

# What is the Meaning of a California Community College Degree?

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## Abstract

**T**he Associate Degree has been subjected to numerous demands and external pressures and, as a result, has evolved somewhat independently at each California community college to meet local needs. Most colleges in the system have developed Associate Degrees based on completion of a general education curriculum. However, current Title 5 language limits the award of the Associate Degree to programs of study which include in-depth study in a specific field. Colleges are not consistent in the application of the titles Associate of Arts and Associate of Science to degree awards. This creates confusion within and outside of the system as to the meaning of the various Associate degrees. This paper reviews these two topics in depth, providing a discussion of the benefits and possible ramifications of changes to Title 5 and the establishment of a uniform application of titles to degrees. The value of the Associate Degree is reviewed and emphasized. The paper concludes with a recommendation calling for the creation of a task force that will develop formal proposals to address these and other issues related to the Associate Degree for future consideration by the Academic Senate.

# Introduction

**W**hat is the meaning of a California community college degree? What does the attainment of the Associate Degree signify? The answers to these questions vary depending on whom you ask and reflect how respondents view the role that community colleges play or should play in the State of California. One answer is that the Associate Degree represents the completion of a general course of study that prepares a person to enter into the job force, equipped with a requisite set of skills needed for a particular vocation. Another answer is that the Associate Degree is a stepping stone on the path to further education, a Bachelor's Degree or post-graduate work. A third answer is that the Associate Degree represents the successful completion of a general course of education, one that has long been argued as providing the foundation for an educated citizenry capable of active participation in society.

While Title 5 Regulations provide a definition of what constitutes the requirements for the awarding of an Associate Degree, changes in society and other external pressures, both economic and legislative, have forced re-examination of the requirements for an Associate Degree. In 2001, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges approved the adoption of an information competency requirement, recognizing the enormous influx of information sources due to technological developments and the ability needed to evaluate those sources. In 2005, after long discussion, faculty approved raising the degree requirements in mathematics and English.

External pressures are forcing the community colleges to grapple with increasing accountability requirements and performance-based funding. Not surprisingly, the Associate Degree has been re-examined locally to respond to this demand for quantifiable data to satisfy accountability measurements. Local conditions have also prompted discussion of creating variations that tailor the Associate Degree for local student populations and local economic needs. Over time, common practice has been a moving away from the specific requirements of Title 5 to address both external pressures and local conditions.

Local decisions about the Associate Degree have also muddied outside perception of the meaning of an Associate Degree. A review of how the two Associate Degrees, the Associate of Arts (AA) and the Associate of Science (AS), are applied to degrees offered by the 109 colleges in the system shows a great variance across the state.

Cognizant of the diversity of the communities that are served by California's community colleges statewide, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges has historically sought to support local control at the community college. However, given the pressures on the Associate Degree and the resultant changes that are occurring on the local level, it is time that the Academic Senate re-examine the Associate Degree, including the Title 5 Regulations that govern its award and the use of the AA/AS designations and titles. The value and the meaning of the Associate Degree need to be re-asserted and clarified, and this can only begin with a thorough understanding of what the Associate Degree has come to represent.

# The Associate Degree as Defined in Title 5

**A**ccording to Title 5 §55805, the community college Associate Degree reflects the culmination of stipulated patterns of learning experiences designed to develop in-depth knowledge about some field, plus “ the ability to think and to communicate clearly and effectively both orally and in writing; to use mathematics, to understand the modes of inquiry of the major disciplines; to be aware of other cultures and times; to achieve insights gained through experience in thinking about ethical problems, and to develop the capacity for self-understanding.” <sup>1</sup>

Structurally, the Associate Degree consists of 60 units of college level course work, a compilation of systematic patterns of general education and field-specific courses that meet the following standards and criteria for approval as degree applicable:

- a) A grading policy that provides for measurement of student performance and is based on demonstrated proficiency in subject matter;
- b) A minimum of three hours work per week for each unit, prorated for short term, laboratory and activity courses;
- c) Subject matter is treated with a scope and intensity that requires students to study independently outside of class time; and
- d) Critical thinking, application of concepts, learning and computational skills, and vocabulary that are determined by the curriculum committee to have college-level difficulty. <sup>2</sup>

These coherent and integrated patterns of learning experiences prepare students to be educated persons with a broad range of knowledge to evaluate and appreciate the physical environment, the culture, and the society in which they live; to be able to examine the values inherent in proposed solutions to major social problems; and to be able to participate effectively in their resolution. In short, the language of Title 5 not only emphasizes the role of the Associate Degree as focused study in a specific field, but it also aims to direct community colleges to prepare citizens with a broad educational foundation, to develop a populace that can participate effectively in all domains of society: civically, economically, and politically.

<sup>1</sup> §55805. Philosophy and criteria for Associate Degree and General Education. Title 5, California Code of Regulations.

<sup>2</sup> §55002. Standards and Criteria for Courses and Classes. Title 5, California Code of Regulations

*“In short, the language of Title 5 not only emphasizes the role of the Associate Degree as focused study in a specific field, but it also aims to direct community colleges to prepare citizens with a broad educational foundation, to develop a populace that can participate effectively in all domains of society...”*

# The Value of the Associate Degree

**A** high school diploma no longer prepares our citizens to participate effectively in our complex society nor to compete for the jobs that will support them economically to reach the “American dream.” According to Van de Water & Gordon-Krueger (2002), “the role played by high schools in the 1940s and 1950s is now being played by colleges and universities, and the patterns of attendance and graduation that existed in high school during the 1930s and 1940s are now unfolding in higher education.” For this reason, the role of the Associate Degree in preparing students for the workforce has increased manifold. Society’s reliance on the community college to offer such preparation has been evidenced by the recent addition of *economic development* to the many missions of the California Community College System.

It has been well documented that higher education correlates to a citizen's economic power. Based on Census data, Porter (2002) reports that earnings of individuals with Associate Degrees far surpass those with only a high school diploma, and Pulliam Weston (2005) furthers the point that these earnings are linked to high quality, coherent programs of study. In her article “Is your degree worth \$1 million—or worthless?” she identifies the economic benefits of a strong Associate Degree. The benefits of a college degree extend beyond economic gains however; Rowley and Hurtado (2002) reported that:

*... non-monetary individual benefits of higher education include the tendency for postsecondary students to become more open-minded, more cultured, more rational, more consistent and less authoritarian; these benefits are also passed along to succeeding generations.*

While studies have linked higher education with increased earnings and broader thinking, the perceived value of the Associate Degree is not always favorable. For many people, there remains a derogatory view of community colleges and the value of a community college education. This is reflected in the deprecatory humor about

*“For many people, there remains a derogatory view of community colleges and the value of a community college education.”*



community colleges by late-night comedians<sup>3</sup> and the fact that community colleges are often portrayed in the media as the consolation prize for those who cannot get into a four-year institution<sup>4</sup>.

Even among community college faculty, there is concern that the rigor of the Associate Degree needs to be strengthened in order to retain the value of the degree. In addition to the requirements for information competency, English, and mathematics mentioned above, faculty have also expressed a desire to establish minimum grade point average requirements for major coursework.

*Whereas there is no minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) that students must achieve solely in their major courses, and*

*Whereas students' achievement in their majors could affect their ability to perform in the field,*

*Resolved that the Academic Senate explore the feasibility of setting a minimum grade point average for degrees and/or certificates in a major, and*

*Resolved that the Academic Senate explore the possibility of implementing a minimum GPA of "C" for courses in a major. [14.01 F00]*

That there exists compelling counter arguments for increasing or maintaining existing levels of rigor for the Associate Degree underscores the existence of competing perspectives on its very purpose.

*"In addition to the requirements for information competency, English, and mathematics mentioned above, faculty have also expressed a desire to establish minimum grade point average requirements for major coursework."*

<sup>3</sup> Jaschik, Scott. "Community Colleges to Jay Leno: Shut Up." *Inside Higher Ed*. June 2, 2005. Accessed at <http://insidehighered.com/news/2005/06/02/leno>.

<sup>4</sup> The television series *Six Feet Under* had such a storyline in its second season in 2002.

# The Purposes of the Associate Degree

Sadly, the narrow focus of the State of California in regards to the community colleges and the degrees granted is more often than not only on the economic needs of the state: how can the degrees granted support the workforce needs of industry and businesses. For many students, the pursuit of a degree may indeed be primarily driven by a need for marketable job skills in order to make a living. However, the focus on an Associate Degree as a function of the economy denies the much greater purpose of education.

The California Community Colleges have a broad mission and charge. Community college students have aspirations that include much more than a degree that is narrow and focuses only on the technical skills required for a specific job. This concept was examined in the 1998 Academic Senate paper *The Future of the Community College: A Faculty Perspective*.

*Too much emphasis is often placed on students bettering their economic prospects through the acquisition of technical skills. This is, of course, one function of the community college. However, even in those cases where students seek no more than the acquisition of work content skills, community college instruction should strive toward the end that students leave having become more complete human beings than they were before. (p. 5)*

While the paper does not specifically explore the role of the Associate Degree in this vision

of education, it establishes the foundational principle that is clearly delineated in the language of Title 5 Regulations and which has been espoused by the Academic Senate for the California Community Colleges.

*The awarding of an Associate Degree is intended to represent more than an accumulation of units. It is to symbolize a successful attempt on the part of the college to lead students through patterns of learning experiences designed to develop certain capabilities and insights. Among these are the ability to think and to communicate clearly and effectively both orally and in writing; to use mathematics; to understand the modes of inquiry of the major disciplines; to be aware of other cultures and times; to achieve insights gained through experience in thinking about ethical problems; and to develop the capacity for self-understanding. In addition to these accomplishments, the student shall possess sufficient depth in some field of knowledge to contribute to lifetime interest.*

*Central to an Associate Degree, General Education is designed to introduce students to the variety of means through which people comprehend the modern world. It reflects the conviction of colleges that those who receive their degrees must possess in common certain basic principles, concepts and methodologies both unique to and shared by the various disciplines. College educated persons must be able to use this knowledge when evaluating and appreciating the physical environment, the culture, and the*

*“Community college students have aspirations that include much more than a degree that is narrow and focuses only on the technical skills required for a specific job.”*

*society in which they live. Most importantly, General Education should lead to better self-understanding. (Title 5 §55805 (a))*

In short, the purpose of a degree is related not just to economic development of the individual and society but to the larger framework of education in a democratic society. Education provides the foundation of an informed citizenry, capable of effectively participating in and contributing to society. Therefore, the achievement of a degree is not only connected to a specific field of study but also related to the breadth of coursework included, often specified as general education requirements, that are geared to cover a broad spectrum of education for a well-rounded educational foundation.

The Associate Degree has also been subjected to the external pressure to function as a component of the transfer function to four-year colleges and universities. In 2000, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed without consultation of academic senates between the three systems of higher education in California to establish a “dedicated transfer degree.” In response, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges passed the following resolution:

*Whereas the Chancellor signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with CSU without*

*consultation with the Academic Senates of the three higher education systems to establish a dedicated transfer degree for CSU, and the three academic senates expressed concern that all three segments be included in discussions of potential changes to transfer degree structures,*

*Whereas the establishment of a “dedicated transfer degree” would have impact on and implications for other degrees and certificates being offered at the community colleges, and*

*Whereas community college students who transfer currently do as well as, if not better than, students who began at UC or CSU, and research needs to be conducted to determine what within the community college experience contributes to that success, and to determine how to increase the numbers of students who transfer, and*

*Whereas Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS) has embarked on a major project to address undergraduate pre transfer major preparation (IMPAC), and to create intersegmental faculty to faculty dialogues regarding student preparation,*

*Resolved that the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges conduct its own independent research as well as work with and through the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS) to research and consider a range of options to improve transfer, including examination of major preparation, the role and structure of the Associate degree, and the advisability of a dedicated transfer degree. [15.02 F00]*

Since passage of this resolution in 2000, community college faculty and their counterparts in the California State University system and University of California have used venues such as the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS) to discuss a wide range of options to improve transfer. These have included

examination of major preparation, the role and structure of the Associate Degree, and the feasibility and advisability of a dedicated transfer degree, without reaching consensus.

Additionally, the Joint Legislative Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education<sup>5</sup> recommended in September 2002, that community colleges establish a “transfer Associate's Degree, within existing Associate degree unit requirements” that will purportedly guarantee community college transfer admission to “any CSU or UC campus, though not necessarily the major of choice” (Recommendation 23.3). Most recently, the 2004 report on student transfer by the Intersegmental Coordinating Council, an arm of the California Education Roundtable, included a recommendation to explore the establishment of a statewide Associate of Arts Transfer Degree.

On this topic, at their October 2003 ICAS meeting, it was noted:

*There is continuing interest in a transfer degree that would require the three governing boards to form an intersegmental group that would include faculty and students, to establish an Associate degree and guarantee transfer admission and course transferability, but not necessarily to the major of choice. It is inconceivable that one Associate degree could prepare students for any major. It would be of interest to see what these*

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.sen.ca.gov/ftp/sen/committee/joint/master\\_plan/\\_home/020909themasterplanlinks.html](http://www.sen.ca.gov/ftp/sen/committee/joint/master_plan/_home/020909themasterplanlinks.html)

*types of degrees look like in the states that offer them.*<sup>6</sup>

While community college faculty have a long-standing commitment to facilitating student transfer, they view such a call for the establishment of a transfer degree with caution. In particular, faculty oppose a transfer degree where the requirements for the degree are unilaterally imposed by external institutions or groups.

An additional purpose of the Associate Degree, and perhaps the most pernicious, is its use for accountability. Under programs such as Partnership for Excellence and the Governor's request for accountability report cards, the already underfunded system has been put under the pressure of increasing the awarding of degrees and certificates in exchange for much needed dollars. While the measurement of degree awards is in and of itself a reasonable reflection of the system's effectiveness, tying dollars to such measurement has had the effect of encouraging districts to promulgate the creation of associate degrees in order to capture data rather than address the other needs previously mentioned.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.academicssenate.cc.ca.us/icas/Meetings/Minutes/Minutes\\_October\\_03.doc](http://www.academicssenate.cc.ca.us/icas/Meetings/Minutes/Minutes_October_03.doc)

*“While community college faculty have a long-standing commitment to facilitating student transfer, they view such a call for the establishment of a transfer degree with caution.”*

# Practice in the Field: The Associate Degrees Operationalized

The broadness of the mission of the community colleges, not to mention the external pressures cited above, has manifested itself in the variety of Associate of Arts (AA) and Associate in Science (AS) degrees offered by community colleges. An informal statewide survey of community college catalogs suggests the following primary characteristics for the AA and AS degrees.

**Associate of Arts Degrees** include two types of degrees. The first is field specific and while meeting the requirements of Title 5 language, it is generally not viewed as a terminal degree. This degree develops the foundation in a specific field for students who intend to transfer to a university and pursue a Bachelor's Degree. It has been argued that a college degree should be able to stand alone; while the focus of this degree is on a continued educational objective, this degree may accomplish the goal of standing alone if the student is not seeking to transfer or is seeking an education for self-actualization purposes. Examples of degrees in this category include English, Anthropology, and Engineering.

The second type of Associate of Arts degree falls among the recent upsurge of degrees that focuses on a compilation of general education courses including the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) and the CSU General Education pattern. Such degrees have a variety of names, such as the Transfer Studies Degree, University Studies Degree, Multidisciplinary Studies Degree and General

Studies Degree among others. Transfer has been a long-held function of community colleges and with the passage of the Partnership for Excellence legislation in 1988, this function not only became more prominent, but community colleges were given performance benchmarks, including the number of degrees awarded, which incentivized the provision of such degrees.

The Academic Senate has traditionally opposed the "general education pattern" degrees described in the preceding paragraph. The concerns about these degrees have been centered on a number of philosophical and pedagogical issues, not the least of which is compliance with existing regulations. "General education pattern" degrees are contrary to the language of Title 5 that identifies Associate Degrees as well thought out, comprehensive patterns of general education and **a specific field** to provide a well-rounded education. Title 5 emphasizes that the awarding of the Associate Degree should "represent more than an accumulation of units." These degrees generally lack coherence and have been likened to a cafeteria approach to degree building, which brings into question the meaning of an Associate Degree. In addition, the Academic Senate has noted that the names of these degrees, especially those that include the word "transfer," may be misleading to students. These degrees are not recognized by the universities where students aspire to transfer, and completion of the degree may not result in the ability to transfer. In fact,

some of the requirements appropriate for an Associate Degree may not be transferable, including current requirements for the Associate Degree in English and mathematics under Title 5.

One area of confusion is in the use of the terms “Liberal Studies Degree” and “Liberal Arts Degree.” The Liberal Studies Degree has been in existence for several decades and has been successfully utilized as the career path for elementary school teaching, putting it in the category of AA degrees which prepare students for further education. The Liberal Arts Degree, on the other hand, has been described by one college as designed to “enable students to develop intellectual maturity, a deeper understanding of themselves and a knowledge of the dynamics of society,”<sup>7</sup> and this definition would place it among the “general education pattern” degrees.

**The Associate of Science Degree** has generally focused on work skills development (field specific) coupled with general education. These degrees are consistent with Title 5 language in college preparation and structure. They stand alone and, although some may prepare students to transfer to a university, for the most part are terminal degrees. Examples of degrees in this area include vocational nursing,

accounting, welding, automotive technology, and office technology.

One final note is that confusion also exists in the use of the terms “Arts” and “Science.” While four-year institutions use the two terms as umbrellas for two distinct sets of major areas of study, the community colleges generally follow the distinction discussed above. However, this is not consistent in the community colleges. At several colleges, for example, the AA is awarded for biological sciences and mathematics, indicating a foundational educational preparation geared to assist students to transfer and not necessarily related to a major in the arts. However, others follow the usage at universities and award the AS for biological sciences and mathematics.

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<sup>7</sup> Allan Hancock College Catalog (2004-2005, p. 59)

*“General education pattern’ degrees are contrary to the language of Title 5 that identifies Associate Degrees as well thought out, comprehensive patterns of general education and a specific field to provide a well-rounded education.”*

# Aligning Title 5 Regulation with Current Practice: Benefits and Consequences

Under current Title 5 Regulation, degrees currently offered by community colleges such as the Transfer Studies Degree, University Studies Degree, Multidisciplinary Studies Degree, General Studies Degree, and Liberal Arts Degree should be disqualified due to the fact that they do not fulfill the requirement that the course of study be in a specified field. Such degrees fall under the category of Liberal Arts and Sciences, General (4901), and for the 2003-2004 year, colleges reported awarding 40,043 Associate of Arts degrees and 1,321 Associate of Science degrees in this area. At the current time, an exact count of degrees awarded that are focused on transfer is not possible using MIS data submitted to the System Office. Given the large number of such degrees, the question is whether or not Title 5 Regulation should be modified to allow for such degrees.

The general argument for revision to Title 5 is that community colleges play an important role in preparing students not only to enter the workforce but in preparing them to participate effectively in the civic functions of a democratic society. The general education provided with the aforementioned degrees provides the educational foundation necessary for such participation. In addition, the general education requirements in communication and analytical thinking also provide necessary skills for any type of employment, providing an economic value to the degree as well. Another justification is that receiving a degree for this preparation has social significance for students, in particular those who are the first in their families to attend an institution of higher

education. While the students themselves may be uncertain of the specific field they wish to enter, a general education degree provides a recognition of successful completion of an important component of higher education. External pressures for a degree that prepares a student for transfer to a four-year institution also supports modifying Title 5 to permit such generalized degrees. A final argument is that the practice is already accepted and extremely common and Title 5 should be modified to reflect this reality.

Even as arguments for a change to Title 5 are given to support current practice and future response to external calls for facilitating transfer, the nomenclature used for such degrees should be carefully considered. While degree requirements for “transfer” degrees are often aligned with the requirements for IGETC or CSU GE Breadth, the use of “transfer” for such degrees may do a disservice to students. Such degrees do not account for the complexities involved in choosing to transfer to a UC rather than a CSU or an independent university. Such degrees may also falsely suggest a guarantee of transfer or simply falsely assure students that they are on the path towards transfer only to find out that the major they later choose has different or additional transfer requirements. The recent implementation of the Lower Division Transfer Pattern (LDTP) by the CSU adds to the possible confusion in the transfer process. While such degrees may be deemed as having a significant value in and of themselves, perhaps it is advisable to remove the word “transfer” from the title of such degrees to avoid confusing and at worst misleading students in their transfer aspirations.

# A Uniform Definition of the Associate Degree: Benefits and Consequences

One of the strengths of the California community colleges derives from individuality. Colleges are given the latitude to implement programs that best respond to their local needs. This is probably the strongest argument for leaving interpretation of the Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees to local colleges and districts.

However, the increasing demands of accountability and the interest in better communicating what the community colleges do and how they contribute to the economic vitality of the State of California also provide a strong impetus for creating a uniform definition of the Associate Degree.

One possibility is to change the Associate Degree structure to reflect the focus of each degree. Such a change would create a common systemwide language for discussing community college degrees, facilitating understanding of the purpose

and hence the value of each degree. Following the usage in universities, the AA and AS might be reserved for liberal arts and science majors where the primary goal is to transfer into the same area at a four-year institution. General education compilation degrees could be put under the AA category with the commonly employed title of Liberal Arts. The advantage to such an application is that this is a usage already used and understood in higher education. This leaves the need to create a means of designating the terminal-degree vocational programs offered in California community colleges. The title of these degrees needs further discussion across the state, but for the purposes of providing examples for this discussion, perhaps these degrees might be designated as AVE, Associate in Vocational Education. Note that in this discussion titles only reflect the focus of a degree and do not imply that the different degrees have different requirements for attainment<sup>8</sup>. Some examples might be:

AA in French (liberal arts degree; intention to transfer)

AA in Liberal Arts (general liberal arts degree; intention to transfer)

AS in biology (science degree; intention to transfer)

AS in nursing (science degree; intention to transfer)

*“... the increasing demands of accountability and the interest in better communicating what the community colleges do and how they contribute to the economic vitality of the State of California also provide a strong impetus for creating a uniform definition of the Associate Degree.”*

<sup>8</sup> The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges has traditionally opposed the national model of the Associate in Applied Science (AAS) with reduced general education requirements.



AVE in hotel and motel services (terminal degree)

AVE in nursing (terminal degree).

Using the 2003-2004 MIS data available through the System Office Datamart, we get an idea of the effect of such a change. Using the examples above, currently all French degrees are offered as AA degrees, so there would be no effect in that category. Out of a total 41,364 Liberal Arts degrees, 1,321 would need to be reclassified as AA rather than AS degrees. Out of 416 biology degrees, 75 would need to be reclassified as AS rather than AA degrees.

A second possibility is to use the predominant principle for the degrees currently in use in community colleges coupled with a field of study. Hence, an AA would be awarded for degrees focused on either general education or preparatory programs for transfer to a four-year institution; and an AS would reflect a terminal degree. This has the advantage of being the common interpretation at many community colleges and avoids introducing a new degree title into the mix. It has the disadvantage of differing from the usage in four-year institutions. Some examples might be:

AA in French (intention to transfer)

AA in Liberal Arts (general education curriculum; intention to transfer)

AA in biological sciences (intention to transfer)

AA in nursing (intention to transfer)

AS in hotel and motel services (terminal degree)

AS in nursing (terminal degree).

*“Following the usage in universities, the AA and AS might be reserved for liberal arts and science majors where the primary goal is to transfer into the same area at a four-year institution.”*

Once again, using the 2003-2004 MIS data available through the System Office Datamart, we get an idea of the effect of such a change. Some changes are the same as under the previous structure. French degrees would be unaffected since all are offered as AA degrees. Of a total 41,364 Liberal Arts degrees, 1,321 would need to be reclassified as AA rather than AS degrees. However, there would be one significant change compared to the previous structure. Of a total of 416 biology degrees, 341 would need to be reclassified as AA rather than AS degrees.

*“Clearly, the Academic Senate will need to work with the System Office to recommend changes to the structure of the Associate Degree, which in turn will require changes to Title 5 and perhaps even Education Code.”*

## Conclusion

**T**hrough research, a survey of college catalogs, breakout discussions at plenary session, and an informal questionnaire, the Academic Senate has gathered information which has informed the discussion in this paper. Given the wide range of opinions expressed on the issues examined, it would be premature to suggest specific recommendations to address concerns with the Associate Degree. Instead, the general direction of this work argues for a review of the structure of the Associate Degree in the California community colleges and the development of changes that will, in due course, be voted upon at a Senate plenary session. Clearly, the Academic Senate will need to work with the System Office to recommend changes to the structure of the Associate Degree, which in turn will require changes to Title 5 and perhaps even Education Code. In working together on such proposed changes, the two groups will also need to consider a more uniform application of the titles for Associate Degrees.

## Recommendations

1. The Academic Senate form a task force with the participation of various constituent groups to consider a wide range of options for the Associate Degree and recommend as needed appropriate changes to Education Code and Title 5 Regulations.
2. The convened task force should recommend changes that would result in a more uniform use of language and titles throughout the state, particularly in the use of AA and AS degree titles and the use of fields of study.
3. The convened task force should consider the requirement of a minimum GPA for all courses taken in a major.

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