

**TOPIC: PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CCHE ADMISSIONS STANDARDS POLICY**

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## **I. SUMMARY**

As required by State law (§23-1-113 C.R.S.), the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (the Commission) will review and revise the admission standards policy (CCHE policy I, F) by December 15, 2013. Statute requires the Commission to align the admissions standards policy with the state's description of postsecondary and workforce readiness, graduation guidelines and the state's remedial education policy.

The Department of Higher Education, on behalf of CCHE, created a taskforce in May 2012 with the charge to review and revise the policy. Throughout this time period, task force members established preliminary recommendations, vetted those recommendations with stakeholders around the state, and revised the recommendations. Based on the recommendations, the Department developed revised admissions standards policy and presented those to the Commission in the November 2013 meeting.

This Agenda Item presents for approval a new admissions standards policy (Attachment A: Admission Standards Policy draft) and implementation plan.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

The 2008 Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act (SB08-212), more commonly known as CAP4K, requires that the Commission review and align the admissions standards policy with the postsecondary and workforce readiness description, adopted by the Commission and the State Board of Education in 2009. Subsequent legislation (HB 12-1155) further requires the Commission to ensure that academic admissions standards are aligned with the state's remedial education policy and allows the Commission to take into account rigor of a student's high school courses.

Department staff presented initial recommendations from the Admissions Standards Policy Review Task Force to the Commission at its August retreat. Staff subsequently presented the draft policy to the Commission at the November 7, 2013 meeting.

Since the November 7 meeting, the Task Force held its final meeting. Staff compiled and reviewed final comments received from Task Force members and other stakeholders and made minor adjustments to the policy. The Commission's discussion on November 7 and the final Task Force meeting helped staff define a timeline and plan for implementation of the new policy. That plan is included in this agenda item.

### III. STAFF ANALYSIS

The key elements of the proposed new policy described below directly support the shift in focus in Colorado from enrollment to student success. The changes seek to align postsecondary admissions expectations with high school graduation guidelines. Further, the policy increases flexibility for institutions to determine their own specific admissions requirements and increases the number of tools they may use to do so. The policy presupposes that institutions will develop admissions requirements and admit students whom they are best able to serve reflecting their statutory role and mission.

#### *First-time Students:*

##### *1. Academic Performance Indicators*

- Institutions will be required to establish and submit to the Commission for approval minimum admissions standards, using at least assessment scores (SAT and ACT; PARCC and Smarter Balance when they are validated), GPA and rigor. The following example is for illustrative purposes only:

Institution X
GPA 3.2
ACT: 27
Rigor: Student completed four years of college preparatory English; four years of mathematics with Calculus in the senior year; three years of science with two years of labs; two years of social sciences; 1 year of world languages; and 2 academic electives in his/her chosen career path.

- The Commission will review all standards and ensure they reflect institutions' role and mission and that institutions with the same selectivity have comparable standards, taking into account service areas and students served at different institutions.
- Institutions may enroll up to 20% of students below their minimum academic standards, as allowed in Colorado statute (the window).

##### *2. Assessment score standards must meet or exceed college-ready standards, unless an institution is able to support the student adequately through Supplemental Academic Instruction (SAI).*

- If Institutions enroll students below college-ready that are not served through SAI, they must explain to the Commission by December 31st of that year how they are supporting those students and how enrolling those students is consistent with the institution's role and mission.

*Transfer Students:*

3. *Academic Performance Indicators:* Institutions are required to establish and submit to the Commission for approval a minimum transfer GPA. Transfer students must further have completed 24 credit hours and all required basic skills courses.

4. *Guaranteed Admission:* Students who achieve an Associate of Arts or Sciences with a minimum gpa will be guaranteed admission.

5. *Communication:* The Department will develop a successor tool to the Index to provide information on college-readiness in a transparent and clear way to high school students so they can better understand what they need to accomplish to gain admission to their institution of choice.

**Changes since November 7<sup>th</sup>**

Following are the concerns expressed and changes made to the draft policy since the November Commission meeting:

- Institution representatives and Task Force members expressed concern with the 2016 timeline in the draft policy (4.01), emphasizing that it would not offer enough time to communicate to students currently in middle or high school what they must do to be admitted to Colorado's institutions.
  - Change in policy: the policy will apply to students seeking admission beginning fall 2016; however for two years—from 2016 to 2018—institutions may chose to use the old (current) admissions standards (i.e., HEAR and the index score) or the new standards (that they develop).
- The section on the high school equivalency exam (4.01.04) did not adequately reflect that GED is no longer the only accepted equivalency exam. Staff consulted with the Colorado Department of Education and learned that each state will be able to authorize equivalency exams for use in that state.
  - Change in policy: Institutions will accept equivalency exam results from any state-approved exam. NOTE: It is unlikely that more than the current GED and two other exams (Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) and HiSet) will be authorized in any state in the foreseeable future. CDE staff explained that developing an equivalency exam is a lengthy and difficult process.
- The Colorado Community College System expressed concern that the draft policy did not explicitly list Career and Technical Education courses as an acceptable measurement of rigor (4.01.02.03).
  - Change in policy: The draft policy now lists CTE courses as a rigor consideration.
- DHE staff noted that the definition of transfer did not align with the Statewide transfer policy (4.03).

- Change in policy: the definition of transfer was changed to match the language in the Statewide transfer policy.
- Academic Council members expressed the concern that the restriction of institutions only using regionally accredited institutions for transfer standards was overly restrictive and that institutions should have the option individually of accepting or not coursework done at regionally accredited institutions (4.03.01).
  - That language was deleted.
- Institution representatives suggested clarification in the guaranteed transfer admission section (4.03.04), noting that in some cases transfer may not in fact be guaranteed.
  - Change in policy: A caveat was added to this section explaining that institutions may have specific policies and procedures in place that may disqualify students from *guaranteed* transfer even if they meet the requirements for guaranteed admission. Those students may still be admitted, admission is simply not guaranteed.
- Fort Lewis College noted that the draft policy failed to exclude Native American students from their calculation of in-state and out-of-state students, as required by law (9.00).
  - Native American student enrollment exemption was added into the policy (per CRS 23-1-113.5 (3)).
- Language about early and middle college students, non-degree seeking students age 21 or younger was eliminated. These students will fall under first-time admissions standards or transfer admission standards based on the college courses they completed.
- The task force requested that an additional requirement be placed on the Guaranteed Transfer Admission policy that students have a maximum of 90 college-level semester credit hours completed to be guaranteed admission.

Department staff made other minor edits as can be seen in the attached draft policy.

### **Implementation Plan**

Commission members, Task Force members and other stakeholders have expressed a number of questions and concerns that staff determined are not within the scope of the policy itself, but rather with the implementation of the new policy. To address these concerns, staff developed the following timeline and implementation plan. Going forward, staff will provide regular updates to the Commission on the implementation activities outlined in this agenda item.

The implementation plan has four key elements: data gathering and analysis; the development of the minimum standards; the communication tool that will be used to communicate the new policy and the admissions standards to students, parents and counselors; and training.

*Data Gathering and Analysis:* Members of the Department's Data Advisory Group and members of the Admission and Transfer Policy Review Task Force have agreed to form a subcommittee to guide the collection and analysis of data needed for full implementation of this policy. This group will also model rigor for institutions. The subcommittee will answer many of the data

questions the Department received during the review process. This subcommittee will also gather academic range data for each four-year state institution's "Window" to be reviewed by the CCHE during the fall of 2014. Staff expect that this data will help determine the value of continuing the "window" policy and references to "minimums". (January 2014- July 2014)

*Development of minimum admission standards:* the subcommittee described above will guide the process of institutions developing minimum admission standards. For example, the subcommittee will provide guidance, in consultation with other institution representatives, on whether institutions should develop minimum standard independently or work within their selectivity groups (e.g., selective institutions, moderately selective institutions) to develop comparable minimum standards. (July 2014 – December 2014)

*Communications Tool:* DHE staff have begun working with College In Colorado to develop the Admission Planning Assistant (formerly known as the index communication tool). This tool will be used to clearly communicate to students, parents and counselors each institution's minimum standards; the description of each institution's middle 50 percentile student body (using GPA and assessment scores); and what that institution is seeking from applicants in terms of rigor. It will also explain what students need to demonstrate to institutions to show they are prepared for college-level courses. (Development of tool ready for preview July 2014)

*Training:* This final component of the implementation plan will train institution representatives and counselors on how to use the new policy to assist students in college planning. Both high school counselors and college advisors will need to understand how the new policy is being implemented, what it is intended to achieve and how to explain it to students and others. Additionally, admission staff will need to be trained on how to use the new policy to admit students. College In Colorado staff will also need to be trained so they can continue to be the Department's outreach arm in ensuring access to students across the state. (Beginning January 2015)

As noted during the November Commission meeting, several areas require further consideration and future amendments to the policy. Staff will bring such amendments to the Commission for action as appropriate.

*Postsecondary Workforce Readiness (PWR) Endorsed Diploma:* Statute establishes that students graduating from high school with a PWR endorsed diploma will receive priority consideration from selective and highly selective institutions of higher education. Institutions have not yet come to agreement on what the term "priority consideration" means in the admissions process; staff continue to work with institutions to establish policy guidelines and clarity. (In collaboration with CDE)

**Tentative Timeline**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Group Responsible</b>
January 2014 – February 2014	Subcommittee formed and meets to establish data needs	DAG and ADTR
March 2014 – May 2014	Committee gathers data; identifies further questions; compiles data from institutions	Committee
June 2014 – July 2014	DHE staff, subcommittee, other institution reps review progress, what data shows, what it means for policy	
July 2014	Committee reports to DHE staff	Committee
July 2014 – December 2014	DHE provides guidance for development of minimum standards	Institutions
July 2014	Admission Planning Assistant (Communications tool) previewed	
December 2014	Admission Planning Assistant (Communications tool) ready	
January 2015	DHE puts in place training program	
In collaboration with CDE	Establish PWR endorsed diploma policy guidelines	DHE
Fall 2016	Institutions use both standards	Institutions
Fall 2018	Institutions use new standards exclusively	Institutions

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

**DHE staff recommends the Commission approve the proposed new Admissions Standards Policy.**

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

C.R.S. §22-1-113