BOARD OF REGENTS
BRIEFING PAPER

1. Agenda Item Title: *Handbook* Revision, Title 4, Chapter 10, *new* Section 32
Requiring Use of Electronic Approvals

Meeting Date: December 5-6, 2013

2. BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

Many documents continue to be circulated for handwritten signatures. This practice is inefficient and adds unnecessary costs to routine operations. However, authorization is needed to allow the use of electronic approvals in lieu of handwritten signatures. The proposed policy provides this authorization and requires the use of electronic approvals whenever possible so long as their use is consistent with, and not prohibited by, any applicable state or federal law or NSHE policy. Under the proposed policy revision, institutions must expeditiously develop procedures to implement electronic approvals and to identify, evaluate, and document where electronic approvals are required.

3. SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

Require use of electronic approvals whenever possible so long as their use is consistent with, and not prohibited by, any applicable state or federal law or NSHE policy. Institutions shall expeditiously develop procedures to implement electronic approvals and to identify, evaluate, and document where electronic approvals are required.

4. IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

Circulating documents for signature is time consuming, inefficient and costly and the practice should be revised as soon as possible.

5. BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

- Many higher education institutions already utilize electronic approvals to improve efficiency, timeliness and cost savings.
- Authorization is needed to allow NSHE to utilize electronic approvals.
- NSHE will reap efficiency and cost saving gains from adoption of the proposed policy.

6. POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

It is generally preferable to obtain original handwritten signatures on at least one copy of a document as such original signatures may be useful in establishing the validity of signatures in the event of a dispute.

7. ALTERNATIVE(S) TO WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED/RECOMMENDED:

Continue to use handwritten signatures.

8. COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:

- ❑ Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title #_____ Chapter #_____ Section #_____
- ☑ Amends Current Board Policy: Title #___4__ Chapter #_10____ *new* Section #____32___
- ❑ Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter #_____ Section #_____
- ❑ Other:_____
- ❑ Fiscal Impact: Yes_____ No__X___
     Explain:_____

[Add new Section 32]

Section 32. <u>Use of Electronic Approvals</u>

1. ***The Board of Regents supports the development and use of electronic approval processes to promote efficiency and cost savings. Institutions shall use electronic approval processes in lieu of handwritten approvals whenever possible so long as their use is consistent with, and not prohibited by, any applicable state or federal law or NSHE policy.***
2. ***Institutions shall expeditiously develop procedures to implement electronic approvals and to identify, evaluate, and document where electronic approvals shall be required.***
3. ***Regardless of the method for implementing electronic approvals, each method shall support the following functions:***
   a. ***Confidentiality – protect content from unauthorized access, so that only the intended audience can view it.***
   b. ***Authenticity – Assure that the document truly comes from the signer.***
   c. ***Integrity – detect unintentional or malicious alteration.***
   d. ***Maintenance – maintain confidentiality, authenticity, and integrity of the record from origination through the entire business process.***
   e. ***Accessibility – allow access to the document across all platforms.***
4. ***At a minimum, such procedures shall:***
   a. ***Identify the person by position who is authorized to sign, approve, and/or prevent unauthorized actions from being taken as a result of an electronic approval and to ensure an appropriate audit trail.***
   b. ***Follow NSHE policies and procedures applicable to contracts.***
   c. ***Include an appropriate form of user authentication (e.g., username/password, PIN, email verification, or digital certificate) with audit capability.***
5. ***Any individual or party that makes inappropriate or illegal use of electronic approvals is subject to sanctions up to and including suspension, dismissal and criminal prosecution as specified in Board policies and state laws.***