

2-YEAR CAMPUSES WANT B.A. DEGREE

By [ANITA WEIER The Capital Times](#) — Friday, March 7, 2008

The head of the state's 13 two-year colleges told the UW System Board of Regents Thursday that those institutions should be able to provide a type of bachelor's degree for place-bound or under-served students.

The University of Wisconsin Colleges are open admissions institutions that provide an access point for higher education for much of the state, said David Wilson, chancellor of the UW Colleges and UW-Extension.

But the colleges could do more to help fill the state's needs for college graduates to build Wisconsin's economy, he said. The state has a lower percentage of college graduates than neighboring states and would need 10,000 more each year to match the degree level in best-performing nations, according to Wilson.

The proposal, presented for information only, faces probable opposition from leaders of four-year schools who believe their universities can meet the need for B.A. degree-holders.

Wilson zeroed in on two options from a committee that analyzed various strategies - offering a restricted baccalaureate degree and offering courses and programs in under-served areas of northern Wisconsin.

The proposed Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences (B.A.A.S.) degree would stress critical and creative thinking, global perspectives and application of knowledge to real-world experience, Wilson said. It would not be a technical or vocational degree.

Credit would be given for prior learning but not past experience, he added. There would be a service learning and internship component, as well as a capstone course in the senior year that would require students to apply all they have learned to a practical problem in the local area.

The chancellor said faculty members and deans of the colleges support the plan, as do businesses statewide.

"We are seeking restricted baccalaureate authority," he stressed. It would not be discipline-specific and would not duplicate the B.A. offered by the four-year institutions, Wilson said.

Students would go through the two-year associate degree program as they do now and then continue for two more years with the additional learning opportunities, he said. Those targeted for the degree would also include graduates of technical colleges and those who obtained associate degrees in the past but never had an opportunity to continue their education.

Wilson said that it would not be necessary to hire numerous new faculty, just to redeploy those who now teach only freshmen and sophomores.

Regent David Walsh said the proposal was a creative way of meeting state needs and Regent Jeffrey Bartell said it could be an attractive way of helping the UW System serve more people in its "Growth Agenda."

But Regent Libby Burmaster said she was concerned about a possible rise in tuition costs at the UW Colleges, as well as duplication of services offered by the four-year universities and the technical colleges. And other regents asked several questions and stressed that they would need considerably more information before approving the idea.

aweier@madison.com