

MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Agenda Item Summary Sheet

Committee: Academic and Student Affairs

Date of Meeting: November 18, 2008

Agenda Item: Proposed Amendment to Policy 3.36 Academic Programs

Proposed Policy Change Approvals Required by Policy Other Approvals Monitoring

Information

Background Information:

The Board of Trustees approved policy 3.36 Academic Programs at their July 2007 meeting. Since then, a task force has made recommendations in response to the 2007 state law that directs the Board of Trustees to adopt policy setting the maximum number of credits required for a baccalaureate degree at 120 credits and the number of credits required for an associate degree at 60 credits. The law allows a process for granting waivers in which industry or professional accreditation standards require a greater number of credits.

After approval of the proposed policy by the Board of Trustees, existing procedure 3.36.1 Academic Programs Procedure will be amended and submitted to the chancellor for approval.

Cite policy requirement, or explain why item is on the Board agenda:

First reading to change Policy 3.36 Academic Programs due to 2007 session law that limits the program credit length of associate and baccalaureate degree programs.

Scheduled Presenter(s):

Linda Baer, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs
Mike López, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
Manuel López, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Quality

Outline of Key Points/Policy Issues:

- 2007 session law sets the maximum number of credits for associate degrees (60 credits) and baccalaureate degrees (120 credits) and allows waivers based on industry or professional accreditation standards.
- Establishing common (systemwide) program credit lengths for similar programs is a fundamental change from current practice that allows program credit lengths to vary across colleges and universities.
- Lowering program credit limits is controversial. AAS degrees, currently limited to 72 credits, require a greater reduction in length than other associate degrees. Students benefit by paying less tuition. The impact of reduced instructional time on graduates' learning outcomes varies by program. Revenue, expenditure and staff impacts are expected but difficult to estimate.
- Reduced program credit lengths and waiver request decisions are expected to be completed by the end of FY 2012.
- Standard policy revision processes were followed.

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
ACTION ITEM**

First Reading

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO POLICY 3.36 ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

1 INTRODUCTION

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3 The Board of Trustees approved policy 3.36 Academic Programs at their July 2007 meeting. Procedures
4 3.36.1 Academic Programs, which require review and approval by the chancellor, were approved on
5 August 1, 2007. Since then, several recommendations have been made for revision to these procedures.
6 Some of the proposed revisions reflect state law, passed in 2007, that directs the Board of Trustees to
7 adopt policy setting the maximum number of credits required for a baccalaureate degree at 120 credits
8 and the number of credits required for an associate degree at 60 credits. The law allows for a process for
9 granting waivers in which industry or professional accreditation standards require a greater number of
10 credits.

11
12 Procedures are reviewed and approved by the chancellor. After approval of the proposed policy by the
13 Board of Trustees, existing procedure 3.36.1 Academic Programs Procedure will be amended and
14 submitted to the chancellor for approval.

15 BACKGROUND

16
17
18 State law, which was passed during the 2007 legislative session, directed that:

19 *By January 1, 2009, the board must adopt a policy setting the maximum number of semester*
20 *credits required for a baccalaureate degree at 120 semester credits or the equivalent and the*
21 *number of semester credits required for an associate degree at 60 semester credits or the*
22 *equivalent. The board policy may provide for a process for granting waivers for specific degree*
23 *programs in which industry or professional accreditation standards require a greater number of*
24 *semester credits.*

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

26 Article 1 Higher Education Appropriations

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

28 Subdivision 3. Board policies

29
30 In response to the legislation, a task force on degree credit caps was established in the fall of 2007 by the
31 Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Office of the Chancellor, Minnesota State
32 Colleges and Universities. Members included representatives from the following:

- 33
- 34 • Academic and Student Affairs Leadership Council,
 - 35 • College and university academic administrators,
 - 36 • Inter Faculty Organization (IFO),
 - 37 • Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF),
 - 38 • Administrative and Service Faculty (MSUAASF)
 - 39 • Minnesota State College Student Association (MSCSA),
 - 40 • Minnesota State University Student Association (MSUSA), and the
 - Office of the Chancellor.

1 The task force charge was to recommend policy and procedure related to statutory requirements for credit
 2 limitations on associate and baccalaureate degree programs within the system. Deliberation over the
 3 course of five meetings led to recommendations that have been considered in the development of
 4 proposed policy and procedure.

5
 6 Notable Changes. In addition to changes recommended to the policy, several changes have been proposed for
 7 the procedures. As listed in the table below, the proposed policy and procedure would make several changes.

Description of Change	Policy or Procedure	Rationale
1. New language sets degree program credit lengths and gives the chancellor authority to decide program credit length waiver requests.	Policy part 3, subpart C	State law directs that the Board adopt policy.
2. Revised language sets program credit length limits for associate and baccalaureate degree programs compliant with law and defines waiver criteria and processes.	Procedure part 3, Subparts B & C	State law: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directs that associate and baccalaureate degree programs be limited to 60 and 120 credits. • Allows a process for granting waivers.
3. Minor language changes: a. Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees b. Master of Arts & Master of Science degrees c. Doctorate	Procedure part 3, Subpart B, items 7, 9 & 11	Improve language
4. Revised language that aligns procedure with policy 3.36 Academic Programs regarding program suspension.	Procedure part 5, Subpart B, item 4	Align procedure with policy
5. Revised language that sets additional documentation requirements for new program applications.	Procedure part 5, Subpart A	Additional documentation requirements for curriculum and external program standards
6. New and revised language clarifies scope and criteria for academic program review.	Procedure part 7 & Part 7, Subpart A	Define scope of program review and edit review criteria

8 **CONSULTATION**

9

10 Consultation for the policy and procedure amendments has occurred as follows:

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- 12 • Reviewed at Academic & Student Affairs Policy Council – 11/27/07; 2/19/08; 9/22/08
- 13 • Reviewed at Academic and Student Affairs Leadership Council – 5/6/08; 11/3/08; Planned for review at 1/6/09 Leadership Council meetings
- 14 • Mailed out for review and comment – April, 2008; 9/30/08 and 10/22/08
- 15 • Reviewed at the IFO Meet and Confer – 9/12/08
- 16 • Reviewed at Graduate Education Council – 10/10/08
- 17 • Reviewed at MSUAASF Meet and Confer – 10/17/08
- 18 • Planned for review at MSCF Meet and Confer – 12/4/08

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21 **RECOMMENDED COMMITTEE ACTION**

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23 The Educational Policy Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees adopt the following motion:

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25 **RECOMMENDED MOTION**

26

27 The Board of Trustees approves the amendment to Policy 3.36 Academic Programs.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

First Reading

BOARD POLICY

Chapter 3. EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

Section 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~~ Undergraduate degree programs shall 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 1. **Community colleges.** Community colleges have the authority to confer
2 undergraduate certificates, diplomas, associate in arts, associate in fine arts, associate
3 in science, and associate in applied science degrees.
- 4
- 5 2. **Consolidated colleges.** Consolidated colleges have the authority to confer
6 undergraduate certificates, diplomas, associate in arts, associate in fine arts, associate
7 in science, and associate in applied science degrees.
- 8
- 9 3. **Technical colleges.** Technical colleges have the authority to confer undergraduate
10 certificates, diplomas, associate in science, and associate in applied science degrees.
- 11
- 12 4. **Universities.** Universities have the authority to confer undergraduate and graduate
13 certificates and associate in arts, associate in fine arts, associate in science,
14 baccalaureate, and graduate degrees.
- 15

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

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

20

21

22 **Subpart C. Academic program credit length limits.** Academic programs that lead to
23 an associate degree shall be limited to 60 credits and academic programs that lead to a
24 baccalaureate degree shall be limited to 120 credits unless the chancellor grants a waiver
25 based on industry or professional accreditation standards that require a greater number of
26 credits.

27

28 The chancellor shall set program credit length requirements and waiver criteria for
29 undergraduate certificates, diplomas and graduate level awards.

30

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

33

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

37

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

40

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

44

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

1 **Part 7. Academic Review.** Each system college and university shall regularly review its
2 academic programs for the purpose of academic planning and improvement.
3
4 Each system college and university shall submit an annual summary of its academic program
5 review activity to the chancellor.
6
7 The chancellor, as appropriate, may conduct statewide or regional reviews of academic programs
8 or program clusters, report findings to the Board of Trustees and, when necessary, impose
9 conditions on academic programs.
10
11 *Proposed effective date: January 21, 2009*

Related Documents: Procedure 3.36.1 - 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](#)