

# **Report of the B.A.S. Degree Task Force**

**April 30, 2014**

## **Introduction**

The Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) degree is often designed to attract “older working professionals who seek career advancement within their...industry.”<sup>1</sup> Students will have earned an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree at a community college before starting, or early in, their careers. As a result, many of their credits earned in their first two years of college do not easily transfer to 4-year universities (the typical transfer model is an Associate of Arts degree to a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science).

Given the potential to serve a new population of students, and the potential to ease the transfer of many community college students and their community college credits to UNI, the B.A.S. Degree Task Force (from here on referred to the Task Force) was charged by Executive Vice President and Provost Gloria Gibson on 12/18/13 to explore the feasibility of establishing programs at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) leading to a BAS degree.

The Task Force consisted of the following members:

- Brenda Bass, Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
- Mohammed Fahmy, Head of the Department of Technology
- John Fritch, Associate Dean in the College of Humanities, Arts, and Sciences
- Deedee Heistad, Director of the Liberal Arts Core
- Kent Johnson, Dean of the Division of Continuing Education and Special Programs
- Mike Licari, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Graduate College\*
- Jerry Smith, Chair of the Faculty Senate

\* Chair of Task Force

The Task Force met weekly throughout most of the spring 2014 semester. The Task Force also solicited input from interested faculty through an open forum, as well as through personal communication. The Task Force also invited Bob Frederick, Director of the Office of Career Services, to attend a meeting and provide information about establishing cooperative relationships with community colleges on this issue. Thus, this report is the result a semester’s worth of investigation and discussion on the issues surrounding the feasibility of establishing programs at UNI leading to a BAS degree.

## **Findings**

The Task Force finds that it is feasible to establish a number of programs at UNI that would lead to a BAS degree. The Task Force did identify a number of considerations and challenges that will need to be addressed in order to successfully establish those BAS programs.

## **Considerations and Challenges**

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<sup>1</sup> “Bachelors of Applied Sciences Degrees: Program Overview, Curricula, and Demand” Custom Research Brief from the Education Advisory Board, 2013 pg. 4 (EAB 2013)

The Task Force identified a number of issues that need to be addressed by campus in order for UNI to successfully launch BAS programs. None of these are insurmountable. In no particular order:

*Liberal Arts Core (LAC)* A number of different alternatives are available to address the challenge of mapping students' AAS degrees onto the LAC at UNI. These might include: a transfer of a block of credits which would meet a variety of category requirements; articulation on a case-by-case basis, varying by student and by community college curriculum; counting professional courses as equivalent to LAC courses; establishing a different LAC for BAS students; or waiving (via demonstration of competency) certain requirements given professional experience.

*Likely Program Areas* Interest at UNI was expressed by the Computer Science department, the Department of Technology, some Criminology faculty, the Social Work department, some in the College of Business Administration, and the School of Applied Human Sciences. Not all of these units may develop BAS programs, and programs may be developed by others not listed.

*Curriculum Development* As BAS programs at UNI are developed, the nature of the AAS curricula at the various community colleges will need to be considered in order to ensure our programs add value beyond the AAS. Our BAS programs will need to be a blend of liberal arts courses as well as courses that add professional expertise. The Task Force recommends some funding be available for faculty to visit universities with successful BAS programs.

*Admission Criteria* As a result, it is important to consider eligibility for admission to a BAS program. If our programs are to be closely articulated with particular AAS programs, and if certain experiences within the AAS programs will map into our LAC, then these considerations may require carefully-constructed admissions criteria. Alignment of fields of study and professional experience will be important. In other words, graduates of certain AAS programs may not be eligible for admission into all BAS programs.

*Accreditations* Certain program and college accreditations held by UNI may influence the ability to establish BAS programs. The most obvious issue is the AACSB accreditation held by the College of Business Administration. Other universities, with AACSB-accredited business schools, have successfully established management-oriented BAS programs, but they reside outside the colleges of business.<sup>2</sup>

*Delivery Methods* The Task Force recognizes the fact that BAS programs at UNI are likely to be delivered online. This method has the benefit of reaching place-bound students, which is important given the target audience mentioned in the introduction. Further, the community around UNI is not especially large and viable BAS programs will likely need to draw students from further away. There may be some BAS programs that are able to attract sufficient demand via face-to-face delivery<sup>3</sup>, so the Task Force will not make a firm recommendation.

*Marketing and Enrollment* Promoting BAS programs will require reaching different audiences than reached by typical undergraduate recruiting. Students who enroll in BAS programs are generally in their 30s who hold low to mid-level positions in their field, and who are looking for opportunities to advance into leadership roles.<sup>4</sup> As a result, more targeted messaging will be needed. Coordination with community colleges will help as well. Bob Frederick, in his discussion with the Task Force, is convinced that community colleges will help promote BAS programs at UNI. For programs offered at a distance, the Division of Continuing Education and Special Programs can assist in marketing.

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<sup>2</sup> EAB 2013 pg. 4

<sup>3</sup> EAB 2013 pg. 5

<sup>4</sup> EAB 2013 pg. 4

*Administrative Flexibility* When developing BAS programs, UNI should consider opportunities to shift our administrative processes so that they fit the needs of the targeted students. This may include, for example, a shift away from semester-based offerings which could shorten the number of months required to complete the degree. The Master of Business Administration at UNI is already offered at a pace of three “modules” per year, rather than two semesters, so there is some precedent on campus. Other processes, such as orientation for transfer students, will have to be modified to fit the particular audience.

*Foreign Language Requirement* The foreign language graduation requirement could be a barrier to attracting students. The new program in Technology Management leaves the issue open-ended, simply indicating that if the requirement has not been completed prior to joining the program, the student should consult with a UNI advisor. Some global solution is needed in order for a set of BAS programs to be successful.

*Higher Learning Commission (HLC)* Should there be interest among the faculty in developing BAS programs, UNI will need to seek permission to offer the degree from the HLC.

## **Conclusion**

The Task Force finds that BAS programs would fit the mission of the university very well. Although there are a number of issues to be addressed, the Task Force feels that none of them are insurmountable. Given these assessments, the Task Force *encourages* the university community to develop programs leading to a BAS degree. Indeed, UNI has just launched a program (Bachelor of Arts in Technology Management) that is essentially a BAS degree program, so we have a model to follow.



# Bachelor's of **Applied Science** Degrees

Program Overview, Curricula, and Demand



# COE Forum

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# 1) Executive Overview

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## Key Observations

**Students who obtain associate's of applied science degrees (AAS) seek opportunities for baccalaureate degree completion in their early 30s; institutions develop online bachelor's of applied science (BAS) degrees to meet this demand.** BAS curricula focus on theory-related courses in communication, mathematics, and literature. Students who enroll in BAS programs maintain strong technical skills in a variety of disciplines (e.g., automotive sciences, horticulture, welding, etc.) before registering for BAS degree programs; BAS programs provide students a broad-based education to supplement their vocational and technical skills.

**Institutions offer online BAS degrees across many different disciplines but typically house the program in the college of arts and science or the college of agriculture.** Institutions offer BAS degrees in business-related disciplines (e.g., management, leadership, organizational leadership, etc.) outside the formal business school to avoid stringent accreditation requirements. Institutions maintain regional accreditations for their BAS programs within the school of arts and science or the school of agriculture.

**Program administrators offer BAS students support services from the application process through degree completion to ensure students graduate on time.** Program administrators inform AAS students about BAS degree completion options on regular visits to area community colleges. Institutions require BAS students to meet with their academic advisor before each course registration period begins to ensure on-time graduation. Contacts emphasize that this support service is vital to BAS student success because BAS students require additional academic support compared to traditional students.

**BAS programs attract older working professionals who seek career advancement within their existing industry.** Contacts indicate that students who enroll in BAS degree programs are typically in their early 30s, hold entry-level to mid-level positions, and seek additional formal education to transition to managerial roles within their organization. Institutions offer BAS programs online to attract working professionals who balance professional and familial commitments with their education.

**Labor market demand for the top BAS concentration-related skills (i.e., organizational leadership, management, information technology) remained steady over time.** Job postings that require an undergraduate degree and BAS-related skills in Oregon indicate a steady demand for skills common to BAS concentrations. This demand is based on overall undergraduate degree coursework and does not distinguish BAS degrees from BS or BA degrees. However, students who enroll in BAS degree programs do not typically seek new employment after degree completion; they seek promotions in their current field based on technical skills they obtained in their AAS coursework in conjunction with their BAS degree.

## 2) Bachelors of Applied Science Program Overview

### Offerings

#### *Local Student and Employer Demand Determine BAS Degree Completion Subject Areas*

Institutions offer BAS degrees to supplement prior AAS coursework and allow students to obtain an undergraduate degree. BAS degrees focus on general education areas (e.g., English, mathematics, social sciences, etc.) rather than niche subject areas because students already possess niche skill sets based on their AAS degree. Institutions offer BAS degrees via online education to meet the needs of working professional students.

#### BAS Offerings and Modality Across Institutions

Institution	BAS Concentration	Face-to-face	Online
Arizona State University	Applied Science Health Science		✓
Bellevue College	Radiation and Imaging Science	✓	
University A	Applied Science	✓	
University B	Administrative Management		✓
Centralia College	Business Management	✓	✓
Clarion University	Technology Leadership	✓	
Daytona State College	Supervision and Management	✓	
East Tennessee State University	Applied Science	✓	
George Mason University	Innovation and Technology Applied Conflict Analysis and Resolution Human Development		✓
Northern Arizona University	Administration		✓
Regis University	Community Interpreting Management Homeland Security		✓
University C	Management	✓	✓
University of Arkansas-Fort Smith	Applied Science		✓
University of Central Florida	Supervision and Administration Information Technology		✓
University of Maine-Augusta	Applied Science	✓	✓
University of Michigan-Flint	Applied Science		✓
University D	Organizational Leadership		✓

The most popular BAS concentrations are business management, information technology, and leadership-related majors.



***Institutions Established BAS Degrees to Provide Opportunities for Degree Completion to AAS Students***

**Degree Launch  
Timeframe**

**6 years**

The BAS program at **University D** took six years to develop and gain institution approval.

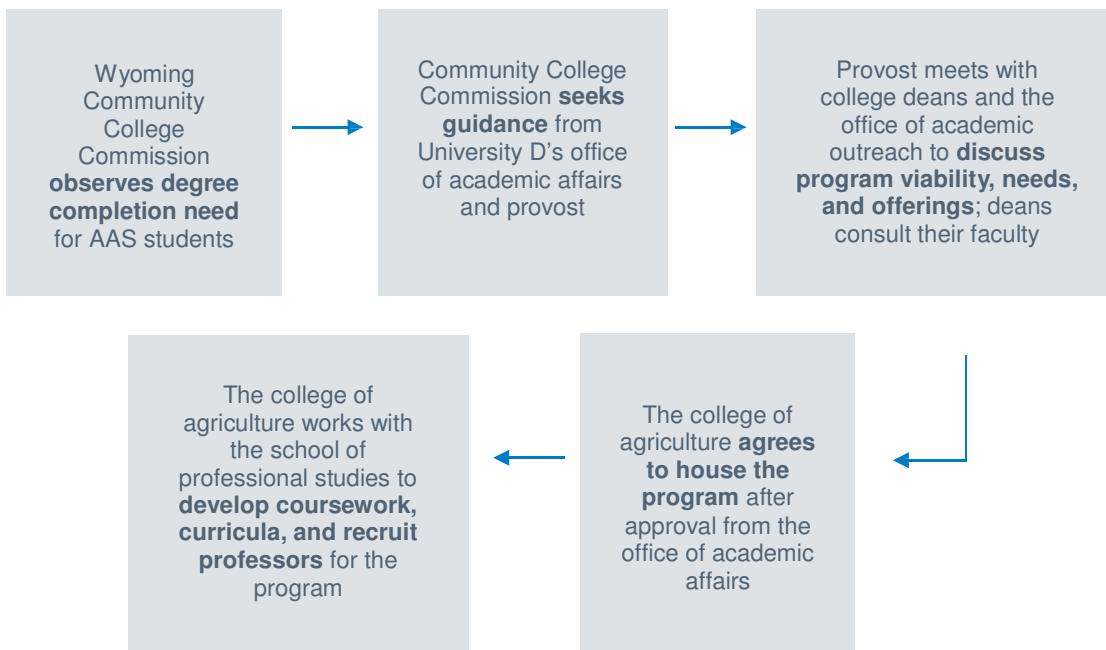
Students with AAS degrees seek opportunities to earn an undergraduate degree in their early 30s, but learn that their AAS degree credits do not transfer to many degree completion programs. AAS degrees in technical fields (e.g., welding or horticulture) do not allow students to transfer coursework to earn a bachelor’s of science (BS) or bachelor’s of arts (BA) degree due to the technical nature of their AAS degree. Returning students earn an undergraduate degree in as little as two years under the BAS program

Contacts at **University C** and **University D** indicate that BAS programs provide the general education skills (e.g., communication and writing), and attract students who wish to apply their AAS coursework to a degree completion program.

***BAS Degree Offerings Seek Faculty Senate and Provost Approval Prior to Launch***

Institutions created BAS degree completion programs within the last five to ten years at the direction of institution leaders and in connection with local community college leaders. The programs at **University A** and **University C** grew out of conversations with academic advisers at area community colleges that suggested the need for a state-wide degree completion program and solidified in faculty senate discussions at both institutions.

**BAS Program Creation Process at *University D***



## ***BAS Programs Recruit Existing Faculty Across Academic Disciplines to Reduce Program Costs***

BAS programs maintain a part-time director and academic advisor to support program operations. Institutions do not maintain independent faculty for BAS program students, rather faculty from across a wide range of disciplines (e.g., literature, mathematics, science, communications, etc.) teach in the BAS program as part of their established workload. The BAS academic advisor teaches in the BAS program as a professor, but serves as academic advisor to non-BAS students as well; about 50 percent of the advisor's time at **University D** time is dedicated to BAS student needs. The director spends the remaining time teaching courses, traveling to area community colleges to recruit for the program, and conducting independent research.

The director is often a full-time faculty member with their own research, teaching, and service commitments to the institution. The directorship often serves as part of faculty service requirements; institutions provide the director with one course remission per year or an additional stipend for directing the BAS program.

## ***Train Academic Advisors in the Nuances and Demands of BAS Students to Encourage On-time Graduation***

Program directors at all contact institutions indicate that high-quality student advising represents the most important factor for BAS program success. BAS degree requirements differ from traditional BS or BA requirements (see curriculum section on page nine) and require advising that reflects different course requirements. As students enter the BAS degree with 60 credits of AAS degree coursework completed, ensuring that students enroll in courses that meet BAS requirements and leverage their previous coursework is a difficult task and requires supervision from an academic advisor. Contacts at **University C** and **University D** indicate that there is one dedicated BAS advisor in the advising office trained to advise BAS students.

The program directors at **University A** and **University D** also indicate that BAS students are not traditional undergraduate students as they have not been enrolled in school for at least seven years and often lack confidence in their academic pursuits. Programs require students meet with their advisor before each enrollment period to help ensure students graduate on-time.

## ***Develop BAS Management Teams to Meet Monthly to Discuss Program Needs***

Many different academic units and campus departments (e.g., advising, online education, individual academic departments) support BAS programs. Program directors develop BAS management teams that meet monthly to address BAS-related concerns and to information-share across departments. The management team also solicits student feedback via email survey at the end of the academic year to suggest program additions and alterations.

### **BAS Management Team Members**

- BAS Program Director
- Associate Dean of College where BAS is housed
- BAS Academic Advisor
- 2-3 BAS Program Faculty

### ***Institutions Require AAS Degree for BAS Admission to Ensure Applied Science Skills Contribute to BAS Degree Requirements***

All contact institutions requires BAS program applicants to hold an AAS degree. Associate's of arts (AA) and associate's of science (AS) degrees do not count towards this requirement because the focus of AA and AS degrees varies from the focus of the *applied* science degree. Institutions offer the BAS degree exclusively as a way to engage former AAS students who originally considered their AAS degree as their terminal degree. The BAS coursework focuses on general education (i.e., English, communications, mathematics) as students already have the applied skills required for degree conferral.

### ***BAS Programs Require Two Years of Work Experience for Program Acceptance***

The BAS programs at **University B**, **University C**, and **University D** require students to possess at least two years of work experience to apply for the BAS program. This requirement seeks to attract mature students to ensure students complete their online work independently and without supervision. However, contacts observe that most applicants have between seven and nine years of experience.

The program director at **University A** indicates that the program does not maintain a work experience requirement because most AAS students are working while seeking their AAS degree; the program director at University A has observed the BAS program enroll a younger demographic each year for the last five years. However, the program at University A is face-to-face and does not require independent completion of online coursework.

#### Entrance GPA

## 2.5

Students must have at least a 2.5 GPA in their AAS degree coursework to enroll in the BAS program at contact institutions.

### ***Program Administrators Travel to Community Colleges to Present on the BAS Degree and Recruit Potential Students***

BAS program directors at **University A** and **University C** travel to each area community college at least four times every semester to engage students and inform them about BAS degree completion opportunities. In addition to formal travel, the directors at **University B** and **University D** coordinate with academic outreach officers at each of the state's community colleges to ensure students receive accurate information about degree completion programs, including the BAS degree program.

# 3) Program Curriculum and Accreditation

## Curriculum

### *Students Build on Strong Work Experience with Theory-based Education*

Students enroll in BAS degree programs to supplement technical and applied skills gained through AAS coursework and work experience with theory-based general education to obtain an undergraduate degree. BAS coursework reflects much of an institution’s liberal arts core curriculum as well as communications and writing courses specific to the applied sciences. In addition, BAS programs offer concentrations in niche areas of study such as business, health care, or information technology. The courses that compose concentrations are not designed to provide students with skills in these fields; students typically are already working in these fields and have these skills. Rather, they confer managerial, writing, and communication skills most relevant to the corresponding field.

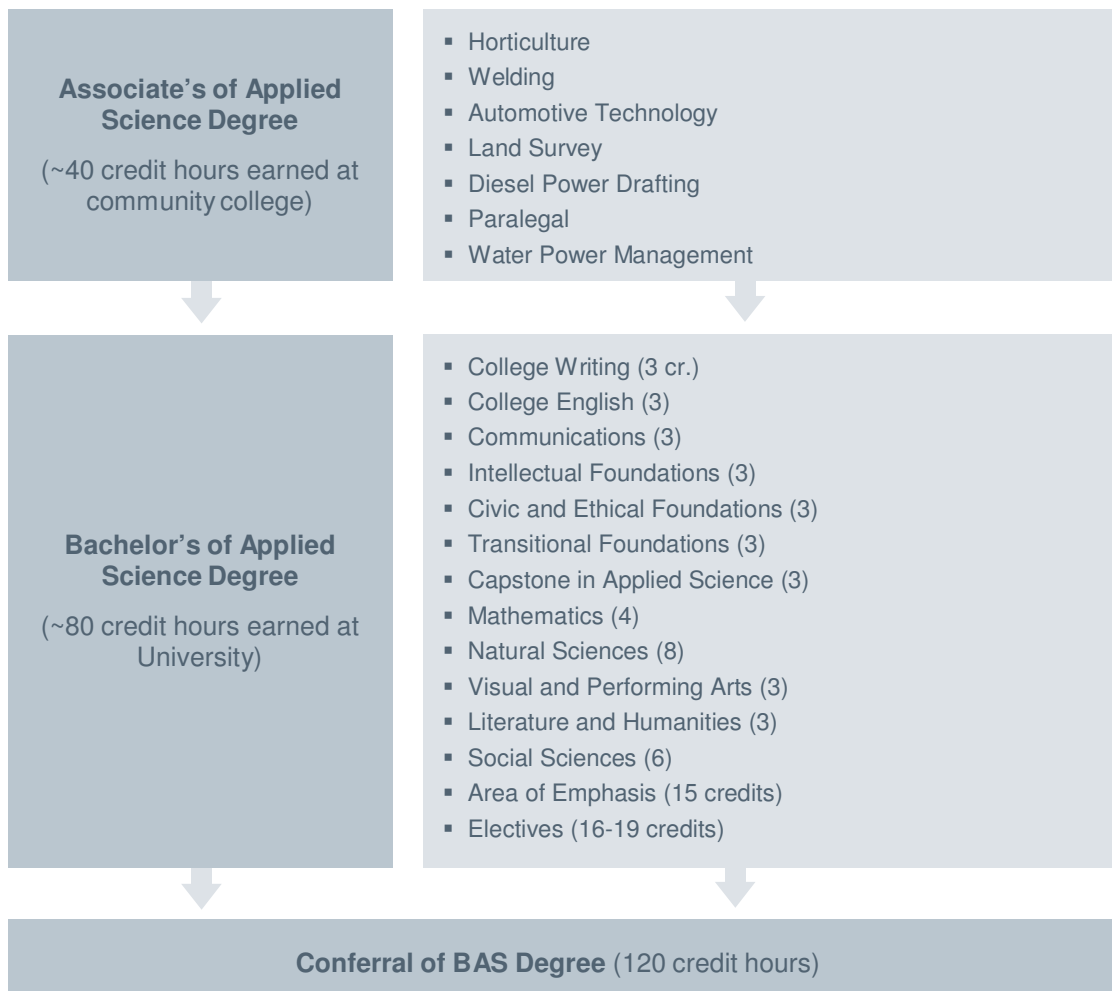
**“**

**An “Upside-down” Degree**

“The BAS degree is in many ways an upside-down degree; technical experience comes first, followed by general education second.”

*BAS Program Director*

### Common BAS Curriculum Separation



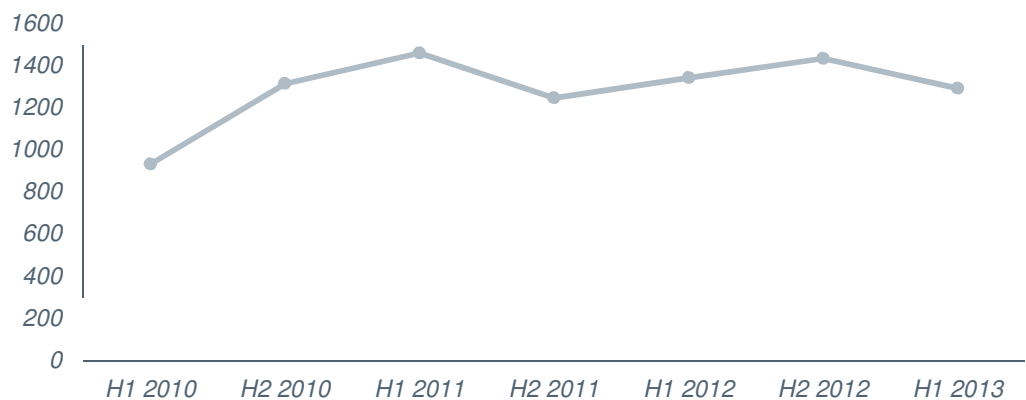
## **Focus Curricula on Business Process, Management, and Analysis to Meet Business-focused Labor Market Needs**

Job postings in Oregon for positions that require an undergraduate degree and business management-related (the most popular BAS degree concentration) skills have increased over 20 percent in the last three years. Programs that develop business management concentrations should include coursework that includes business process, management, and accounting as they are the top in-demand skills and are not the focus of course curricula at many institutions. The labor-market data reflects job postings, and does not adequately capture any promotions that BAS students gain as an outcome of completing their undergraduate degree. Further, this data reflects all undergraduate degrees (BA, BS, and BAS) in its analysis; there is no statistical method to explore the BAS-specific labor market.

Contacts at **University A** and University D indicate that employers recognize the BS and BA differently from the BAS; BAS students typically do not seek new employment, but rather promotions to managerial roles within their current job. (For additional Labor market data, see *Appendix B*).

### **Number of Job Postings in Oregon Requiring Business Management-related Skills and an Undergraduate Degree**

*January 2010-June 2013*

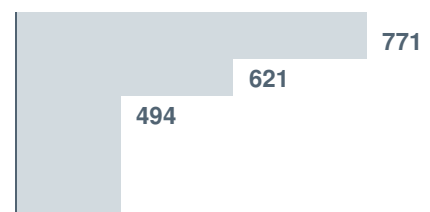


Source: Burning Glass Labor/Insight™

### **Top Five Skills in Oregon-based Job Postings Requiring Business Management-related Skills and an Undergraduate Degree**

*August 2012-July 2013*

*Business Process*  
*Business Administration*  
*Business Planning*  
*Training Programs*  
*Accounting*



n = 2,762 job postings with 3 unspecified  
 Source: Burning Glass Labor/Insight™

## Accreditation

### ***BAS Degrees Receive Accreditation from Regional Accrediting Bodies***

BAS programs are fully accredited undergraduate degrees. The accrediting body varies from institution to institution, but is typically conferred by a local or regional accrediting body. For example, the BAS program at **University D** maintains accreditation from a regional body.

### ***Business-related BAS Degrees Do Not Maintain AACSB Accreditation or Reside in Business Schools***

BAS programs in business-related fields do not reside in schools of business. The BAS with a focus on organizational leadership at **University D** resides in the college of agriculture and natural resources. Most other BAS programs exist in the college or school of professional studies, continuing education, or in the school of arts and science because these schools build on students' technical expertise and do not maintain strict AACSB accreditation requirements. There are no BAS programs that are offered in business, only business-related areas (e.g., management or administration), to avoid the need to gain AACSB accreditation for the BAS program. The BAS program in management at **University C** was established in 2009 and did not interfere with the AACSB accreditation the University's business school received in 2010.

## 4) Student and Employer Demand

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### Student Demand

#### ***Entry-level to Mid-Level Employees Seek BAS Degrees for Career Advancement***

Students enroll in BAS degree completion programs as working adults who possess seven to ten years work experience. The BAS program director at **University D** notes an average student age of 34 in the program; the oldest student in 2012 was 61 and the youngest was 20. Because AAS coursework does not count towards BA or BS requirements, the BAS program is the most time- and cost-effective way for students to obtain a bachelor's degree.

#### ***Students Seek Online Course Offerings to Manage Professional, Familial, and Academic Commitments***

Degree completion students balance family life with their professional and academic pursuits. Therefore, contacts indicate that online coursework is the most popular method of course delivery. Although **University C** offers a BAS degree both online and face-to-face, over 75 percent of students chose to complete the program online. The BAS program at **University D** is only offered online due to the vast population distribution of the state. Contacts at both institutions indicate that despite their online modality, over 80 percent of their students come from within the state.

## Employer Demand

### ***Employers Seek Candidates for Managerial Positions that Possess Business Management-related Skills and an Undergraduate Degree***

Employer demand in Oregon for positions that require an undergraduate degree and business management-related, information technology, or leadership-related skills (i.e., the top BAS degree concentrations) has increased over the last three years. The Burning Glass Labor/Insight™ tool allowed The Forum to provide analysis of the market demand for undergraduate degrees (i.e., BA, BS, and BAS).

Contacts at **University A** and **University D** suggest that labor market data is not an adequate measurement for BAS program viability because students already have jobs in technical-related occupations in a broad range of industries and seek opportunities for promotion. The Forum controlled its labor market research not only for undergraduate degrees, but also for skills conferred by BAS degrees (though many overlap with BS and BA degrees in similar fields). The most common occupations for job postings in Oregon for business-related BAS programs are managerial positions, confirming interview observations.

### **Top Five Occupations of Oregon Job Postings Requiring Business Management-related Skills and an Undergraduate Degree**

*August 2012-July 2013*



n = 2,762 job postings with 11 unspecified  
Source: Burning Glass Labor/Insight™

### ***Employer Demand for Information Technology-related Positions Grew Over 75 Percent from 2010 to 2013***

The number of jobs positing in Oregon for positions that require an undergraduate degree and information technology-related skills that match those conferred through IT-related BAS concentrations increased over 100 percent from H1 (January-June) 2010 to H2 (July-December) 2012, but has decreased 23 percent in H1 2013. However, institutions that develop BAS programs should offer, at minimum, a business-related concentration instead of an information technology concentration because students' fields are defined prior to BAS program entry (e.g., horticulture, welding). Business-related concentrations (e.g., management, organizational leadership) allow institutions to attract the most students because the skills conferred by these concentrations are applicable across diverse industries.

## 5) Research Methodology

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### Project Challenge

Leadership at a member institution approached the Forum with the following questions:

- What is the disciplinary focus of BAS degrees? What are the most popular program titles of BAS degrees?
- What are the primary components of the curriculum of a bachelor's of applied science degrees in a business-related field?
- How do contacts partner with community colleges to form articulation agreements with bachelor's of applied science degree offerings?
- What student populations do BAS degrees target?
- What previous degrees or prior learning do programs require for admission? What metrics do programs consider for admission?
- What challenges did administrators face to establish BAS degrees? How did they address those challenges?

### Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- Advisory Board's internal and online research libraries (<http://www.eab.com>)
- The Chronicle of Higher Education (<http://www.chronicle.com>)
- Institutional websites: A hyperlink to the bachelor's of applied science landing page is provided for each institution in the "research parameters" section below.
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (<http://www.nces.ed.gov/>)
- Williams, Karen. "Bachelor of Applied Sciences Degree Program: A New and Innovative Collaboration between a Land Grant University and Community Colleges," *North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture Journal*. March 2010.



## Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed bachelor's of applied science program directors at public institutions.

### A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief

Institution	Type	Location	Approximate Institutional Enrollment (Undergraduate/Total)	Classification
<a href="#">Arizona State University*</a>	Public	Mountain West	59,400/73,300	Research Universities (very high research activity)
<a href="#">Bellevue College*</a>	Public	Pacific West	13,500/13,500	Baccalaureate/ Associate's College
University A	Public	Mountain West	19,500/22,300	Master's Colleges (larger programs)
University B	Public	Pacific West	10,700/11,300	Master's Colleges (medium programs)
<a href="#">Centralia College*</a>	Public	Mountain West	3,300/3,300	Baccalaureate/ Associate's College
<a href="#">Clarion University*</a>	Public	Mid-Atlantic	5,500/6,500	Master's Colleges (larger programs)
<a href="#">Daytona State College*</a>	Public	South	15,200/15,200	Baccalaureate/Associate's College
<a href="#">East Tennessee State University*</a>	Public	South	12,300/15,100	Doctoral Research Universities
<a href="#">George Mason University*</a>	Public	Mid-Atlantic	20,700/33,000	Research universities (high research activity)
<a href="#">Northern Arizona University*</a>	Public	Mountain West	21,800/26,000	Research universities (high research activity)
<a href="#">Regis University*</a>	Private	Mountain West	5,700/10,700	Master's Colleges (larger programs)
University C	Public	Pacific West	5,800/6,200	Master's Colleges (larger programs)
<a href="#">University of Arkansas-Fort Smith*</a>	Public	South	7,400/7,400	Baccalaureate/ Associate's College
<a href="#">University of Central Florida*</a>	Public	South	51,000/59,600	Research Universities (very high research activity)

<b>University of Maine-Augusta*</b>	Public	Northeast	4,900/4,900	Baccalaureate/ Associate's College
<b><u>University of Michigan-Flint*</u></b>	Public	Mid-west	7,000/8,300	Master's Colleges (larger programs)
<b>University D</b>	Public	Mountain West	10,200/12,900	Research universities (high research activity)

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Institution Web sites

\*Profiled from secondary research