

Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

January 15, 2026

Agenda Item: Rules - Notice of Intended Action - Chapter 21 (Adopt)

State Board Goal: Goal 4

State Board Role/Authority: This rulemaking is adopted under the authority provided in Iowa Code sections 256.7 and 260C.48(1).

Presenter(s): None – consent agenda

Attachment(s): One

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Board amend Chapter 21.

Background: This rulemaking implements the requirements of 2025 Iowa Acts, House File 295, regarding State Board approval of additional accrediting organizations. The Department received no public comment. The adopted rules are identical to the Notice of Intended Action.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT[281]

Adopted and Filed

The State Board of Education hereby amends Chapter 21, Community Colleges,” Iowa Administrative Code.

Legal Authority for Rulemaking

This rulemaking is adopted under the authority provided in Iowa Code section 260C.48.

State or Federal Law Implemented

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

Purpose and Summary

This 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.

Public Comment and Changes to Rulemaking

Notice of Intended Action for this rulemaking was published in the Iowa Administrative Bulletin on December 10, 2025, as **ARC 9085C**.

A public hearing was held on December 30, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. in Room B50, Grimes State Office Building, Des Moines, and by video conference. Noone attended the hearing to make comment on this rule. There were no other public comments. The rule is identical to the published notice.

Adoption of Rulemaking

This rulemaking was adopted by the State Board on January 15, 2026.

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.

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).

Effective Date

This rulemaking will become effective on March 11, 2026.

The following rulemaking action is adopted:

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.