

Report presented to:

Senator Michelle Fischbach, Chair, Senate Higher Education Committee

Representative Bud Nornes, Chair, House Higher Education Committee

Senator Sandy Pappas, Minority Lead, Senate Higher Education Committee

Representative Tom Rukavina, Minority Lead, House Higher Education Committee

In compliance with Minnesota law 2009, chapter 95, article 2, section 44

Submitted by:

Minnesota State College Faculty

Minnesota State College Student Association

Date submitted:

December 22, 2011

## Background

Laws 2007, chapter 144, article 1, section 44, subdivision 3, paragraph (b) directed the board of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) to adopt a policy setting the maximum number of credits required for an associate degree at 60 semester credits, with the possibility of a waiver for programs with industry or accreditation requirements justifying such. Subsequently, Laws 2009, chapter 95, article 2, section 44 exempted associate of applied science (A.A.S.) degrees from the requirement until July 2, 2012 and directed the Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF) and the Minnesota State College Student Association (MSCSA) to present a report to the appropriate house and senate committees recommending a process for reviewing the credit requirements for an A.A.S. degree.

Since the passage of the 2009 law, MSCF and MSCSA have met 15-20 times to exchange ideas and proposals for how to address the unique nature of A.A.S. degrees in the context of a 60-credit cap. The main focus of the discussions was on defining a process for granting waivers to programs which can legitimately demonstrate the need for more than 60 credits in an A.A.S. degree.

MSCF and MSCSA recognize the historical significance of advisory committees in A.A.S. degree programs. Advisory committees, which are made up of local industry experts, have the capacity to make curricular recommendations based on industry standards and needs. Further, MSCF and MSCSA recognize the critical role students can and should play in the advisory committee process. Together, the advisory committee process with substantive student involvement provides a venue for addressing significant curricular issues, such as the 60-credit cap, in a meaningful way.

MSCF and MSCSA recommend the MnSCU System Office create a procedure for granting waivers for existing A.A.S. degree programs above 60 credits that includes and recognizes the following concepts:

- Substantive curricular reviews of all A.A.S. programs in excess of 60 credits.
- The individual, unique nature of A.A.S. degrees.
- The primary role of program advisory committees, consisting of local industry experts.
- The essential contribution of properly appointed students to program advisory committees and opportunity for campus student associations to provide feedback if there is no student representation on committees.
- The central role of campus Academic Affairs and Standards Councils in local academic decisions.
- The creation of a "statement of value added" for programs seeking a waiver, indicating what content students get for the additional credits.
- A paperwork process that ensures all parties participated and had the opportunity for input.
- An opportunity for an appeal of outstanding concerns to the system level.
- Tight, but reasonable, timelines to move the process along.
- MnSCU will provide waiver information on A.A.S. degree programs upon request.

MSCF and MSCSA agree that the procedure should apply to A.A.S. degrees in existence prior to January 1, 2010. The parties also believe the system's program development and waiver processes should apply to programs created after January 1, 2010.

Legislative Action Requested

MSCF and MSCSA request that the legislature amend the applicable current laws, providing direction to MnSCU for creation of a procedure, inside reasonable timelines, based on the concepts outlined above.

Respectfully submitted,

 \_\_\_\_\_

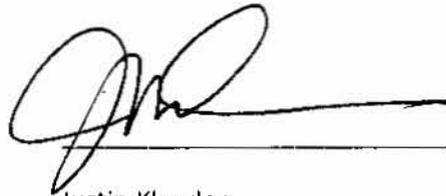
Greg Mulcahy  
MSCF President

 \_\_\_\_\_

Geoff Dittberner  
MSCSA President

 \_\_\_\_\_

Kevin Lindstrom  
MSCF Technical Vice President

 \_\_\_\_\_

Justin Klander  
MSCSA Executive Director