## Louisiana Believes

## Course Choice Year 2 Request for Applications (RFA): 2013 Louisiana Course Choice Application Guide

# John White State Superintendent of Education September 25, 2013

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#### **Timetable for Year 2 Course Choice RFA Processes**

Process Step	Target Date	Process Step	Target Date
Year 2 RFA Released	Sept. 25	Interview Period	Oct 15 – Nov 26
Course Choice Year 2 Webinar	Oct. 3	Independent Review Panels Period	Nov 1 – Dec 13
Application Period	Sept. 25 – Nov. 1	BESE Approval: Course Providers /Incubators	Jan, 2014

Register to receive all Course Choice Year 2 communications at: <a href="mailto:CourseChoice@la.gov">CourseChoice@la.gov</a>





#### **Section 1: Course Choice Year 2 Objectives**

Course Choice is an integral component of *Louisiana Believes*, helping Louisiana students achieve ambitious academic and job readiness goals, while contributing to the state's policy goal of preparing our students to obtain post-secondary degrees and high-quality, high-wage 21<sup>st</sup> Century careers.

In Year 2 of the program, the primary goals of Course Choice as envisioned in Act 2 will remain the same:

- give students and their parents/caregivers unprecedented choice in developing personal educational pathways;
- provide innovative career and technical education courses, internships and apprenticeships
  that will prepare students for the types of jobs Louisiana needs filled by Louisiana graduates in
  order for the state to prosper;
- motivate academically-focused students to graduate high school on time or early, many with

college credits to prepare them for postsecondary academic and career success;

- offer high-quality K 8 courses; and
- help students who are behind their class level catch up and graduate on time.

Louisiana's Course Choice program will continue to recruit traditional and non-traditional course providers to offer a comprehensive selection of rigorous academic and career course offerings.

In its first year of implementation Course Choice has:

#### Louisiana Course Choice Program Goals

- Students have unprecedented choice in developing personal educational pathways
- Students successfully complete industry-based certification courses, internships and/or apprenticeships
- Students graduate with the skills to enter postsecondary programs and workforce-ready
- Students in grades K 8 have access to high quality course offerings
- Students graduate on time or early
- completed an application/selection process that resulted in BESE approval of a cohort of high-quality course providers;
- developed and deployed an online parent/student registration system scalable to accommodate a growing Course Choice program; and
- launched a Course Choice counselor assistance center, staffed by experienced, professional school counselors, to support parents, students, and their school counselors in selecting Course Choice course offerings.

In its second year of implementation, Course Choice will become a "content driver."

Using Innovation Targets, Course Choice Year 2 will recruit course providers capable of developing course offerings that help Louisiana students of all interests and abilities develop critical literacy, numeracy, life, and job skills.



#### Section 2: Year 2 RFA Application / Selection Processes

The table below outlines the parallel RFA processes for course providers and course incubators.

	Course Provider RFA Process
Sept. 25	RFA released on LDOE website: www.LouisianaBelieves.com
Oct. 3	Course Choice Year 2 Webinar
Sept. 25 – Nov 1 Application Period	Course provider applicants submit an online application in the Course Choice portal  Rejected applicants receive feedback, one opportunity to resubmit application.
Oct. 15 – Nov. 26 Interview Period	Accepted applicants participate in a multi-phase interview (pre-interview submission, interview, follow-up Q&A).
Nov. 1 – Dec. 13 Independent Review Panels	LDOE schedules and convenes third party independent review panels to review applicants designated "Proceed" based on their interview.
January 2014 BESE Approval	BESE considers course providers recommended for approval by LDOE.

Year 1 course provider applicants that were not BESE-approved will be allowed to re-enter the Year 2 RFA process where they were eliminated in Year 1 (e.g. an applicant designated *Do Not Proceed* after its Year 1 interview will be allowed to update its application and immediately enter the Interview process)

The three-phase course provider RFA process will be a streamlined version of the Year 1 RFA process:

- <u>Step 1: Applications</u> course provider applications will be submitted online, and will be slightly shorter in Year 2, based on our Year 1 lessons learned. Rejected applicants will be allowed to revise and resubmit their application only <u>one time</u> based on the LDOE input they receive. *All submissions are due to be submitted online by 5pm CDT, November 1, 2013 no exceptions*;
- <u>Step 2: Interviews</u> course provider applicants with Accepted applications will proceed to a multi-phase interview process;
- <u>Step 3: Independent interview panels</u> course provider applicants that receive a *Proceed* designation from their Interviews will have their candidacies reviewed by an independent review panel; and
- Step 4: BESE review and approval/rejection.

The Course Choice Year 2 RFA process has a new feature – *Innovation Targets*.

Innovation Targets are "curricular aspirations," targets set by the Department in the hope that course providers will provide rigorous, relevant course offerings that provide Louisiana students with unprecedented academic, job-readiness and personal development opportunities.

Based on input from school districts and regional stakeholders (business leaders, foundation executives and regional economic development /workforce development experts), the Department developed the Innovation Targets for Course Choice Year 2 indicated on the next page.



#### **Course Choice Year 2 Innovation Targets**

- 1) **Expanded Opportunities for Career-Oriented Students** the Department is seeking applications from course providers that help Louisiana students attain high-wage careers in high-growth job sectors. Examples could include:
  - ✓ innovative ways to expand access to high-value Career and Technical Education (CTE) training courses (construction crafts, advanced manufacturing, transportation, energy, healthcare) for students in more remote school districts. Example: "portable" course offerings;
  - ✓ WorkKeys Gold and Platinum prep courses; and
  - ✓ rigorous academic course offerings relevant to high-growth job sectors in Louisiana. Example: an Applied Geometry: Construction course that meets all new expectations for student work.
- 2) **ELA and Math Skills-Based Content** the Department is seeking Louisiana teacher-designed ELA and math units that meet the new standards and expectations for student work, scalable modular content delivered online or face-to-face. Example: "best practices" courses and course materials developed by Louisiana teachers.
- 3) **Student Services** the Department is seeking applications from course providers that can offer services that address the specific needs of specific student populations. Example could include:
  - <u>Counseling</u> course providers that offer college and/or career planning services;
  - <u>Occupational Therapy</u> course providers that offer occupational therapy or other services that help special needs students attain their full individual potential;
  - <u>HiSET Prep</u> course providers that can provide a HiSET curriculum on a flexible calendar and in different modalities;
  - <u>Arts and Music</u> course providers that can offer a suite of Arts and Music courses aligned to TOPS standards.

While the Department welcomes all course provider applicants, Course Choice Year 2 will focus on receiving and reviewing applications from course providers that can address one of the Innovation Targets indicated above.



#### Section 3: Required Application Components/Required Application Format

The LDOE has designed the Course Choice application package to collect only the essential information necessary for LDOE to Approve or Reject an application. This Year 2 application is a streamlined version of the Year 1 application template. *The Year 2 application will be entirely electronic, submitted online*.

#### **Application Instructions for Course Providers**

All applications must submit their applications online – please click on the following URL:

#### https://lacoursechoice.fluidreview.com/

Utilizing an online application portal will streamline both the process of preparing applications for course providers and the evaluation of applications by the LDOE, Independent Review Panels and BESE.

**Applications page limits will be limited electronically.** No cover letters, executive summaries or organizational marketing materials will be accepted. Instructor resumes will be requested from course providers invited to participate in the interview stage.

Cou	Course Choice Course Provider Application Template: Required Components Description			
Section	Application Section	Page Limit *	Template Section Components	
1	Application Summary Sheet	1	Contact information, firmographic information	
2	Provider Vision, Background and Capabilities	7	<ul> <li>Provider Vision/ Strategy</li> <li>Provider Background (history, leadership, strengths)</li> <li>Overview of Proposed Course Offerings</li> <li>Format /Technologies Used to Deliver Courses</li> </ul>	
3	Overview of Proposed Curriculum	8	<ul> <li>Curriculum Sources</li> <li>Proposed Instructional Materials</li> <li>Delivery Methods / Course Modalities</li> <li>Addressing Special Need Students</li> </ul>	
4	Instruction Quality	4	<ul> <li>History /Examples of Instructional Quality</li> <li>Instructor Qualifications (resumes exempt from page limit)</li> <li>Data Supporting Instructional Effectiveness</li> </ul>	
5	Accountability	3	<ul> <li>Specific Course Goals /Metrics</li> <li>Progress Monitoring</li> <li>Assessment /Accountability Systems</li> </ul>	
6	Proposed Tuitions	3	Tuition price bids, supporting documentation	
7	Provider Financial Structure /Strength	1	Completion of a financial strength and structure check-off questionnaire	
8	References	3	One page reference formats	
9	9 Signature Page		Not part of application package page limit	
* - the length of individual sections will be electronically limited				

The next section of this RFA provides detailed submission instructions for applications.



#### 1. Formatting and Submission Requirements

1.1. All applications must be uploaded using the link https://lacoursechoice.fluidreview.com/
The submission portal is completely intuitive. Any course provider with questions should contact Dave Lefkowith (lefty@la.gov) to receive written instructions and/or verbal guidance.

#### 1.2. Submission Protocols

- 1.2.1. Applications can be uploaded to the Course Choice RFA portal any time between 8 am CDT on September 25, 2013 until 5 pm CDT on November 1, 2013. 5 pm CDT on November 1, 2013 is the final submission deadline.
- 1.2.2. It is solely the responsibility of all applicants to make sure their application is uploaded by the final submission deadline. Applications that for any reason are not received by the final submission deadline will not be considered. No appeals will be considered.

#### 2. Applicant Code of Conduct

**2.1.** Applicants are responsible for determining that there will be no conflict or violation of the Ethics Code if the company is awarded the contract. Ethics issues are interpreted by the Louisiana Board of Ethics.

#### 3. Public Disclosure

- **3.1.** All materials submitted in response to this request become the property of state. Selection or rejection of an application does not affect this right.
- **3.2.** Only information that is in the nature of legitimate trade secrets or non-published financial data may be deemed proprietary or confidential. Any material within an application identified as such must be clearly marked in the applications and will be handled in accordance with the Louisiana Public Record Act, R.S. 44: 1-44 and applicable rules and regulations. Any application marked as confidential or proprietary in its entirety may be rejected without further consideration or recourse.
- **3.3.** By submitting, the applicant grants the Louisiana Department of Education the right and license to republish its application, if the Department so chooses, as an example or sample application for the edification of other applicants.

#### 4. Determination of Responsibility

- **4.1.** Determination of the applicant's responsibility relating to this RFA shall be made according to the standards set forth in LAC 34: 136. The State must find that the applicant:
  - 4.1.1. Has adequate financial resources for performance, or has the ability to obtain such resources as required during performance.
  - 4.1.2. Has the necessary experience, organization, technical qualifications, skills, and facilities, or has the ability to obtain them.
  - 4.1.3. Is able to comply with the proposed or required time of delivery or performance schedule.
  - 4.1.4. Has a satisfactory record of integrity, judgment, and performance
  - 4.1.5. Is otherwise qualified and eligible to receive an award under applicable laws and regulations.

Applicants should ensure that their application contains sufficient information for the State to make its determination by presenting acceptable evidence of the ability to perform the services called for by this RFA.



#### 5. Right to Prohibit Award

**5.1.** In accordance with the provisions of R.S. 39:2192, in awarding contracts after August 15, 2010, any public entity is authorized to reject an application from, or not award the contract to, a business in which any individual with an ownership interest of five percent or more has been convicted of or has entered a plea of guilty or *nolo contendere* to any state felony or equivalent federal felony crime committed in the solicitation or execution of a contract or bid awarded under the laws governing public contracts under the provisions of Chapter 10 of Title 38 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, professional, personal, consulting, and social services procurement under the provisions of Chapter 16 of this Title, or the Louisiana Procurement Code under the provisions of Chapter 17 of this Title.

#### 6. RFA Addenda

**6.1.** The State reserves the right to change the calendar of events or revise any part of the RFA by issuing an addendum to the RFA at any time.

#### 7. Waiver of Administrative Informalities

**7.1.** The State reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to waive administrative informalities contained in any applications.

#### 8. Application Rejection

**8.1.** Issuance of this RFA in no way constitutes a commitment by the State to award a contract. The State reserves the right to accept or reject, in whole or part, all applications submitted and/or cancel this announcement if it is determined to be in the State's best interest.

#### 9. Withdrawal and Re-submission of Applications

**9.1.** An applicant may withdraw an application that has been submitted at any time up to the date and time the application is due. To accomplish this, a written request signed by the authorized representative of the applicant must be submitted to the RFA Coordinator.

#### **10. Subcontracting Information**

- **10.1.** The State shall have a single prime contractor as the result of any contract negotiation, and that prime contractor shall be responsible for all deliverables referenced in its application. This general requirement notwithstanding, applicants may enter into subcontractor arrangements; however, they should acknowledge their total responsibility for the entire contract.
  - If the applicant intends to subcontract for portions of the work, the applicant should include specific designations of the tasks to be performed by the subcontractor. Information required of the applicant under the terms of this RFA may be required for each subcontractor.
- **10.2.** Unless provided for in the contract with the State, the prime contractor shall not contract with any other party for furnishing any of the work and professional services herein contracted for without the express written approval of the State.



#### 11. Cost of Preparing Applications

**11.1.** The State is not liable for any costs incurred by prospective applicants prior to issuance of or entering into a contract. Costs associated with developing an application, preparing for oral presentations and interviews, and any other expenses incurred by the applicants in responding to this RFA are entirely the responsibility of the applicants, and shall not be reimbursed in any manner by the State of Louisiana.

#### 12. Errors and Omissions in Applications

**12.1.** The State will not be liable for any errors in applications. The State reserves the right to make corrections or amendments due to errors identified in applications by the State or the applicant. The State, at its option, has the right to request clarification or additional information from the applicants.

#### 13. Corporation Requirements

**13.1.** If the contractor is a corporation not incorporated under the laws of the State of Louisiana, the contractor shall have obtained a certificate of authority pursuant to R. S. 12:301-302 from the Secretary of State of Louisiana.

If the contractor is a for-profit corporation whose stock is not publicly traded, the contractor shall ensure that a disclosure of ownership form has been properly filed with the Secretary of State of Louisiana.



#### Section 4: Application Eligibility Standards/Application Evaluation Criteria

Eligibility Standards – the enabling legislation for Course Choice established basic eligibility standards that all course providers <u>must</u> meet. Successfully addressing these eligibility standards is a requirement for all applications, but not sufficient for an application to be accepted into the interview stage.

These eligibility standards as articulated in the enabling legislation are:

### "Ticket to Play" Application Eligibility Standards (established in enabling legislation)

- 1) Course provider complies with law and rules
- 2) Proposal is valid, complete, financially well-structured, educationally sound
- 3) Proposal provides a plan for collecting data in accordance with R.S. 17:3911 (course evaluation/ accountability). See **Section 5: List of Appendices** for links that provide details on the required components for this data collection
- 4) Course offers potential for increased learning opportunities and access to quality education for all Louisiana students

For the purposes of evaluating the course provider applications submitted, the LDOE will interpret these eligibility standards as indicated in the table below.

Eligibility Standard	How the Eligibility Standard will be Assessed		
See page 4 above for table: "Course Choice Application Template: Required Components Description"			
Course provider complies	Applicant submits a complete application with all required components		
2) Proposal is valid	Applicant's Sections 3 and 4 of Course Choice Required Application Components confirm the applicant's proposal is educationally sound; Section 7 confirms the applicant is financially well-structured		
3) Proposal provides plan	Applicant's Sections 5 of Course Choice Required Application Components confirms the applicant has an acceptable plan for accountability data collection		
4) Course offers potential	Applicant's Sections 2, 3, 4 and 6 indicate: a) an understanding of Louisiana's standards for course materials; b) acceptance of Louisiana's commitment to educate all our children; c) the vision and ability to offer high-quality courses that will help Louisiana students succeed academically and prepare them for the workforce; and d) an ability to offer courses at a competitive, cost-effective tuition		

All prospective Course Choice course providers <u>must</u> submit an application package that successfully addresses <u>every one</u> of these application eligibility standards.

All determinations of whether an application meets these eligibility standards will be indicated on a "pass/fail" basis.



*Evaluation Criteria* – to ensure the highest quality Course Choice course offerings the LDOE developed more demanding *evaluation criteria* for RFA applications. These evaluation criteria are:

#### "Comparative Assessment" Application Evaluation Criteria

- 1) Ability of course provider to help Louisiana achieve key education goals
- 2) Commitment of course provider to serve special needs students
- 3) Quality of course content /course design /proposed instructors
- 4) Commitment of course provider to accountability
- 5) Cost effectiveness

The LDOE will interpret these evaluation criteria as indicated in the table below.

Evaluation Criteria		How the Evaluation Criteria will be Assessed: Evaluation Sub-Components
1)	Ability of course provider to help	Provider illustrates how its course offering(s) will help Louisiana achieve one or more of the state's Course Choice Program Goals:
	Louisiana achieve	Students enter the next, age-appropriate grade on time and on level
	key education goals	<ul> <li>Students successfully complete rigorous and advanced high school and post-secondary course work</li> <li>Students successfully complete industry-based certification courses, programs, internships and/or apprenticeships based on Pathways to Careers</li> </ul>
		Students graduate on time or early
		Students graduate with the skills to enter post-secondary programs or workforce-ready
2)		2a) Provider has a plan of action to serve special needs students
	course provider to serve special needs	2b) Provider has materials designed to serve special needs students
	students	2c) Provider agrees to implement accommodations for a student's individualized education plan
3)	Quality of course content / course	3a) Curriculum sources are named; a listing of course instructional materials, facility requirements, and/or technologies is provided
	design / proposed	3b) Core courses are aligned with current Louisiana state standards
	instructors	3c) Industry-based courses are aligned with Louisiana state adopted guidelines or industry-based standards
		3d) Dual enrollment courses meet the standards grade-level expectations for the high school course for which the student is receiving credit and for college credit as established by the Board of Regents
		3e) All instructional staff members are fully certified in the areas in which they teach per Louisiana requirements; data are provided indicating instructor effectiveness
4)	Commitment of	4a) Provider offers clear and rigorous standards for student achievement
	course provider to	4b) Provider offers detailed systems for timely and complete student achievement reporting
	accountability	4c) Provider offers a description of how data will be collected and analyzed for student assessment
		4d) Provider utilizes accepted standards for academic performance and job skill certification
		4e) Provider provides clear standards for reporting its performance
5)	Cost effectiveness	5a) Course tuition is at or below the maximum tuition provided by the MFP (see table, page 8)
		5b) Provider can justify that its course tuition bid(s) is/are at fair market value
		5c) Provider relates its proposed tuition for the course to class materials, activities and quality

All determinations of whether an application meets these evaluation criteria will be indicated on a "pass/fail" basis.



Evaluation Process Notes – LDOE evaluation teams will evaluate every course provider's application package versus the eligibility standards described above. Application packages that do not "pass" all four eligibility standards will be rejected.

Applicants will be able to revise and resubmit their application package <u>one time</u> should they choose to do so.

LDOE evaluation teams will then assess application packages that "pass" all four eligibility standards versus the five evaluation criteria. Applications packages must "pass" on each evaluation criterion, but for each application LDOE does <u>not</u> have to address each of the evaluation sub-components (articulated on page 11) to achieve a passing grade. If an application package achieves a "pass" on a majority of sub-criteria, then the application package will achieve a "pass" for that evaluation criterion.

A course provider's application package will be accepted for interview if:

- the application package achieves a "pass" on all four eligibility standards;
- the application package achieves a "pass" on all five evaluation criteria; and
- the application package conforms with all of the RFA's administrative and legal requirements.

LDOE will provide a detailed description of the interview evaluation process *only* to applicants who are accepted for an interview. These interview evaluation guidelines will explain how course providers can successfully move from the interview stage forward to the evaluations by the Independent Experts Panel and BESE.

BESE is responsible for the final evaluation and approval or rejection of all course provider applications.

No appeals will be considered at any stage. All determinations of accepted/rejected and proceed/do not proceed are final.

Unsuccessful course providers/applicants are encouraged to submit new proposals during future Course Choice RFA application processes.



#### **Section 5: List of Appendices**

The following appendices will provide applicants with useful information regarding BESE, the LDOE, the State's educational standards and goals, and other topics relevant to the Course Choice RFA process.

Appendices Table 1: Course Choice Enabling Legislation			
Title/ Subject of Appendix	URL Link	Information Included	
Act 2/HB 976 (2012 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature)	http://www.legis.state.la.us/billdata/b yinst.asp?sessionid=12RS&billtype= ACT&billno=2	Enabling legislation for the Course Choice program	
Bulletin 132: Louisiana Course Choice Program	http://bese.louisiana.gov/documents -resources/policies-bulletins	State Department of Education policy related to Course Choice.	
Bulletin 741: Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators http://bese.louisiana.gov/docum-resources/policies-bulletins		Policies passed by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to govern the operation of public elementary, middle, and secondary schools.	

Appendices Table 2: Louisiana Course Content Guidelines/Requirements			
Title/Subject of Appendix	URL Link	Information Included	
Career and Technical Education Course Guidelines	http://bese.louisiana.gov/docu ments-resources/policies- bulletins	A listing of career and technical education public school courses offerings and guidelines for individual courses.	
Course Code Catalog	Available upon request	A listing of courses and course codes used to track students' high school credit in the state Student Transcript System (STS).	

Appendices Table 3: Louisiana State Standards Requirements			
Title/Subject of Appendix	URL Link	Information Included	
Louisiana State Standards	http://www.louisianab elieves.com/academics /academic-standards	Academic standards define the knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn in a subject in each grade. Academic standards provide a clear path for students to gain the proficiency that is required to learn increasingly complex material in the next grade. Students who learn the knowledge and skills defined by the academic standards, year after year, are on track to graduate from high school on time and ready to enter college or the workforce	



Appendices Table 4: Special Education Requirements			
Title/Subject of Appendix	URL Link	Information Included	
Federal Government Section 508	http://www.section508.gov/#	Federal requirements for making educational web content equally accessible to people with disabilities	
Section 508 Checklist	http://webaim.org/standards/508/checklist	Practical guide for adhering to the requirements established in Section 508	
University of Washington publication	http://www.washington.edu/doit/Broch ures/Technology/distance.learn.html	Useful information on "Making Distance Learning Accessible to Everyone"	
University of Washington publication	http://www.washington.edu/doit/Broch ures/Technology/equal_access_uddl. html	Useful information on "Universal Design of Distance Learning"	
What Works with K – 12 Online Learning	http://www.iste.org/images/excerpts/K 12OLL-excerpt.pdf	Excerpt (Chapter 8) on "Exceptional Learners: Differentiated Instruction Online"	
University of Alaska Anchorage	http://edit.www.uaa.alaska.edu/accessibility/role/coursefacilitator.cfm	Guidelines for course facilitators	
National Center for Accessible Media (NCAM)	http://ncam.wgbh.org/experience_lear n/educational_media/accessible- online-learning-tea	Accessible online learning	



Appendices Table 5: Miscellaneous Resources			
Title/Subject of Appendix	URL Link	Information Included	
INACOL National Standards for Quality Online Courses	http://www.inacol.org /research/nationalsta ndards/iNACOL Cours eStandards 2011.pdf	National standards designed to provide states, districts, online programs, and other organizations with a set of quality guidelines for online course content, instructional design, technology, student assessment, and course management.	
INACOL National Standards for Quality Online Teaching	http://www.inacol.org /research/nationalsta ndards/iNACOL Teach ingStandardsv2.pdf	National standards that provide teachers a set of criteria for effective online learning to guarantee that the teachers are better able to understand the technology, new teaching methods and digital course content to foster a personalized online learning environment for every student.	
Louisiana Letter Grade Policy	http://www.louisiana believes.com/account ability/school-letter- grades	Louisiana has been grading schools for more than a decade. Since 1999, the state has issued School Performance Scores for public schools, which are based on data about student achievement. To more clearly communicate the quality of schools to parents and the public, Louisiana adopted letter grades based on School Performance Scores in 2010	
LA Accountability System	http://www.louisiana believes.com/account ability	Louisiana Believes starts with the premise that all students can achieve high expectations and master rigorous academic standards. If you believe all children can learn, then you must hold schools accountable for the performance of students.  Louisiana grades schools on a scale of A through F, just like students. Letter grades are easy for parents and the public to understand. The grades are calculated based on objective measures of student achievement, including test scores and graduation rates. Today, the number of A and B schools – 471 – is higher than the number of D and F schools – 461. In 2012, nearly one-third of all schools achieved expected growth	

Applicants should email <a href="mailto:CourseChoice@la.gov">CourseChoice@la.gov</a> to register to receive all LDOE communications about the Course Choice RFA process, and to review all publicly available information about the Course Choice RFA process at any time.