## TOPIC: DEGREE AUTHORIZATION – renewal of full authorization for ROCKY VISTA UNIVERSITY

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1. **SUMMARY**

This consent item concerns renewal of full authorization for Rocky Vista University pursuant to the Degree Authorization Act (§23-2-101 C.R.S.).

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## BACKGROUND

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) has statutory responsibility for administration of Title 23, Article 2 of the Colorado Revised Statutes, commonly referred to as the Degree Authorization Act (DAA). The Act sets out the terms by which the Commission may authorize accredited private colleges and universities, out-of-state public colleges and universities, and seminaries and bible colleges to operate in Colorado.

The DAA outlines the Department’s jurisdiction over private education programs available to Colorado residents. The DAA establishes standards to (1) prevent misrepresentation, fraud, and collusion in offering educational programs to the public and (2) protect, preserve, foster, and encourage the educational programs offered by private educational institutions, which meet generally recognized criteria of quality and effectiveness as determined through voluntary accreditation.

Pursuant to statute and policy, all institutions authorized under the DAA must renew that authorization periodically. The renewal period varies by the type of authorization that the institution holds from the CCHE. A private college or university that has full authorization “shall apply for renewal of authorization in accordance with the schedule for institutional reaccreditation by its accrediting body or every three years, whichever is longer.”

Full authorization is awarded to institutions that demonstrate consistent compliance with statute and policy, which are institutionally accredited by an institutional accrediting agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and has had a successful on-site review or reaffirmation of accreditation for its Colorado location(s). These institutions are subject to the deceptive trade practice provisions in §23-2-104, C.R.S.

Rocky Vista University is a private, for-profit medical school that has been operating in Colorado as an accredited institution since 2008. The University is accredited by the Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation and by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and currently offers three programs from its Colorado campus:

* Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO)
* Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS)
* Master of Biomedical Sciences (MSBS)

Through its self-reporting, the University reported 1,831 students for Calendar Year 2022.

1. **STAFF ANALYSIS**

Pursuant to CCHE Policy Section I, Part J, the institutional accreditation cycle triggers the renewal of authorization for institutions that are awarded Full Authorization by the CCHE. The Higher Learning Commission’s Institutional Actions Council continued the accreditation of Rocky Vista University with the next reaffirmation of accreditation in 2033-34. HLC accreditation assures quality by verifying that an institution meets threshold requirements and is engaged in continuous improvement. All institutions are required to submit data annually in their institution update, undergo annual monitoring of financial and non-financial indicators, and adhere to HLC policies and practices.

With the renewal of accreditation by HLC, Rocky Vista University applied to the Department in July 2024 for renewal of Full Authorization in accordance with the CCHE policy, Section I, Part J. Rocky Vista University will undergo a site visit review by the Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation in AY2025-2026.

In addition to renewing and maintaining its accreditation, Rocky Vista University continues to meet and comply with all requirements for authorization to operate in Colorado. In a review of the Department’s student complaint database, there are no outstanding complaints against Rocky Vista University.

Upon review of the HLC reaffirmation letter and the Seminary’s continued compliance, Department staff recommend Rocky Vista University for the renewal of Full Authorization.

1. **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff recommends the Commission approve the renewal of Full Authorization for Rocky Vista University.**

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

C.R.S §23-2-103.3(5) A private college or university that has authorization from the commission pursuant to this section and maintains its accreditation shall apply to the department for reauthorization in accordance with the schedule for reaccreditation by its accrediting body or every three years, whichever is longer. A seminary or religious training institution shall apply for reauthorization every three years. A private college or university or seminary or religious training institution that seeks reauthorization shall submit an application in accordance with the procedures and policies adopted by the commission and shall pay the reauthorization fee established by the commission pursuant to [section 23-2-104.5](http://web.lexisnexis.com/research/buttonTFLink?_m=0440209b70196c0a450023ec95de11c7&_xfercite=%3ccite%20cc%3d%22USA%22%3e%3c%21%5bCDATA%5bC.R.S.%2023-2-103.3%5d%5d%3e%3c%2fcite%3e&_butType=4&_butStat=0&_butNum=3&_butInline=1&_butinfo=COCODE%2023-2-104.5&_fmtstr=FULL&docnum=1&_startdoc=1&wchp=dGLzVzB-zSkAb&_md5=fccf21cdb05ad81de4864a4d217ac5a1).