

Perspectives

Community College Leadership for the 21st Century

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The community college baccalaureate provides a way of reaching underserved learners . . . that supports enrollment in bachelors-level, occupational and technical degree programs.

- David J. Wesse

While community colleges will never take over the role of four-year institutions in the American educational system, they most certainly can fill a much-needed niche of preparing workers for highly technical and in-demand jobs.

- Grace Chen

Doctorate in Community College Leadership
Empowering graduates to advance community colleges towards excellence and community responsiveness through exemplary leadership.

The Elusive Community College Baccalaureate Degree

Daniel J. Phelan, PhD

President, Jackson College
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Evolution or Mission Creep? This juxtaposition of a false dichotomy is often the first line of defense when the idea of community college applied baccalaureate degrees is introduced. Sadly, often lost amid the initial framing and the ensuing skirmish line is the real question that should be probed: What is in the best interest of those seeking the degree? Presumably, the response should be tantamount to 'access' to the education and training necessary to succeed and thrive in today's changing economy.

It's time to abandon the protection of institutional turf and instead focus our collective attention on broadening the pathways to real access and success.

Such access to higher education should be structured to overcome the barriers students actually experience. It only seems reasonable that public higher education would be uniquely interested in the equity and availability of education, demonstrated by providing financial access, geographic access, diversity access, chronological access, support access, innovation access, opportunity access, academic access, and employment access. In every way that matters, public higher education's raison d'être should be about access for all, which could reasonably prompt new business models, new delivery models, and new degree models. Unfortunately, politics, territoriality, budgets, tradition, history, and status have gotten in the way of mission, espoused core values, and what is best for the American people.

Seemingly lost from memory is higher education's proud tradition of identifying and responding to the access needs of the masses. Whether finding the latest cure to an implacable disease, to training returning war veterans, offering students the ability to earn college credit while in high school, to providing instruction around the world, higher education found a way to serve others. Most assuredly, community colleges and universities have adapted to meet new and intensifying public needs with countless examples of growth, development and expansion.

Universities have evolved, changing to meet changing needs. For example, Michigan State University began as the Agricultural College of the State of Michigan, later enrolling female students, then adding a four-year curriculum, followed by the addition of master and doctoral degrees, which led to university status. Another Michigan example of an institution that evolved to meet the growing needs of the state and its citizenry is Western Michigan University, which began as the Western State

Normal School, originally offering only a two-year training program, then later becoming a teaching college, ultimately evolving into a comprehensive university, recently adding a medical school. The experience of these aforementioned intuitions is similarly repeated around the country.

Community colleges have likewise had a mission of evolution and adaptation to meet local, regional, state, and national needs. More particularly, access, innovation, and change, in response to the community, is at the center of why community colleges were originally created. They have routinely expanded student support services, calibrated programs with changing business and industry needs, built tighter connections to employers, created innovative partnerships with K-12 systems, and partnered with local and state governments to advance economic development. Just as universities have evolved, so too have community colleges. The continued response to the needs of their communities is at the core of why community colleges are seeking to deploy the applied baccalaureate.

Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce forecasts that by 2020, 65 percent of all jobs will require some form of postsecondary education. Not all of the current, nor future technical and applied baccalaureate degrees needed are accessible for many of the time-bound, place-bound, and financially strapped students served by community colleges. It's time to abandon the protection of institutional turf and instead focus our collective attention on broadening the pathways to real access and success.

Unfortunately, advancing the applied baccalaureate degree can be a long-term proposition and, as such, requires significant perseverance, creativity, and fortitude.

A 2016 National Report on college affordability, produced by Pennsylvania State University, offers interesting insight into the realities of the cost of attendance and affordability for the demographic served by most community colleges (i.e., 36% are first-generation college students, 62% receive federal aid, 51% are non-white minorities, and 17% are single parents, according to the American Association of Community Colleges). The Penn State report notes, in Michigan for example, that lower-income families would be required to spend nearly 50% of their annual income in order pay for the tuition

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EMERGING LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES

In the decades since their inception, the provision of community baccalaureate degrees has spread to nearly half the states. While critics point to perceived competition with 4-year colleges and to potential community college mission creep as deterrents, if the U.S. expects to meet the growing demand for college educated citizens while still maintaining a commitment to workforce development, the community college baccalaureate may provide a practical solution. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders. Their answers appear below:

Moaty Fayek, MS

Dean of Business
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Community colleges have long been proud of their open door policies. Additionally, colleges have consistently filled gaps in the U.S. workforce by providing skilled workers through career technical education (CTE) programs. However, all this has been slowly changing following legislation enacted by officials perhaps unfamiliar with community colleges' mission. For example, various student success legislations, aimed to increase success rates by increasing the number of degrees and certificates awarded to full-time and transfer students, also hinder those who want to take a course or two to improve their skills to get better jobs or promotions. While such students will always be welcomed, they may now be placed lower on the priority registration list.

If one looks at the degrees offered by the California community colleges, the offered bachelor's degrees fall into the CTE category and feature class sizes fewer than 25 with high operating costs. That is certainly the case for other states. During the economic downturn, many CTE programs were cut due to their high operating costs and low seat counts. Could the same happen to those bachelor's degrees if we are hit with another economic crisis? For these programs to survive, they must maintain high enrollment to avoid being on the chopping block should the next economic downturn hit. Offering bachelor's degrees at community colleges would certainly create an affordable path for community college students who cannot afford the tuition cost of four-year universities. Additionally, the schedule flexibility would make it easier for working students to further their education.

There are approximately 2.1 million students in the California community college system. If 10% of those students were to enroll in the bachelor degree programs at California community colleges, enrollments would total over 200,000 students, which is equivalent to almost 50% of students enrolled in the California State University system. Do community colleges have the capacity to handle such demand? What impact would that level of enrollment have on the system and the mission for which community colleges were established? Would the focus shift to 4-year degrees, causing other programs to slowly disappear? Is it sustainable? Where would the additional resources come from?

I believe a strategic long-term study measuring the impact should be conducted before more community colleges begin to offer bachelor's degrees. It would be a good thing for students, especially those who are working, as well as underserved students who cannot afford the high price tag of universities. I highly recommend learning from other colleges' experiences before thinking of offering bachelor's degrees at your college. It is important to understand the challenges and the commitment needed to make such programs successful.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

In what ways are the anticipated benefits of community colleges awarding bachelor's degrees being realized today?

Margaret A. Lyons, MA, LPC

Director of Student Services, College of Pharmacy
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Since the Great Recession, the majority of jobs created require a post-secondary education or other specialized training. This trend is expected to continue and, according to the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University, 65% of new jobs will require a postsecondary degree by 2020.

Given the accelerating demand for skilled workers, policymakers must consider alternative approaches for creating a workforce with the skills and educational training to compete for these jobs.

The creation of the community college baccalaureate is one viable approach for fulfilling this need. Currently, 21 states allow community colleges to grant baccalaureate degrees in a limited number of high-demand programs (e.g., nursing, teaching). Because of this demand, people who hold a community college baccalaureate degree are highly sought by local employers for well-paying, full-time employment. As such, this degree has the potential to improve the local economy by efficiently developing a skilled workforce.

Most importantly, the community college baccalaureate presents a unique opportunity for community colleges to fulfill their mission as a community-based institution of higher education. Because community colleges often serve a diverse student body (e.g., first generation college students, English as a second language learners, and underrepresented minorities), the community college baccalaureate offers an opportunity for these students to earn an educational credential necessary for professional employment.

In addition to increasing individuals' access to professional credentials and careers, this degree offers benefits to the community college itself. These programs broaden the target 'market' and fill a gap in the educational economy. And, the addition of four-year students enhances the community because the baccalaureate diversifies the intellectual environment through variety and rigor of course offerings.

The community college baccalaureate also creates a segment of the student body inherently more invested in the community because they are part of it for twice as long. This provides an opportunity for students and colleges to invest and develop novel programs to support students throughout their college careers. For instance, targeted, well-executed peer mentoring programs may be one approach for helping new baccalaureate students navigate any stressors, both academic and non-academic, associated with completing the degree. Because the community college baccalaureate may recruit students with a longer investment in the institution, the potential impact of college support programs may be expanded as well.

For these reasons, the community college baccalaureate presents a radical opportunity to develop a highly-skilled workforce that benefits the student, the community, and fulfills the mission of community colleges.

Reference: Carnevale, A. P., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2013). Recovery: Job growth and education requirements through 2020.

Moaty Fayek is Dean of Business, Computer Science and Applied Technologies at De Anza College, California. Moaty previously served as Professor, Chairman, and Graduate Advisor at California State University-Chico, as well as an entrepreneur and business owner with a passion for education and strong ties to the high-tech industry. He earned his MS in Computer Science from CSU, Chico, and is currently enrolled in the Ferris State University DCCL program.



Margaret Lyons, MA, is the Director of Student Services for the College of Pharmacy at Ferris State University. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and has worked as an advisor, counselor, and director at two and four-year institutions. She is pursuing her doctorate at Ferris State University in community college leadership, with a focus on non-academic programs such as mentoring that are designed to increase student well-being and academic success.



NATIONAL LEADER PERSPECTIVE

In the decades since their inception, the provision of community baccalaureate degrees has spread to nearly half the states. While critics point to perceived competition with 4-year colleges and to potential community college mission creep as deterrents, if the U.S. expects to meet the growing demand for college educated citizens while still maintaining a commitment to workforce development, the community college baccalaureate may provide a practical solution. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders. Their answers appear below:

Baccalaureate Degrees Conferred by Community Colleges

Beth Hagan, PhD

Executive Director, Community College Baccalaureate Association

A Unique Perspective. The first baccalaureate degree was conferred by a community college more than thirty years ago but it wasn't until the 1990s that the need for these degrees came into focus. My seventeen years as Executive Director of the Community College Baccalaureate Association has afforded me the unique opportunity to focus on the issues that have impacted the 88 U.S. community colleges that currently confer four-year degrees and those that desire to do so. Discussions about the issues have been both negative and positive during these years.

The positive discussions of the late 1990s were about improving access to degrees and providing opportunities for the place-bound and economically challenged to obtain four-year degrees without leaving home. The negative conversations were about college mission because four-year degrees were the domain of universities. Understanding why both the positive and negative sides of those conversations were simultaneously correct and incorrect requires a close examination of where we are today.

The Degrees. The 650+ degrees that are being conferred by community colleges today are applied baccalaureate degrees, primarily Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS), Bachelor of Applied Technology (BAT) and Bachelor of Science (BS) degrees. Most degrees are specific to a local workforce demand: Digital Media; Information Technology; Logistics; Coastal Ecology; Diesel Technology, and 650+ more. (www.accbd.org has a chart of baccalaureate conferring colleges.)

The Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) has a slightly different and more universal appeal with 30 BSN programs in 11 states. All of these programs are for those who are currently Registered Nurses (RN), most of whom are working. The BSN is in increasingly greater demand for many reasons, not least of which is the Institute of Medicine's Report that calls for 80% of nurses to be BSN-trained by 2020. Teacher education degrees have even broader appeal but most of these are very specific: BA in Bilingual Education; BS in Secondary Education in Physics; BS in Secondary Business Technology Education, and 80+ more.

None of the baccalaureate programs are Liberal Arts, nor are they designed to substitute for what might be called a traditional college experience. These degrees are not offered by most universities because they are applied and tend to be outgrowths from traditional community college fields of study. So the conversations have proven true, there is greater access to four-year degrees, but simultaneously false. The degrees are specific to local workforce needs, not likely to produce vast increases in college educated citizenry or to compete with universities for students.

The Beneficiaries. Early discussions were optimistic that community colleges could provide an alternative pathway for students who were unlikely to attend university because of economic challenges or family responsibilities. It was hoped that reaching these potential students could have a tremendous impact on the number of bachelors' degrees conferred, thus leading to a better educated population.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

In what ways are the anticipated benefits of community colleges awarding bachelor's degrees being realized today?

What has evolved are opportunities for the place-bound, but many are place-bound because they are employed, sometimes in a company or industry that requires additional education. For example, First Responders might seek a BS in Emergency Services, BS in Criminal Justice or BAS in Public Safety Management to advance professionally. Or, they are place-bound because their local employers have a compelling demand for certain skills such as those developed in a BS in Interaction Design or Radiologic and Imaging Sciences. Local students are educated to meet

these needs. This makes sense because most of the degree programs cannot be developed until a local need is clearly demonstrated.

[T]he scope of the improvement requires an understanding that the applied baccalaureate degree is based on community need and is workforce specific.

The Outcomes. There is no doubt that we do not have enough information about outcomes. Some studies are underway and one, an evaluation by the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, recently demonstrated positive results: earnings increased from the AAS degree to the BAS by 38%. Students retained or graduated from 2014-2015 fall to spring class was 81%. The enrollment of students of color in Seattle was 51%. Enrollment in the baccalaureate programs was 947 FTE, up from 77 in 2008.

Early conversations about access were correct. Students in baccalaureate programs are more likely to complete. Underserved populations are benefitting. Academic progression in nursing is being facilitated. Local community colleges are addressing the needs of their communities. Access has been improved through 650+ degree programs in 88 colleges in 20 states, but the scope of the improvement requires an understanding that the applied baccalaureate degree is based on community need and is workforce specific.

Early conversations about mission were incorrect. The outcome has not been the transformation of these 88 institutions into four-year colleges because none, if any, enroll more than a small percentage of their students in these programs. The Washington Study addresses 947 FTEs. There were 181,000 students in the system that year. But they have only just begun.

So let the conversations about permitting the community colleges who are now struggling to obtain the authority to confer baccalaureate degrees, especially the desperately needed BSN, continue. These conversations, seventeen years later, remain both positive and negative but communication about the real issues can only benefit the students we ultimately serve.



Beth Hagan, PhD, has served as the Executive Director of the Community College Baccalaureate Association (CCBA) since 1999. She holds MEd and MBA degrees from the University of Illinois and a PhD in Entrepreneurship Education from Union Institute and University. Dr. Hagan is the 2009 recipient of the CCBA Pioneer Award, presented annually to an individual who has taken the lead in improving access to postsecondary education.



QUICK TAKES
Highlights
from the Field

The (New) Bachelor

by **Narcisca A. Poliono** and **Norma Goldstein**

Today we are seeing an increase in the community college baccalaureate degree offerings across the country, generally due to a combination of factors such as unmet industry needs, limited student opportunities due to geographic isolation, affordability issues, and state mandates to address specific state-based shortages.

This article presents a brief overview of the status and growth of community college baccalaureate programs throughout the country. Access this work here: <http://bit.ly/1SYMuJn>

Community College and the Four-Year Degree

by **A. J. O'Connell**

This article explores the community college baccalaureate degree issue, including the needs behind those degrees, including "the changing needs of industries and individual states when it comes to higher education." With a focus on the state perspective, the author discusses the myriad issues surrounding the community college applied baccalaureate degree and explores the question of whether the line between community colleges and traditional colleges might be blurring.

Access this work here: <http://bit.ly/1NobA4a>



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The Elusive Community College Baccalaureate Degree *(continued from page 1)*

associated with full-time enrollment at one of the State's public universities.

This real access to baccalaureate education should be at the core of the debate for how states could strategically leverage the community college infrastructure to increase financial access to reach all students. If we shift the debate from what's best for higher education institutions to what's best for students, the state policy opportunities become clear.

Some progress has been made, but it's woefully insufficient. Beth Hagan, Executive Director of the Community College Baccalaureate Association, notes that more than 20 states currently allow for community colleges to provide limited applied baccalaureate programming. Three additional states, (Illinois, California and Ohio), have active or impending legislation to grant similar authority to community colleges. Ohio's plan, for example, permits 10 affordable bachelor's degrees in applied and technical areas in those instances where universities are unresponsive to demonstrated need. California is piloting 15 colleges in program areas currently not offered by the University of California or by California State University.

If we shift the debate from what's best for higher education institutions to what's best for students, the state policy opportunities become clear.

Unfortunately, advancing the applied baccalaureate degree can be a long-term proposition and, as such, requires significant perseverance, creativity, and fortitude. In Michigan, for example, the first meaningful discussion of the baccalaureate began in December 2004 with the release of the first public policy document to advance the idea of the community college baccalaureates. The report, authored by the Lieutenant Governor's Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth, included the following recommendation: "The Michigan legislature must pass enabling legislation that defines the criteria and process by which Michigan community colleges may offer applied baccalaureate degrees in response to unmet economic, employer, or community needs in their service regions." Eight years later, in December 2012, after multiple legislative meetings, presentations, and independent research, the State's community colleges were granted authority for only four programs: Maritime Technology, Concrete Technology, Energy Production, and Culinary Arts (Nursing, initially included in the legislation, was later dropped due to pressure from the universities).

Michigan community colleges face an uphill battle once again with introduced legislation requesting authority for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), and a handful of other occupational programs. There are many factors contributing to the need for more nurses with baccalaureate degrees, but one of the greatest drivers is the increasing number of hospitals seeking Magnet status (i.e., recognition given by the American Nurses' Credentialing Center, to hospitals that demonstrate high quality of nursing care). Tandem with this specialty recognition is the simultaneous adoption of the BSN as the entry-level credential for nurses. In order to be eligible for Magnet status, hospitals need 80% of their nurses trained at the baccalaureate level. This is a real systemic challenge for Michigan, given that only 47% of Registered Nurses in Michigan hold a BSN, with nearly 40% of practicing

RNs being 55 or over (according to a 2015 survey by the Michigan Center for Nursing).

Community colleges are fully prepared for this work, most currently providing Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) and Registered Nurse (RN) degrees with high state board licensing pass rates (Jackson College for example, consistently exceeds state and national pass rate levels). Furthermore, community colleges have the facilities, health education complexes, and training equipment (e.g., high fidelity mannequins, task trainers, and anatomy tables). Furthermore, community colleges provide the first 62-72 hours of the BSN with the fourth year at the lowest cost, utilizing curriculum principally didactic or lecture in design.

Other secondary program accreditors are also increasing their requirements of community colleges, both in terms of defining the number of faculty required to teach, their educational requirements, the type of instructional equipment needed, the specific courses and credit hours to be awarded, and even the number of students that can be enrolled in the program at a single time. For example, the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care's (CoARC) website states that "...all programs applying for accreditation be able to award a minimum of a baccalaureate degree upon student completion of programmatic and degree requirements. The position statement emphasizes that the [organization] supports continuing the accreditation of existing associate degree programs that meet the CoARC Standards." [Emphasis added]. I suspect that, over time, increasing numbers of allied health programs will add the baccalaureate degree as the entry employment credential. This action further signals the need for community colleges to be able to respond to these workforce educational requirements at the local level, which are often inaccessible by students.

Jack Welch, the famed retired CEO of General Electric, is quoted with having said, "If the rate of change on the outside exceeds the rate of change on the inside, the end is near." In my view, the rate of required change on the outside is greater than what current systems of approval will allow for community colleges. Therefore, community colleges must be allowed to evolve, by granting the elusive applied baccalaureate programming authority. Let the marketplace determine which organizations continue and which do not, rather than lobbyists, elitism, territory, legislation, and revenue protectionism.



Dr. Daniel J. Phelan is President and CEO of Jackson College in Michigan. Phelan is Chair-Elect of the Board of Directors for the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), is Co-Chair of AACC's Higher Education Act Reauthorization Task Force, and is Chair-Elect of the Higher Education Research and Development

Institute (HERDI). He currently serves as a Director of the Community College Baccalaureate Association (CCBA), a Board member for the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) and the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society (PTK), and is a founding Board member for the international organization, US-Brasil Connect (USBC). Continuous innovation, quality, service, and vision for an improved future of student success have continued to define Phelan's contribution to the community college movement. His new book, *Unrelenting Change, Innovation, and Risk: Forging the Next Generation of Colleges*, was published in January 2016. He holds a PhD in Higher Education Administration from Iowa State University and an MBA from St. Ambrose University.