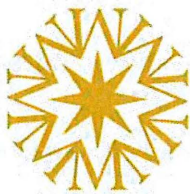


Degree Credit Caps:

Report to the Legislature

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

October 2015



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
& UNIVERSITIES

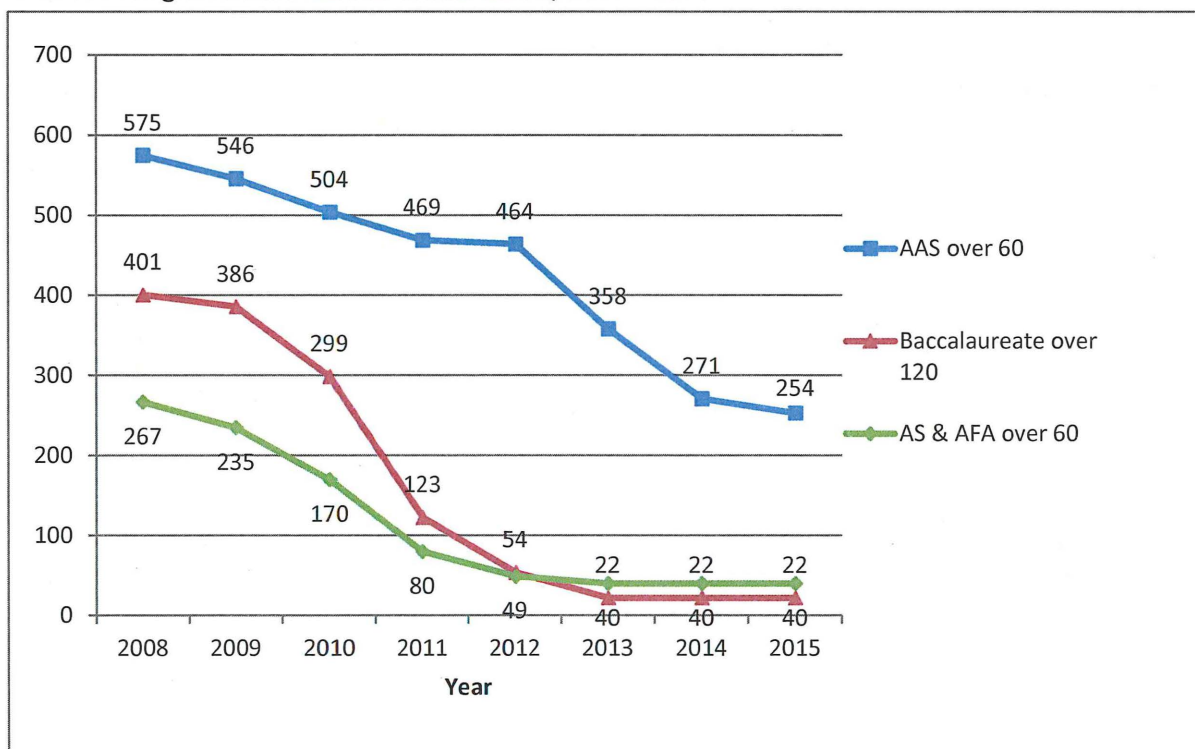
Report Summary

Legislation from 2008 requires the Minnesota State College and Universities Board of Trustees to annually report to the house and senate higher education committees regarding waivers that have been requested and granted. **Legislative requirements have been met.** All system associate of arts, associate of science, associate of fine arts, associate of applied science, and baccalaureate degree programs are in compliance with Minnesota Statutes and Board of Trustees policy and system procedures regarding program credit lengths. During the 2014-2015 academic year, 61 AAS credit length waiver applications were reviewed and approved (see Table 1). No waiver requests for other associate degree or baccalaureate programs were received.

Progress in Academic Program Credit Reduction

Chart 1 illustrates the number of programs by award type that exceed credit limits over time. From August 2007 (when 60/120 legislation became effective), through August 15, 2015, the number of associate degree programs (AA, AS and AFA) over 60 credits has been reduced from 401 to 40; associate of applied science degree programs (AAS) over 60 credits have been reduced from 575 to 254, and baccalaureate degree programs over 120 credits have been reduced from 267 to 22. The associate and baccalaureate degree programs exceeding credit limits were granted a waiver based on industry or professional standards.

Chart 1: Programs that Exceed Credit Limits, 2007 - 2015¹



¹ Program counting has changed over time. In 2013, counts were as of June 1 rather than July 1, due to changes in the program inventory database. After 2013, suspended programs are no longer included and programs are counted by institution rather than by location. In 2014, counts were as of September 30 due to turnover in staff personnel.

Waiver Requests and Approvals.

As shown in Table 1, sixty-one associate of applied science (AAS) waiver requests were reviewed and approved during the 2014 – 2015 academic year. No waiver requests for other associate degree or baccalaureate programs were received.

Table 1. 2014 – 2015 Academic Year Associate of Applied Science (AAS) Waiver Approvals

College	Program	Approved Waiver
Anoka Technical College	Golf Course Grounds Management	69 credits
	Mechanical Drafting and Design	69 credits
Central Lakes College	Criminal Justice	72 credits
	Marine and Small Engine Technology	69 credits
	Natural Resources Technology	64 credits
	Natural Resources/Law Enforcement	72 credits
	Robotics/Automated Systems Tech	70 credits
Dakota County Technical College	Electrical Construction and Maintenance Technology	81 credits
	Multi-Media and Web Page Design	70 credits
Hennepin Technical College	Culinary Arts	65 credits
	Engineering CAD Technology	72 credits
	Fluid Power Engineering Technician	72 credits
	Graphic Design – Creative	69 credits
	Graphic Design – Web Design	69 credits
	Interactive Designer	64 credits
	Landscape Design and Construction	72 credits
	Video Production Specialist	72 credits
Lake Superior College	Building Construction Technology	72 credits
	Commercial and Residential Wiring	82 credits
	Electronic Technology: Industrial Controls	72 credits
	Integrated Manufacturing – Engineering CAD Technology	67 credits

College	Program	Approved Waiver
	Integrating Manufacturing Technology – CNC	71 credits
	IT Specialist: Network Administration	72 credits
Mesabi Range College	Paramedic	67 credits
	Electrical Controls and Maintenance	72 credits
Minneapolis Community and Technical College	Airframe Technician	63 credits
	Electroneurodiagnostic Technology	70 credits
	Graphic Design: Print Media	66 credits
	HVAC and Refrigeration	72 credits
	Powerplant Technician	67 credits
	Web and Interactive Media	66 credits
Minnesota State College-Southeast Technical	Medical Laboratory Technician	67 credits
Minnesota State Community and Technical College	Auto Service Technology	72 credits
Minnesota West Community and Technical College	Agriculture Business Management and Marketing	72 credits
	Agriculture Production	72 credits
	Medical Laboratory Technician	67 credits
Northland Community and Technical College	Paramedic	66 credits
	Fire Technology	62 credits
	Firefighter/Paramedic	78 credits
Ridgewater College	Cosmetology	67 credits
	Dairy Management	72 credits
	GPS/GIS Technology for Agriculture	72 credits
	Law Enforcement	67 credits
Riverland Community College	Automotive Service Technology	66 credits
	Diesel Technology	72 credits
	Manufacturing Technical Specialist	68 credits

Rochester Community and Technical College	Building Utilities Mechanic	69 credits
	CAD Technology	72 credits
	Clinical Research Coordination	61 credits
	Veterinary Technology	75 credits
St. Cloud Technical and Community College	Robotics and Automation	71 credits
South Central College	Accounting	71 credits
	Accounting Technician	67 credits
	Agribusiness Office Specialist/Manager	72 credits
	Agribusiness Production	72 credits
	Agribusiness Service and Management	72 credits
	Agribusiness Service Technician	72 credits
	Intensive Care Paramedic Technician	67 credits
	Medical Laboratory Technician	65 credits
Vermilion Community College	Wilderness and Park Management	68 credits
	Wildland/Wildlife Law Enforcement	72 credits

Status of Program Length by Degree Awarded

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities are in compliance with the legislative directive to reduce associate degree requirements to 60 credits and baccalaureate degree requirements to 120 credits unless a waiver is granted for the program based on industry or professional standards. Of the 1,593 degree programs currently offered by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, 316 (19.8%) have been granted waivers to exceed the caps, and most of these are programs that award the associate of applied science degree. Of the 571 baccalaureate degree granting programs, only 40 (7%) have been granted a waiver to exceed the 120-credit cap. Of the 360 programs awarding an associate of arts, associate of science, or associate of fine arts degrees, only 22 (6.6 %) have been granted a waiver to exceed the 60-credit cap. There are 662 programs that award the associate of applied science degree, and of those, 254 (38.5%) were granted a waiver to exceed the 60-credit limit based on industry or professional standards.

Board Policy 3.36 limits all associate degree programs to 60 credits and all baccalaureate programs to 120 credits unless the chancellor grants a waiver to allow a greater number of credits. All new programs or program revisions must comply with the degree credit caps or must be granted a waiver pursuant to system procedure 3.36.1 (see Appendix B).

APPENDIX A

Related Legislation

Session laws in 2007, 2008 and 2009 affect the credit length of selected degree programs. Session law in 2007² directs the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees to set the maximum number of semester credits required for a baccalaureate degree at 120 credits, and for an associate degree at 60 credits. The law permits the Board of Trustees to grant waivers for specific degree programs in which industry or professional accreditation standards require a greater number of credits. In January 2009 the Board of Trustees amended Policy 3.36 Academic Programs and the chancellor approved the related procedure to guide the system's response to this legislation.

Legislation in 2008, below, requires the Board of Trustees to annually report to the house and senate higher education committees regarding waivers that have been requested and granted.

MAXIMUM CREDIT FOR GRADUATION; WAIVER REPORTING.

The board must annually by October 1 report to the chairs of the house of representatives and senate committees with primary jurisdiction over higher education policy on the board's current policy setting the maximum number of semester credits required for a baccalaureate and an associate of arts degree at 120 and 60 semester credits or their equivalent, respectively, as required by Laws 2007, chapter 144, article 1, section 4, subdivision 3, paragraph (b). The report must specifically identify requests in the previous academic year for waivers from the policy and the requests granted. The specific identification must include, among other things, the program and the campus for which a request was made and for which a waiver was granted. EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective January 1, 2009.³

Session law in 2009, below, modifies the 2007 legislation by (a) directing that, until July 2, 2012, associate of applied science degree programs be exempt from the 60-credit length limit set by Board of Trustees policy and (b) permitting additional waiver review criteria for emerging or innovative programs.

MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES DEGREE REQUIREMENTS.

Until July 2, 2012, an associate of applied science degree offered by a college in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system is exempt from the 60-semester credit length limit for an associate degree specified in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board Policy number 3.36, Part 3, Subpart C. The chancellor may consider criteria for waiving the credit length limits under this board policy for emerging or innovative programs. By January 2, 2012, the Minnesota State College Faculty and the Minnesota State College Student Association must present a joint report to the house of

² Minnesota Session Laws 2007 Chapter 144, article 1, section 4, subdivision 3, paragraph (b)

³ Minnesota Statutes § 136F.301

*representatives and senate committees with jurisdiction over higher education policy on process for reviewing the credit requirements for an associate of applied science degree. EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective the day following final enactment and applies to associate of applied science degrees whether first offered before, on, or after that date.*⁴

⁴ Minnesota Session Laws 2009, Chapter 95, article 2, section 44

APPENDIX B

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board Policies Chapter 3 – Educational Policies

3.36 Academic Programs

Part 3. Authorized Academic Awards.

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

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

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System Procedure Chapter 3 – Educational Policies

Procedure 3.36.1 Academic Programs

Part 3. Authorized Academic Awards.

Subpart C. Program Credit Length Waivers for Associate and Baccalaureate Degrees.

1. **Authority.** The system office determines the approval or disapproval of all requests for waivers to exceed program credit length limitations.
2. **Criteria for Granting Waivers.** Credit length waivers may be granted when determined necessary to ensure that the degree provided meets industry or professional standards. Waivers shall be granted only when a need for a longer program credit length is demonstrated by one or more of the following:
 - a. Industry Standards
 - (1) National or international program certification,
 - (2) National or international standards, including skill standards,
 - (3) Standards recommended by a primary employer or multiple employers within a program service area.
 - b. Professional Standards
 - (1) National specialized program accreditation,
 - (2) State licensure requirements,
 - (3) National practices or standards.

3. Waiver Process for Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate of Fine Arts, and Baccalaureate degrees. The following process shall be followed to request a waiver:

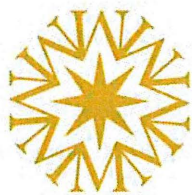
- a. Preparation of a waiver application for submission to the system office shall be consistent with accepted system college or university curriculum approval processes. Waiver requests for similar academic programs may be pursued on a Page 13 Procedure 3.36.1 multi-college/university basis when recommended by faculty consistent with accepted processes at each participating system college or university.
- b. Academic program advisory committees may provide recommendations on learning requirements. Program advisory committee recommendations that support the standards may be submitted with the waiver request. For student

representation on college or university academic program advisory committees, see Board Policy 2.3 and System Procedure 2.3.1 Student Involvement in Decision-Making.

- c. Waiver applications will be distributed for review and comment to state student associations, faculty union leadership, and system college and university administrators.
- d. The system office will act on the waiver application and notify the applicant.
- e. Appeals related to waiver decisions will be processed through the vice chancellor for academic and student affairs.
- f. Public information regarding the waiver process, review criteria, rationale for decisions, and decisions reached will be available on the system office website.

4. Waiver Process for Associate of Applied Science degrees. The following process shall be followed to request a waiver:

- a. Preparation of a waiver application for submission to the system office shall be consistent with accepted system college or university curriculum approval processes.
- b. An associate of applied science waiver application shall compare and contrast credit lengths of comparable programs and provide a program analysis describing learning outcomes not found in shorter programs.
- c. Academic program advisory committees shall provide recommendations on learning requirements. For student representation on college or university academic program advisory committees, see Board Policy 2.3 and System Procedure 2.3.1.
- d. Waiver applications shall document the approval of the system college or university curriculum committee, the program advisory committee, and the system college or university student representative on the program advisory committee. If there was no student representative on the program advisory committee, the system college or university student association shall review and comment on the waiver application.
- e. Waiver applications will be distributed for review and comment to state student associations, faculty union leadership, and system college and university administrators.
- f. The system office will act on the waiver application and notify the applicant.
- g. Appeals related to waiver decisions will be processed through the senior vice chancellor for academic and student affairs.
- h. Public information regarding the waiver process, review criteria, rationale for decisions, and decisions reached will be available on the system office website.
- i. Associate of applied science programs approved to exceed 60 credits shall include an explanation of why the program is longer than similar programs in the catalog description.



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