TO: Illinois State Board of Education

FROM: Robert E. Schiller, Superintendent
       Christopher Koch, Director

Agenda Topic: Action Item – Institutional Accreditation Decisions: Knox College and McKendree College

Materials: Notification of Accreditation Recommendation: Knox College (Attachment 1)
           Notification of Accreditation Recommendation: McKendree College (Attachment 2)

Staff Contact(s): Michael Long

Purpose of Agenda Item

- To review the Knox College and McKendree College accreditation recommendations issued by the State Teacher Certification Board.

Expected Outcome(s) of Agenda Item

- To issue final accreditation decisions for Knox College and McKendree College; and
- To authorize the State Superintendent to inform the institutions of the State Board decisions.

Background Information

Knox College

On December 5, 2002, the Audit Committees of the State Teacher Certification Board (STCB) reviewed the team report and supplementary materials provided by Knox College to issue an accreditation recommendation to the State Board of Education. The findings of the Audit Committees were approved by the Certification Board in plenary session on December 6. Following the action by the Board, the Superintendent sent a letter to the College informing the leadership of the recommendations developed by the Certification Board and advising the institution that a final accreditation decision would be issued by the State Board of Education.
Located in Galesburg, Illinois, Knox College was visited by a site team between April 27 and May 1, 2002. The team was composed of public school personnel and higher education faculty and administrators. Over the four and one-half days of the review, team members examined documents and exhibits prepared by the institution and interviewed faculty, administrators, graduates, teacher education candidates, and public school practitioners. The team carefully studied the Conceptual Framework of the educational unit, reviewed candidate performance data (e.g., state testing scores, internal assessment results, etc.), and analyzed various systems and procedures introduced by the College to assure compliance with each of the six accreditation standards.

**McKendree College**

McKendree College, located in Lebanon, Illinois, was visited by a site team of public school and higher education representatives in November, 2000. The review was conducted under a previous set of rules, procedures, and standards. The team findings were presented to the State Teacher Certification Board in June, 2001. At that time, the Board required the College to submit in 18 months a written report and associated materials detailing its progress in addressing each of the weaknesses identified through the review process.

The Audit Committees of the State Teacher Certification Board examined the 18-month report submitted by McKendree College on December 5, 2002. In plenary session on December 6, the Board accepted the recommendations of the Audit Committees. The Superintendent advised the institution of the Certification Board recommendations in a December letter.

**Analysis and Implications for Policy, Budget, Legislative Action and Communications**

**Analysis**

*Knox College*

The seven-member visitation team recommended that Knox be found in non-compliance with Standard 1 (Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions) for various weaknesses, that Standards 3, 4, and 5 be met with weaknesses, and that Standards 2 and 4 be met. (See Attachment 1 for the Certification Board recommendations.) Following its review of materials provided by the College, the Certification Board revised the team recommendation to declare all standards met. The Board removed two weakness statements developed by the team and revised another. As a consequence of this action, the Certification Board recommends that Knox be awarded Continuing Accreditation, but be required to submit a written report to State Board staff in six months on the enumerated weaknesses.
Staff affirms the recommendations of the State Teacher Certification Board. Documentation available to the team and submitted to the Board provides sufficient evidence to assure secondary education candidates are appropriately prepared in instructional methods and that all teacher education candidates are provided the knowledge and skills necessary to instruct exceptional learners. Furthermore, the modification of the weakness that alleged insufficient training in reading at the primary level is warranted based on a review of specific course syllabi.

Beyond the six-month written report recommended by the Certification Board, Knox College, like all institutions, will be required to submit to staff an Annual Report each October 1. This report is to detail the institution’s progress in resolving each of the remaining weaknesses. The Annual Reports are to be brief, succinct descriptions of actions taken by the institution in improving its educator preparation programs. The six-month report can be folded into the Annual Report to obviate the need for two separate reports.

McKendree College

When McKendree College was visited in the fall, 2000, the State Board of Education was employing standards developed by NCATE in 1995 and modified in 1997. Therefore, the team based its review on the standards in effect at the time, and subsequent findings by the Certification Board also relate to the 1995/1997 standards.

The results of the team visit were presented to the State Teacher Certification Board at its June, 2001, meeting. At that time, the Board determined McKendree to be in non-compliance with five of 20 standards and identified significant weaknesses in six others. The Certification Board determined that McKendree be required to prepare a written report on the unmet standards in 18 months and to submit this documentation for Board review in December, 2002.

On December 5, the Audit Committees examined the McKendree report, studied documents provided by the institution, and questioned several McKendree representatives invited to the meeting. Based upon the evidence available to it, the Certification Board determined that all standards are met. Board action also removed five of the weakness statements. (Attachment 2 translates the original Board recommendations based on the 1995/1997 standards to the current 2000 standards.) Finally, Board members commended McKendree for the development and implementation of strategic plans intended to address the remaining weaknesses.

Staff concurs with the recommendations of the Certification Board. Continuous monitoring of the College’s progress will be performed each year with the filing of the Annual Report. Staff routinely examines each report, provides feedback on the institution’s activities, or, if necessary, schedules a meeting with College personnel to develop deeper assurances of adequate progress in addressing the weaknesses.
Policy, Budget, and Legislative Implications

The final accreditation decisions of Knox College and McKendree College do not have policy, budget, or legislative implications.

Communication

Each institution must advise current and prospective candidates of its accreditation status. Similarly, the Division of Professional Preparation and Recruitment will post the State Board’s accreditation decisions on its web site to provide public notice of the status of each educational unit.

Pros and Cons of Various Actions

Acceptance of the Certification Board’s recommendations for Knox College and McKendree College will conclude this cycle of each institution’s review process. The colleges will begin to design and implement appropriate modifications to address identified weaknesses. In accordance with the Illinois Administrative Code (Section 25.115 d)), McKendree will be reviewed again in the fall, 2005, and Knox will be visited in the spring, 2007.

If the Board rejects or significantly modifies the Certification Board recommendations (e.g., declares one or more standards to be unmet, substantially increases or decreases the weakness statements, etc.), the final decisions will be shared with Knox and McKendree. Contingent upon the Board’s action, Knox and/or McKendree may be required to extend the review cycle by filing additional reports, undergoing a focused visit in two years on one unmet standard, or hosting in two years a full visit based on all six standards.

Superintendent’s Recommendation

The State Board should:

- grant Continuing Accreditation to McKendree College;
- grant Continuing Accreditation to Knox College but require a written report on identified weaknesses in six months; and
- authorize the Superintendent to inform the colleges of the State Board’s decisions.

Next Steps

Staff will contact representatives of each institution to explain the State Board’s decision and to provide assistance in resolving the cited weaknesses.