



*Report from
California Community Colleges
Baccalaureate Degree
Study Group*

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Overview:

There has been renewed interest in the addition of bachelor degrees to the California community college mission as evidenced by the responses to presentations made at recent statewide meetings and conferences. The establishment of bachelor degree programs at community colleges is seen by some as a strategy to increase college participation rates for local residents who are unable to relocate because of family or work commitments or to address the needs of rural communities and the state's need for additional bachelor degree-trained individuals in high demand technical disciplines that are either not offered by other segments of higher education or for which demand cannot be met by existing programs.

California has been falling behind other states in percentage of residents holding bachelor's degrees. The state ranked eighth in the nation in its share of 25 to 34-year-olds with bachelor's degrees in 1960 when the California Master Plan for Higher Education was implemented. Today it has slipped to 14th place, according to the Public Policy Institute of California.

Currently, state public institutions award slightly more than 110,000 bachelor's degrees each year and private institutions award 40,000. To meet the projected demand by 2025, the state would need to immediately increase the number awarded by almost 60,000 per year—about 40 percent above current levels.

While a community college bachelor's degree might assist in meeting this challenge, questions and reservations do exist regarding the idea of bringing this model to California. Some express concern that community college bachelor's degrees would represent a further erosion of the California Higher Education Master Plan's differentiation of missions across the state's systems of public higher education. Those voicing these objections argue that further broadening the California Community Colleges' mission, would diminish attention to transfer, basic skills, and career technical education—especially since the system is just now restoring access levels in the wake of the recent severe economic recession. Additional concerns involve the potential duplication of programs and efforts or other ramifications that might result from potential duplication amongst the systems.

A Study Group, appointed by Chancellor Brice W. Harris, was asked to review the various aspects of bachelor degrees at community colleges. The Study Group included members from various constituencies from across the community college system as well as members from the California State University and the University of California. It should be noted that the group engaged in dialogue and study but were not given the task for finalizing positions or policy statements on behalf of their constituent groups.

The granting of baccalaureates at community colleges is a growing movement. Nationwide, more than 50 community colleges operate almost 500 baccalaureate programs in 21 states. To help inform policy development in California, the Study Group reviewed the track records of these existing programs. In addition, current California demographic, economic, and workforce trends were analyzed to determine potential areas of need for such a program. Of special note is the work being done by the Community College Baccalaureate Association, a national organization promoting better access to the baccalaureate degree on community college campuses and serving as a resource for information on various models for accomplishing this purpose and the Office of Community College Research at the University of Illinois (http://occrll.illinois.edu/applied_baccalaureate/) which has done some of the most respected and extensive work on the applied baccalaureate.

Process:

The Study Group held a series of meetings and public presentations to discuss the various aspects of offering baccalaureate degrees in California community colleges. All Study Group members actively participated.

August 22	Webinar/Conference Call Introductions, Review Plan, History, Need Statement. Finalize Schedule of Meetings
September 17	Meeting (Sacramento) Facilitated Discussion, Research, Draft Recommendations
October 15	Conference Call Review Draft Recommendations
November 22	Release of Draft Recommendations at CCLC
December 9	Conference Call Review Final Recommendations, Submit to Chancellor

California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office staff developed the final document by reviewing discussions and information from each meeting and summarizing this material according to key topics. The Chancellor will review the final document and use it to inform the Board of Governors and all constituents of the work completed.

Research Available and Reviewed

Through the course of the study period, the Study Group reviewed reports dealing specifically with community colleges bachelor’s degrees as well as more general information related to labor market demand and completion metrics.

The following website links provide key information and resources used by the Study Group:

Study Group Resources and Reports

- Baccalaureate Degree Study Group Website
- PowerPoint Presentation (Fall 2013)
- California Demand for Four-Year Degrees
- The Community College Baccalaureate: Process and Politics
- California Policy and Legislative History

Nursing Resources

- California Nursing Baccalaureate Sub Committee Report
- The Future of Nursing
- CCC-CSU Nursing Degree Pathways

General Resources

- More Community Colleges Confer Bachelor's Degrees
- A Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of Two Community College Baccalaureate Programs in Florida: An Exploratory Study by Edwin Bommel, 2008
- CTE Transfer - Literature Review
- Public Institutions Awarding 4 and 2 Year Degrees
- Save Community Colleges Org Inc.

Topics Covered

The Study Group reviewed the charge provided by Chancellor Harris. The following responses provide the basic directions and output received from the Study Group. In some cases, the discussion is still incomplete and will require further study, research, and analysis as well as meaningful engagement of constituent groups.

- How would bachelor's degree programs complement other programs and courses offered by the community colleges?

The Study Group agreed that the addition of baccalaureates should not alter or detract from the present mission of community colleges in California. Baccalaureates should achieve a net gain for the State of California without diminishing resources for programs already being sponsored at the 112 colleges in the system. Community Colleges in several other states have offered bachelor degrees without detracting from their primary missions. In Florida, for example, legislation requires the colleges to retain the community college missions when expanding to offer applied baccalaureates. If California were to pursue the idea of offering baccalaureates in its community colleges, similar protections for the primary missions of the colleges would be necessary.

- How bachelor's degree programs would address specific regional or state workforce needs.

The Study Group agreed that bachelor's degrees should be held to the same level of standards as associate degrees and certificates, especially in the area of regional or state workforce needs. Through the Doing What Matters initiative from the Chancellor's Office, colleges evaluating the offering of baccalaureate degrees would need to participate in regional research and discussion, including strong input from business and industry. In reviewing the workforce needs, California should take care that new degrees are based on documented demand from the California economy and not based solely on federal or international labor market data.

- Documented demand for additional bachelor's graduates in the programs proposed.

The Doing What Matters initiative provides a framework for setting the necessary levels of business and industry demand for workers needing more than an associate degree.

- Additional costs of delivering the proposed bachelor's degree programs.

The Workgroup discussed several funding models identified in the research on other states that offer a community college baccalaureate degree. These ranged from fully self-supporting using differential tuition revenue, to full state support. State-supported models with funds augmented with revenue from community partners and regional collaboratives were also discussed as important options. Based on current experience and research, the assumption is that offering community college baccalaureates would be a cost effective way for the state to prepare the workforce with the skills needed for the future of California.

- Admission criteria that could be used by colleges in selecting students for entrance into bachelor's degree programs along with the number of students to be admitted and served by the programs.

Currently, California community colleges have an open access policy, requiring only an application and minimal admission requirements. If colleges begin to offer baccalaureate degrees, there must be a discussion of when and how an admissions process should be engaged, governed by local policy. Should it be during the initial education planning process or at the end of the associate degree sequence? This topic must be studied further by a specific group of specialists in the area.

- Whether the proposed bachelor's degree programs would unnecessarily duplicate the degree programs offered by other postsecondary education institutions in certain regions (CSU, UC, and private) and that are meeting projected state workforce needs.

Although further study of the distribution of baccalaureate degree programs is necessary, it is anticipated that the regional statewide assessment of need would be based on business and industry need, coupled with an analysis of current offerings of degrees from the California State University (CSU), the University of California

(UC), and other higher education institutions and their capacity to meet California's workforce needs. The anticipation is that most (if not all) new baccalaureate degree programs at community colleges would not otherwise be offered in the region.

- How articulation strategies might complement or possibly limit the movement of students from community colleges to the CSU or UC systems.

The implementation of a baccalaureate program at community college is not meant to take away from current articulation, but to enhance it. There are already many examples of cooperative efforts between community colleges and baccalaureate-granting institutions. These should continue to operate and be encouraged. In addition, current strategies to increase the number of transfer students should not be decreased or otherwise negatively impacted by the addition of community college baccalaureates.

- The implications on the existing accreditation of California community colleges should the bachelor's degree option be added.

Currently, community colleges are limited to offering one baccalaureate degree under accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). ACCJC is currently seeking changes in its scope with the U.S. Department of Education to accredit community colleges offering more than one baccalaureate. The decision on change in scope for ACCJC is projected to be determined sometime during Spring 2014.

- Ability of community colleges to support bachelor's degree programs including the adequacy of facilities, faculty, administration, libraries, and other student support and academic resources.

The actual cost of offering a baccalaureate degree was not reviewed by the Study Group. A cost study should be completed as costs may vary due to geography, program, service area, and population.

- What changes would be needed at the Chancellor's Office to support community college bachelor's degree (curriculum, student services, fiscal, facilities, etc.) programs.

The Chancellor's Office is currently understaffed. Adding the review, approval, and reporting of baccalaureates would increase the workload. Although this concern was clearly identified, the Study Group did not have sufficient data on which to predict the impact. Obviously, if only a few colleges move forward with baccalaureates, the impact would be minimal after the initial implementation process. If many colleges move toward the baccalaureate, it may be necessary to establish a single office with associated staff in the Academic Affairs Division.

The Chancellor's Office should respond to these challenges by identifying resources – external or otherwise. They should identify how many districts want to move forward with offering baccalaureate degrees and determine what impact that will have on the system. It could be possible that a limited, targeted, and strategic project would be more feasible than a system-wide initiative.

Data from states which have established community college baccalaureates could inform decisions about the need for state coordination.

- Data collection and evaluation needed to measure the success and effectiveness of bachelor's degree programs.

The Study Group identified that the Student Success Scorecard, Salary Surfer, and other reporting products from the Chancellor's Office would need to be expanded to capture and identify the impact of the degrees being offered.

Summary:

The Baccalaureate Degree Study Group studied the basic issue of awarding baccalaureates in California community colleges. In addition, the Study Group gathered feedback at two major community colleges conferences during the fall semester. At both conferences, there was significant interest and support demonstrated.

After much discussion and feedback, the Study Group believes that the offering of baccalaureates by the California community colleges merits serious review and discussion by the Chancellor and the Board of Governors.

We recommend that the Chancellor's Office and the Board of Governors conduct the necessary research and policy analysis that is noted above related to providing baccalaureates in the California community colleges, including a definition of the types of baccalaureates that would be appropriate for California Community Colleges, the criteria in which the Chancellor's Office would evaluate college proposals, and an analysis of related degrees already in existence. The research should include projections of workforce needs, demonstration of financial support, and measures of program quality. Further work should proceed with an ongoing dialogue with the California State University and the University of California. The research should include projections of workforce needs, analysis of potential sources of financial support and fiscal feasibility, and measures of program quality that would be used by the Chancellor's Office in evaluating future college proposals. Finally, further study should consider potential impact on the current mission of the California community colleges as well as on existing programs at local campuses.

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Appendices

Study Group Resources and Reports

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