



Challenges and Opportunities

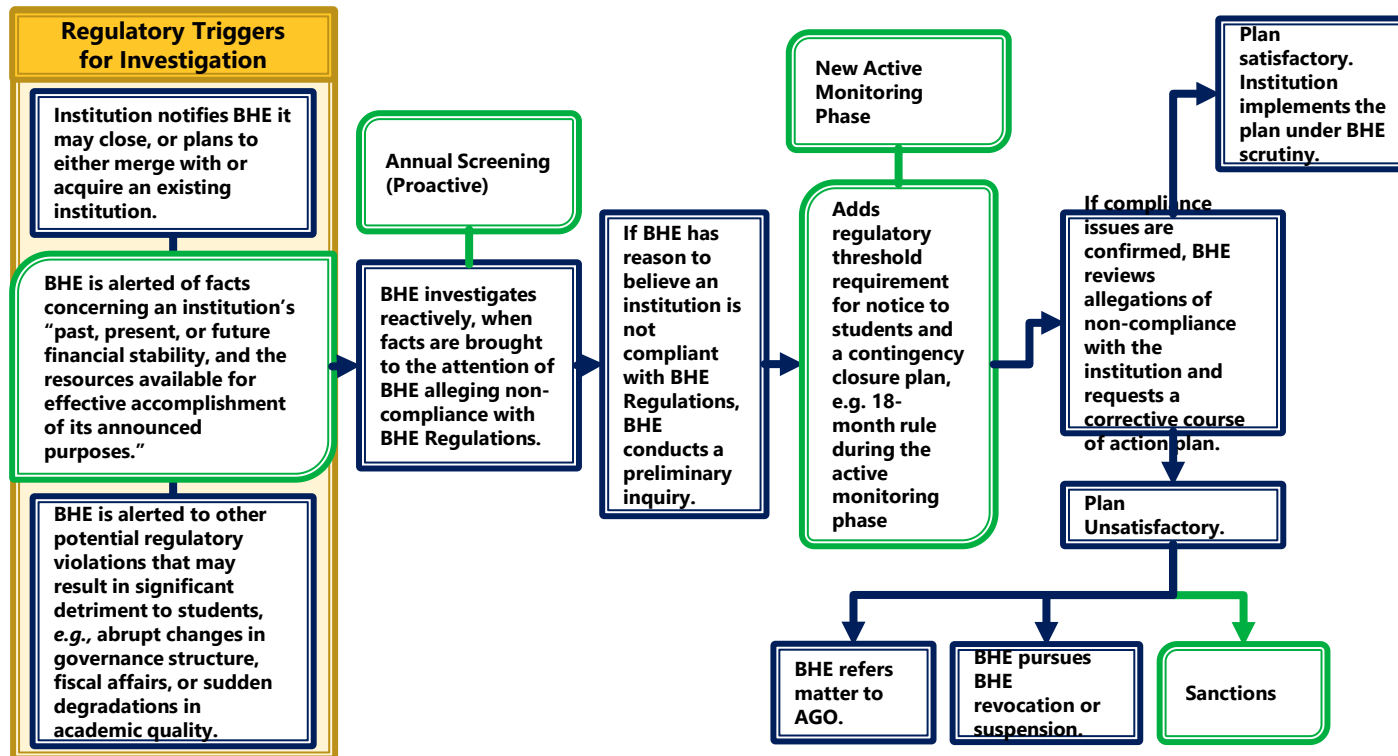
Current challenges

- Only applies to 77 out of 98 IHEs
- Reactive: “facts brought to our attention”
 - No affirmative obligation for annual screening
- “Past, present, and future financial stability”
 - No established metrics
 - No threshold standard
- Notice to students and contingency closing plans
 - Not mandatory, may be requested
- Confidentiality
 - Currently use investigatory & deliberative process exemptions

Proposed enhancements

- Include all IHEs participating in State Financial aid programs in screening and monitoring
- Proactive: requires BHE to conduct annual screenings using multiple metrics on publicly available data
- Defining within context of “past, present, and future financial stability,” whether and how institutional financial issues are screened for monitoring and action (*e.g.*, 18 month rule, multiple measures)
- Notice to students and contingency closing plans required based on regulatory threshold
- Confidentiality- statutory exemption

THESIS RECOMMENDATIONS



Elements of a Teach Out Plan

- Ensure student records are retained
- Review existing articulation agreements or create new institutional pathways (by majors) to ensure transfer of students with little to no loss of credits. Create exigency transfer agreements to facilitate seamless completion of a degree (e.g., waive residency requirements)
- Review and provide feedback on institutional communication to stakeholders
- Help institutions to create reverse transfer arrangements
- Provide transitional teams even after closure
- Facilitate recruitment and admissions fairs for affected students
- Facilitate approval of temporary teach out arrangements

Guiding Principles for Implementation of THESIS Recommendations

- Balanced approach-consumer protection and institutional integrity
- Shift from being reactive to proactive
- One size does not fit all
 - Exploring multiple measures/indicators/trends
- Be deliberative and inclusive; solicit input from multiple stakeholders
- Ensuring confidentiality protections is key
- Requiring timely notification to students is also key

Timeline

April 2018- Mount Ida College announces abrupt closure

June 2018- BHE forms THESIS working group

Summer and Fall 2018- THESIS group meets, conducts research and analysis, develops recommendations

January 22, 2019- BHE accepts THESIS Working Group report and charges Commissioner to develop implementation recommendations

January-June 2019- Informal stakeholder vetting; regulation drafting

May-June 2019- Finalize a draft set of regulations; distribute draft regulations for further informal vetting

June 18, 2019- BHE votes to put draft regulations out for formal public comment

June-August 2019- Public Comment period; DHE staff revise regulations as needed; finalize policies

Fall 2019 BHE Meeting- Vote on final regulations (Date of meeting TBD)