

# WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMMISSION

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## PRESS RELEASE

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In a special meeting, August 28, 2019, the Wyoming Community College Commission unanimously approved authorizations to allow Central Wyoming College (CWC) and Laramie County Community College (LCCC) to pursue approval of Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) degree programs. BAS degrees tend to be more technical and career-specific in nature than the traditional Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degrees. As CWC's Director of Institutional Effectiveness Louisa Hunkerstorm explained, "community colleges offering four-year degrees is a growing nationwide trend. These offerings allow students to continue their education beyond the Associate's level at an affordable price while staying in their home communities. Degree offerings can be tailored to suit a community's specific workforce needs, and may be more applied or technical than the focus of typical four-year university degrees."

The community colleges were authorized to offer BAS programs in the latest legislative session, when the Wyoming State Legislature approved a bill (SEA0080) allowing the colleges to offer the degrees as part of a statewide effort to increase the percentage of the population with high-quality industry credentials and degrees. Beginning with the codification of the Wyoming Educational Attainment Council Executive Committee in the 2019 General legislative session, Wyoming leaders have been collaborating on several fronts to provide additional pathways for individuals to obtain post-secondary credentials and certificates. According to former Governor Mead's executive order, "the economic growth and economic diversification of the State will depend on citizens and workers with a wide array of knowledge and skills." It emphasized that high-quality industry credentials and higher education degrees were connected to higher employment and increased earning power.

As is customary with all new academic programs, the colleges must obtain a series of approvals before the new programs can be offered, including authorizations from a college's board of trustees, the Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC), and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) – the accrediting organization for all higher learning institutions in the central and mountain states. Combined with CWC and LCCC's internal approval processes, these detailed approvals will ensure that any programs will fit within the college's mission, serve

Wyoming state goals, meet standards of academic quality and rigor, and serve the students well.

Several other Wyoming community colleges are also planning to offer BAS degrees, and will be making formal proposals to the Commission in future WCCC meetings. For LCCC and CWC, the August 28<sup>th</sup> authorization allows them to begin preparing official applications for HLC authorization, with a goal of welcoming the first students to their BAS programs in Fall 2020.