



**POLICY  
MATTERS**

# Update on the Community College Baccalaureate

***With growing pressures to address the challenges of access, cost, and capacity, the community college baccalaureate is here to stay.***

Over the past decade, there has been steady growth in the number of community colleges independently offering the baccalaureate degree. Figure 1 illustrates the 11 states that have approved at least one two-year-college baccalaureate, and the three states in which some effort is currently under way. (This might mean that a bill has been introduced, that the subject is under study, that a particular community college is actively seeking baccalaureate status, or some other activity.) Table 1 lists approved institutions, by state, describing the variety of degrees currently approved. At a minimum, this new role for community colleges raises questions about the fundamental missions of two- and four-year institutions, and about the meaning of the baccalaureate degree. In addition, to the extent that it expands to more degrees, institutions, and states, this trend challenges the somewhat precarious balance between the two sectors—to alter the flow of state support and students.

## Observations

◆ **The community college baccalaureate has developed in response to increased demands for**

**higher education, combined with cost and capacity concerns.**

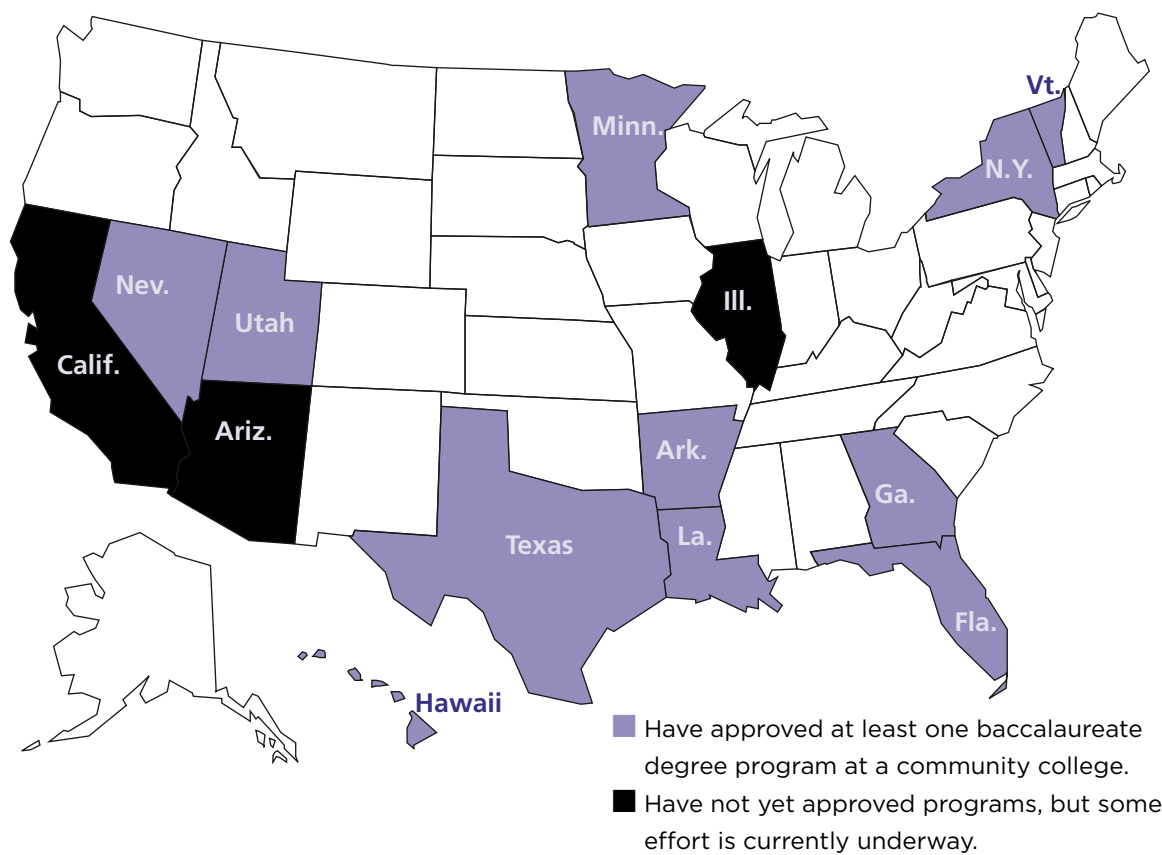
Specifically, recent decades have witnessed:

- increased demand by nontraditional students who are time- and place-bound;
- increased labor market demand in specialized fields (e.g., health care and education);
- increased demands in specific geographic areas;
- demands for new kinds of baccalaureate degrees in applied and technical fields;
- overcrowding on many four-year campuses, with demands exceeding capacity; and
- limited higher education resources and pressures to reduce costs.

◆ **There are several alternatives to the independent community college baccalaureate, and collaboration with four-year institutions in granting the degree is far more common.**

*Community College Week* recently reported that between 100 to 200 community colleges currently offer a bachelor's degree program in some capacity, but only a small number do so on their own (what we are calling the "independent" baccalaureate). Far more common are collaborative programs with four-

**Figure 1. Community College Baccalaureate**



year institutions, such as university centers or shared facilities, joint programs, 2+2 arrangements, and other kinds of partnerships.

◆ **To date, approvals of independent community college baccalaureates have been targeted and limited, and subjected to a careful review process.**

The independent baccalaureate has not been the first response to meeting demands, but one that is embarked upon with great caution after workforce need has been documented, alternatives involving four-year colleges have been explored and exhausted, and community college capacity has been determined.

◆ **Some independent community college baccalaureate degrees represent no competition with four-year colleges, while others have the potential to do so—for example, teacher education programs in community colleges, and those at**

**community colleges located in more populous areas.**

Much of the early growth in the community college baccalaureate coincided with the emergence of the applied baccalaureate degree in fields such as protective services and new areas of information technology. This did not pose a threat to four-year colleges, especially in geographically isolated areas and because they did not have a history in these fields. However, more recently, public pressures have grown to utilize the community college to address access, workforce, and cost issues in many more fields, especially teaching and nursing. Even more recently, with the entrance of Miami Dade College into the picture, we are seeing community colleges starting to address new demands in populous areas with many four-year colleges.

◆ **As community colleges have taken on broader functions over the past couple of decades, many have morphed into four-year institutions. There**

**are concerns that growth of the independent baccalaureate will lead to more widespread “mission creep” and loss of the traditional community college.**

Some community college presidents view the independent baccalaureate positively, as a step toward greater visibility and mission expansion. Other presidents prefer partnerships with four-year colleges, emphasizing more traditional roles for each sector. The jury is still out as to the extent to which community colleges will begin to look more like four-year colleges.

◆ **To date, there has been no federal involvement in this area, but a Senate bill, introduced in March 2004, could alter the picture in relation to teacher preparation.**

This bill (S. 2156), the Community College Teacher Preparation Enhancement Act of 2004, would amend Title II of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to enhance teacher preparation programs in several ways, including support for the community college baccalaureate. However, the bill supports many options for use of federal funds, including enhancing collaboration and developing partnerships between two- and four-year institutions, and supporting the transfer function.

## **Conclusion**

With growing pressures to address the challenges of access, cost, and capacity, the phenomenon of the independent community college baccalaureate is undoubtedly here to stay. To best serve the public interest, both policymakers and campus leaders need to carefully assess the motivation for changes, their form and scope, cost factors, and effects. Too much is at stake to do otherwise.

## **Resources**

The Community College Baccalaureate Association was formed in 1999 “to promote the development and acceptance of the community college baccalaureate degree as a means of addressing the national problems of student access, demand, and cost.” Significantly, this year, it adopted a new, broader mission statement; it aims “to promote better access to the baccalaureate degree on community college campuses, and to serve as a resource for information on various models for accomplishing this purpose.” [accbd.org](http://accbd.org)

A recent policy brief by the Education Commission of the States, *Teacher Education Baccalaureate Degrees at Community Colleges*, explores issues related to independent BA programs in education. [ecs.org/clearinghouse/49/56/4956.pdf](http://ecs.org/clearinghouse/49/56/4956.pdf)

Other papers in the series look at different roles played by community colleges in teacher preparation: *Seamless Pipeline from Two-year to Four-year Institutions for Teacher Training* and *Community Colleges as Professional Development Resources for Working Teachers*. [ecs.org/clearinghouse/49/57/4957.pdf](http://ecs.org/clearinghouse/49/57/4957.pdf)  
[ecs.org/clearinghouse/49/59/4959.pdf](http://ecs.org/clearinghouse/49/59/4959.pdf)

On June 22, 2004, the Harper College (Palatine, Illinois) Board of Trustees authorized the college to begin lobbying for a change in state law to allow it to offer selected baccalaureate degrees. Its Bachelor’s Degree Initiative website contains information gathered thus far and offers an interesting case study of the phenomenon. [harpercollege.edu/bachelor/index.shtml](http://harpercollege.edu/bachelor/index.shtml)

In March, 2004, U.S. Senator Snowe introduced the Community College Teacher Preparation Enhancement Act of 2004. Enter ‘2156’ under bill number at [thomas.loc.gov/](http://thomas.loc.gov/)

In 2000, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching added a hybrid category of baccalaureate colleges to the Carnegie Classification, the “Baccalaureate/Associate’s College,” for colleges where the majority of conferrals are at the sub-baccalaureate level, but where bachelor’s degrees account for at least 10 percent of all conferrals. Background and description of the 2000 changes are provided on the foundation website. [carnegiefoundation.org/classification/CIHE2000/background.htm](http://carnegiefoundation.org/classification/CIHE2000/background.htm)

**Table 1. Summary of Approved Community College Baccalaureate Degrees**

State/Institution/Degrees and Majors	Presence of Degrees in Selected Fields		
	Education	Nursing	Info Tech/ Tech Mgmt
<b>Arkansas (Year Approved—1998)</b>			
<b>University of Arkansas at Fort Smith</b>	X	X	X
BS: Accounting			
Biology with Life Science and Earth Science			
Teacher Licensure			
Business Administration			
Chemistry with Teacher Licensure			
Early Childhood Education P-4			
Imaging Science (Diag Med Sonography or Management)			
Information Technology			
Mathematics with Teacher Licensure 7-12			
Middle Childhood Education with Emphasis in Math/Science			
Music Education			
BSN: Nursing			
<b>Florida (Year Approved—2001)</b>			
<b>Chipola College (Year Approved—2002)</b>	X		
BS: Secondary Mathematics Education			
Secondary Science Education			
<b>Miami Dade College (Year Approved—2002)</b>	X		
BS: Exceptional Student Education			
Secondary Mathematics (6-12)			
Secondary Science (6-12) (four concentration areas)			
<b>St. Petersburg College (Year Approved—2001)</b>	X	X	X
BSE: Elementary Education			
Exceptional Student Education			
Secondary Education—Mathematics			
Secondary Education—Biology			
BSN: Nursing			
BAS: Dental Hygiene			
Technology Management			
<b>Georgia</b>			
<b>Dalton State College (Year Approved—1999)</b>			X
BAS: Technology Management			
BBA: Management			
BS: Management Information Systems			
Industrial Operations Management			
Marketing Systems			
BSW: Social Work			

State/Institution/Degrees and Majors	Presence of Degrees in Selected Fields		
	Education	Nursing	Info Tech/ Tech Mgmt
<b>Macon State College</b> (Year Approved—1997) BS: Business and Information Technology (4 tracks) Communications and Information Technology Health Information Management Health Services Administration Information Technology (6 tracks) Nursing Public Service		X	X
<b>Hawaii (Year Approved—2004)</b> <b>Maui Community College</b> (under development)			
<b>Louisiana (Year Approved—2001)</b> <b>Louisiana State University at Alexandria</b> BSE: Elementary Education Bachelor of General Studies BS: Biology Bachelor of Liberal Studies (Psychology or Business)	X		
<b>Minnesota (Year Approved—2003)</b> <b>Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College</b> Elementary Education	X		
<b>Nevada (Year Approved—1998)</b> <b>Great Basin College</b> BA: Elementary Education Nursing [in development] Integrative and Professional Studies BAS: Management in Technology Instrumentation Land Surveying/Geomatics	X	X	X
<b>New York (Year Approved—1996)</b> <b>Morrisville State College</b> BBA: Automotive Technology Management Information Technology Management Resort and Recreation Service Management BT: Application Software Development Automotive Technology Dairy Management Electronic Marketing and Publishing End-User Support Equine Science and Management Network Administration Renewable Resources Web Development			X

State/Institution/Degrees and Majors	Presence of Degrees in Selected Fields		
	Education	Nursing	Info Tech/ Tech Mgmt
<b>SUNY College of Agriculture and Technology at Cobleskill</b> BBA: Technology Management (three degrees) BT: Agricultural Business Management Animal Science Information Technology (five degrees) Plant Science			X
<b>SUNY College of Technology at Alfred</b> BBA: Technology Management: Financial Services BS: Architectural Technology Computer Technology Construction Management Engineering Technology Electrical Engineering Technology Electromechanical Engineering Technology Mechanical Engineering technology Surveying Engineering Technology BT: Construction Management Technology Information Technology (three degrees)			X
<b>SUNY College of Technology at Canton</b> BBA: Technology Management (two degrees) BT: Health Services Management Health Services Management: Mortuary Science Information Technology Public Safety Technology: Criminal Investigation Veterinary Services Management			X
<b>SUNY College of Technology at Delhi</b> Golf Course Management (three degrees) Hospitality Management (four degrees) Information Technology (three degrees) Veterinary Technology Management			X
<b>Texas (Year Approved—2003)</b> <i>All three colleges to offer applied science and technology degrees</i>			
<b>Brazosport College</b>			X
<b>South Texas Community College</b>			X
<b>Midland College</b>			X
<b>Utah</b>			
<b>Dixie State College (Year Approved—1999)</b> BS: Business Administration Computer and Information Technology Elementary Education BSN: Nursing	X	X	X

State/Institution/Degrees and Majors	Presence of Degrees in Selected Fields		
	Education	Nursing	Info Tech/ Tech Mgmt
<b>Utah Valley State College (Year Approved—1992)</b> BAT: Information Technology BA: Behavioral Science (4) English (2) English Education History Integrated Studies (31) Philosophy BS: Accounting Aviation Professional Pilot Information Technology (four degrees) Behavioral Science (4) Biology Biology Education Business/Marketing Education Technology Management Apprenticeship (26) Chemistry Chemistry/Physics Education Computer Science (4) Early Childhood Education English (2) English Education Earth Science Earth Science Education History Education Integrated Studies (31) Criminal Justice Paralegal Studies Mathematics Mathematics Education Multimedia Communications Technology Nursing Business Management (6) Hospitality Management (2) Philosophy Physics	X	X	X
<b>Vermont (Year Approved—1993)</b> <b>Vermont Technical College</b> BS: Architectural Engineering Technology Business Technology and Management Computer Engineering Technology Electromechanical Engineering Technology			X