

RE: EXCEPTION REQUESTS FOR AAS PROGRAMS IN RADIOLOGIC TECHNOLOGY

FROM: Kathy Hughes, CAO, Flathead Valley Community College
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As the Chief Academic Officers of the institutions listed above, we request an exception to BOR Policy 301.12 for the AAS degree programs in Radiologic Technology. Our Radiologic Technology programs have been programs out of compliance with two provisions of the policy:

- 1) The 72-credit cap on credits in an AAS degree program. Although all of our institutions are able to reduce credits in our Radiologic Tech programs to 72 credits or fewer, we do not believe it is in the best interest of students to do so.
- 2) The four-semester + intersession/two academic years completion cap. Even when we artificially reduce the credits to meet the credit cap, we are unable to reduce the time-to-degree to anything less than five semesters, including the intersession.

We are aware that Montana Tech College of Technology has been able to design and deliver the AAS degree in Radiologic Technology in a way that complies with both provisions, but our programs are distinguished from that of Montana Tech in the following relevant ways:

1. Hospital-Supported Faculty in a Former Hospital-Based Program

All four of our programs were formerly programs delivered by the hospital unassociated with any academic institution. Although they have transitioned to academic programs, their curriculum design, particularly the number of hours in the clinical setting, continues to reflect their hospital-based roots and expectations. Because the faculty lines in all four programs were significantly under-written by the hospitals where they were formerly based during the start-up phase and continue to be significantly underwritten by the hospitals in three of the four programs currently, our institutions feel an obligation to honor the program directors' preference to preserve clinical hours, especially since it creates no additional burden for students and expands post-graduate opportunities.

2. Justification for Additional Credits in Clinical Settings

Preparation for entry-level work in Radiologic Technology requires extensive clinical experiences not common to other health science occupational programs. Students need to perform close to 2000 radiographic examinations before graduation. Each examination takes 45 – 90 minutes, meaning that an estimated minimum of 1600 clinical hours is required to complete the program. As former hospital-based programs, our programs aspire to that level of clinical experience. It cannot be achieved within the 72-credit, five-semester provisions of BOR 301.12.

Currently, all programs, including Montana Tech's, appear to comply with the 72-credit limit of BOR 301.12 by reducing the credit:hours ratio from the standard 1:3 to 1:4. That alteration is not in the best interest of students for students in our programs because:

- Assigning the appropriate number of credits for the hours devoted does not save students in tuition since they have already benefited from the flat spot in each semester where clinical hours are assigned.
- When students have more credits in their AAS degree, they will be able to transfer more into the B.S. articulations being developed with MSU – Billings and MSU – Northern for Bachelor of Science degrees. All four programs see that articulation opportunity as desirable for their graduates.

3. Justification for Additional Semester

A review of AAS degrees in radiologic technology in our region establishes that a large majority of these programs require the equivalent of at least five semesters of instruction. Montana Tech is able to deliver the entire Rad Tech Curriculum in four semesters in part because it requires significantly fewer clinical hours in its program. The directors of the four programs seeking an exception believe that the addition of a 4-credit course in Anatomy and Physiology to the second semester (first semester after completion of prerequisites) in the hospital-based programs creates too heavy a credit load for students in their first program-specific semester.