



CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

PRESS RELEASE

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California Community Colleges to Award Bachelor's Degrees Under Historic Legislation Signed by Gov. Brown

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – In an historic first for public higher education in the state, Gov. Jerry Brown signed legislation yesterday that allows California community colleges to award bachelor's degrees in fields not currently served by the California State University (CSU) or University of California (UC).

The legislation, authored by Sen. Marty Block (D-San Diego), directs the California Community Colleges system to establish a pilot baccalaureate degree program in 15 college districts by no later than the 2017-18 academic year.

The state Chancellor's Office, in consultation with UC and CSU, will decide which districts are chosen to host programs, subject to California Community Colleges Board of Governors approval. Districts will be selected according to their ability and interest in establishing rigorous undergrad programs that confer degrees in high demand among regional employers. Achieving a geographical balance of districts to maximize student enrollment will be another factor.

"Thanks to the governor, Legislature, and college educators who supported this bill, like Chancellor Constance Carroll of San Diego, the country's largest system of higher education joins the ranks of community colleges in other states that offer four-year degrees," said California Community Colleges Chancellor Brice W. Harris. "Employers in California seek candidates with advanced credentials and many struggle to fill positions in some of the fields that will be covered under the new program. This law will help us to meet California's workforce needs, does not duplicate CSU or UC degree programs, and gives more Californians access to affordable higher education that can enable them to obtain well-paying jobs."

The new four-year degree programs could be offered in vocational occupations where an Associate of Arts degree had been acceptable in the past for employment but now increasingly require a bachelor's degree to be competitive. These fields and occupations can include dental hygiene, industrial technology, allied health technology, emergency medical technicians, and data management for health care.

Under the new law, community colleges would charge only \$84 more per unit for upper-division baccalaureate coursework than they currently charge for lower-division courses.

The Legislative Analyst's Office will conduct an interim evaluation of the bachelor's degree program in 2018, and a final evaluation by July 2022. The pilot program will end in the 2022-23 academic year, unless extended by the Legislature.

"California community colleges are well placed to educate students who may have been unable to earn a four-year degree due to our low tuition rates and numerous and easily accessible locations throughout the state," Harris added.

The California Master Plan for Higher Education outlines the roles UC, CSU, and the community colleges play in educating the state's population. Under the original plan, enacted in the 1960s, UC awarded doctoral, master's, and bachelor's degrees, CSU awarded bachelor's and master's degrees, and the community colleges offered lower-division coursework and associate degrees or certificates. The plan has been adjusted to meet workforce needs in recent years. For instance, CSU can now award doctoral degrees in education, nursing, and physical therapy.

Nationwide, more than 50 community colleges operate almost 500 baccalaureate programs in 21 states.

Gov. Brown also signed AB 2558 earlier this month. The legislation establishes the Community College Professional Development Program, which aims to increase professional development activities for all community college employees.

The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation composed of 72 districts and 112 colleges serving 2.1 million students per year. Community colleges supply workforce training, basic skills education and prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions. The Chancellor's Office provides leadership, advocacy and support under the direction of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. For more information about the community colleges, please visit <http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/>.

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