

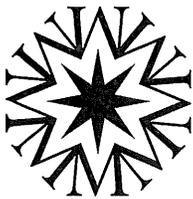
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# Degree Credit Caps:

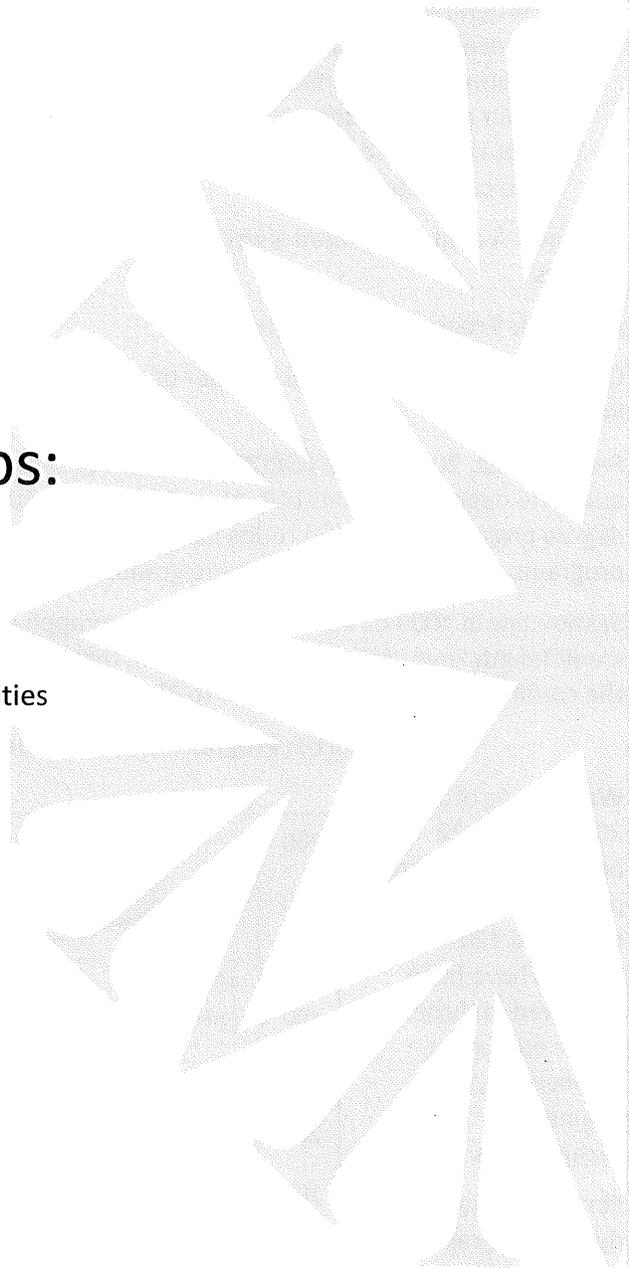
## Report to the Legislature

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

October 2013



**Minnesota**  
STATE COLLEGES  
& UNIVERSITIES



## Report Summary

Legislative requirements have been met.

- All system associate in arts, associate in science, associate in fine arts, baccalaureate degree programs are in compliance with Minnesota Statutes and Board of Trustees policy and system procedures regarding program credit lengths.
- During FY2013, credit length waivers were approved for one baccalaureate degree program, four associate degree programs and 12 associate in applied science degree programs.
- During FY2014 review of over 300 associate in applied science degree programs is expected to be completed.

Appendix A contains related legislation and appendix B presents chancellor's procedure for credit length waivers.

## Academic Program Credit Reduction

Chart 1 illustrates the annual number of programs by award type and credit length that exceeded credit limits.

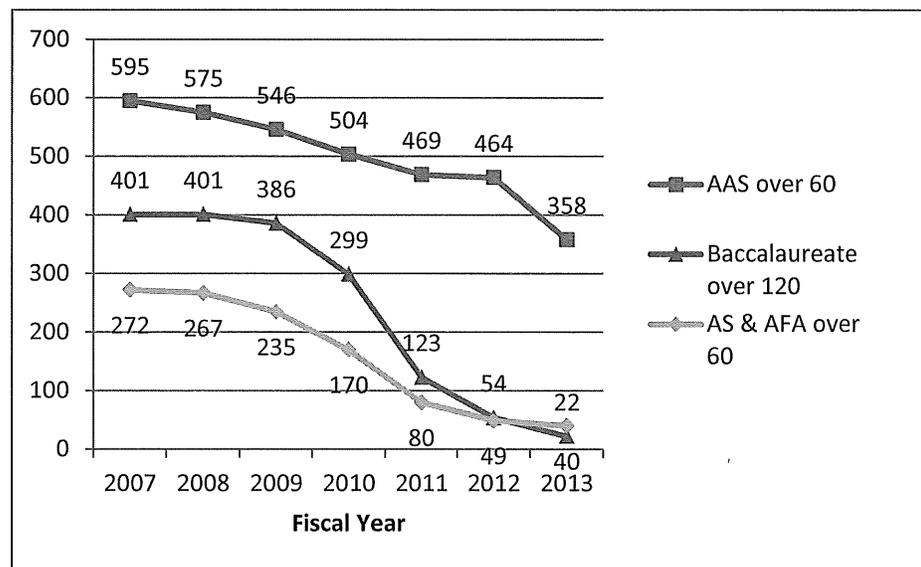
From August, 2007 (when 60/120 legislation became effective), through June 30, 2013, the number of associate degree programs (AA, AS and AFA) over 60 credits has been reduced to 40; baccalaureate degree programs over 120 credits have been reduced to 22. These associate and baccalaureate degree programs over their credit limit were granted a waiver based on industry and professional standards.

Session law in 2009 directed that associate of applied science degree programs be exempt from the credit length limit until July of 2012. Since that time, associate of applied science degree programs over the credit limit have been reduced to 358 programs. Review of these programs is underway.

**Chart 1: Programs that Exceeded Credit Limits, FY2007 - 2013<sup>1</sup>**

**Waivers.** As of July 1, 2013, for the 22 baccalaureate degree programs approved to exceed 120 credits, waivers have been approved in three areas: education, engineering, and engineering technologies.

For the 40 associate degree programs (AA, AS, and AFA) approved to exceed 60 credits, waivers have been approved



<sup>1</sup> Compared to previous legislative reports, program counting has changed in three ways. Counts as of June 1 were used instead of July 1 so that the former program inventory database could be used through FY2012. Program Navigator, which is the new program inventory system, is used beginning with FY2013. Also, suspended programs are no longer included and programs are counted by institution rather than by location.

in six areas: Dental Hygiene, Emergency Medical Services, Intensive Care Paramedic, Law Enforcement, Music, and Nursing.

For associate in applied science degree programs, 46 have received approval to exceed 60 credits since inception through October 2013. The remaining 312 applied science degree programs are currently under review and will either apply for a credit waiver during FY14 or reduce to 60 credits.

During fiscal year 2013 a total of 17 waiver applications (12 associate in applied science, 4 associate in science, and 1 baccalaureate) were reviewed. These applications, which were approved, are listed in table 2 below.

**Table 2: Approved Waiver Applications, FY2013**

<b>College/University</b>	<b>Program Name</b>
<b>Associate in Applied Science</b>	
Alexandria Technical and Community College	Mechanical Drafting, Design Engineering Technology Medical Administrative Specialist
Normandale Community College	Dietetic Technology
South Central College	Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning/Refrigeration
St. Cloud Technical and Community College	Administrative Assistant Finance and Credit
Minnesota State College – Southeast Technical	Auto Body Collision Technology
	Biomedical Equipment Technology
	Broadband Delivery Technician
	Electronics Technology
Vermilion Community College	Radiography
Vermilion Community College	Natural Resource Technology - Forestry/Wildlife
<b>Associate in Science</b>	
Central Lakes College	Nursing
Inver Hills Community College	Emergency Health Services
Rochester Community and Technical College	Intensive Care Paramedic
St. Cloud Technical and Community College	Nursing
<b>Bachelor of Education</b>	
Minnesota State University Moorhead	Elementary Inclusive Education

## APPENDIX A

### Related Legislation

Session laws in 2007, 2008 and 2009 affect the credit length of selected degree programs. Session law in 2007<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>*

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 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.<sup>4</sup>*

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

<sup>3</sup> Minnesota Statutes § 136F.301

<sup>4</sup> Minnesota Session Laws 2009, Chapter 95, article 2, section 44

## APPENDIX B

### Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System 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 in Arts, Associate in Science, Associate in 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 college or university curriculum approval processes. Waiver requests for similar academic programs may be pursued on a multi-college/university basis when recommended by faculty consistent with accepted processes at each participating 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. Board policy requires student representation on college academic program advisory committees as specified in Policy 2.3 and Procedure 2.3.1.
  - c. Waiver applications will be distributed for review and comment to statewide student associations, faculty union leadership, and 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 in 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 college or university curriculum approval processes.
  - b. An associate in 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. Board policy requires student representation on college academic program advisory committees as specified in Policy 2.3 and Procedure 2.3.1.
  - d. Waiver applications shall document the approval of the college curriculum committee, the program advisory committee, and the college student representative on the program advisory committee. If there was no college student representative on the program advisory committee, the college 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 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 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 in 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.