DEGREES AND DEGREE TITLES

I. PURPOSE

This regulation provides a description and list of degrees and degree plan titles for WCJC.

II. POLICY

A. Associate Degree Description

The associate degree is central to the mission of the College, and reflects the larger goals of educational attainment the College holds for its students. It is a means through which the College develops and maintains integrity in its educational programs. When appropriately defined, the associate degree becomes an integrating force for the College, serves as an important student guide, and promotes commitment on the part of students for program completions.

Emphasis on the associate degree indicates to faculty, administrators, students, and society that the College has a vision of what it means to be an educated person and affirms the College’s commitment to program continuity, coherence, and completion. The associate degree must indicate that the holder has developed proficiencies sufficient to prepare for upper division collegiate work, or to enter directly into a specific occupation with confidence. The degree will be awarded only for completion of a coherent program of study designed for a specific purpose.

1. Responsibility for Quality

a. The College assumes a responsibility to students and the public to establish and maintain excellence in all educational programs. In offering an associate degree program, the College recognizes its obligation to certify that the student receiving the degree has attained associate degree levels of achievement. When the College awards the associate degree, it is providing the individual with the currency to negotiate the next step, whether that is a step into full-time employment or into a baccalaureate degree program. The associate degree should be recognized by employers and universities as the best indication that a student has attained the knowledge and skills necessary to enter a field of work or an upper division university program.

b. The College represents substantial investments by, and has returned great dividends to, individuals, our District, and the State of Texas. Because of the investment required to build and maintain quality programs, the College has a professional obligation to develop programs only where resources are sufficient to ensure quality. In addition, the College, in partnership with the communities it serves, must provide straightforward information to appropriate decision makers about the resources required to maintain a quality program.

2. Organization of the Curriculum

a. Working under the direction of the appropriate administrative leaders, it is the responsibility of the teaching faculty and academic staff to design, monitor, and evaluate the specific associate degree programs offered by the College. This process must involve consultation with others, both inside and outside the College. The associate degree program links learning that has gone before with learning that will come after. Therefore, those concerned with framing the associate degree requirements must not approach the task in isolation. Full attention must be given to continuity in learning, as well as to the proficiencies required for an individual to achieve career satisfaction. Educational leaders at the College will maintain a continuing dialog with high school administrators and faculty,
as well as with college and university decision makers, with regard to program scope and sequence. The student should experience little or no loss of continuity, or loss of credits, when moving from one level of education to another.

b. The associate degree programs at the College must consist of a coherent and tightly knit sequence of courses supported by an evaluation component that measures the outcomes of the learning process, either at the course level, comprehensively, or both. All degree programs must also ensure that graduates attain the following core objectives: critical thinking skills, communication skills, empirical and quantitative skills, teamwork, personal responsibility, and social responsibility.

B. Associate Degree Titles

In recent years there has been a proliferation of titles of associate degrees. In order to avoid confusion as to the level of academic achievement attained, the College will award the following degrees:

1. Associate of Arts (AA)
2. Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT)
3. Associate of Applied Science (AAS) with an additional designation to denote study

C. Associate Degree Types

1. The Associate of Arts (AA) degree primarily prepares the student to transfer to an upper division baccalaureate degree program. Students awarded Associate of Arts degrees should be accepted as junior level transfers in baccalaureate degree-granting institutions.
2. The Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) degree is for students planning to pursue baccalaureate programs that lead to initial Texas teacher certification.
3. The Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree is an occupationally-oriented degree. Its primary purpose is to prepare students for entry into a particular occupation upon completion of the degree.

D. Limitation of Policy

This policy statement is limited to the associate degree, and does not address other important elements of our College mission. The College is attended by many individuals for reasons other than obtaining a degree. Continuing education and noncredit courses are reaffirmed as important to our mission. Nothing in this policy statement should be interpreted as discouraging the admission of students who do not have degree objectives to all courses for which they are qualified and from which they will benefit.

(POLICY APPROVAL: 7-24-89, Board of Trustees, amended 2-19-08, amended 7-15-14)