

**TOPIC: FORMAL ADMISSION OF NON-DEGREE STUDENTS:
MODIFICATION TO ACADEMIC AFFAIRS POLICY I,
PART F: ADMISSIONS STANDARDS POLICY.**

PREPARED BY: MATT McKEEVER

I. SUMMARY

Since 1986, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education has held the authority to establish statewide admission standards for public colleges and universities. In 2003, CCHE Academic Affairs Policy I, Part F (Admissions Standards Policy) was modified dramatically to include minimum academic coursework requirements, otherwise known as the Higher Education Admission Requirements (HEAR). The addition of the HEAR was accompanied by several other technical changes to the Admissions Standards Policy, such as the clarification of the admission policy as it relates to non-degree students. The implementation of the non-degree transfer policy revision created a roadblock to non-traditional students who were planning to complete their college education. The changes to the policy described herein and found in [Attachment A](#) address non-degree students, age 22 and over, making formal application into the same institution.

Staff recommends that the Admission Standards Policy be changed to allow non-degree students, age 22 years and older, applying for formal admission at the same institution to be considered transfer applicants as long as they meet Admission Standards Policy transfer standards.

II. BACKGROUND

Following the adoption of the 2003 modifications to the CCHE Admissions Standards Policy, CCHE staff began receiving requests from various constituents to revisit the non-degree transfer policy. Institutions have the ability to enroll non-degree students in courses on a space available basis. In 2003 the Commission approved changes to the Admission Standards policy to require that non-degree students applying for formal admission to the same institution would be required to meet the same standards as a first time freshman, regardless of credit hours earned. The revision was spurred by the operation of several programs in which students who elected to enroll did so as non-degree-seeking and were not subject to the freshmen admission standards. The non-degree students often enrolled in the same on-campus courses in which admitted freshmen enrolled, lived in the residence halls, and in many ways participated in campus activities and programs as if they were admitted degree-seeking freshmen. With the changes to the admission policy's transfer standards in 2003, these programs were discontinued.

However, the 2003 changes to the admission policy's transfer standards affected a population of non-traditional aged students planning to complete their degree. These non-traditional students, seeking ways to complete their degree, generally have additional responsibilities other than college (i.e. careers, family, and homes). These additional responsibilities may not allow the student flexibility to attend school outside of their area. Taking courses as a non-degree student provides non-traditional students the ability to determine if they can balance school with other responsibilities. However, taking classes as a non-degree student alters the way they can be considered for admission to that institution. Specifically, the student is considered as a first time freshman even if they have completed sufficient college credit hours to otherwise be eligible as a transfer applicant. Considering these non-traditional students eligible for transfer standard standing, after demonstrating college level success, would encourage degree completion for non-traditional students.

If these proposed changes are approved, non-degree students, age 22 and over, applying for formal admission at the same institution at which they took non-degree coursework, will be subject to the transfer standards of the Admission Standards Policy. Non-degree student, age 21 and younger, applying for formal admission to the same institution at which they took non-degree course work will be subject to freshman standards regardless of credit hours earned.

All of the policy modifications found herein were discussed with the state's senior admission officers and chief academic officers.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

The 2003 policy revision to eliminate programs that offered students an opportunity to attend an institution that they otherwise would not have been admissible was necessary. However, a consequence of the policy revision was the creation of a roadblock for non-traditional students that were place bound and wanting to complete a degree.

Non-traditional students are allowed take courses with non-degree standing. Some of the non-degree students have additional responsibilities (i.e. careers, family, and homes) and are determining if they are ready to go back to school by taking coursework prior to formally applying to the institution. Because of the 2003 revisions, these students may not be admissible to an institution even though they had demonstrated success as a non-degree student. Selected examples of students that the 2003 revisions adversely affected follow:

- Student age 50+: some college work at approx. 2.75 and recalls "doing ok in high school." A published author, the student is interested in finally completing degree, but wants to do non-degree coursework first to "get feet wet." Is concerned about getting a hold of high school transcripts, as she is not sure if the school is even still standing. If student were to take non-degree

- courses they would have to be admitted through window, not based on academic achievement of non-degree work.
- Student age 28: Poor high school grades from several schools, no SAT/ACT scores. Thought would just try some courses as a non-degree student, and has done well. For the first time in life feels academically intelligent, and would like to be formally admitted. By the end of term will meet the transfer standard, but will not be admissible as transfer and will have to be considered a window admit.
 - Student age 32: Excellent non-degree student who ended up with a 3.113 GPA and 38 hours. Student visited with admissions office right after the policies for admission changed, and was told that because of low high school GPA and low SAT scores would not be eligible for admission. Student left school at that time. Student said put school on the back-burner because they did not want to risk applying and getting denied.

Some non-traditional students are seeking ways to complete their degree and generally have additional responsibilities other than college. These additional responsibilities sometimes do not allow the student flexibility to attend school outside of their area. Taking courses as a non-degree student provides non-traditional students the ability to determine if they can balance school with other responsibilities. Changing the policy to consider non-traditional non-degree students applying for formal admission at the same institution as a transfer applicant encourages degree completion.

Recognizing that the 2003 revisions of the policy were necessary to eliminate programs that essentially admitted non-qualified students, and recognizing that some non-traditional students may be place bound and recognizing that it is in the best interest of higher education in Colorado to encourage completion of degrees; staff recommends that the Admission Standard Policy is changed to allow non-degree students, age 22 years and older, applying for formal admission at the same institution be considered transfer applicants as long as they meet all other transfer standards.

The recommended changes would not alter the policy for those non-degree students aged 21 and under applying for formal admission at the same institution.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Admission Standards Policy be changed to allow non-degree students, age 22 years and older, applying for formal admission at the same institution to be considered transfer applicants as long as they meet Admission Standards Policy transfer standards.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

**23-1-108 C.R.S.
23-1-113 C.R.S.**