

Workforce Information Item a. Attachment

UPDATE ON COMPLIANCE WITH BOR Policy 301.12 on AAS and CAS Programs

by Mary Sheehy Moe, Chair, Academic Affairs Committee of the Two-Year Education Council
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The Academic Affairs Committee of the Two-Year Education Council has spent the past 18 months designing and implementing a review of all AAS and potential CAS programs offered in the Montana University System, to determine the current state of program compliance with the newly adopted provisions of BOR Policy 301.12. The intents of the provisions of that policy follow.

- To ensure that the design of two-year degree offerings aligns with their purposes and parameters:
 - Associate of Arts and Associate of Science programs emphasize general education coursework that will transfer to fulfill the requirements for the first two years of the receiving institutions' four-year degrees.
 - Associate of Applied Science and Certificate of Applied Science programs emphasize technical coursework that will prepare graduates for immediate employment in the occupational field.
- To ensure that two-year degrees are designed and delivered for completion in two years.
- To ensure that AAS and CAS curricula from MUS institutions preparing students for similar occupations have enough flexibility to respond to local workforce needs but enough similarity to facilitate public confidence in the level of preparation and equity of student access and success.
- To provide a process for campuses seeking exceptions to one or more of the provisions.

The work of the Academic Affairs Committee began with Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees. Although some clarification was necessary in some instances to ensure that these degrees did not designate a discipline, in general there were few problems with compliance in these degree areas.

From April 2006 – August 2007, the Committee conducted a comprehensive review of a total of 254 technical programs, 161 culminating in the AAS degree and 93 culminating in a certificate. In September 2006, recommendations were made to the Board of Regents for policy refinements, which were subsequently adopted, and areas of non-compliance in the 254 programs were identified.

Since that time, the individual campuses have either resubmitted programs identified as non-compliant for a second review or employed their internal processes to bring non-compliant programs into compliance with BOR Policy 301.12. In April and June 2007, campuses submitted their updated curricula to the Academic Affairs Committee of the Two Year Education Council and the Council made recommendations for approval/non-approval to the Two Year Education Council.

Through that process, of the 81 programs out of compliance with the first two provisions of the policy in August 2006, all but 36 were found to be in compliance by August 2007. The Two Year Education Council has recommended that programs still not in compliance by March 2008 begin the moratorium process.

Only the first two requirements for AAS and CAS programs have been the focus of the review to date. Thus, unless granted an exception (4 exceptions have been granted), all AAS programs consist of less than 73 credits, they can be completed in two academic years, and at least 2/3 of the total credits in the degree are technical in nature. All CAS programs consist of less than 46 credits, they can be completed in one calendar year, and at least 2/3 of the total credits are technical in nature.

In the year to come, the Academic Affairs Committee will design and implement the review process for the third requirement of these programs – general education requirements that are similar in rigor and amount in programs preparing students for the same occupation. The Committee has also begun a review of the differences in BOR Policy 720 and 730.6, minimum qualifications for community college faculty and for technical college faculty, respectively, with the intent of standardizing these expectations.