Regulatory Analysis

Notice of Intended Action to be published: 281—Chapter 21
"Community Colleges"

Iowa Code section(s) or chapter(s) authorizing rulemaking: 260C.48(1)
State or federal law(s) implemented by the rulemaking: 2025 Iowa Acts, House File 295

Public Hearing

A public hearing at which persons may present their views orally or in writing will be held as follows:

November 18, 2025 8 to 9 a.m.	Room B50 Grimes State Office Building Via videoconference meet.google.com/nea-roez-asx

Public Comment

Any interested person may submit written or oral comments concerning this Regulatory Analysis, which must be received by the Department of Education no later than 4:30 p.m. on the date of the public hearing. Comments should be directed to:

Thomas A. Mayes
Grimes State Office Building
400 East 14th Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
Phone: 515.281.8661
Email: thomas.mayes@iowa.gov

Purpose and Summary

This proposed rulemaking implements 2025 Iowa Acts, House File 295, which eliminates the requirement that community colleges be accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and broadens the accreditation requirement to "any federally recognized accreditor of postsecondary educational institutions selected" by the Iowa State Board of Education.

Analysis of Impact

1. **Persons affected by the proposed rulemaking:**

- **Classes of persons that will bear the costs of the proposed rulemaking:**

There are no costs noted for this proposed rulemaking.

- **Classes of persons that will benefit from the proposed rulemaking:**

The State as a whole will benefit from increased flexibility in the accreditation process.

2. **Impact of the proposed rulemaking, economic or otherwise, including the nature and amount of all the different kinds of costs that would be incurred:**

- **Quantitative description of impact:**

There is no known quantitative impact.

- **Qualitative description of impact:**

There is no known qualitative impact.

3. **Costs to the State:**

- **Implementation and enforcement costs borne by the agency or any other agency:**

There may be unanticipated costs associated with selecting a recognized accreditor.

- **Anticipated effect on State revenues:**

Any effect on State revenues will be negligible.

4. **Comparison of the costs and benefits of the proposed rulemaking to the costs and benefits of inaction:**

Rulemaking is required to conform to the terms of the statute.

5. **Determination whether less costly methods or less intrusive methods exist for achieving the purpose of the proposed rulemaking:**

There are no less costly alternatives. Rulemaking is required to conform to the terms of the statute.

6. **Alternative methods considered by the agency:**

- **Description of any alternative methods that were seriously considered by the agency:**

There are no plausible alternatives to rulemaking.

- **Reasons why alternative methods were rejected in favor of the proposed rulemaking:**

Rulemaking is required to conform to the terms of the statute.

Small Business Impact

If the rulemaking will have a substantial impact on small business, include a discussion of whether it would be feasible and practicable to do any of the following to reduce the impact of the rulemaking on small business:

- Establish less stringent compliance or reporting requirements in the rulemaking for small business.
- Establish less stringent schedules or deadlines in the rulemaking for compliance or reporting requirements for small business.
- Consolidate or simplify the rulemaking's compliance or reporting requirements for small business.
- Establish performance standards to replace design or operational standards in the rulemaking for small business.
- Exempt small business from any or all requirements of the rulemaking.

If legal and feasible, how does the rulemaking use a method discussed above to reduce the substantial impact on small business?

There is no impact on small business.

Text of Proposed Rulemaking

ITEM 1. Adopt the following **new** definition of "Federally recognized accreditor of postsecondary educational institutions," in rule **281—21.1(260C)**:

"Federally recognized accreditor of postsecondary educational institutions" or *"federally recognized accreditor"* means an accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education to perform accreditation functions and selected by the state board of education to perform such functions in Iowa. The state board may select more than one federally recognized accreditor. Iowa Code sections 260C.47 and 260C.48 require that the state accreditation process be integrated with the processes established by a federally recognized accreditor.

ITEM 2. Rescind the definition of "Higher Learning Commission" in rule **281—21.1(260C)**.

ITEM 3. Rescind rule 281—21.61(260C) and adopt the following **new** rule in lieu thereof:

281—21.61(260C) Accreditation components and criteria—federally recognized accreditor. To be accredited by the state board of education and maintain accreditation status, a community college must meet the accreditation criteria of a federally recognized accreditor of postsecondary institutions and additional state standards. Documents and materials provided in accordance with the accreditation

requirements of the federally recognized accreditor will also be provided to the department for the state accreditation process.