

Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

November 19, 2025

Agenda Item:	Rules – Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 21 (Amend)
State Board Priority:	Goal 4
State Board Role/Authority:	This rulemaking is proposed under the authority provided in Iowa Code sections 256.7 and 260C.48(1).
Presenter(s):	Thomas A. Mayes General Counsel and Rules Coordinator
Attachment(s):	One
Recommendation:	It is recommended that the State Board of Education give notice of its intent to amend Chapter 21.
Background:	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 State Board. A hearing on a regulatory analysis hearing is scheduled for November 18, 2025, at 8:00 a.m., in Room B-50, Grimes State Office Building, Des Moines, and by video conference.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT[281]

Notice of Intended Action

The State Board of Education hereby proposes to amend Chapter 21, “Community Colleges,” Iowa Administrative Code.

Legal Authority for Rulemaking

This rulemaking is proposed under the authority provided in Iowa Code 260C.48(1).

State or Federal Law Implemented

This rulemaking implements, in whole or in part, 2025 Iowa Acts, House File 295.

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.

A hearing on a regulatory analysis hearing is scheduled for November 18, 2025, at 8:00 a.m., in Room B-50, Grimes State Office Building, Des Moines, and by video conference.

Fiscal Impact

This rulemaking has no fiscal impact to the state of Iowa.

Jobs Impact

After analysis and review of this rulemaking, no impact on jobs has been found.

Waivers

Any person who believes that the application of the discretionary provisions of this rulemaking would result in hardship or injustice to that person may petition the State Board for a waiver of the discretionary provisions, if any, pursuant to 281—Chapter 4.

Public Comment

Any interested person may submit comments concerning this proposed rulemaking. Written comments in response to this rulemaking must be received by the State Board no later than 4:30 p.m. on December 30, 2025. 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

Public Hearing

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

December 30, 2025

Room B50

8 to 9 a.m.

Grimes State Office Building

Via videoconference:

meet.google.com/nzv-caed-ttz

Persons who wish to make oral comments at the public hearing may be asked to state their names for the record and to confine their remarks to the subject of this proposed rulemaking.

Any persons who intend to attend the hearing and have special requirements, such as those related to hearing or mobility impairments, should contact the State Board and advise of specific needs.

Review by Administrative Rules Review Committee

The Administrative Rules Review Committee, a bipartisan legislative committee which oversees rulemaking by executive branch agencies, may, on its own motion or on written request by any individual or group, review this rulemaking at its regular monthly meeting or at a special

meeting. The Committee’s meetings are open to the public, and interested persons may be heard as provided in Iowa Code section 17A.8(6).

The following rulemaking action is proposed:

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.

as amended by 2025 Iowa Acts, Senate File 175.