

**Bachelor of Applied Science Degree  
Task Force**

**Final Report of Activities**

**June, 2006**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In accordance with the goals of the Florida Department of Education and the Florida Community College System's Strategic Plan, a Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) Task Force was convened during the fall of 2005 and the spring of 2006 to examine existing BAS degree programs and to develop a common definition of the BAS degree for Florida's public higher education institutions. The Task Force, which consisted of representatives from the Office of the Florida Board of Governors, the State University System, the Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education, the Florida Community College System, and the Florida Department of Education, met three times over a seven month period.

Academic quality, structural consistency, and articulation assurance were key factors that guided the work of the Task Force. Thoughtful research, discussion and deliberation resulted in unanimous agreement on a definition of the BAS degree for Florida, including descriptions of four degree structures currently in use. This BAS definition and associated degree structures will assist public institutions of higher education as they develop new BAS degrees designed to increase access to the baccalaureate and strengthen Florida's workforce and economy.

## **BACKGROUND**

For many years there has been growing concern among legislators and state policy makers about baccalaureate degree production in Florida. While Florida is one of the top states in the nation for associate degree production, it is 46<sup>th</sup> out of 50 in baccalaureate degree production. This, combined with the state's transition from an agriculture and service-based economy into an economy based on technology, healthcare, and other sophisticated industries, has led to the development of additional baccalaureate pathways and degrees. Partnership agreements between community colleges and upper-division institutions have expanded over the past five years. Currently, over 20,000 students are enrolled in baccalaureate programs on community college campuses through concurrent and joint-use programs.

In 2001, legislation was developed that authorized community colleges to provide site determined baccalaureate degrees under certain circumstances (Section 1007.33, F.S.) Additionally, Senate Bill 1162 re-established St. Petersburg Junior College as St. Petersburg College and provided the authority for this institution to grant baccalaureate degrees in nursing, education, and technology (Section 1004.73, F.S.).

Bachelor of Applied Science degrees were approved for those fields of study selected by the Board of Trustees at St. Petersburg College with the stipulation that these programs must be based on local workforce needs, and that, for each program selected, St. Petersburg College must offer a related Associate in Science or Associate in Applied Science degree. Each BAS degree program was required to articulate fully with at least one Associate in Science degree program. It is also significant to note that St. Petersburg College was required to maintain the mission and policies of a Florida Community College.

## **STRATEGIC INTEGRATION**

The work of the BAS Task Force was conceived and conducted in order to be fully integrated with the goals and priorities of the Florida Department of Education and the Florida Community College System. The list below shows the alignment of Task Force activities with key goals and objectives of Florida's K-20 educational system.

### Florida Department of Education **Strategic Goal Number Two**

- Seamless articulation and maximum access

## Florida Department of Education **Strategic Imperative Number Eight**

- Coordinate efforts to improve higher student learning

## Florida Community College System Strategic Plan--**Priority Goal Number Three**

- Facilitate baccalaureate access through policies which maintain a local community focus, thereby reaffirming our commitment to meeting unmet community economic and educational needs.

## Florida Community College System Strategic Plan--**Initiative 3.2**

- Establish a Florida Community College System Task Force during 2005-2006 to define common curricular parameters for the BAS degree with a focus on quality, consistency, and articulation.

### **PURPOSE**

During the development of Strategic Initiative 3.2, it was determined that, “as interest in, and the demand for, the Bachelor of Applied Science Degree grows, so does the need to provide curriculum guidelines (i.e., common prerequisites, common course numbering, etc.) for these programs.” It was this determination and directive that led to the formation of the BAS Task Force.

### **CHRONOLOGY**

- Summer, 2005—Planning for BAS Task Force
- November 9, 2005—Task Force Meeting via Conference Call
- January 19, 2006—Task Force Meeting at Daytona Beach Community College
- May 3, 2006—Task Force Meeting at University of South Florida
- June, 2006—Final Report Drafted
- Summer, 2006—Planned Dissemination of Findings

### **PROCESS AND OUTCOMES**

Because the BAS degree may be offered at any institution of higher education authorized to offer baccalaureate degrees, Dr. R.E. LeMon, Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs of the Office of the Florida Board of Governors (BOG) was invited to co-chair the Task Force with Dr. Judith Bilsky, Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Success with the Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education (DCCWE). Additionally, representatives from two state universities (one with a BAS and one with a BSAS) were selected to join the Task Force. Other members of the Task Force included administrators from community colleges with existing BAS degrees, staff from DCCWE, and the Director of the Office of Articulation at the Florida Department of Education. A total of 20 members were invited to serve on the BAS Task Force.

**Meeting Number One:** In preparation for the November 9, 2005 conference call, staff from DCCWE began conducting research on the BAS degree in Florida, in other states, and in other

countries. Florida statutes and rules relating to baccalaureate degrees in general, and the BAS degree in particular, were also identified. These materials were distributed to the members of the BAS Task Force for review prior to the conference call. After discussion regarding the purpose of the Task Force and some of the existing BAS programs in the state, the group decided to focus on two key objectives:

- To collect data on all existing Florida BAS degrees in order to analyze similarities and differences and to identify common degree models or structures
- To identify common academic components of all BAS degrees and to develop a working definition of the BAS degree in Florida

**Meeting Number Two:** The next meeting of BAS Task Force was held at Daytona Beach Community College on January 19, 2006. Prior to this meeting, an internet link to the *Lake Washington Technical College Bachelor in Applied Technology Program Feasibility Study* was provided to all members of the Task Force. This was a recent, very well-researched report that provided excellent background information on applied baccalaureate degrees. A link was also provided to the March 15, 2005 presentation to the State Board of Education on the Bachelor of Applied Science Degree by the Council for Education Policy, Research and Improvement (CEPRI).

At this second meeting of the BAS Task Force, staff from DCCWE presented highlights from the Lake Washington report, the CEPRI presentation, and an overview of Florida's AS to BS Articulation Model. After discussion of these materials, the Task Force divided into two subcommittees. One worked to categorize the major program components of Florida's existing BAS programs using a template. The other subcommittee discussed whether any new degree structures were needed and then developed a list of recommended features for Florida BAS degree programs. After reports from both subcommittees, the group agreed that two priority tasks needed to be accomplished:

- Conversion of the completed templates into a side-by-side comparison, or matrix, of existing Florida BAS programs
- Development of a working definition for the BAS degree based on the features recommended by the Task Force and academic components common to these degrees

**Meeting Number Three:** The final meeting of the BAS Task Force occurred on May 3, 2006 at the University of South Florida. Prior to this meeting, staff from DCCWE drafted a matrix of existing BAS degree programs and a working definition of the BAS degree (along with descriptions of four existing degree structures) and distributed them to the Task Force for consideration. During the meeting, members of the Task Force worked to refine the matrix, the BAS definition, and the descriptions of the degree structures. The Task Force also agreed to a plan for disseminating the results of their work. This plan included reporting to the following policy making entities:

- Florida Board of Education
- Florida Board of Governors
- Articulation Coordinating Committee
- Community College Council of Presidents

## **BACHELOR OF APPLIED SCIENCE—DEFINITION**

The following definition was developed by the BAS Task Force with special consideration for the issues of academic integrity, articulation, flexibility, workforce preparation, and applied learning:

***The Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) is the designated degree for flexible baccalaureate programs that are designed to accommodate the unique demands for entry and advancement within specific workforce sectors. BAS programs provide degree completion opportunities for students from a variety of educational backgrounds, but primarily those with A.S. degrees or the equivalent. BAS degree programs conform to all articulation conventions (including common course prerequisites, common course numbering, and faculty credentialing in accordance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools). BAS degree programs typically include capstone experiences that provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the application of acquired knowledge, skills, and competencies.***

## **BACHELOR OF APPLIED SCIENCE—CURRENT DEGREE STRUCTURES**

Nationally, and internationally, BAS degrees have been designed to address specific workforce needs. These needs are diverse--encompassing everything from skill development in written communication, oral communication, and critical thinking, to advanced knowledge and technical expertise within specific disciplines, to the need for training in management and administration.

After a thorough analysis of the purposes and characteristics of existing Florida BAS degrees (see Appendix B), the Task Force identified **four distinct degree structures** currently in use. These degree structures are described below with a preliminary statement to emphasize the fact that BAS degrees conform to the same statutory requirements, and meet the same quality standards, as all baccalaureate degrees in the state of Florida.

***All BAS degrees require completion of Florida's standard baccalaureate degree requirements (36 hours of General Education, College Level Academic Skills Testing, and demonstration of foreign language competence).***

### ***Inverted Baccalaureate***

*An upper-division focus on general education, electives, and an appropriate area of concentration*

### ***General Management***

*An upper-division focus on general business and management courses*

### ***Advanced Discipline and Management***

*An upper-division focus on advanced content in the discipline of the A.S. degree (or equivalent) and management courses*

### ***Discipline Saturation***

*An upper-division focus on advanced content in the discipline of the A.S. degree (or equivalent)*

## **GUIDANCE FOR INSTITUTIONS**

Bachelor of Applied Science degrees provide opportunities for students to gain and advance workforce skills. Flexible degree structures are already in place in Florida to allow for the acquisition of communication and critical thinking skills, leadership and management skills, advanced technical knowledge, and combinations of this content. However, new structures are

not prohibited when justified by local workforce needs and supported by sound educational pedagogy.

Relevant options for meeting language requirements should be considered, including coursework in conversational language competence—especially if career-specific courses can be developed or offered. The inclusion of a capstone experience is a defining characteristic of this degree type. It allows for the integration of higher-order thinking skills and provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate competencies in applied settings.

While the BAS would typically be considered a “transfer degree,” meaning that students apply for admission to upper division coursework after completing an Associate in Science degree (or equivalent), this is not required. It is acknowledged that some students will enter BAS degree programs as freshmen; thus, curriculum must be fully developed for each year of study and case-by-case evaluation of each student’s academic preparation is expected.

Any proposed BAS degree must comply with all Florida statutes, rules and policies governing baccalaureate degree programs and instruction, including 36 hours of General Education coursework. Any proposed BAS degree must also comply with all Florida statutes, rules and policies governing articulation and transfer, including the identification of common prerequisites, if they are required.

When considering new baccalaureate degrees, it is highly recommended that institutional representatives contact appropriate state-level staff for guidance and technical assistance.

## **APPENDIX A**

List of Members, Additional Participants, and Staff

## **APPENDIX B**

Matrix of Current BAS Degree Programs in Florida