

## **BOARD OF REGENTS BRIEFING PAPER**

### *Handbook Revision, Graduation Requirements*

#### **BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:**

Currently, Board policy (*Title 4, Chapter 16, Sections 24 and 36*) provides the number of credits that must be earned in residence to meet degree requirements at the state college and community colleges. The regional accrediting agency, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), does not specify the number of credits that must be earned in residence to earn a degree or certificate, but they do expect institutions to establish such a threshold and apply it uniformly. Board policy indicates that for the state college at least 30 credits must be earned in residence for a bachelor's degree (*Title 4, Chapter 16, Section 36*) and at least 15 credits must be completed in residence to meet graduation requirements at a community college (*Title 4, Chapter 16, Section 24*). The Board's policy is silent in terms of a similar requirement for the universities.

Further, a student recently submitted a complaint to the Board that concerns the following provision as indicated on certain university transfer agreements:

*A candidate for a bachelor's degree must earn a minimum of 120 units, at least 40 of which must be in courses numbered 300 or above. A minimum of 60 units must be taken at a 4-year institution with a minimum of 30 units (300-level or above) in residence at the University of Nevada, Reno.*

While the aforementioned language comes specifically from the UNR catalog, a similar provision is included in UNLV's and NSC's course catalogs. Under this four-year institution provision, a student may transfer in up to 90 units from the state college, but only up to 60 credits from a community college. While the language clearly indicates a minimum number of credits that must be taken in residence, it specifies a further limit on transfer credits based on the type of institution (two-year versus four-year). While NWCCU expects institutions to establish a threshold of credits that must be earned in-residence at the degree-granting institution, there is no apparent expectation that institutions create different limits on the number of credits accepted toward degree requirements based on two-year or four-year status.

The policy revision presented herein would prohibit NSHE's four-year institutions from limiting the number of transfer credits based on institution type. In vetting this proposed revision with the Academic Affairs Council, concern was expressed that community colleges may begin to offer more 300-400 level courses. In order to address this concern, the proposal also includes language intended to establish safeguards to ensure that all institutions offering 300-400 level courses only do so for Board-approved programs that they formally offer or for the purpose of fulfilling transfer agreements.

#### **SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:**

Revise *Title 4, Chapter 16, Section 16*, to indicate an in-residence credit requirement for bachelor's degrees earned at a university similar to the current requirement in place for community colleges and the state college, as well as a revision prohibiting the limitation of the number of transfer credits that can apply to a degree based on institution type; *Title 4, Chapter 16, Section 24*, to further define the number of in-residence credits required for associate and bachelor's degrees at a community college; *Title 4, Chapter 16, Section 36*, prohibiting the limitation of the number of transfer credits that can apply to a degree based on institution type; *Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 18*, clarifying that all upper and lower division baccalaureate level courses are transferable and prohibiting limitation of the number of transfer credits that can apply to a degree based on institution type; and *Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 17*, restricting the upper division course offerings at an institution to courses that apply to one or more degree programs that are approved by the Board or for the purpose of fulfilling transfer agreements.

**IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):**

A student complaint to the System Office prompted a review of UNR, UNLV, and NSC institutional transfer policies, applicable Board policy, and NWCCU accreditation requirements..

**CHECK THE NSHE STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL THAT IS SUPPORTED BY THIS REQUEST:**

- Access (Increase participation in post-secondary education)
- Success (Increase student success)
- Close the Achievement Gap (Close the achievement gap among underserved student populations)
- Workforce (Collaboratively address the challenges of the workforce and industry education needs of Nevada)
- Research (Co-develop solutions to the critical issues facing 21<sup>st</sup> century Nevada and raise the overall research profile)
- Not Applicable to NSHE Strategic Plan Goals

**INDICATE HOW THE PROPOSAL SUPPORTS THE SPECIFIC STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL**

The proposed revisions support student success by ensuring that four-year institutions treat transfer credits consistently, whether they are earned originally at a two-year or four-year institution.

**BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:**

- The proposal establishes an in-residence requirement of 30 upper-division credits for all bachelor’s degrees awarded by the universities and community colleges, aligning with existing Board policy for bachelor’s degrees awarded by NSC and also with all institutional catalogs.
- The proposal ensures that credits transferring in to a four-year institution are not limited based on institution type (four-year versus two-year).
- The proposal does **not** change existing Board policy that acknowledges the roles and responsibilities of faculty, departments, colleges, and institutions in determining the applicability (articulation) of transfer courses to general education and degree requirements.

**POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:**

None have been brought forward.

**ALTERNATIVE(S) TO WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED/RECOMMENDED:**

Retain current policy language.

**RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHANCELLOR’S OFFICE:**

This recommendation is supported by the Chancellor’s Office and was drafted by the Department of Academic and Student Affairs.

**COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:**

- Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title # \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter # \_\_\_\_\_ Section # \_\_\_\_\_
- Amends Current Board Policy: Title 4, Chapter 16, Sections 16, 24, and 36; Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 17 and 18
- Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter # \_\_\_\_\_ Section # \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Fiscal Impact: Yes \_\_\_ No X \_\_\_  
Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**POLICY PROPOSAL**  
**Title 4, Chapter 16, Section 16**  
**University Requirements for Graduation**

Additions appear in *boldface italics*; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

**Section 16. University Requirements for Graduation**

It is the policy of the Board of Regents to allow students options in selecting the catalog under which to graduate in order to assist students in graduating without excess credits or undue delay. This policy is consistent with *Nevada Revised Statutes 396.560*.

Periodic revisions of degree requirements are made because of advances in knowledge, changes in occupational or professional qualifications, or the expectations of accrediting authorities. Students should consult the appropriate entities (e.g. advisors, licensing boards, etc.) before selecting the catalog under which to graduate to ensure compliance with any occupational or professional requirements or other post-graduation requirements. Such requirements may necessitate adherence to the degree requirements of a recent or current catalog. Institutional catalogs do not constitute contractual agreements or commitments.

1. A student enrolled at a university may elect to graduate under the catalog of the year of enrollment in a baccalaureate-level program or the year of graduation.
2. A university student who changes his or her major must choose the catalog of the year of the latest change of major or the year of graduation.
3. In addition to the catalog options under Subsections 1 and 2 of this Section, an NSHE transfer student may elect to graduate under the catalog of the year in which the transfer student initially enrolled at the two-year institution.
4. The catalog selected for the purpose of university graduation may not be more than 10 years old at the time of graduation.
5. Exceptions to this policy may be made on a case-by-case basis as determined by the appropriately designated university official.
6. *Candidates for a bachelor's degree at a university must complete at least 30 upper-division credits in residence. Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, an institution cannot limit the number of transfer credits that can apply to degree requirements based solely on the institution type from which the credits originate. An institution may determine the degree applicability of any transfer credits from any other institution on a course-by-course basis and consider curriculum alignment, program accreditation standards, and other academic factors in making those determinations.*

**POLICY PROPOSAL**  
**Title 4, Chapter 16, Section 24**  
**Community College Requirements for Graduation**

Additions appear in *boldface italics*; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

**Section 24. Community College Requirements for Graduation**

The following requirements must be met by a student seeking to graduate from an NSHE community college:

1. Each [~~associate~~] degree or certificate student is required to satisfy course requirements as defined in the college catalog.
2. It is the policy of the Board of Regents to allow students options in selecting the catalog under which to graduate in order to assist students in graduating without excess credits or undue delay. This policy is consistent with Nevada Revised Statutes 396.560.

Periodic revisions of degree requirements are made because of advances in knowledge, changes in occupational or professional qualifications, or the expectations of accrediting authorities. Students should consult the appropriate entities (e.g. advisors, licensing boards, etc.) before selecting the catalog under which to graduate to ensure compliance with any occupational or professional requirements or other post-graduation requirements. Such requirements may necessitate adherence to the degree requirements of a recent or current catalog. Institutional catalogs do not constitute contractual agreements or commitments.

A student may select the catalog year governing requirements for graduation under the following circumstances:

- a. the year in which the student enrolled; or
- b. the year the student officially selects a program of study; or
- c. the year in which the student will complete the curriculum requirements for an associate degree or certificate of achievement.

Exceptions to this policy may be made on a case-by-case basis as determined by the appropriately designated community college official.

3. If a degree is offered for the first time after a student has enrolled, the student may choose the catalog year in which the degree or major was first offered. Except as otherwise provided in this Section, the selected catalog may not be more than six years old at the time of graduation for students receiving an associate degree or certificate of achievement, and not more than 10 years old at the time of graduation for students receiving a baccalaureate degree.
4. A returning student may elect to graduate under the catalog of the year in which the student enrolled before the student's break in enrollment if approved by the academic officer. The selected catalog may not be more than 10 years old at the time of graduation for students receiving a baccalaureate degree. For purposes of this Subsection, "returning student" means a student who has not graduated from a NSHE or non-NSHE institution and who enrolls after a break in enrollment of one or more semesters from a NSHE institution.
5. A student must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.0.

6. [~~A student must complete a minimum of 15 semester credit hours within the college~~].  
***Candidates must complete at least 15 credits in residence for an associate degree and at least 30 upper-division credits in residence for a bachelor's degree.***
7. A student must not have a financial or library obligation to the college.
8. A student may earn multiple degrees and certificates of achievement provided all course and graduation requirements for each degree or certificate are fully satisfied as outlined in the college's course catalog.

**POLICY PROPOSAL**  
**Title 4, Chapter 16, Section 36**  
**State College Requirements for Graduation**

Additions appear in *boldface italics*; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

**Section 36. State College Requirements for Graduation**

It is the policy of the Board of Regents to allow students options in selecting the catalog under which to graduate in order to assist students in graduating without excess credits or undue delay. This policy is consistent with Nevada Revised Statutes 396.560.

Periodic revisions of degree requirements are made because of advances in knowledge, changes in occupational or professional qualifications, or the expectations of accrediting authorities. Students should consult the appropriate entities (e.g. advisors, licensing boards, etc.) before selecting the catalog under which to graduate to ensure compliance with any occupational or professional requirements or other post-graduation requirements. Such requirements may necessitate adherence to the degree requirements of a recent or current catalog. Institutional catalogs do not constitute contractual agreements or commitments.

1. A student enrolled at the state college may elect to graduate under the catalog of the year of enrollment in a baccalaureate-level program or the year of graduation. However, college core curriculum requirements for graduation are determined by the year of admission to the college as a regular degree-seeking student.
2. A state college student who changes his or her major must choose the catalog of the year of the latest change of major or the year of graduation.
3. In addition to the catalog options under Subsections 1 and 2 of this Section, an NSHE transfer student may elect to graduate under the catalog of the year in which the transfer student initially enrolled at the two-year institution.
4. The catalog selected for the purpose of state college graduation may not be more than 10 years old at the time of graduation.
5. Exceptions to this policy may be made on a case-by-case basis as determined by the appropriately designated state college official.
6. In order to graduate students are required to have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.0, including all postsecondary course work attempted.
7. Candidates for a bachelor's degree at the state college must complete at least 30 upper-division credits in residence. ***Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, an institution cannot limit the number of transfer credits from a community college that can apply to degree requirements.***

**POLICY PROPOSAL**  
**Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 18**  
**Transfer Courses and Student Appeals**

Additions appear in *boldface italics*; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

**Section 18. Transfer Courses and Student Appeals**

1. A transfer course is one that is acceptable by a receiving NSHE institution to apply toward an approved degree program at that institution.
2. All *upper and lower division* baccalaureate level courses are transferable. In general, a baccalaureate level course is one that is commonly offered by a regionally accredited [~~four-year~~] educational institution as being applicable toward a bachelor's degree. [~~Some courses within an AAS degree may be applicable only toward a BAS degree if that degree is offered by the receiving institution.~~] *Institutions cannot limit the number of transfer credits applicable to degree requirements based on institution type.*
3. Each institution shall determine the acceptability of general elective transfer courses, and departmental, college, or other requirements or equivalents shall be forwarded to the appropriate department or college for course evaluation. If general elective credit from a non-NSHE institution is granted by one NSHE institution, then all NSHE institutions shall accept the credit unless the facts on which the original decision was based have changed. Appropriate consultation with the faculty is required throughout the evaluation process.
4. A receiving institution shall not require a transfer student to take examinations to validate credit in those courses that are approved as transferable.
5. Application of credits toward degree requirements is the responsibility of the college and department in which the student is seeking a degree. Validation of course content may be required when lower-division courses are used to satisfy upper-division curricular requirements.
6. Pursuant to Nevada Revised Statutes 396.568, an NSHE institution shall not require a student to repeat a course on transfer to a university or State College if an equivalent course was taken and successfully completed at any other NSHE institution, except for programs that have defined a time limit for completion.

**POLICY PROPOSAL**  
**Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 17**  
**Course Numbering**

Additions appear in *boldface italics*; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

**Section 17. Course Numbering**

1. All undergraduate courses in the NSHE must be common-course numbered with equivalent courses offered throughout the System. To be assigned a new and unique course number at least 20 percent of the proposed course content must be unique and not found in a current or pending course within the NSHE.

Any additions or changes to undergraduate course prefixes, numbers, titles, and/or credits must follow the procedures established by the Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs and may not be included in class schedules or catalogs until written approval is received from the Department of Academic and Student Affairs.

2. The NSHE Articulation Coordinating Committee shall provide administrative oversight of the NSHE Common Course Numbering System.
3. An NSHE common course numbering master file shall be maintained by the Office of the Chancellor and published on the Web.
4. Each NSHE institution shall list and update the requirements for each program leading to the bachelor's degree and publicize these requirements for use by all other institutions in the state.
5. Each NSHE institution shall include in its official catalog of undergraduate courses a [S]section stating all lower-division prerequisites for each upper-division specialization or major program.
6. A system-wide course numbering rubric for all institutions shall be maintained so that baccalaureate transfer courses are clearly identified for student reference prior to registration under the following general course numbering parameters:
  - a. Remedial/developmental courses 001-099
  - b. Lower-division courses 100-299
  - c. Upper-division courses 300-499
  - d. State College graduate courses 500-699
  - e. University graduate courses 500-799
7. *An institution shall only offer upper division courses that apply to one or more degree programs that are approved by the Board for offering at that institution or for the purpose of fulfilling transfer agreements.*

[7] 8. Community colleges may utilize a B suffix for course numbers to alert students that the course may be non-transferable for a NSHE baccalaureate degree.

[8] 9. Within the student information system, non-transferable courses and courses that are transferable for a bachelor's of applied science degree only must be appropriately identified for students and advisors during the registration process.

[9] 10. Professional schools may establish their own distinct course numbering rubric that extends beyond the numbering rubric set forth under Subsection 6.