



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
& UNIVERSITIES

**REPORT of the
TASK FORCE on
DEGREE CREDIT CAPS**

March 25, 2008

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REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON DEGREE CREDIT CAPS

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

March 25, 2008

Executive Summary

The Task Force on Degree Credit Caps was established in the fall of 2007 by the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Office of the Chancellor, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. Members included representatives from the Academic and Student Affairs Leadership Council, college and university academic administrators, Inter Faculty Organization (IFO), Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF), Minnesota State College Student Association (MSCSA), Minnesota State University Student Association (MSUSA), Administrative and Service Faculty (ASF, formerly MSUAASF), and the Office of the Chancellor. The task force charge was to recommend policy and procedure related to statutory requirements for credit limitations on associate and baccalaureate degree programs within the system. Deliberation over the course of five meetings led to the recommendations shown below.

Task Force Recommendations. The recommendations speak to the three responsibilities outlined in the task force charge: a) identify criteria and processes for granting consistent exceptions to the legislatively prescribed degree credit limitations, b) propose timelines for implementation of required Board policy, and c) propose Board policy and Chancellor's procedure to support implementation of the legislative mandate. The recommendations also address applicability to specific award categories.

Recommendation on applicability to degree program categories

1. *Associate degrees.* All AA, AFA, AS and AAS degrees will be 60 credits unless a waiver is granted.
2. *Baccalaureate degrees.* All baccalaureate degrees will be 120 credits unless a waiver is granted.
3. *Diplomas.* The credit length of diploma programs shall be reviewed when affected by statute (136F.32 Degrees; Diplomas; Certificates) or credit length requirements of associate in applied science degree programs.

Recommendation on program waiver processes

All Awards.

1. Faculty members are responsible for preparing a multi-college/university or individual program-length waiver rationale and recommending a program credit length waiver request to college and university administrators according to accepted college or university processes.
2. Waiver requests for similar programs may be pursued on a multi-college/university basis when recommended by program faculty. Such requests should be processed on each participating campus according to accepted college or university processes.
3. Program advisory committees may provide recommendations on learning requirements. System policy requires student representation on college program advisory committees.
4. College and university administrators are responsible for ensuring that multi-college/university and individual program-length exemption requests are submitted to the Academic Programs Unit in the Office of the Chancellor according to accepted college or university processes.
5. Waiver requests will be posted 21 days for review and comment to a system-wide listserv that includes state and college or university leadership of student and faculty associations, and college and university administrators.

6. The Academic Programs Unit in the Office of the Chancellor is responsible for reviewing and recommending acceptance or denial of all program-length waiver requests to the Associate Vice Chancellor responsible for the Academic Programs Unit in Academic and Student Affairs.
7. Information regarding waiver processes, review criteria, rationale for decisions, and decisions reached will be publicly available on the Office of the Chancellor website.
8. Appeals related to waiver decisions will be processed through the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs.

AA degrees. See process for all awards.

AFA and AS degrees. See process for all awards. If a baccalaureate degree is 120 credits, associated AFA and AS degrees will be 60 credits unless a college or university agrees to a greater number of credits in transfer through an articulation agreement.

AAS degrees. See process for all awards.

Baccalaureate degrees. See process for all awards.

Diplomas. See process for all awards. Diploma program credit lengths will be reviewed when related degree programs are reviewed for a waiver.

Recommendation on program-length waiver criteria for all awards:

All Awards. (AA, AFA, AS, AAS and Baccalaureate Degrees; Diplomas)

Credit length exemptions may be granted when a compelling justification is documented by industry or professional accreditation standards for one or more of the following:

- A. Industry standards
 1. National or international program certification
 2. National or international standards, including skill standards
 3. A recommendation from a primary employer or from multiple employers within a program service area
 4. A recommendation from a program advisory committee in support of items 1-3 above.
- B. Professional standards
 1. National specialized program accreditation
 2. State licensure requirements
 3. National practices or standards
- C. Unique challenges
 1. Emerging or innovative programs
 2. Programs of special merit or need

Recommendation on implementation timelines:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Task</i>
January, 2009	Adoption of revised academic programs policy 3.36 and procedures 3.36.1
January- July, 2009	Colleges and universities begin: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewing degree credit lengths of all associate and baccalaureate degrees • preparing waiver requests, or • revising curriculum to conform to approved credit lengths. Office of the Chancellor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifies programs likely to be eligible for multi-college/university consistency and • establishes a process for managing system-wide meetings of affected programs.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Task</i>
July, 2009	State-level meetings begin to discuss similar credit lengths of associate and baccalaureate degrees when waiver requests are initiated by colleges and/or universities. Colleges and universities begin the review and revision of articulation agreements for associate in fine arts and associate in science degrees.
January, 2010 – July, 2010	State-level meetings continue. All associate in arts and bachelor of arts degree programs not seeking waivers are set at lengths of 60 and 120 credits, respectively.
July, 2010 – July, 2011	State-level meetings continue.
July 1, 2011	The Baer memo of 11/26/07 is fully implemented, resulting in the inclusion of prerequisites and negotiation of articulation agreements for associate in science degrees with at least one system university.
July, 2011 – January, 2012	State-level meetings continue.
July 1, 2012	Program credit length requirements for all associate and baccalaureate degrees are fully implemented.

Recommendation on proposed policy and procedure:

The task force recommended that policy and procedures be revised to reflect the applicability, process and criteria as outlined above. *(See Appendices E and F for draft policy and procedure.)*

NOTE: The task force report was prepared by Academic Programs Staff, Office of the Chancellor, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, Wells Fargo Place, 30 East 7th Street, Suite 350, St. Paul, MN 55101. For additional information, contact Dr. Ron Dreyer, phone 651-296-9596, e-mail ron.dreyer@so.mnscu.edu.

REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON DEGREE CREDIT CAPS

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

The purpose of the following report is to describe the processes and deliberations of the Task Force on Degree Credit Caps, and to communicate the subsequent recommendations to the Senior Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs, Office of the Chancellor, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

Background Information

Length of programs within Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

Consideration of program length in higher education aligns closely with development of public higher education opportunities in Minnesota, reaching back to periods when contact hours and quarter credits were the common measurement units. Technical Colleges translated contact hours into course credits some years before the 1995 merger of public colleges and state universities in Minnesota. During that same period, technical colleges participated in a process that helped establish a degree of consistency among similar program areas.

Two events occurring after the merger concerned program credits. The first was the December, 1996 approval of Board of Trustees policy 3.17 on Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates. This policy specified minimum and maximum credit lengths for programs. After the implementation date (August 15, 1998), programs exceeding the limits required special approval. The second event that affected program credits was the 1996 passage of legislation¹ that required universities and colleges within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system to convert programs from quarter credits to semester credits, with conversion to be completed by the start of the 1998-1999 academic year. As part of implementation of the 3.17 policy and 1996 legislation, institutions were permitted to exceed the upper credit limits for diploma, associate and bachelor's degree programs, provided approval was forthcoming from the Office of the Chancellor.

As a result of the parameters established in policy and procedure, program credit length requirements have been consistent since 1996. Policy 3.17 set credit lengths for associate in arts, associate in fine arts and associate in science degree programs at 60-64 semester credits; associate in applied science degree programs at 60-72 credits; and baccalaureate degree programs at 120-128 credits. Special approval by the chancellor is required when programs that exceed the policy credit limit are proposed.

In June 2007, the Board of Trustees approved the consolidation of eight academic program policies into one policy, Policy 3.36 Academic Programs. Procedure 3.36.1 Academic Programs, which implemented the new policy and specified program credit requirements, was signed by the chancellor shortly thereafter; the procedures went into effect on August 1, 2007. The new policy and procedures did not change credit length requirements for degree programs.

¹ *Minnesota Statute Chapter 212, HF No. 1856, Article 2, Section 4, Subd. 1.*

Selected examples from other states.

A limited review of studies focusing on program credit length in other states found that several states have examined time-to-degree credit hour issues. There continues to be considerable variation in program credit length among institutions, but some efforts are being made to reduce program length. For example, the state of Florida conducted a national survey of 75 public universities in 1995 to identify common practices related to program credit length in baccalaureate programs.² This study found that programs clustered in three groups: a) disciplines with low credit hour requirements, 120-124 credits; b) disciplines with moderate length, 124-126; and c) disciplines generally at 128 credits and a few exceeding 128. Florida subsequently reduced 506 of 614 baccalaureate programs to 120 credit hours.

Also in 1995, as a way to increase institutional efficiency, the Board of Regents for the University of Wisconsin system established a goal of decreasing attempted credits-to-degree from 145 to 140 by 2000-01. A follow-up analysis in 2002 showed that between 1993-94 and 2000-01, the UW System average number of credits-to-degree decreased from 145 to 137. All institutions reduced their average credits-to-degree. When reported in 2002, 80 percent of the degree programs required 120 credits; most of the programs requiring a higher number of credits are in education, allied health, and engineering.³

In 1998, the University System of Georgia—like the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system during that same period—changed from quarter credits to semester credits. In addition, however, the Georgia System proposed that baccalaureate degrees be capped at 120 semester hours. This was done out of a concern for “credit creep”, i.e., the addition of credit hour requirements as disciplines evolved, without corresponding reductions. As a result of the policy change, significant reductions in the total number of credit hours earned by graduates in FY 2000 were reported. The shift toward fewer credits required for degree program completion was viewed as representing savings to both the state and the students.⁴

In 2007, the California State University system reported that “. . . three-fourths of the programs now require 120 total semester units. About 85 percent have lowered their total unit requirement. Programs requiring more than 120 units most often are professionally oriented programs in such fields as engineering, computing, clinical sciences, journalism, and the arts (bachelor of fine arts and bachelor of music programs), as well as integrated programs of teacher preparation that incorporate both subject matter and professional preparation.”⁵

² Pitter, G. (1996) *Hours to Graduation: A National Survey of Credit Hours Required for Baccalaureate Degrees*, State University System of Florida.

http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED409776&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED409776

³ The University of Wisconsin System, Office of Policy Analysis and Research. *Institutional Efficiency and Student Success: The Relationship between Credits-to-Degree, Time-to-Degree and Graduation Rates.* See <http://www.uwsa.edu/opar/orb-im/index.htm>

⁴ University System of Georgia Board of Regents, Office of Strategic Research and Analysis. *Credit Creep and the Hours Cap: The Effects on Total Credit Hours Earned by Baccalaureate and Master's Degree Recipients.*

⁵ Written communication to Academic Program staff, Office of the Chancellor, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

Policy requirements in the Illinois Community College System place the length of associate in applied science (A.A.S.) programs at 64-credits. Consistent with these limits, the College of Du Page (the largest community college in Illinois) holds most A.A.S. programs at 64 credits. For those that are longer, 14 programs are between 65 and 69 credit hours long, and four programs exceed 70 credit hours. Many of the longer programs cluster in the allied health field.

While the studies reviewed did not report the criteria used to make decisions on the credit length of most programs, it can be observed that the programs with the highest credit hour requirements tended to include professional programs in such areas as health, education, and engineering. The general impetus to reduce program credit length appeared to stem from a concern for efficiency and wise use of resources.

Minnesota Legislation on Program Credit Lengths.

Concern for the increasing higher education costs to students led to action by the Minnesota Legislature in 2007.⁶ At that time a law was passed that requires the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees to adopt a policy by January 1, 2009 that sets the maximum number of semester credits required for a baccalaureate degree at 120 semester credits or the equivalent and the number of semester credits required for all associate degrees at 60 credits or the equivalent. The legislation specified that Board policy may provide for a process for granting waivers for specific degree programs in which industry or professional accreditation standards require a greater number of credits. (*See Appendix A, "Task Force Charge" for the full text of the statute.*)

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System Response.

The 2007 legislation on program credit lengths required institutions within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities to reduce the number of credits in most currently offered degree programs. The complexity of this undertaking raised concerns and issues that affect individual colleges and universities, and the system as a whole. Because of these factors, the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs convened a task force to examine the requirements of the legislation and develop recommendations for implementation. The work of the task force was viewed as being supportive of the System's strategic direction to "provide students with a full range of high-quality learning programs and services that respond to student needs and document student achievement."

Task Force on Degree Credit Caps

The task force charged with the responsibility of preparing recommendations for implementation of the legislation was organized during the fall semester, 2007. This time-limited group was charged with submitting a final report by January 31, 2008.

Charge to the task force.

The primary charge of the task force was to prepare recommendations for consideration by the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs. Specifically, the recommendations were to a) identify criteria and processes for granting consistent exceptions to the legislatively prescribed

⁶ H.F. 1063 (Chapter 144, Article 1, Sec. 4, Subd. 3)

degree credit limitations, b) propose timelines for implementation of required Board policy, and c) propose Board policy and Chancellor's procedure to support implementation of the legislative mandate. *(See Appendix A for the formal charge.)*

Membership.

Twenty-three members were appointed to the task force, with the structure and membership determined in accordance with current practices for representation of constituent groups. Since program credit length was viewed as primarily being an academic responsibility, the membership was comprised of representatives from the Academic and Student Affairs Leadership Council, college and university academic administrators, Inter Faculty Organization (IFO), Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF), Minnesota State College Student Association (MSCSA), Minnesota State University Student Association (MSUSA), Administrative and Service Faculty (ASF, formerly MSUAASF), and the Office of the Chancellor. *(See Appendix B for a listing of task force members.)*

Task force members were directed to keep the goal of meeting student needs in mind while representing their respective constituencies. They were also expected to communicate information on task force proceedings to their constituencies and to obtain input from constituents regarding proposed recommendations.

Meetings.

Five meetings were held by the task force. All sessions were held at the System offices in Saint Paul and convened by the task force representative from the Office of the Chancellor, in accordance with protocol adopted at the first session. Agendas, minutes, and discussion or background materials for upcoming meetings were posted on a website⁷ prior to each scheduled session.

As a means of expediting deliberations of the task force and engaging as many members as possible in task force meetings, arrangements were made to offer the option of participating through a WebEx™ connection or interactive television as well as coming to the actual meeting site.

Meetings were conducted using a format of full-group and sub-group processes to expedite the deliberations, with colleges and university representatives meeting in sub-groups to focus on issues specific to associate degrees and baccalaureate degrees. Consensus processes were used to develop a final report integrating findings and recommendations across the sub-groups.

Study, consultation and reporting processes.

The charge to the task force indicated that it may a) review and analyze approaches used by other institutions or systems, b) propose research questions to be addressed by staff to assist in deliberations, and c) obtain expert advice, as appropriate. In addition, a guiding principle for the task force was to bring transparency to the deliberations by sharing information regarding discussions and soliciting opinions on the content. The program review website, used to provide information and materials to task force members, was also publicized to faculty and student organizations, and to the Academic and Student Affairs Leadership Council. At each meeting, a specific agenda item featured

⁷ <http://www.programreview.project.mnscu.edu>

reports from individual task force members. Academic Programs staff from the Office of the Chancellor provided research and coordination assistance throughout the process.

Scope of the Review

Awards named in legislation.

The 2007 legislation specified credit limitations for associate and bachelor's degree programs within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. Graduate, diploma, and certificate programs were not included in the scope of the legislation. Table 1 provides a summary of the number of programs affected. When counted by institution (rather than by location), a total of 1,516 programs are covered under the legislation. Of the 944 associate degree programs, 43 currently have been approved to exceed policy limits, and the other 901 associate degree programs have credit lengths within the policy ranges of 60-72 or 60-64 credits. However, only 66 of these programs meet the legislative mandate of 60 credits. Of the 572 bachelor's degree programs offered within the system, five (5) currently have been approved to exceed policy limits, while 567 have credit lengths within the policy ranges of 120-128 credits. The limit of 120 credits would be met by 159 baccalaureate programs.

Award Class	Credit Status	Program Count (January 2008)
Associate (AAS)	60	41
	61 to 72	567
	over 72	31
Associate (AA, AS, AFA)	60	25
	61 to 64	268
	over 64	12
Bachelors	120	159
	121 to 128	408
	over 128	5
Total		1,516

Diploma program credit lengths are included in Table 2. Although diploma programs are not specifically mentioned in the statute, other legislation (*See Appendix C for MN Statute 136F.32*

Award Class	Credit Status	Program Count (January 2008)
Diploma	30 to 45	295
	46 to 60	124
	61 to 72	219
	over 72	8
Total		646

Degrees; Diplomas: Certificates, Subd.2) requires that all vocational or technical credits earned for a diploma or certificate shall be applicable to any available degree in the same program. Consequently, lengths of diploma programs may be affected by the lengths of related associate degree programs. Current policy sets diploma credit lengths at 31 to 72 credits and allows for exceptions. The data shown in the table indicate that of the 646 diploma programs currently offered, 8 are over 72 credits in length. If an associate in applied science degree program with a credit length of 60 credits is offered, a maximum of 45 credits could be transferred to

the associate program from the diploma program. The 351 programs over 45 credits could be affected.

Specified waiver criteria.

Although the legislation included all associate and baccalaureate degree programs within its scope, provisions were also made for granting exemptions when industry or professional accreditation standards provided justification for longer program credit lengths. These criteria have been important

bases for exceptions historically, and are reflected in past decisions on program credit length within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. For example, the October 6, 1998 memorandum to chief academic officers from the senior vice chancellor for academic and student affairs emphasized that credit length exceptions to the limits specified in Policy 3.17 would be considered in only three situations (note Figure 1 below). The cases reflect decision-rules that would justify more waivers than the current legislation allows.

The same memorandum stated that, in enforcing the 1999 limits, no exceptions would be granted for “grandfathered” programs or “prior agreements” with staff in the Office of the Chancellor. It also noted that certificate, master’s and specialist degree programs could not exceed policy limits, and that any college-level prerequisites must be included in the total credit length of the programs. The directive pointed out that parsing one program into two sequenced programs also would be unacceptable. Only the advanced technical certificate, specialized graduate certificate, master’s degree or specialist degree could require graduation from another program as a precondition for enrollment.

Figure 1. Excerpt from the October 6, 1998 Memorandum of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs:

“Credit length beyond the policy limits will be approved only if one or more of the following conditions exist: a) the length is required by a state or national licensing body or other regulatory agency, accrediting association, or board; b) the program is employer-sponsored where the employer specifies the required credits as a condition for conferring the award; or c) a formal task analysis has been conducted within the last three years and the results endorsed by an advisory committee. Request for a program length in excess of policy from a professional association or advisory committee is not sufficient for approval.”

Subsequent adaptations of policy show changes in the types of awards that could be offered (for example, advanced technical certificates and specialized graduate certificates are no longer offered and system universities have been authorized by the legislature to offer doctoral education in selected areas) as well as in the range of award programs where credit length exceptions could be considered. For example, current procedures allow approval of master’s degree programs of longer credit length when certain criteria are met.

Given the above history, the primary challenges faced by the task force were to identify exemption criteria within the parameters of the 2007 legislation, design implementation processes to assure consistency in granting exceptions to the legislative limits, propose language for Board policy and chancellor’s procedure to implement the legislation, and establish timelines. The following section of the report presents the types of information considered by the task force during its deliberations.

Deliberations of the Task Force

Identification of issues.

Early review of the legislation reinforced the understanding that its primary purpose was to benefit students by keeping the cost of education as affordable as possible. Consequently, examination of issues emerged through discussion of assumptions that would serve as a basis for making decisions related to the task force charge.

The assumptions presented in Table 3 were compiled after discussion of several draft iterations. The list reflects issues related to the scope of recommendations considered by the task

force as well as the respective responsibilities of various constituents involved in the decision-making process. These assumptions were applied in the development of subsequent proposals on degree program credit length and exemption criteria.

Table 3. Underlying Assumptions

1. **Legislation**—*Recommendations of the task force will implement H.F. 1063, Chapter 144, Article 1, Sec. 4, Subd.3.*
2. **Program Review**—*All associate degree programs over 60 credits and baccalaureate programs over 120 credits will be examined.*
3. **Phase-in Period**—*Adoption of procedures will require a reasonable phase-in period.*
4. **Roles**—
 - **Program advisory committees**, where present, provide a) information on industry standards and certifications, and b) recommendations on learning outcomes;
 - **Student representatives** participate in the waiver development process;
 - **Faculty members provide** a) rationale for program credit length waivers and b) recommend waiver requests to the institution administration;
 - **College and university administrators** recommend a waiver request to the Office of the Chancellor; and
 - **The Office of the Chancellor** a) reviews the waiver request, b) works with the institution(s) when possible to reach mutually agreeable conclusions regarding approval and c) provides public information.

Proposal for determining waivers.

The first responsibility of the task force cited in the task force charge concerned the preparation of recommendations that identified criteria and processes that would be used to determine whether a request to waive the legislative prescribed degree credit limitations would be granted. The recommendations also needed to address questions regarding applicability by specifying how various types of awards would be treated. In terms of applicability, the task force proposed to limit the length of all degrees to the lengths required by legislation, unless a waiver was granted. The task force agreed that all two year degrees would be 60 credits unless a waiver was granted. Similarly, all baccalaureate degrees would be 120 credits, unless a waiver was granted. Diplomas would also be subject to review where a related two year degree is involved.

The task force also proposed that a process be developed for determining waivers. For the most part, the process was applicable to all awards, with two exceptions that addressed the relationship between baccalaureate and associate degrees when the baccalaureate degree exceeds 120 credits, and the relationship between diplomas and other two year degrees. Considerations for determining an appropriate course of action included the a) transparency of the process and criteria to all parties, b) the levels and stages of involvement of faculty, students, college and university administrators, external parties, and the Office of the Chancellor, c) consistency of practices, and d) scope of the waiver, meaning that—in the case of some degree programs—a system-wide waiver might be warranted. (*See Appendix D for a flow chart of the waiver review process.*)

As proposed, waiver processes reflected group agreements on the guiding assumptions. Waiver processes were proposed to be consistent for all awards, with two exceptions: (1) for associate in science and associate in fine arts degree programs when related baccalaureate degree programs are set at 120 credits, and (2) for diploma programs when related degree programs are reviewed.

Finally, criteria for granting waivers were proposed according to award. All associate and baccalaureate degree programs would be subject to the waiver criteria as applied to all awards. The criteria addressed are those named in the legislation, i.e., industry and professional accreditation standards. The proposal specified the kinds of standards applicable to each criterion.

Proposal for implementation timelines

The second responsibility cited in the task force charge was to propose timelines for implementing the required Board policy. The resulting timelines outline the general processes and scheduled dates for various actions to accomplish the program credit length changes. The timeline begins with the January 1, 2009 date named in statute for the adoption of system policy and concludes with July 1, 2012 as the date when "full implementation" is expected. The timeline gives a general indication of the tasks to be accomplished during that time. However, it was recognized that colleges and universities likely would change program credit lengths before a scheduled date if a convenient time or event such as a regular review process were to occur.

Of particular note are the dual responsibilities of colleges and universities and the Office of the Chancellor during the January-July, 2009 time period. Colleges and universities will be considering waiver applicability for individual programs, while the Office of the Chancellor will be establishing a process for managing program credit waiver requests as well as involving faculty to identify programs that may require system-wide consistency of program credit length. Beginning in July, 2009, system-wide meetings would begin to determine similarity in credit length of programs. These meetings could continue through the spring semester of 2012.

Proposal for revised policy and procedures

The third responsibility of the task force was to recommend Board policy and Chancellor's procedure that would implement the legislative mandate. (*See Appendices E and F for the resulting recommendations.*) Suggested policy changes include the addition of a new subpart, "Subpart C to Part 3 – Authorized Academic Awards. Authority to exceed credit lengths of associate and baccalaureate degree programs". Proposed new policy language states that the Chancellor is responsible for approving requests for waivers to exceed credit lengths established in procedure.

More specific language on program credit length limitations is shown in revised Procedures 3.36.1 Academic Programs. Here provisions would be inserted into Part 3, subpart B, which defines awards. In addition, a new Subpart C - Authority to exceed approved credit lengths of associate and baccalaureate degrees, would be inserted.

The proposed revisions to policy 3.36 and procedures 3.36.1 will be forwarded through the system policy review process for subsequent review and recommendation to the Board of Trustees and the Chancellor.

Task Force Recommendations

The recommendations of the task force responded to the three responsibilities outlined in the task force charge: a) identify criteria and processes for granting consistent exceptions to the legislatively prescribed degree credit limitations, b) propose timelines for implementation of required Board policy, and c) propose Board policy and Chancellor's procedure to support implementation of the legislative mandate. The recommendations are shown below, including those regarding applicability to specific award categories.

Recommendation on applicability to degree program categories:

1. Associate degrees. All AA, AFA, AS and AAS degrees will be 60 credits unless a waiver is granted.
2. Baccalaureate degrees. All baccalaureate degrees will be 120 credits unless a waiver is granted.
3. Diplomas. The credit length of diploma programs shall be reviewed when affected by statute (136F.32 Degrees; Diplomas; Certificates) or credit length requirements of associate in applied science degree programs.

Recommendation on program waiver processes:

All Awards.

1. Faculty members are responsible for preparing a multi-college/university or individual program-length waiver rationale and recommending a program credit length waiver request to college and university administrators according to accepted college or university processes.
2. Waiver requests for similar programs may be pursued on a multi-college/university basis when recommended by program faculty. Such requests should be processed on each participating campus according to accepted college or university processes.
3. Program advisory committees may provide recommendations on learning requirements. System policy requires student representation on college program advisory committees.
4. College and university administrators are responsible for ensuring that multi-college/university and individual program-length waiver requests are submitted to the Academic Programs Unit in the Office of the Chancellor according to accepted college or university processes.
5. Waiver requests will be posted 21 days for review and comment to a system-wide listserv that includes state and college or university leadership of student and faculty associations, and college and university administrators.
6. The Academic Programs Unit in the Office of the Chancellor is responsible for reviewing and recommending acceptance or denial of all program-length waiver requests to the Associate Vice Chancellor responsible for the Academic Programs Unit in Academic and Student Affairs.
7. Information regarding waiver processes, review criteria, rationale for decisions, and decisions reached will be publicly available on the Office of the Chancellor website.
8. Appeals related to waiver decisions will be processed through the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs.

AA degrees. See process for all awards

AFA and AS degrees. See process for all awards. If a baccalaureate degree is 120 credits, associated AFA and AS degrees will be 60 credits unless a college or university agrees to a greater number of credits in transfer through an articulation agreement.

AAS degrees. See process for all awards.

Baccalaureate degrees. See process for all awards.

Diplomas. See process for all awards. Diploma program credit lengths will be reviewed when related degree programs are reviewed for a waiver.

Recommendation on program-length waiver criteria:

All Awards. (AA, AFA, AS, AAS and Baccalaureate Degrees; Diplomas)

Credit length waivers may be granted when a compelling justification is documented by industry or professional accreditation standards for one or more of the following:

- D. Industry standards
 - 1. National or international program certification
 - 2. National or international standards, including skill standards
 - 3. A recommendation from a primary employer or from multiple employers within a program service area
 - 4. A recommendation from a program advisory committee in support of items 1-3 above.
- E. Professional standards
 - 1. National specialized program accreditation
 - 2. State licensure requirements
 - 3. National practices or standards
- F. Unique challenges
 - 1. Emerging or innovative programs
 - 2. Programs of special merit or need

Recommendation on implementation timelines:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Task</i>
January, 2009	Adoption of revised academic programs policy 3.36 and procedures 3.36.1
January- July, 2009	Colleges and universities begin: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewing degree credit lengths of all associate and baccalaureate degrees • preparing waiver requests, or • revising curriculum to conform to approved credit lengths. Office of the Chancellor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifies programs likely to be eligible for multi-college/university consistency and • establishes a process for managing system-wide meetings of affected programs.
July, 2009	State-level meetings begin to discuss similar credit lengths of associate and baccalaureate degrees when waiver requests are initiated by colleges and/or universities. Colleges and universities begin the review and revision of articulation agreements for associate in fine arts and associate in science degrees.
January, 2010 – July, 2010	State-level meetings continue. All associate in arts and bachelor of arts degree programs not seeking waivers are set at lengths of 60 and 120 credits, respectively.
July, 2010 – July, 2011	State-level meetings continue.
July 1, 2011	The Baer memo of 11/26/07 is fully implemented, resulting in the inclusion of prerequisites and negotiation of articulation agreements for associate in science degrees with at

<i>Date</i>	<i>Task</i>
	least one system university.
July, 2011 – January, 2012	State-level meetings continue.
July 1, 2012	Program credit length requirements for all associate and baccalaureate degrees are fully implemented.

Recommendation on revised policy and procedure:

The task force recommended that policy and procedures be revised to reflect the applicability, process and criteria as outlined above. *(See Appendices E and F for draft policy and procedure.)*

Summary

As charged by the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, the Task Force on Degree Credit Caps developed recommendations on waiver applicability, criteria and processes; implementation timelines; and implementation policy and procedure.

Agreement was reached on the key issues associated with applicability, criteria and processes. As a result, the task force recommended that a) all associate and baccalaureate degrees would be set at the statutory limit unless a waiver was granted, and diploma program credit lengths would be reviewed when affected by statute or requirements of associate in applied science degree programs; b) waiver processes would be consistent for all awards, except for associate in science and associate in fine arts programs when related baccalaureate programs are set at 120 credits, and for diploma programs when related degree programs are reviewed; and c) all associate and baccalaureate degree programs would be subject to the statutory waiver criteria of industry and professional accreditation, as applied to all awards and interpreted through designated standards.

Implementation timelines were developed, beginning with the legislatively-named date of January 1, 2009 for adoption of related policy. Subsequent benchmarks were established for tasks that would need to be accomplished by colleges, universities and the Office of the Chancellor before the target date of full implementation by July 1, 2012.

Finally, the task force recommended revisions of existing Board policy and Chancellors procedure. In accordance with System practice, these revisions will form the basis for further review through other processes conducted by the Office of the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees.

Acknowledgments

Members of the Task Force on Degree Credit Caps express appreciation to their constituencies for providing information that assisted in the analyses of issues and development of recommendations. The communications from interested persons and organizations helped give full expression to concerns and ideas related to program credit lengths.

In particular, the following constituencies are recognized:

- *Academic and Student Affairs Leadership Council*
- *Inter Faculty Organization (IFO)*
- *Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF)*
- *Administrative and Service Faculty (ASF)*
- *Minnesota State College Student Association*
- *Minnesota State University Student Association*
- *Office of the Chancellor*

The Task Report was prepared by Academic Programs Staff, Office of the Chancellor, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, Wells Fargo Place, 30 East 7th Street, Suite 350, St. Paul, MN 55101. For additional information contact Dr. Ron Dreyer, phone 651-296-9596, e-mail ron.dreyer@so.mnscu.edu.

Appendix A: Charge to the Task Force



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
& UNIVERSITIES

MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS DIVISION

TASK FORCE ON DEGREE CREDIT CAPS

CHARGE DOCUMENT

The Legislative Mandate:

Higher Education Funding Bill [H.F. 1063 (Chapter 144)]

Article 1 Higher Education Appropriations

Section 4. Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

Subdivision 3. Board policies

(b) By January 1, 2009, the board must adopt a policy setting the maximum number of semester credits required for a baccalaureate degree at 120 semester credits or the equivalent and the number of semester credits required for an associate degree at 60 semester credits or the equivalent. The board policy may provide for a process for granting exemptions for specific degree programs in which industry or professional accreditation standards require a greater number of semester credits.

Task Force Purpose: The task force shall prepare recommendations that

- (a) identify criteria and processes for granting consistent exceptions to the legislatively prescribed degree credit limitations,
- (b) propose timelines for implementation of required Board policy, and
- (c) propose Board policy and Chancellor's procedure to support implementation of the legislative mandate

Linkages to Strategic Directions: The work of this task force supports Strategic Direction 3: *Provide students with a full range of high-quality learning programs and services that respond to student needs and document student achievement.*

Study, Consultation and Reporting Processes: The task force may (a) review and analyze approaches to degree credit limitations used by other institutions or systems; (b) propose research questions to be addressed by staff to assist in deliberations; and (c) obtain expert advice, as appropriate. Office of the Chancellor staff will develop an inventory of college and university programs by credit length to support the task force in this work.

Because of the complexity of this challenge and its differential impact on college and university programming, the task force will form two sub-groups to focus on issues specific to (a) associate degrees and (b) baccalaureate degrees. Using consensus, the task force will prepare one final report that integrates findings and recommendations across sub-groups. The task force and sub-groups may meet in person or by conference call, as needed.

The task force shall endorse the final report and submit it to Linda Baer, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, for dissemination to colleges, universities, and System faculty and student associations for review and comment.

Task Force Members: The Task Force on Degree Credit Caps shall have 23 members in the following categories:

- o 3 representing system college academic administrators,
- o 3 representing system university academic administrators,
- o 5 representing the Inter Faculty Organization (IFO),
- o 5 representing the Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF),
- o 2 representing the Minnesota State College Student Association,
- o 2 representing the Minnesota State University Student Association,
- o 2 designees from the Leadership Council, and
- o 1 Associate Vice Chancellor for Continuous Improvement.

Faculty representation from a variety of academic programs and disciplines is desirable.

Expectations of Task Force Members: Task force members shall keep the goal of meeting student needs in mind while representing their respective constituencies. Members shall communicate information on task force proceedings to their constituencies and obtain input from constituents regarding proposed recommendations.

Expenses: The Office of the Chancellor will pay travel expenses for faculty and student members. Institutions will be expected to pay expenses for administrators.

Timelines: This is a time-limited task force.

Start Date. The task force will convene October 12, 2007 or as soon as members have been named, which ever occurs first. The two designated sub-groups will meet as needed.

Target Completion Date. The target date for submitting the final report to Senior Vice Chancellor Baer is January 31, 2008.

Review Dates. The Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the Leadership Council will discuss the recommendations in February, 2008. Following consultation with the faculty unions and student organizations, recommendations will be presented and discussed with the full Leadership Council in March.

Office of the Chancellor Staff:

Staff Support. Selected staff from Academic and Student Affairs.

Resource/Specialist Staff. The task force will determine the need for staff expertise on academic issues, human resources, and/or financial factors, and request appropriate support.

Responsible Associate Vice Chancellor: Manuel López, manuel.lopez@so.mnscu.edu; 651/282-5520.

Appendix B: Task Force Membership

System college administrator representatives

Jan Doebbert, Alexandria Technical College
Diane Graber, Minnesota West Community and Technical College
Peggy Kennedy, Saint Paul College

System university academic administrator representatives

Brenda Flannery, Minnesota State University, Mankato
Bette Midgarden, Minnesota State University Moorhead

Inter Faculty Organization (IFO) representatives

Cathy Summa, Winona State University
Grover Cleveland, Metropolitan State University
Steve Kramer, Southwest Minnesota State University
Wil Shynkaruk, Minnesota State University Moorhead
Kate Smith, Bemidji State University

Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF) representatives

Greg Mulcahy, Century College
Bob Defries, Alexandria Technical College
Kathleen Pederson, Hennepin Technical College
Sue TenEycki-Stafki, Minnesota State Community and Technical College
Diane Vangness, Minnesota West Community and Technical College

Minnesota State University Association of Administrative & Service Faculty (MSUAASF) representatives

Michael Sharp, St. Cloud State University

Minnesota State College Student Association (MSCSA) representatives

Scott Formo, President, MSCSA
Jordan Brandt, Vice President, MSCSA

Minnesota State University Student Association (MSUSA) representatives

Kara Brockett, State Chair, MSUSA
JJ Jouppi, Executive Director, MSUSA

Leadership Council representatives

Ann Valentine, President, Minnesota State Community and Technical College
Earl Potter, President, St. Cloud State University

Office of the Chancellor representative

Manuel M. Lopez, Associate Vice Chancellor

Appendix C: Minnesota Statute 136F.32, Degrees; Diplomas; Certificates

136F.32 DEGREES; DIPLOMAS; CERTIFICATES.

Subdivision 1. **Approval.** The board may approve awarding of appropriate certificates, diplomas, or degrees to persons who complete a prescribed curriculum.

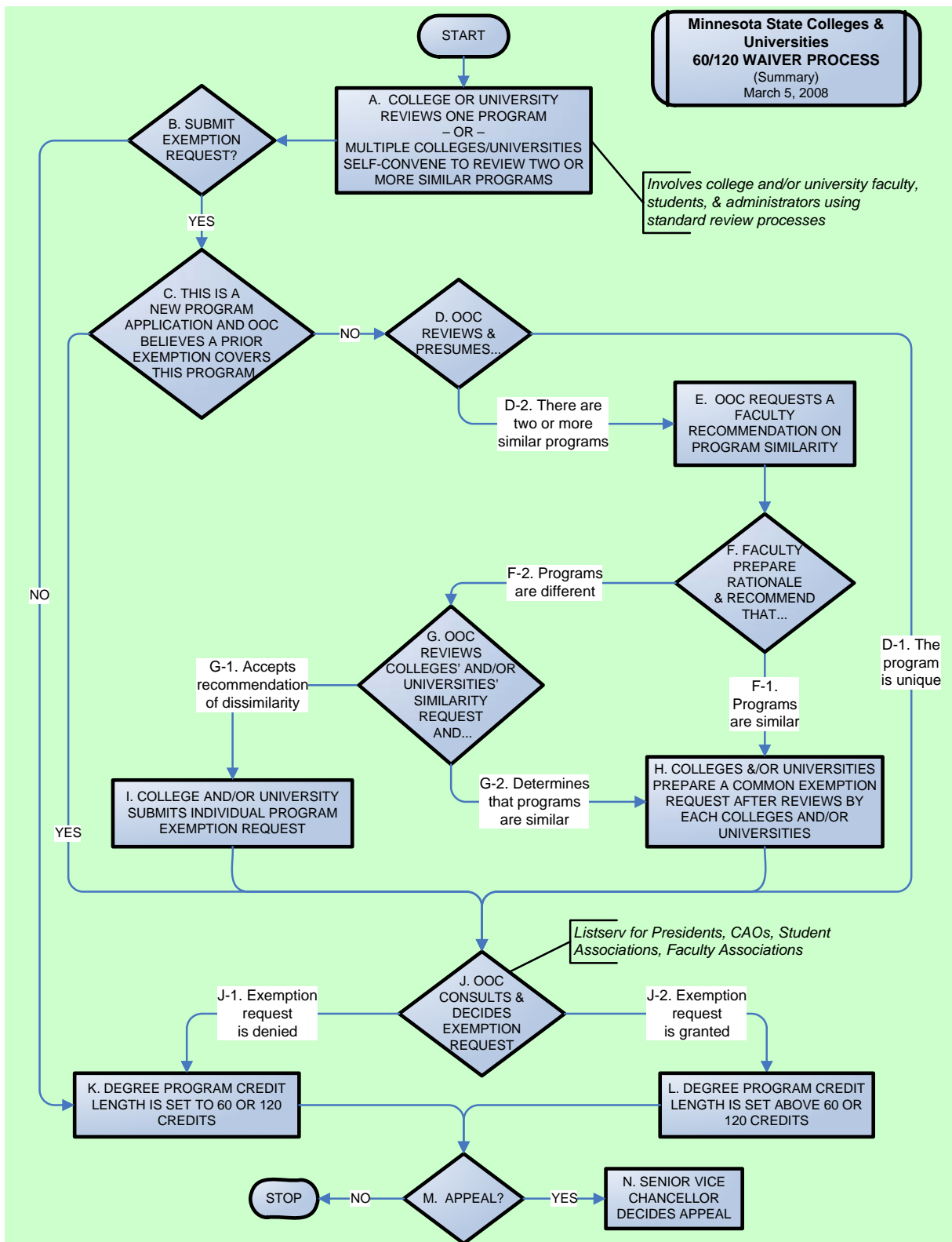
Subd. 2. **Technical and consolidated technical colleges.**

(a) A technical college or consolidated technical community college shall offer students the option of pursuing diplomas or certificates in each technical education program, unless the board determines that a degree is the only acceptable credential for career entry in a specific field. All vocational and technical credits earned for a diploma or certificate shall be applicable toward any available degree in the same program. (b) Certificates and diplomas are credentials that demonstrate competence in a vocational or technical area and, therefore, may include a general education component only as part of an articulation agreement or to meet occupational requirements as established by the trade or profession, or by the program advisory committee. Students shall be provided with applied training in general studies as necessary for competence in the program area. Students who have earned a certificate or diploma may earn a degree in the same field if they complete the general education and other degree requirements.

Subd. 3. **Assessment.** To reduce barriers to enrollment and to train a skilled workforce, students may be assessed for skills necessary for competency in a technical or vocational field as part of their program. The results of standardized assessment tests shall not prohibit enrollment in a student's certificate or diploma program.

History: 1995 c 212 art 4 s 27; 1997 c 183 art 3 s 20; 1999 c 214 art 2 s 14,15; 2005 c 107 art 2 s 32

Appendix D: Flow Chart of the Waiver Review Process



Appendix E: Proposed Board Policy 3.36 Academic Programs

MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
DRAFT POLICY
2/19/08

Proposed Amendment to Policy 3.36 Academic Programs

3.36 Academic Programs

Part 1. Purpose and Applicability. The purpose of the Academic Programs policy is to direct system decision-making regarding the development, approval and management of academic programs to meet Minnesota's educational needs. This policy applies to credit-based academic programs of system colleges and universities.

Part 2. Definitions. The following definitions have the meanings indicated for all Board policies unless the text clearly indicates otherwise.

Subpart A. Academic award. Academic award means a certificate, diploma or degree.

Subpart B. Academic program. Academic program means a cohesive arrangement of college-level credit courses and experiences designed to accomplish predetermined objectives leading to the awarding of a degree, diploma, or certificate. Most academic programs include a general education component. The purpose of an academic program is to:

1. increase students' knowledge and understanding in a field of study or discipline,
2. qualify students for employment in an occupation or range of occupations, and/or
3. prepare students for advanced study.

Subpart C. Academic program inventory. Academic program inventory means the official list of academic programs offered by system colleges and universities.

Subpart D. Credit. Credit means a quantitative measure of instructional time assigned to a course or an equivalent learning experience such as class time per week over an academic term.

Subpart E. General education. General education means a cohesive curriculum defined by faculty through system college or university procedures to develop reasoning ability and breadth of knowledge through an integration of learning experiences in the liberal arts and sciences.

Part 3. Authorized Academic Awards.

Subpart A. System college and university award authority. System colleges and universities have authority to confer academic awards only as specified below.

1. **Community colleges.** Community colleges have the authority to confer undergraduate certificates, diplomas, associate in arts, associate in fine arts, associate in science, and associate in applied science degrees.
2. **Consolidated colleges.** Consolidated colleges have the authority to confer undergraduate certificates, diplomas, associate in arts, associate in fine arts, associate in science, and associate in applied science degrees.

3. **Technical colleges.** Technical colleges have the authority to confer undergraduate certificates, diplomas, associate in science, and associate in applied science degrees.
4. **Universities.** Universities have the authority to confer undergraduate and graduate certificates and associate in arts, associate in fine arts, associate in science, baccalaureate, and graduate degrees.

Approval by the Board of Trustees is required for a system college or university to confer an academic award type for which specific authority is not granted in this policy.

Subpart B. Academic award characteristics. The chancellor shall specify the characteristics of academic awards.

Subpart C. Authority to exceed credit lengths of associate and baccalaureate degree programs. The chancellor is responsible for approving requests for waivers to exceed credit lengths established in procedure.

Part 4. Authority to Establish Academic Program Locations. Approval of the chancellor is required for establishment of a location at which an academic program may be offered.

Part 5. Academic Program Approval. Approval of the chancellor is required for new academic programs, changes to existing academic programs, suspension of academic programs, and closure of academic programs at system colleges and universities.

An approved academic program shall include curricular requirements for earning an academic award, such as credits in general education, a major and/or minor, and all prerequisite courses.

The chancellor shall maintain the academic program inventory. Only academic programs approved by the chancellor as recorded in the academic program inventory may be offered by system colleges and universities.

Part 6. Student Options when Academic Programs are Suspended, Closed, or Changed. A system college or university shall provide a student admitted to an academic program an opportunity, consistent with system college or university policy, to complete the academic program when it is suspended or closed or when the requirements have changed.

Part 7. Academic Review. Each system college and university shall regularly review its academic programs for the purpose of academic planning and improvement.

Each system college and university shall submit an annual summary of its academic program review activity to the chancellor.

The chancellor, as appropriate, may conduct statewide or regional reviews of academic programs or program clusters, report findings to the Board of Trustees and, when necessary, impose conditions on academic programs.

Date of Implementation: 8/01/07,

Date of Adoption: 6/20/07,

Date & Subject of Revisions:

6/20/07 - Repealed the following policies:

3.2 - Academic Program Inventory

3.10 - Academic Program Review

3.12 - Academic Program Suspension and Reinstatement and Closure

3.14 - Academic Program Approval

Procedure 3.14.1 - Addressing Transfer in Approval of New Programs

3.17 - Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates

Procedure 3.17.1 - Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates

3.19 - Academic Program Redesign.

3.20 - Academic Program Replication or Relocation.

3.25 - Degree Granting Authority.

Click here for additional 3.36 [HISTORY](#)

Appendix F: Proposed System Procedure 3.36.1 Academic Programs

MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
DRAFT PROCEDURE
2/19/2008

Proposed Amendment to Procedure 3.36.1 Academic Programs

Procedure 3.36.1 Academic Programs

Part 1. Purpose and Applicability.

Subpart A. Procedure Purpose. The purpose of academic program procedures is to establish standards, processes and conditions that enable consistent implementation of academic program policy.

Subpart B. Applicability. These procedures apply to policy 3.36 – Academic Programs.

Part 2. Definitions. The following definitions have the meanings indicated for all Board policies unless the text clearly indicates otherwise.

Subpart A. Academic award. Academic award means a certificate, diploma or degree.

Subpart B. Academic program. Academic program means a cohesive arrangement of college level credit courses and experiences designed to accomplish predetermined objectives leading to the awarding of a degree, diploma, or certificate. Most academic programs include a general education component. The purpose of an academic program is to:

1. increase students' knowledge and understanding in a field of study or discipline,
2. qualify students for employment in an occupation or range of occupations, and/or
3. prepare students for advanced study.

Subpart C. Academic program characteristics. Academic program characteristics are attributes that operationally describe an approved academic program and include:

1. name,
2. academic award,
3. federal Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) code,
4. credit length,
5. location(s),
6. emphases, if any,
7. articulation or collaborative agreements, if any, among institutions and parties, and
8. status (active, suspended, closed).

Subpart D. Academic program closure. Academic program closure means a change in status which permanently closes the academic program to new enrollment.

Subpart E. Academic program curriculum component. Academic program curriculum component is a program element with set requirements.

Emphasis. Emphasis means a focused component of an academic program.

Major. Major means a curriculum component of an academic program intended to provide in-depth study in a discipline, a professional field of study or an occupation. A major may include an academic program emphasis.

Minor. Minor means a curriculum component of limited depth and/or breadth within a baccalaureate academic degree program.

Other components. Other components of an academic program may include electives, required courses, and general education.

Subpart F. Academic program inventory. Academic program inventory means the official list of academic programs offered by system colleges and universities.

Subpart G. Academic program redesign. Academic program redesign is a change to an academic program characteristic.

Subpart H. Academic program reinstatement. Academic program reinstatement is a change from suspended to active status.

Subpart I. Academic program relocation. Academic program relocation occurs when an active academic program is closed at its present location and approved for delivery at a different location.

Subpart J. Academic program replication. Academic program replication occurs when an active academic program is offered at an additional location.

Subpart K. Academic program suspension. Academic program suspension is a change in status which temporarily closes the academic program to new enrollment.

Subpart L. Advisory committee. Advisory committee means a group established to provide guidance on academic program development and improvement including need, design, accountability, and closure.

Subpart M. Articulation agreement. Articulation agreement means a formal agreement between two or more educational entities to accept credits in transfer toward a specific academic program.

Subpart N. Collaborative agreement. Collaborative agreement means a formal agreement between two or more parties, at least one of which is a system college or university, to co-deliver an academic program. One or more colleges or universities signing the agreement may confer the award.

Subpart O. Course. Course means a set of designed learning experiences with defined outcomes.

Subpart P. Credit. Credit means a quantitative measure of instructional time assigned to a course or an equivalent learning experience such as class time per week over an academic term.

Subpart Q. Curriculum. Curriculum means a coherent set of instructional experiences designed through established system college and university procedures to achieve desired student learning outcomes. Curriculum may refer to an academic program, an academic program element such as the major, an instructional unit, the general education component, or the entirety of offerings of a college or university.

Subpart R. Fine arts. Fine arts include disciplines of creative writing, dance, music, theatre or the visual arts in which artistic purposes are primary.

Subpart S. General education. General education means a cohesive curriculum defined by system college or university faculty to develop general knowledge and reasoning ability through an integration of learning experiences in the liberal arts and sciences.

Subpart T. Graduate course enrollment. Graduate course enrollment specifies which students are permitted to enroll in a graduate course.

Master's dual-enrollment. Master's dual-enrollment courses are open to undergraduate students and graduate students at the master's level.

Master's. Master's courses are open only to graduate students at the master's level.

Doctoral dual-enrollment. Doctoral dual-enrollment courses are open to graduate students at the master's and doctoral levels.

Doctoral. Doctoral courses are open only to graduate students at the doctoral level.

Subpart U. Liberal arts and sciences. Liberal arts and sciences include the humanities, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences.

Subpart V. Location. Location means a geographic place where an institution has been approved to deliver an entire academic program.

Subpart W. Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. The Minnesota Transfer Curriculum comprises transferable general education courses that reflect competencies adopted by the public higher education institutions in Minnesota.

Subpart X. Mission statement. A mission statement conveys an institution's broad intentions and distinctive character; describes its primary educational programs and their purposes; recognizes the diversity of its learners; identifies the students to be served, including particular constituents; defines a primary service area and communicates a commitment to the advancement of society's values and common purposes and the advancement of excellence in higher learning. Use of this definition is restricted to this procedure and related guidelines, if any.

Subpart Y. New academic program. New academic program means an academic program identified by curricular content and an academic award that is significantly different from other academic programs at a system college or university.

Subpart Z. Online academic program. Online academic program means an academic program that is delivered entirely or almost entirely over the Internet. When pedagogically necessary, limited portions of an online academic program may require face-to-face instruction, professional practice or applied activities that are not appropriate for online delivery.

Subpart AA. Preparatory Course. Preparatory course means a lower-division college level course, outside of an academic program, that compensates for insufficient high school or equivalent preparation.

Subpart BB. Prerequisite Course. Prerequisite course means a college level course within an academic program that all students must complete before enrolling in another college level course or a major.

Subpart CC. System colleges and universities. System colleges and universities are colleges and universities governed by the Board of Trustees.

Colleges. System colleges means community colleges, technical colleges, and consolidated colleges that are separately accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association. A consolidated college refers to community colleges and technical colleges that, under board direction, have formally organized into a single institution.

Universities. System universities confer academic awards through the graduate level and are accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association.

Subpart DD. Task analysis. Task analysis means a process used to identify the knowledge, skills, tools, and abilities needed to perform an occupation.

Subpart EE. Undergraduate course level. Course level reflects the degree of difficulty, the breadth and depth of learning expectations or the sequential learning required of knowledge. Course content and level are determined by system college and university faculty through established procedures.

Developmental. Developmental course content prepares students for entry into college level courses. Developmental level course credits do not apply toward a certificate, diploma, or degree.

Lower-division. Lower-division course content prepares students for specific academic program outcomes or for upper-division undergraduate coursework at a university.

Upper-division. Upper-division course content builds upon or integrates knowledge gained in lower-division undergraduate courses. Content of upper-division courses is determined by the university faculty through established procedures.

Part 3. Authorized Academic Awards.

Subpart A. System college and university award authority. A system college or university may change its institution type or confer academic awards for which it is not authorized by submitting an application to the chancellor and obtaining approval from the Board of Trustees. The application shall include demonstration of system college or university readiness and capacity to deliver the new award.

Subpart B. Academic award attributes. Academic awards shall have the following attributes.

- 1. Undergraduate certificate.** An undergraduate certificate is awarded upon completion of a 9 to 30 credit academic program. An undergraduate certificate program may have an occupational outcome or address a focused area of study.

An undergraduate certificate shall not have emphases.

At least one-third of the credits in the academic program shall be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation by the faculty and approval by the president of the institution.

An undergraduate certificate program less than 9 or more than 30 credits in length may be approved when the certificate program prepares an individual for employment and the length or the designation as a certificate is (1) required by an employer, a licensing body or other regulatory agency, accrediting association, or board or (2) based on a formal task analysis conducted within the previous three years and the results endorsed by an advisory committee.

- 2. Diploma.** A diploma is awarded upon completion of a 31 to 72 credit undergraduate academic program that prepares students for employment. A minimum of 24 credits shall be in occupational or technical courses.

A diploma may have one or more emphases of at least 9 credits when there are at least 30 credits in the major that are common to the emphases.

At least one-third of the credits in the academic program shall be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation by the faculty and approval by the president of the college.

A diploma program of more than 72 credits in length may be approved when the diploma program prepares an individual for employment and the length is (1) required by an employer, a licensing body or other regulatory agency, accrediting association, or board or (2) based on a formal task analysis conducted within the previous three years and the results endorsed by an advisory committee.

The credit length of diploma programs shall be reviewed when affected by statute (136F.32 Degrees; Diplomas; Certificates) which directs that all vocational and technical credits earned for a diploma or certificate be applicable toward any available degree in the same program.

- 3. Associate in arts degree.** An associate in arts degree is awarded upon completion of a 60 ~~to 64~~ credit program in the liberal arts and sciences without a named field of study. It is designed for transfer to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions.

The degree requires completion of at least a 40 credit general education curriculum that fulfills the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum goal areas.

An associate in arts degree may have one or more emphases of at least 9 credits each in liberal arts and science fields, provided there is an articulation agreement with a baccalaureate major offered by at least one system university.

At least 20 credits shall be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the faculty and approval by the president of the college or university.

A waiver may be granted to exceed a program length of 60 credits.

- 4. Associate in fine arts degree.** An associate in fine arts degree is a named degree awarded upon completion of a 60 ~~to 64~~ credit program in particular disciplines in the fine arts.

An associate in fine arts degree program is designed to transfer in its entirety to a related baccalaureate degree program. At least one articulation agreement is required between the community college or the community and technical college and a system university awarding a baccalaureate degree in a related fine arts discipline, unless the chancellor grants an exception.

The degree requires a minimum of 24 general education credits selected from at least six of the ten goal areas of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. The chancellor may increase this minimum for selected disciplines.

Art. An associate in fine arts degree in art requires the minimum of 24 general education credits selected from at least six of the ten goal areas of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.

Music. An associate in fine arts degree in music requires at least 30 general education credits selected from at least six of the ten goal areas of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.

Theatre arts. An associate in fine arts degree in theatre arts requires at least 40 general education credits and completion of the entire Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.

An associate in fine arts degree shall not have emphases.

At least 20 credits shall be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the faculty and approval by the president of the college or university.

A waiver may be granted to exceed a program length of 60 credits.

An associate in fine arts degree program will be 60 credits unless colleges or universities agree to the transfer of a greater number of credits through an articulation agreement.

- 5. Associate in science degree.** An associate in science degree is awarded upon completion of a 60 ~~to 64~~ credit transfer program in scientific, technological, or other professional fields.

The associate in science degree program is designed to transfer in its entirety to a related baccalaureate program by way of an articulation agreement. ~~An associate in science program proposed with greater than 64 credits requires special approval by the chancellor.~~

Associate in Science degrees may be awarded in either a broad or specific field of study.

Broad Field. A broad field associate in science degree transfers to all system universities offering related baccalaureate programs through a statewide articulation agreement. Broad fields may include areas such as (1) agriculture, (2) business, (3) computer and information sciences, (4) education, (5) engineering, (6) engineering technologies, (7) environmental sciences, (8) health sciences, and (9) natural sciences.

Specific Field. Specific field associate in science degrees may be designed for both transfer and employment. A specific field associate in science degree requires at least one articulation agreement between a community college, community and technical college, or technical college and a system university awarding a baccalaureate degree in a related discipline, unless the chancellor grants an exception.

The associate in science degree requires a minimum of 30 general education credits selected from at least six of the ten goal areas of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.

An associate in science degree shall not have emphases.

At least 20 credits shall be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the faculty and approval by the president of the college or university.

A waiver may be granted to exceed a program length of 60 credits.

An associate in science degree program will be 60 credits unless colleges or universities agree to the transfer of a greater number of credits through an articulation agreement.

- 6. Associate in applied science degree.** An associate in applied science degree is awarded upon completion of a 60 ~~to 72~~ credit program in a named field of study in scientific, technological or other professional fields.

An associate in applied science degree program ~~It~~ prepares students for employment in an occupation or range of occupations. An associate in applied science degree may also be accepted in transfer to a related baccalaureate program.

The degree requires a minimum of 15 general education credits selected from at least three of the ten goal areas of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. At least 30 credits shall be in the academic program's occupational or technical field of preparation. ~~An associate in applied science program proposed with greater than 72 credits requires special approval by the chancellor.~~

An associate in applied science may have one or more emphases of at least 9 credits each when there are at least 30 credits in the major that are common to the emphases.

At least 20 credits shall be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the faculty and approval by the president of the college or university. ~~An associate in applied science degree more than 72 credits in length may be approved when the academic program prepares an individual for employment and the length is (1) required by an employer, a licensing body or other regulatory agency, accrediting association, or board or (2) based on a formal task analysis conducted within the previous three years and the results endorsed by an advisory committee.~~

A waiver may be granted to exceed a program length of 60 credits.

7. **Baccalaureate degree.** A baccalaureate degree is awarded upon completion of a 120 to 128 credit program incorporating general education, major requirements and, as appropriate, a minor.

The bachelor of arts degree is awarded upon completion of a curriculum with a major in the liberal arts or fine arts.

The bachelor of science degree is awarded upon completion of a curriculum with a major in a professional area other than the liberal arts or fine arts.

The chancellor may approve academic programs culminating in a more specific baccalaureate degree type, for example, bachelor of applied science, bachelor of fine arts, bachelor of music, bachelor of science in nursing, bachelor of social work, or another designated type.

At least 40 of the required credits for the degree shall be at the upper-division level.

The degree requires at least a 40 credit general education curriculum, that fulfills all of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.

A baccalaureate degree may have one or more emphases of at least 9 credits each when there are at least 18 credits in the major that are common to the emphases.

At least 30 credits shall be taught by the faculty recommending the award. These requirements may be decreased upon recommendation by the faculty and approval by the president of the university.

~~A baccalaureate degree more than 128 credits in length may be approved by the chancellor when the length is (1) required by an employer, a licensing body or other regulatory agency, accrediting association, or board or (2) consistent with nationwide common practice.~~

A waiver may be granted to exceed a program length of 120 credits.

8. **Graduate certificate.** A graduate certificate is awarded upon completion of a 9 to 30 credit program in a focused area of study at the graduate level.

A graduate certificate shall not have emphases.

All credits shall be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the faculty and approval by the president of the university.

9. **Master's degree.** A master's degree is awarded upon completion of a 30 to 54 credit program at the graduate level in a discipline or professional field.

The master of arts degree is awarded upon completion of a course of graduate studies in the liberal arts or fine arts.

The master of science degree is awarded upon completion of a curriculum with a major in a professional area other than the liberal arts or fine arts.

The chancellor may approve academic programs culminating in a more specifically named master's degree type, for example, master of arts in teaching, master of business administration, master of fine arts, master of public administration, or master of science in nursing.

At least one-half of the required credits, exclusive of a thesis, capstone, or similar culminating project, shall be credits restricted exclusively to graduate student enrollment.

A master's degree may have one or more emphases of at least 9 credits when there are at least 18 credits in the major that are common to the emphases.

All credits shall be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the faculty and approval by the president of the university.

A master's degree more than 54 credits in length may be approved by the chancellor when the length is (1) required by an employer, a licensing body or other regulatory agency, accrediting association, or board or (2) consistent with nationwide common practice.

- 10. Education specialist degree.** An education specialist degree is awarded upon completion of a 60 to 72 credit program at the graduate level in the professional education field. The education specialist degree may be awarded to a holder of a master's degree after the successful completion of a course of graduate study of at least 30 semester credits.

An education specialist degree may have one or more emphases of at least 9 credits each when at least 18 credits are required in the post-master's portion of the degree.

No more than 16 credits of an education specialist degree may be master's dual-enrollment courses.

All credits beyond the master's shall be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the faculty and approval by the president of the university.

- 11. Doctorate.** A doctorate is awarded upon completion of an academic program of at least 72 credits in an applied professional field at the graduate level.

Minnesota State Universities are authorized to grant the doctorate in the following applied disciplines: audiology, business, education, nursing, psychology, and physical therapy.

At least 45 credits in graduate level courses shall be taught by the faculty recommending the award, including up to 12 credits for a dissertation or equivalent project. At least 36 of these 45 credits shall be in doctoral only courses. This 45 credit requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the faculty and approval of the president of the university.

No more than 16 credits of the doctoral program may be master's dual enrollment courses.

A doctorate may have one or more emphases of at least 9 credits when there are at least 18 credits in the post-master's portion of the degree.

Subpart C. Credit length waivers for associate and baccalaureate degrees.

Authority. The office of the chancellor determines the acceptance or denial of all program-length waiver requests.

Criteria for granting waivers. Credit length waivers may be granted when a compelling justification is documented by one or more of the following:

1. Industry standards
 - a. National or international program certification
 - b. National or international standards, including skill standards
 - c. A recommendation from a primary employer or from multiple employers within a program service area
 - d. A recommendation from a program advisory committee in support of items a-c above.
2. Professional standards
 - a. National specialized program accreditation
 - b. State licensure requirements
 - c. National practices or standards
3. Unique challenges
 - a. Emerging or innovative programs
 - b. Programs of special merit or need

Waiver Process. The following process shall be followed for waiver requests to exceed approved credit lengths:

1. Consistent with accepted college or university processes, faculty members are responsible for preparing a multi-college/university or individual program-length waiver rationale and recommending a waiver request to college and university administrators. Waiver requests for similar programs may be pursued on a multi-college/university basis when recommended by program faculty consistent with accepted college or university processes on each participating campus.
2. Program advisory committees may provide recommendations on learning requirements. System policy requires student representation on college program advisory committees.
3. Consistent with accepted college or university processes, college and university administrators are responsible for ensuring that multi-college/ university and individual program-length waiver requests are submitted to the office of the chancellor.
4. Waiver requests will be posted for 21 days for review and comment to a system-wide listserv that includes state and college or university leadership of student and faculty associations, and college and university administrators.
5. The waiver request is reviewed by the office of the chancellor and a decision is made.
6. Public information regarding the waiver process, review criteria, rationale for decisions, and decisions reached will be available on the office of the chancellor website.
7. Appeals related to waiver decisions will be processed through the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs.

Part 4. Authority to Establish Academic Program Locations.

Subpart A. Approval of an academic program location. Location approval is required for a system college or university to deliver a new, replicated or relocated academic program at a location where it is not currently delivering any academic program. Location approval requires academic program approval and lease approval, when applicable.

The academic program application shall specify the location name, postal address and lease information as applicable. For a location not owned by the system, the location application shall include information regarding approval of the lease:

1. \$2 million or more requires Board of Trustees approval,
2. \$100,000 or more or for a time period longer than five years requires chancellor approval, or
3. under \$100,000 requires notification to the chancellor

Subpart B. Termination of location approval. A location approval expires when a system college or university has closed all academic programs at the location.

Part 5. Academic Program Approval. The chancellor shall prepare guidelines for the preparation of academic program proposals.

Subpart A. Approval of new academic programs. A new academic program requires approval by the chancellor before it is offered by a system college or university.

All college level courses required for academic program completion, with the exception of preparatory courses, shall be included in the total number of credits for an undergraduate academic program.

Pursuant to guidelines prepared by the chancellor, academic program proposals must provide documentation of:

Authorization

1. alignment with the system college or university mission and award authority,

Resources

2. the capability to provide necessary human, facility, technological and financial resources,
3. faculty qualifications,

4. facility leases and bonding requests, where applicable,

Need

5. student interest,
6. occupational demand,
7. unnecessary duplication with academic program at other system colleges and universities,

Program Attributes

8. location(s) and delivery mode,
9. regional or other inter-institutional reviews where applicable,
10. special circumstances, such as a specified termination date, intermittent delivery, or rotating sites,

Curriculum

11. catalog description and student learning outcomes,
12. conformance to award requirements,
13. programmatic career pathways,
14. skills standards where applicable,
15. applicable industrial or professional certification requirements,
16. transferability of credit,

Approvals and Agreements

17. signed articulation agreements or collaborative agreements where applicable,
18. academic program advisory committee recommendations where applicable,
19. documentation of system college or university approval, and
20. other documentation that supports the application.

Subpart B. Approval of changes to existing academic programs.

1. **Closure.** Closure of an academic program requires approval by the chancellor. Approval will only be granted under the following circumstances:
 - a. The closure is requested by a system college or university, and the chancellor determines that the documentation provided supports closure,
 - b. The chancellor determines that closure is warranted, or
 - c. The academic program has not been reinstated following a suspension.

The academic program closure application must include evidence, as applicable, regarding

- 1) academic program need,
- 2) student enrollment trends,
- 3) employment of graduates,
- 4) the financial circumstances affecting the academic program, system college or university,
- 5) the plan to accommodate students currently enrolled in the academic program,
- 6) impact on faculty and support staff,
- 7) consultation with appropriate constituent groups including students, faculty and community,
- 8) alternatives considered, and
- 9) other factors affecting academic program operation.

A closed academic program shall not be relocated, replicated or reinstated.

2. **Accreditation to deliver academic degree programs online.** Higher Learning Commission accreditation can be extended for online delivery of one or more of its academic degree programs. Approval shall be granted by either:
 - a. the Higher Learning Commission or
 - b. the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs.

If approval is sought from and granted by the Higher Learning Commission, a system college or university shall notify the chancellor of its authorization to deliver one or more academic degree programs online within 60 days of receiving that notice.

If approval is sought from the Senior Vice Chancellor, system colleges and universities indicate their intent to offer one or more academic degree programs online by submitting an Institutional Change Request Report to the Minnesota Online Council. The Minnesota Online Council reviews the request, arranges a site visit by a peer review team and makes a recommendation to the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs. If approved, the Senior Vice Chancellor for

Academic and Student Affairs shall notify the system college or university of its extended accreditation to deliver academic degree programs online.

A system college or university may deliver courses, certificates and diplomas online without an extension of accreditation.

Academic program approval and authority to deliver academic degree programs online can occur simultaneously.

The chancellor shall maintain an inventory of academic degree programs approved for online delivery.

3. **Redesign.** Prior approval shall be obtained from the chancellor for academic program redesigns that affect the approved name, CIP code, the addition of emphases, a change in award, or a change in credit length when the change exceeds the maximum or fails to meet the minimum credit lengths defined in policy.

Prior approval is not required for deletion of emphases or changes in credit length when the change is within the limits established by board policy. System colleges and universities shall report these changes to the chancellor.

4. **Suspension and reinstatement.** A system college or university may suspend an academic program for three years. The system college or university shall notify the chancellor of the suspension no later than 30 days after its effective date, and the notification shall include documented reasons for suspension and a plan and date for reinstatement. The suspension may be extended for up to one year with notification to the chancellor. The chancellor shall close an academic program that has not been reinstated following a suspension.

Reinstatement requires approval of the chancellor based on review of required documentation. The reinstatement plan must address the following, as applicable:

- a. academic program need,
- b. student enrollment trends,
- c. employment of graduates,
- d. financial circumstances affecting the academic program, system college or university,
- e. the plan to accommodate students currently enrolled in the academic program,
- f. impact on faculty and support staff,
- g. consultation with appropriate constituent groups including students, faculty and community,
- h. academic program accreditation or licensure,
- i. alternatives considered, and
- j. other factors affecting academic program operation.

A suspended academic program shall not be relocated or replicated until it is reinstated.

5. **Academic program replication or relocation.** Academic program replication and/or relocation within one institution requires approval by the chancellor when the replication or relocation:

- a. is offered at a location that is new to the system college or university,
- b. affects an existing agreement between institutions,
- c. is in the same service area or within a reasonable commute of a similar academic program offered by another system institution, or
- d. involves leasing non-system property.

If none of the above applies, only notification by the president to the chancellor of the location is required.

Relocation to another system college or university requires approval of the chancellor. The system college or university to which an academic program is reassigned must provide for the viability of the academic program including equipment, accreditation, facilities, curriculum and other factors.

Part 6. Student Options when Academic Programs are Suspended, Closed, or Changed. A system college or university shall establish plans to address students' opportunities to complete an academic program when it has been suspended or closed or when the requirements have changed.

Subpart A. Academic program suspension and closure. A system college or university shall develop a plan to serve students who were admitted to an academic program proposed for suspension or closure. The plan shall identify admitted students who are covered by the plan and their options to complete the academic program.

The system college or university shall notify students about their options and assist them with their individual plans. Students covered by the plan shall maintain full-time enrollment status unless the system college or university makes other provisions.

Subpart B. Academic program changes. A system college or university shall notify students who have been admitted to an academic program of any changes to the academic program. Students shall be given an opportunity to graduate under the catalog requirements at the time of their admission to the institution or under any subsequent catalog requirements.

Part 7. Academic Review.

Subpart A. Academic review criteria. Where applicable, the review shall address:

- 1. contributions to the mission and plans of the system college or university,
- 2. assessment of student learning outcomes,
- 3. effectiveness measures,
- 4. compliance with accreditation, licensure or certification requirements; or other requirements,
- 5. advisory committee or other appropriate industry or professional input as determined by the system college or university through established procedures,
- 6. compliance with Minnesota Transfer Curriculum requirements and
- 7. other factors as appropriate.

Subpart B. Review of new doctoral programs. All new doctoral programs must be reviewed at the end of the first three years of operation and a report submitted to the chancellor. Elements to be reviewed include:

- 1. outcomes for goals and objectives described in the application,
- 2. achievement of specialized accreditation if required for operation,
- 3. enrollments levels and resources for sustainability,
- 4. unanticipated problems or developments, and
- 5. plans for improvement.

Subpart C. Annual report. The annual summary reported to the chancellor shall include:

1. a list of academic programs or academic units that were reviewed, including those that completed specialized accreditation review,
2. selected exemplary accomplishments,
3. identification of potential problems, and
4. the system college or university academic program review policy and procedure.

Subpart D. Chancellor's reviews. The chancellor may report to the Board of Trustees on statewide or regional reviews of academic programs or program clusters. When necessary, the chancellor may impose conditions on academic programs.

Approval Date: 08/01/07

Effective Date: 08/01/07

Appendix G: Memorandum on Interim Process on Degree Credit Limits



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
& UNIVERSITIES

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

WELLS FARGO PLACE
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 20, 2007

TO: Presidents

FROM: *Linda L. Baer*
Linda L. Baer, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs

SUBJECT: Interim Process on Degree Credit Limits

As you are aware, the Higher Education Funding Bill indicated that: "By January 1, 2009, the board must adopt a policy setting the maximum number of semester credits required for a baccalaureate degree at 120 semester credits or the equivalent and the number of semester credits required for an associate degree at 60 semester credits or the equivalent. The board policy may provide for a process for granting waivers for specific degree programs in which industry or professional accreditation standards require a greater number of semester credits." [see Chapter 144, *Article 1 Higher Education Appropriations*, Section 4, subdivision 3 (b)]

It is my intent to discuss an interim process for limiting approvals of new associate degree and baccalaureate programs exceeding the credit limits with the Leadership Council in September. We invite your thoughts on how we might responsibly position ourselves for the future given the legislative limits imposed on us.

As a result, I have directed Associate Vice Chancellor Manuel López and staff in the Academic Programs unit to create a task force to explore the implications of this legislation and make recommendations for policy and procedure. Of particular note, the more noticeable impact of these limitations on the Associate in Applied Science will be explicitly addressed by the task force. The Leadership Council, faculty and student associations, and the colleges and universities will be involved in this process. We hope to have draft recommendations from the task force by early spring 2008.

We look forward to your participation in the preliminary discussions at the September Leadership Council meeting.

c: James McCormick
Manuel López
Chief Academic Officers