



Digest

Digest means an item that has been through internal review of the Chancellor's Office and the review entities. The item now has form and substance, and is officially "entered into Consultation." The Council reviews the item and provides advice to the Chancellor.

CONSULTATION

TITLE: Defining the Associate in Arts and the Associate in Science

DATE: March 19, 2009

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BACKGROUND

According to title 5 §55061, the community college Associate Degree reflects the culmination of stipulated patterns of learning experiences designed to develop in-depth knowledge about some field, plus “the ability to think and to communicate clearly and effectively both orally and in writing; to use mathematics; to understand the modes of inquiry of the major disciplines; to be aware of other cultures and times; to achieve insights gained through experience in thinking about ethical problems; and to develop the capacity for self-understanding.” Only the title, Associate Degree, is used in title 5 and defined, as specified in Section 55061.

Throughout the system, however, colleges confer degrees labeled as Associate in Arts (AA) and Associate in Science (AS). Since these titles are not defined in title 5, there is wide variation in their use across the system.

In Fall 2005, the Academic Senate adopted the paper *What is the Meaning of a California Community College Degree*. One of the issues introduced in the paper is the concept of creating statewide definitions for the Associate in Arts and the Associate in Science. While the paper acknowledges the local value of leaving the usage of these degree titles to colleges and districts, the paper gives greater weight to creating statewide definitions in the interest of better communication of the purpose of community college degrees to students, the Legislature, and other interested groups.

Prior to adoption of the paper, colleges explored the idea of creating new associate degrees. Some faculty, in fact, expressed interest in establishing an Associate in Fine Arts (AFA) and an Associate in Applied Science (AAS), the latter in use in other states for an associate degree with fewer general education requirements. The AFA and AAS would be used in addition to the AA and AS. With adoption of the paper, however, and later at the Spring 2007 Plenary Session, the Academic Senate focused on the Associate in Arts and Associate in Science as the sole appropriate titles for the Associate Degree. The Academic Senate voted down a resolution to eliminate use of Associate in Arts and Associate in Science in favor of the unitary degree title, Associate Degree, and voted in favor of a resolution to “support and establish statewide definitions for the types of associate degrees offered by California community colleges”(9.01). The Senate engaged in discussions about statewide definitions for the Associate Degree, resulting in the following actions.

At the Fall 2008 Plenary Session, the Academic Senate voted to support Resolution 9.03:

Whereas, The Academic Senate paper What is the Meaning of a California Community College Degree highlighted the fact that the inconsistent application of Associate of Arts and Associate of Science to our associate degrees across colleges fails to convey a clear idea to students and to the public about the value of an associate degree;

Whereas, A survey by the Academic Senate Associate Degree Task Force, in response to this paper, found strong support for the standardization of these terms;

Whereas, Resolution 9.01 S07 called on the Academic Senate to support and establish statewide definitions for the types of associate degrees offered by California community colleges; and

Whereas, The Associate Degree Task Force was asked to develop a proposal for a possible title 5 change to bring back to the body for discussion and consideration;

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges support regulation to define the Associate of Arts and the Associate of Science degrees;

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges support defining the Associate of Science degree in title 5 Regulation as an associate degree in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics or in the area of career technical education, with all other associate degrees given the title of Associate of Arts; and

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges ensure that new title 5 language explicitly state that the two degrees (Associate of Arts and Associate of Science) have the same minimum general education requirements.

ANALYSIS

The Academic Senate has brought the resolution to the Chancellor's Office for development and review of possible title 5 language to implement such a change. There has been discussion of the proposal in the System Advisory Committee on Curriculum and with Chief Student Services Offices.

Proposed language:

55061.5 Types of Associate Degrees

The criteria established by the governing board of a community college district to implement its philosophy on the associate degree shall name the associate degree as either Associate in Science or Associate in Arts, based on the academic area of its major or area of emphasis, using the following criteria:

(a) The "Associate in Science" degree will be awarded in the

- (1) areas of science, technology, engineering, or mathematics; or*
- (2) areas of career technical education.*
- (b) The “Associate in Arts” degree will be awarded in all areas not included in part (a).*
- (c) This section shall be effective for all students admitted to a community college for the Fall 2011 catalog year or term or any term thereafter.*

Under such a regulatory change, no associate degrees other than the Associate in Arts and the Associate in Science would be allowed, barring future changes to regulation.

RECOMMENDATION

The Consultation Council support forwarding the new language for title 5 §55061.5 as above, which defines the usage of the degree titles Associate in Arts and Associate in Science for the entire community college system, to the Board of Governors for consideration.