

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Item Name: Request for Credit Exception for the University of Arizona

Action Item

Requested Action: The University of Arizona asks the committee to review and recommend for board approval a credit exception request.

Background/History of Previous Board Action

In April 2007, ABOR approved NAU's 90/30 program (NAU policy # 100224) that allows the transfer of up to 90 transfer units into a variety of specializations included in their Interdisciplinary Studies degree.

In December 2009, ABOR approved an exception to transfer credit limits, up to 75, for the Bachelor of Applied Sciences (BAS) degree at UArizona.

Additionally, in June 2021 ABOR approved a similar exception for up to 75 transfer credits for the BS in Biological Sciences at NAU.

Discussion

The BGS degree meets the changing needs of students and increases affordability and access for 4-year and transfer students to the university.

Raising the credit transfer limit for the BGS would address equity concerns in Arizona and across our academic locations, as the BGS is offered at Main Campus (Tucson), Arizona Online Campus, Global Direct Campus, and at multiple locations within the Distance Education/Near You Network.

Expanding the limit of transfer credits supports Arizona's economic development in two primary ways: a) it increases access to higher education and supports Arizona's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) goals.

The passage of Arizona Senate Bill (SB) 1453, which allows community colleges in Arizona to offer four-year bachelor's degrees, introduces more competition into the higher education landscape in Arizona. This legislation could affect the admission and retention rates of all UArizona campuses, particularly in key areas related to health, the sciences, and education. As a broad multi-disciplinary program offered at multiple campuses, especially through the Near-You-Network, the BGS is well-situated to serve students across the state. Allowing the degree to accept an increased number of

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transfer credits from community colleges makes UArizona more attractive for many Arizona residents.

This is commensurate with many of our peer institutions.

Statutory/Policy Requirements

ABOR Policy 2-223.F “Academic Locations, Degree Programs, and Organizational Units”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**Request to Change Academic Program Credit Requirements**

University: University of Arizona

Name of Academic Program: Bachelor of General Studies
Internal Academic Program ID: GNSBGS
Academic Department: College of Humanities
Geographic Site: Main, Online, Distance, Global Direct
Instructional Modality: In-Person, Online, and Hybrid modalities, depending on campus.
<p>Brief Program Description:</p> <p>The University of Arizona Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) degree is a broad multidisciplinary course of study rather than a traditional major/minor. The degree prepares students to think critically and analytically across a wide range of disciplines or fields of study.</p> <p>From its conception, the BGS degree program was created to provide a pathway towards a college degree for a population of students that may not find a traditional major the most appropriate route for them. Student populations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who have broad interests and who wish to complete a multidisciplinary degree rather than a traditional single-discipline degree • Transfer students, especially non-traditional students who have already completed general education courses and/or associate degrees • Students who began as pre-majors in a particular area but have not been admitted to their desired degree program • Students who have not declared a major but are close to, or over the 60 units/time to declare a major policy <p>Designed specifically with these students in mind, the BGS degree helps fulfill the land-grant mission of the University of Arizona by providing an opportunity for a diverse segment of our student population, including many who transfer from Arizona community colleges, to complete their college degree in a timely manner. Currently of the BGS program (750+ majors) is one of the most diverse on campus—51% of majors are students of color and 43% first generation college students—and provides pathways to degree completion for these underrepresented students.</p> <p>Having a BGS degree enhances graduates' employment possibilities. Building from General Education coursework to upper-division coursework in a particular concentration will make</p>

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graduates more competitive in the job market with employers who do not require expertise in a particular discipline but nonetheless want to hire college graduates who are proficient in various modes of communication, critical thinking, and analytic skills.

Enrollment for the Past Three Years:

Fall '19: 843

Fall '20: 896

Fall '21: 775

Credit Revision Requested

Request to allow up to 75 credit hours to transfer from community colleges and be applied toward the requirements for the Bachelor of General Studies degree.

Reason for Revising Credit Requirements:

Allowing community college students to apply a higher number of transfer credits will increase affordability and access and will encourage students to complete a degree at the University of Arizona.

UArizona has already taken a progressive step in creating the BGS degree to meet the changing needs of students and maintain affordability and access for 4-year and transfer students to the university. Raising the credit transfer limit for the BGS would address equity concerns in Arizona and across our academic locations, as the BGS is offered at Main Campus (Tucson), Arizona Online Campus, Global Direct Campus, and at multiple locations within the Distance Education/Near You Network. Expanding the limit of transfer credits supports Arizona's economic development in two primary ways: a) it increases access to higher education and supports Arizona's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) goals to assist adult and dislocated workers find high value employment that require bachelor's degrees, and b) democratizing access to higher education bolsters a high-value workforce with bachelor's degrees that attracts more employers to the state.

The passage of Arizona Senate Bill (SB) 1453, which allows community colleges in Arizona to offer four-year bachelor's degrees, introduces more competition into the higher education landscape in Arizona. This legislation could affect the admission and retention rates of all UArizona campuses, particularly in key areas related to health, the sciences, and education. As a broad multi-disciplinary program offered at multiple campuses, especially through the Near-You-Network, BGS is well-situated to serve students across the state. Allowing the degree to accept an increased number of transfer credits from community colleges makes UArizona more attractive for many Arizona residents.

Comparing UArizona to other institutions that offer Bachelor of General Studies degrees, the majority accept 70 or more credits, including the following: University of Connecticut (75), University of Miami (75), Drexel University (90), Texas Tech University (72), and University of Kansas (75).

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There is a wide range in how UArizona's peer universities treat their local community college systems. Eight of the peer institutions allow the transfer of up to 60 units from a community college to count towards a bachelor's degree, while seven peer institutions allow 75 units or more to count. There is then ample precedent among our peers for increasing the transfer credit limit for the BGS (akin to Bachelor of Arts, which remains the standard option for interdisciplinary degrees at our peer institutions). Moreover, raising the limit of BGS to 75 could still be portrayed as an academically responsible or conservative step as other peer institutions have limits above that.

<i>Peer Institution</i>	<i>BGS equivalent</i>	<i>transfer credits</i>
University of California, Davis	"Individual" (create our own) major	80
University of California, Los Angeles	"Individual" (create our own) major	80
University of Florida	Interdisciplinary Studies	60
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	Interdisciplinary Studies	80
University of Iowa	Liberal Arts	60
University of Maryland, College Park	Interdisciplinary Studies	60
Michigan State University	Interdisciplinary Humanities	56
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities	Individualized Studies	60
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Interdisciplinary Studies	75
Ohio State University	Comparative Studies	60
Pennsylvania State University	Letters, Arts, and Sciences	84
Texas A&M University	University Studies	up to 75
University of Texas, Austin	no equivalent	Varies by program
University of Washington, Seattle	no equivalent	90
University of Wisconsin, Madison	"Individual" (create our own) major	72

Thinking more broadly about the regional and national goals of UArizona for Online Campus, increasing the credit limit to 75 becomes a necessity to compete with other online institutions. For example, Southern New Hampshire University accepts 90, and The University of Maryland Global Campus allows 70 units from a two-year institution to transfer into their Bachelor of General Studies degree program. Moreover, the University of Arizona Global Campus (formerly Ashford) has a Bachelor of Arts Liberal Arts that will accept 90 transfer credits. Increasing the number of transfer credits will allow the BGS degree program to continue supporting UArizona Online Campus by offering flexibility for its target demographic.

Statutory/Policy Requirement and Precedent

The 1996 Transfer Articulation Task Force Report, approved by the Arizona Board of Regents and the (former) State Board of Directors for the Community Colleges of Arizona, and submitted to the Arizona Legislature, outlines the articulation system between the universities

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and community college and limits to 64 the number of credits which transfer from a community college to a university.

In April 2007, ABOR approved NAU's 90/30 program (NAU policy # 100224) that allows the transfer of up to 90 transfer units into a variety of specializations included in their Interdisciplinary Studies degree that is broadly commensurate with UArizona's Bachelor of General Studies.

In December 2009, the Arizona Board of Regents approved an exception to transfer credit limits, up to 75, for the Bachelor of Applied Sciences (BAS) degree. In a letter to State Representative John Kavanagh regarding this decision, ABOR's assistant executive director for Government Affairs wrote: "as part of the on-going efforts to increase baccalaureate degree production, the universities will continue to work with community colleges and other partners to explore mechanisms, including increased transferability of coursework, to allow students to smoothly, quickly and affordably progress to degree completion." We believe increasing the transfer credit limit for the BGS degree will similarly fulfill this promise.

Additionally, in June 2021 ABOR approved a similar exception for up to 75 transfer credits for the BS in Biological Sciences in NAU.

Is this program in an ABOR designated high demand field? YES NO

Is the revised program in education, health, science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM)?