

Applied Baccalaureates: Expanding Transfer Pathways from Community College to University

Supporting Transfer Students

Successful completion of Oregon students who transfer from community colleges to universities is central to the mission of every public university. In the past, students who started in a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program at a community college and were awarded an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree, faced challenges. Before 2009, AAS degrees were considered “terminal,” and there were limited paths to transfer to a university for a Bachelor’s degree. Now, Oregon’s public universities have designed transfer solutions for this problem, and have been graduating Oregon students who want to advance in their careers with Applied Baccalaureate degrees.

What are Applied Baccalaureates?

The unique Applied Baccalaureate (AB) degrees are designed for the student who has earned a technical associate of science degree (AS) or an associate of applied science degree (AAS) and is seeking the skills necessary for career growth. The AB programs build on a core of career and technical education courses and adds management or other disciplinary depth, advanced technical skills and general education courses, effectively combining technical skills with professional skills. These programs provide opportunities for graduates to move into supervisory and management positions or for advancement within their existing careers.

Most AB programs require a total of 180 quarter credit hours. AB degrees allow students to transfer 60 credits of Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses taken as part of the AAS or AS degree, plus any general education courses that may apply, and then must take at least 60 upper-division credits from 300- and 400- level courses. Many students transfer 100 credits upon admission from the community colleges or other higher education institutions, reducing their time to complete a Bachelor’s degree. Faculty and advisers work with prospective students to maximize the transfer of credits into AB programs. Enrollment in Career and Technical Education AAS programs at all 17 community colleges exceeds 30,000 annually. All of these students currently have access to a bachelor’s degree by transferring to one of the ten existing AB or other programs at Oregon’s public universities.

Applied Baccalaureates at Oregon’s Public Universities			
University	Name of Degree/ Start Date	Capacity	Modality
EOU	Business Administration; Summer 2016	Uncapped	On campus, online and on site at multiple centers in Oregon
EOU	Emergency Medical Services Administration; summer 2016		Online only
OIT	BAS in Technology & Management; April 2011	Uncapped	Klamath Falls, Wilsonville, Online
SOU	BAS Management; Fall 2009	Uncapped	Online and onsite in Ashland and Medford
SOU	Bachelors in Innovation and Leadership; Fall 2014	Would need to add cohort	Short course, night classes, some online, mostly onsite in Medford
WOU	Applied Bacc. Computer Science; Oct 2015	25	Monmouth; portion offered online and hybrid modes
WOU	Applied Bacc. Economics; Oct 2015	50	All WOU programs can expand capacity with added faculty
WOU	Applied Bacc. Gerontology; July 2013	20	
WOU	Applied Bacc. Information Systems; Oct 2015	20	
WOU	Applied Bacc. Psychology; July 2013	40	

Background

Work on AB degrees was initiated by House Bill 3093 of the 2009 Legislative Session. The bill directed the Oregon Joint Boards of Education to develop a plan for AB degrees in Oregon. The members of the Steering Committee identified three key goals: (1) provide opportunities to Oregonians who originally aspired to two-year degrees but now seek careers that require four-year degrees; (2) provide Oregon employers with employees that have the advanced technical and management skills that increase productivity and competitiveness; and (3) improve the efficiency of the educational delivery system.

In brief their recommendations were:

1. **Methods:** Existing methods for planning and approving new bachelor's degrees be used for AB degrees.
2. **Criteria:** New AB degrees should be approved only when they meet the criteria set out in the Board of Higher Education's policy. The university that will award each degree will determine whether it will be designated a Bachelor of Applied Science, a Bachelor of Science, or some other appropriate designation.
3. **Articulation Agreements:** Improvements be made to the articulation between the associate's and bachelor's degrees.
4. **Role of community colleges:** Oregon's public universities currently grant AB degrees based on partnerships with community colleges. If demands for AB degrees are identified that cannot be met by such partnerships, community colleges may seek authority to grant these degrees at a later time.

In 2015, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission's (HECC) HB 2973 Low Cost Degree Work Group incorporated the AB into its study of affordability programs. The work group acknowledged that while EOU, Oregon Tech, SOU and WOU currently offer AB degrees, there appears to be a lack of widespread knowledge about the degrees among the Legislature, HECC, potential students, and advisors at the community colleges who could raise awareness among students about the AB options, many of which are delivered on-site and on-line for place-bound students.

Public Universities Offer Flexibility, Transfer and Career Paths

Since 2009, Oregon's Technical and Regional Universities have started 10 AB degree programs; enrolled 207 students; and awarded 88 AB degrees. These programs all have additional capacity and many are offered online, removing location barriers for rural students.

- The universities want to utilize what they have learned in current AB programs to support student success and expand enrollment in existing degrees, through enhanced transfer advising and student support services.
- All campuses are mapping distinct pathways from community colleges to their most popular university degrees to improve student transfer.
- The universities want to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and continue a partnership approach with community colleges to expand AB programs, with universities awarding AB degrees with smooth transfer pathways from AAS college programs.
- The public universities are willing to fill any gaps in the market to respond to regional and state employer needs and are working with the community colleges and the governor's office to understand those needs.

For More Information Please contact the Oregon Council of Presidents at richardsond@wou.edu or the government relations staff member from any of the seven public universities.

