

Fairmont State Board of Governors  
POLICY # 52

Effective Date: September 27, 2006

TITLE: Degree Definitions

SECTION 1: General

1.1 Scope This policy defines the degrees awarded by Fairmont State University and is intended to be used in design of all degrees programs at the University

SECTION 2: Definitions

- 2.1 Associate's Degree: A program of study equivalent to two years of full-time study consisting of major and liberal studies (general education) components.
- 2.2 Bachelor's Degree: A program of study equivalent to 4 years of full-time study consisting of a major, liberal studies (general education) courses and elective components.
- 2.3 Master's Degree: A program of study equivalent to 1 to 2 years of study. A master's degree generally follows completion of a bachelor's degree but in certain circumstances advanced baccalaureate students may be dual enrolled in a master's program. A master's degree cannot be attained before completion of a bachelor's degree.
- 2.4 Major: A specialized program of study that prepares a student for entry level into a profession (e.g. teaching, engineering, business, performance in the arts), graduate school, professional school or entry level employment in a field requiring general qualifications. For the purpose of this rule, courses that are required in the major and that also satisfy liberal studies requirements may be counted formally as part of liberal studies, rather than as part of the major requirement. A major shall consist of between 32 and 65 credit hours. A major may include a required minor, but the total credit hours for the major, including the minor, may not exceed 65.
- 2.5 Minor: A specialized program of study used to complement a major by providing a secondary area of expertise. A minor shall consist of between 18 and 24 credit hours.
- 2.6 Liberal Studies (General Education): The Fairmont State Board of Governors endorses the North Central Association Higher Learning Commission's Statement on General Education (February 21, 2003) which states in part, "Understanding and appreciating diverse cultures, mastering multiple modes of inquiry, effectively analyzing and communicating information, and recognizing the importance of

creativity and values to the human spirit not only allow people to live richer lives but also are a foundation for most careers and for the informed exercise of local, national, and international citizenship.” Liberal studies courses shall consist of between 32 and 42 credit hours for a bachelor’s degree and between 16 and 21 credits for an associate’s degree.

- 2.7 Free Electives: Courses chosen by a student to broaden their areas of study in a self directed manner. Free Electives may not be specified by the program or institutional faculty. Baccalaureate students must be given a minimum of 21 hours of free elective credit as part of their program of study.

### SECTION 3: Board Policy:

- 3.1 Requirements for master’s degrees offered by Fairmont State University are limited to a maximum of 36 semester hours of credit. Exceptions to this policy must be recommended by the program and approved by the Board of Governors. Exceptions will be limited in number and approved only on the basis of the criteria listed in Section 4 below.
- 3.2 Requirements for bachelor’s degrees offered by Fairmont State University are limited to a maximum of 128 semester hours of credit. The degree program of study shall include major, liberal studies (general education) and elective components. Exceptions to this policy must be recommended by the provost and approved by the Board of Governors. Exceptions will be approved only on the basis of the criteria listed below.
- 3.3 Requirements for associate’s degrees offered by Fairmont State University are limited to a maximum of 72 semester hours of credit and must meet requirements outlined in WVCCTC Series 7. The degree program of study shall include major and liberal studies (general education) components. Exceptions to this policy must be recommended by the Provost or C&TC President, as appropriate and approved by the Board of Governors. Exceptions will be approved only on the basis of the criteria listed in Section 4 below.

### SECTION 4: Procedure

- 4.1 Programs seeking exceptions to any of the maximum credit hour limits must submit formal requests to the Board of Governors for approval. The rationale for the exception must document the existence of one or more of the criteria in paragraph 4.2 below.
- 4.2 Criteria
  - 4.2.1. Accreditation standards of the appropriate specialized accrediting agency mandate more credit hours than allowed in section 3.
  - 4.2.2. Licensing standards of the profession involved require more credit hours than allowed in section 3.

4.2.3. Employment and initial success in the profession require more credit hours than allowed in section 3.

4.3 The burden of proof will be on the program requesting exceptions to document that any or all of the above conditions are present with regard to their particular situation.

#### SECTION 5: Implementation

5.1 The lesser of two or 50% of existing programs in each School or College will be in compliance with this policy by Fall 2007. All other existing programs must conform to the policy by Fall 2008. New programs must conform at the time of approval.