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## THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE BACCALAUREATE: PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

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*This article will address important puzzles about community colleges and their roles with baccalaureate delivery. To that purpose, the article is organized into five key sections. First, the rationale underlying the community college baccalaureate (CCB) and key policy issues will be described. Second, a glossary of terms will be offered to provide a foundation for research about baccalaureate degree programs and models involving community colleges. Third, a national summary of states where community colleges are authorized to confer baccalaureates will be discussed. Florida is home to the largest number of community colleges authorized to confer baccalaureates and will be discussed as an illustrative case of a bellwether movement. The fourth section will build on the first three and discuss issues and challenges for local and state leaders, policymakers, and practitioners to guide program development, future research, and policy exploration at the local, state and federal levels. Finally, our fifth section will offer our closing remarks and summarize briefly key predictions for the future in relation to the nation's CCB movement.*

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American higher education has never been a constant set of hierarchically aligned institutions neatly placed into fixed categories. Rather, it has been characterized by regular, and often significant, institutional reinvention. When Yale University's governing board chose to offer graduate degrees, previously not offered by any institution in the United States, its decision was not challenged as an instance of "mission creep" or the dangerous shifting of resources previously assigned solely to undergraduate studies. In the same manner, the steady shift of state policies to permit normal schools to become teacher colleges and grant bachelor degrees greatly enhanced the nation's emerging system of public secondary schools and was even encouraged by the federal Bureau of Education.<sup>1</sup> From this long-term perspective, the decision of some states to permit their community colleges to participate in the nation's tradition of institutional reinvention of higher education may be seen as simply another example of a highly flexible, state-based system responding to the needs of its citizens. The decision can be seen as an attempt to provide each citizen with the opportunity to participate fully in the mainstream of American economic life.

In our opinion, the community college baccalaureate (CCB) is not an isolated phenomenon that suddenly appeared in response to self-interested, institutional aspirations to be a "true" college (Floyd, 2006). Instead, we believe that it is yet another manifestation of the current, broad-based evolution of postsecondary education, an evolution that reaches beyond America to include Canada and Europe through its Bologna Process.<sup>2</sup> As American production workers lose their jobs to nations with low-cost workforces, it becomes ever more important that America's colleges provide preparation programs that

<sup>1</sup>According to Cohen (1998) a primary mission of early nineteenth-century normal schools was teacher training. The curriculum included two to three years of training after two years of high school. By the late nineteenth century, about 130 normal schools were open. Most were transformed into state colleges offering baccalaureate degrees and masters' degrees in teaching. Other curriculum areas eventually included nursing, accounting, trades, technology, business, home economics and various areas of agriculture. According to Rudolph (1990), approximately 160 community colleges in 40 states evolved from normal schools.

<sup>2</sup>The Bologna process (or Bologna accords) was launched in 1999 at the University of Bologna, Italy (hence its name) and is intended to make European academic degree standards more comparable. It was formed in response to the challenge of the need for an increasingly skills-rich knowledge base. Further, Asian nations are increasingly aware that they must not rely upon other nations for advances in technology, but must support their own research into new technologies and economic opportunities. To compete globally, United States policy-makers and leaders need to fully appreciate the extent and seriousness of this challenging environment and strive to participate in this reinvention of a system of higher education that is over a century old.

meet employers' needs for employee skill sets. College programs need to be packaged and delivered in convenient formats to meet the needs of a diverse American workforce, ranging from 18-year-olds to aging baby boomers.

As we move into the 21st century, American higher education finds itself facing a significant crossroads. The nation's workforce is being challenged across the globe by increasingly skilled and better educated competitors. As the providers of undergraduate education to a plurality of all students, community colleges are well positioned to help meet this challenge by expanding their curricula through the various forms of the community college baccalaureate.

Through a variety of steps, community colleges in a number of states have been authorized to award baccalaureate degrees. With a few exceptions, these programs have been in high-demand occupational fields such as teaching, business, allied health, and public service. Such degrees have the potential to dramatically enhance the employment opportunities for the thousands of place-bound Americans for whom traditional, residential college, and university baccalaureate programs are either inaccessible or unresponsive to their workforce needs.<sup>3</sup>

Historically, the community college has been viewed as a connector, linking the high school graduate to either employment-oriented, two-year programs or, through a variety of pathway partnerships, to institutions with the authority to award the baccalaureate. (Bragg & Barnett, 2006). Within the last decade, an increasing number of community colleges have taken an additional step, securing state and local authorization to confer their own baccalaureates. (Floyd, 2005). Some criticize the CCB as a diversion from the community college's traditional mission of emphasizing lower division offerings,<sup>4</sup> while others applaud these new degrees as an appropriate and much needed extension of the community-based mission of these associate-degree granting colleges.<sup>5</sup> However, well-grounded research on policy and practices lags behind the adoption of all forms of baccalaureate degrees delivered solely by community colleges or in partnership with others. (Floyd, Skolnik, & Walker, 2005)

<sup>3</sup>It is important to note that while adding baccalaureate degree programming to their curriculum, many community colleges have also increased their partnerships with four-year colleges and universities as additional efforts to expand opportunities for baccalaureate attainment. See Patricia Windham, P., Perkins, G. and Rogers, J. (2001). Concurrent use: Part of the new definition of access, *Community College Review*, 29(3), 39–55.

<sup>4</sup>Some of the critics include Townsend, 2005; Wattenbarger, 2000; and Eaton, 2005.

<sup>5</sup>The Community College Baccalaureate Association and Kenneth P. Walker are among the most prolific champions of the community college baccalaureate movement.

**ISSUES AND QUESTIONS EXAMINED**

The purpose of this paper is fivefold. First, we will describe the rationale underlying the community college baccalaureate and address the following questions: “Why is baccalaureate attainment an important issue for United States policymakers and citizens?” and “What is the rationale for the community college baccalaureate?” To address these questions, we will present data on the value of a baccalaureate degree in the United States and data from community college student satisfaction reports.

In the second section, we will offer a glossary of terms to help provide a foundation for a discussion of baccalaureate degree programs involving community colleges. This paper primarily focuses on the model whereby community colleges solely award baccalaureate degrees. However, the terms listed also describe other alternative baccalaureate pathway models that are important to understanding fully the expansive role community colleges serve in baccalaureate attainment in the United States. Community colleges that confer their own baccalaureates rarely do so without also participating in other partnership baccalaureate delivery models.

Third, we will illustrate the impact of this movement by providing national summary information about the states and colleges authorized to confer the CCB. We will also provide a current snapshot view of Florida’s CCB activities. Florida is home to the largest number of community colleges authorized to confer baccalaureates and is the CCB “bellwether state.” To date, Florida has authorized 10 of the 28 community colleges to offer the CCB. We will present information about Florida’s community colleges and briefly describe their role with other baccalaureate models.

The fourth section will build on the first three, and it will discuss issues and challenges for local and state leaders, policymakers, and practitioners to guide program development, future research, and policy exploration. We will also offer specific questions to guide local and state discussions while introducing a suggested role for federal leadership.

Finally, our fifth section will offer our closing remarks and summarize briefly key predictions for the future in relation to the nation’s CCB movement. We close suggesting that the changes among CCB community colleges are more evolutionary than revolutionary.

Our methodology includes a review of readily accessible records, including state statutes and governing regulations, community college and university Web sites, published and unpublished working papers, policy documents, and refereed and nonrefereed articles. We also rely

on previously published and unpublished works, along with our professional observations as practitioner-scholars. Our arguments will be grounded in data in the public domain about the individual and societal values of baccalaureate degrees, available literature, and our professional experiences. We recognize that our over 65 years of combined community college experience is pragmatically useful as we interpret data, such as student satisfaction reports, but we also know that our experience in community colleges and with the CCB may introduce bias into the study. To ensure that this paper is balanced, we offer critics' views of this movement and attempt to provide as much balance as possible with our points of view.

While this paper focuses only on the United States community college baccalaureate movement, it is important to understand that the U.S. does not stand alone among the world's advanced industrial states in reinventing higher education. The European Union, under the terms of the Bologna Process, is well along in a fundamental revision to the structure of higher education in its member states.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, governments in three of Canada's four largest provinces have authorized community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees, especially in high demand workforce fields (Skolnik, 2005; Laden, 2005). At a time of intense international economic competition, where the skills and abilities of workers are of increasing importance to a nation's success, comparing programs across national boundaries can have a significant impact on improving a country's competitive position in the new global market. This, however, lies beyond the scope of this paper.

## ***COMMUNITY COLLEGE BACCALAUREATE BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE***

### ***Why is Baccalaureate Attainment an Important Issue for United States Policymakers and Citizens?***

Why is baccalaureate attainment an important issue for United States policymakers and citizens? Simply put, higher education pays for individuals and society.

According to a recent College Board study, there is a positive correlation between earnings and the level of education for people of all racial backgrounds and for men and women alike (Baum & Ma, 2007). The higher one's income, the more one contributes to

<sup>6</sup>Information about the Bologna Process is available from: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna>.

tax revenues and the less likely one is to depend upon government assistance programs. The higher one's educational level, the more likely the person is to understand the reasoning and views of others, an increasingly important skill in our ever-changing global society. In addition, the higher one's education, the more likely the person is to vote, actively participating in the democratic processes of this nation. Even workers with lower educational levels benefit when educated coworkers drive up the pay scale for the entire labor pool in a metropolitan area (Baum & Ma, 2007).

Citing 2006 United States Census Bureau data, the College Board notes that the proportion of adults in the U.S. who completed high school, an associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree and higher, increased dramatically over the last 50 years among individuals aged 25 and older (Baum & Ma, 2007). In 1940, 76% of the population 25 and older did not graduate from high school, 14% were high school graduates, and 6% had some college or were associate degree graduates, with only 5% graduating with a bachelor's degree or higher. In contrast, by 2006, only 15% of this age cohort lacked a high school diploma, while 32% had graduated from high school, 26% had completed some college or an associate's degree, and 28% had completed a bachelor's degree or higher.

While today's proportion of adults completing a bachelor's degree or higher is almost six times that of 60 years ago, the educational expectations of employers have also increased. Academic prerequisites for even entry-level employment with an established firm, when compared over the last century, are significantly greater. For instance, in the first quarter of the 20th century, a recent high school graduate of a Midwestern high school, typically no more than 17 years old, could acquire a provisional K-8 teaching credential with as few as 10 college credits. Even a progressive state like New York did not require a bachelor's degree to permanently credential its elementary grade teachers until the mid-1930s. Similarly, with a few notable exceptions such as Johns Hopkins University, the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia's Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, admission to the most prestigious university law and medical schools required fewer than 15 credit hours (mostly in language, mathematics, and chemistry) as a prerequisite for admission. An individual seeking a career in law could, therefore, anticipate admission to the bar by the age of 20, while the student intent on a career in medicine could begin practice by age 21 or 22 (Pedersen, 2000). Such is not the case today.

Increasingly, employers are requiring the bachelor's degree for entry-level employment and advancement, especially in such allied

health fields as nursing. Community colleges served as essential providers of nursing training from the early 1950s, ranging from certification to degree programs in the careers as Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN), Registered Nursing (RN), and most recently, the Bachelor's Degree in Nursing (BSN). Health profession jobs that once required no more than LPN or RN certification now demand the BSN or higher in addition to state licensure.<sup>7</sup> In short, individuals seeking secure, established, and reasonably lucrative careers in allied health, public service, law enforcement, and the technologies must expect to make a commitment of no less than the baccalaureate merely to gain access to these fields.

Giving fresh impetus to the importance of making the baccalaureate both accessible and affordable to the broadest pool of Americans is the United States Department of Labor's projected changes in the size and composition of the labor force. Between 2004 and 2014, it is estimated that of the approximately 19 million new jobs that will be created, slightly over 30% will either be in health care or teaching, with a large portion of the balance in the fields of employment services and professional-technical services. All three "super fields" increasingly require a baccalaureate as a minimum credential for employment.<sup>8</sup>

Adding to the importance of an earned baccalaureate as a pathway to well-paying, stable employment is the dramatic growth projected for professional and related occupations in areas such as management, transportation, business, finance and other professions. Current Labor Department estimates project some 1.6 million new jobs in these fields by 2014.<sup>9</sup> Access to positions in this growing field will depend heavily upon an individual holding at least an associate's degree. But better still will be an earned baccalaureate, irrespective of the position in question. Employment in computer systems design and related services will add almost one-fourth of all new jobs in this super field, driven by the increasing reliance of businesses on information technology and the growing recognition of the importance of on-going network security. Of these three super fields, those in the professional-technical sector are most likely to require not just a baccalaureate, but software or hardware-specific certification to secure employment. Such certification opens up new possibilities

<sup>7</sup>It is important to note that the authors are not making an argument in favor of the BSN over the RN as a credential, but stating the fact that the BSN is increasingly becoming a preferred credential by some, in spite of viable arguments to the contrary by organizations such as the American Association of Community Colleges.

<sup>8</sup><http://www.bls.gov/oco/oco2003.htm>

<sup>9</sup><http://www.bls.gov/oco/oco2003.htm>

for community colleges and four-year colleges and universities to collaborate in meeting employment needs in close proximity to the individuals pursuing opportunities in these and America's other rapidly growing career fields.

### ***What is the Rationale for the Community College Baccalaureate?***

What is the rationale for the community college baccalaureate? Simply put, "access"—geographical, programmatic, and financial.

America's community colleges enroll almost half of the undergraduates in higher education. Community colleges are geographically accessible, offer open admissions, and are reasonably affordable institutions. As demands for baccalaureate degrees increase, especially in certain high-demand workforce areas, local community colleges are experiencing increased pressures to respond programmatically to meet these needs. Much of the evidence to support local demands for workforce baccalaureates is anecdotal. However, a 2003 survey of community college presidents commissioned by the Community College Baccalaureate Association indicates that approximately one-fourth of the respondents received requests from local employers to offer baccalaureate degrees due to unmet needs. Over two-thirds of the respondents indicated that four-year institutions in their area are not currently meeting the demands for baccalaureate training in certain high-demand career fields (Floyd, 2006). Community colleges are accustomed to connecting employers with well-trained workers and, thus, it was not surprising that the presidents perceived pressures from communities for access to local baccalaureate training. Further, most of the nation's population is within driving distance of a community college and, as such, these "people's colleges" are valued for their service to place-bound citizens. Place-bound students are constrained by lack of geographic access to universities and by family and work obligations that prohibit them from completing classes on a traditional format and campus.<sup>10</sup>

Regional universities and state college missions are evolving, increasing their emphasis on graduate education and research, and consequently increasing undergraduate admissions standards.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Sean Fanelli, president of Nassau Community College, described the importance of service to place-bound students in "Bringing the Community College Baccalaureate into Focus." Deborah L. Floyd's (2005) chapter also described baccalaureate access issues of a rural Appalachian student in an area where she served as a community college president.

<sup>11</sup>According to Deborah L. Floyd (2006 and 2005), many universities are well along in a process she describes as "growing up"—characterized in significant measure by refocusing their curricula toward graduate-level education and research.

Therefore, many place-bound workers aspiring to complete the baccalaureate may lack access to locally-provided degrees. This access gap is especially apparent in fields with high employment demand such as allied health, teaching, technology, and public service.<sup>12</sup> To illustrate, during a time of draconian budget cuts in 2007 and 2008, many Florida universities raised undergraduate admissions standards, increased tuition, and capped enrollments. As a result, “open door” community colleges are left with bulging enrollments and limited resources to meet education and training needs (“Florida eyes tuition to fill budget shortfalls,” 2007). These fiscally challenging times can be especially difficult for community colleges delivering their own baccalaureate programs, especially if additional funding for the programs does not follow enrollments.

In addition to providing programmatic and geographical access, community colleges have a track record of “doing more with less” resources, especially in areas of instructional programming. In every state, community college student tuition is less than that of state university counterparts, meaning that community colleges are a good value for students. Community colleges are a good value for taxpayers as well, since state per-student funding is also lower for community colleges. While the funding varies from state to state, a recently reported figure of per capita spending at public community colleges is \$9,183 per student. When compared to \$27,973 per four-year university student, the lower cost supports the notion that community colleges are a good value for taxpayers as well (Mellow, 2008). In some states, such as Florida, community college junior and senior level baccalaureate programs are funded at a lower per student cost than comparable university baccalaureate programs.<sup>13</sup>

Another important rationale for the CCB rests on the community college’s local successes, where Americans previously underserved by higher education live and work. In a recent study based on a survey of approximately 220,000 students at U.S. community colleges, colleges, and universities, students consistently ranked satisfaction with the community college higher than that of their four-year private and public colleges (Noel-Levitz, 2000). Further, this study revealed that, consistent with the egalitarian mission of community colleges (which rests on their collective commitment to social justice), all ethnic

<sup>12</sup>This access gap has provided an important rationale for authorizing policies and baccalaureate community college programming in these fields.

<sup>13</sup>Florida’s community colleges are funded at 85% of comparable upper division direct costs, not actual costs. Thus, Florida’s baccalaureate community colleges do not receive funds for actual costs of counseling, library support and administrative services.

groups included in this study were more satisfied as a group with this sector over all others. All ethnic groups were also more likely to reenroll at a community college over a four-year public college. Thus, it seems reasonable, given the documented student satisfaction with their community college experience, that students would be receptive to these institutions extending their curriculum to include offering the bachelor's degree.

Community colleges have traditionally provided access to higher education for the masses and served as a stepping stone to a university baccalaureate (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). However, advocates of the community college baccalaureate believe that adding the bachelor's degree to offerings from community colleges will provide a natural extension of their mission to serve their citizenry (Walker, 1999; 2005; 2006). Critics argue that because partnership models, such as concurrent use programs, are widespread and successful,<sup>14</sup> there is little need for community colleges to launch their own degrees. Further, while some critics contend that entering a community college rather than a university may lower the probability of baccalaureate attainment,<sup>15</sup> others contend that obtaining an associate's degree at a community college actually increases the probability of successful baccalaureate matriculation.<sup>16</sup> Overall, advocates and critics alike generally agree that community colleges are consciously responsive to local workforce needs, low-cost providers of quality instruction, and proximate to place-bound and diverse students.

### ***TERMINOLOGY FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE BACCALAUREATE PATHWAYS: PUZZLES AND PIECES***

Putting together the puzzle describing contributions community colleges make to baccalaureate achievement is not a simple task. Partners, especially universities, hold key puzzle pieces as community colleges strive to make sense of the pieces within their sight and control. As for two-year junior and community college partners, awarding the four-year baccalaureate degree has historically been reserved for university partners—at least until recently.

<sup>14</sup>For research about concurrent-use campuses, see Windham, Perkins, & Rogers, 2001. Regarding models, see Floyd, Skolnik, and Walker, 2005. Also, for descriptors of baccalaureate partnership models see the next section of this paper.

<sup>15</sup>For a discussion, refer to Dougherty, 1994.

<sup>16</sup>The Florida Community College System has provided numerous reports citing that completion of an associate's degree at one of Florida's community colleges actually enhances the probability of baccalaureate completion compared with university freshman resident students.

Many community college students need more than two years to complete an associate's degree, especially in fields such as nursing and allied health. At the other end of the spectrum, postbaccalaureate and continuing education programs have become an integral part of many community college curricula. College labels such as junior college and two-year college do not reflect the breadth and complex role of community colleges within higher education. The puzzle pieces describing community colleges are evolving over time and emerging as rich, albeit complex, pictures of a uniquely American institution reflecting an innate entrepreneurial spirit.

Beyond traditional academic offerings, community colleges provide an array of higher education opportunities, including continuing and workforce development programs for working adults, high school dual enrollment and community services programs for youth, high school completion classes for returning adults, and postbaccalaureate teacher education courses for career changers. While somewhat loosely connected, these community colleges play an integral role in realizing meaningful access and opportunity for local citizens.

As community college missions and programs evolve, the terminology to accurately describe programs often lags behind practice. To illustrate, the term "community college baccalaureate" has been used to describe both partnership degrees granted in collaboration with four-year colleges and universities and baccalaureate degrees awarded by community colleges on their own authority. This weaving of terminology has been confusing, although understandable as some practitioners search for accurate descriptors of their work. As other terms, such as "university center," emerge that more accurately describe baccalaureate partnership models, the use of the term "community college baccalaureate" is being limited to bachelor's degrees solely awarded by community colleges.

Adding to the confusion is the question of what to name community colleges and associate degree-granting institutions after they gain baccalaureate degree authorization. They then are no longer classified as community colleges, or they may then be affiliated with universities as a branch or center. For instance, should we count Utah as authorizing community college baccalaureates considering that the Utah legislature renamed two former community colleges as state colleges with lower divisions that are charged with embracing and preserving the philosophy and mission of a community college? Should Arkansas be counted as a community college baccalaureate state since Westark College, Arkansas' oldest community college, confers baccalaureates and is now university affiliated? State governing structures and laws reflect the political nature of higher education and, as such, terminology,

models, and missions are not consistently applied across state boundaries.

To appreciate fully the “community college baccalaureate model” wherein community colleges confer their own baccalaureate degrees, it is important to understand various pathway partnership models of baccalaureate delivery. While these partnership models are not the focus of our paper, it is important to remember that providing access to baccalaureate degrees through partnerships is not a new role for community colleges.

Providing clarity about the baccalaureate delivery models on community college campuses, Floyd (2005; 2006) classified the following partnership baccalaureate delivery models involving community colleges as articulation, university center, and university extension. Floyd defined the community college baccalaureate model as a delivery system whereby the degree is solely awarded by the community college. Teacher education certification with postbaccalaureate programming (Floyd & St. Arnaud, 2007; Floyd & Walker, 2003) is yet another approach. Lorenzo (2005) further expanded the most popular university center model in describing six partnership models: colocation, enterprise, integrated, virtual, sponsorship and hybrid.

While the focus of this paper is on the emerging community college baccalaureate (CCB) movement, it is important to understand other ways that community colleges engage in baccalaureate attainment. Thus, this second section addresses terminology. The following is a list of terms and definitions related to baccalaureate degree pathways as they apply to the community colleges.<sup>17</sup> In developing this list, we reviewed published and unpublished works, legislative statutes and governing regulations, and numerous websites. We also relied heavily on our own experiences as practitioner-scholars in community college education. This list is by no means exhaustive and is presented with the intention that the definitions will help advance the discussion and study of community colleges and baccalaureate programming.

- **Community College Baccalaureate (CCB):** This term describes the degree granted by postsecondary institutions approved for associate degree awards with the addition of limited baccalaureate degree approval in specialized fields. In most, but not all cases, the CCB degree includes the same general education

<sup>17</sup>The terms described here have been discussed in previously published papers and books cited.

requirements of certain university-granted baccalaureates. In some cases, however, the general education requirements are not the same, and the degrees are more focused on workforce preparation without an expectation of serving as a prerequisite for any graduate-level program. The baccalaureate degree is awarded by the community college. In many states, such as West Virginia, Texas, and Florida, the authorizing legislative language mandates that the college must continue the community college mission as baccalaureate degree offerings are added to the curriculum. The term “community college baccalaureate” also has been used to describe partnership models in which a university confers the baccalaureate; however, the use of “community college baccalaureate” in such instances is confusing and inaccurate.

- **Articulation Baccalaureates:** This term describes the least integrated of pathway programs, but the most common joining community colleges and universities. These partnership degrees are tied together through a 2 + 2 strategy between the community college and university. The strategy ensures a student completing at least two years of approved study at a community college will be guaranteed transfer to a university for the concluding two years of study leading to a bachelor’s degree. This model works best when the university is in close physical proximity to the community college or when the transferring student is willing to relocate to the university campus. The baccalaureate degree is awarded by the senior institution—a four-year college or university.
- **University Center and Concurrent Use Baccalaureate:**<sup>18</sup> These terms refer to pathways that rely upon partnerships between community colleges and universities. Most, but not all, university centers are situated on community college campuses and host the upper division programs of four-year colleges and of public and private universities. Often an extension of the articulation model, the university center and concurrent use approaches bring courses directly to students where they live and work, typically in close proximity to a community college campus. The baccalaureate degree in these cases is awarded by the senior institution—a four-year college or university.

<sup>18</sup>Floyd (1998) labeled this approach as a “communiversity” in making the case for supporting higher education partnerships, especially in rural communities. For an in-depth description of this approach, see Lorenzo, 2005, and Windham, Perkins, & Rogers, 2001.

- **University Extension Baccalaureate:** This approach may or may not rely on partnerships, but does rely on university governance structures. In some states, selected community colleges and associate-degree-granting colleges have affiliated governance structures with state universities and are considered as university extension centers. While the governance and accreditation structures vary considerably, examples of associate degree colleges affiliating with universities include the Louisiana State University-Alexandria, the University of Arkansas-Ft. Smith and Oklahoma State University-Okmulgee. In other instances, universities follow the tried and true extension model of sending their faculty to the students, often (as North Carolina State University exports courses over a wide-band channel, to its Asheville campus) utilizing on-line distance courses. In this model, the baccalaureate degree is awarded by the branch or extension under the name of the university.
- **Workforce Baccalaureates:** This term has been used to describe traditional four-year baccalaureate degrees in areas such as teacher education, allied health, law enforcement, and public service. The general education requirements for these degrees vary. Workforce baccalaureates are awarded by community colleges with proper authorization and by universities.
- **Applied Baccalaureates:** This degree generally articulates with an associate of applied science and is offered in specialized fields of study such as technology management, business management, certain health fields, and information technology. The applied baccalaureate degree is often named a bachelor of technology, bachelor of applied technology, or a bachelor of applied science. The terms “applied baccalaureate” and “workforce baccalaureate” have been used synonymously. Applied baccalaureates are awarded by community colleges with proper authorization, and by universities.
- **Inverted Baccalaureates (3 + 1):** This degree is a four-year baccalaureate degree, often in a technical field, wherein the learner completes the general education requirements in the last quarter and front loads the technical courses during the first three quarters of study. An inverted baccalaureate can articulate with a workforce or applied baccalaureate. In such cases, the last quarter of a student’s program of study will be focused on general education as opposed to technical courses. Inverted baccalaureates are sometimes called “upside down” degrees. Four-year colleges and universities award inverted baccalaureate degrees.

## ***THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE BACCALAUREATE: A NATIONAL OVERVIEW AND A SNAPSHOT OF FLORIDA***

This third section describes a national overview of the community college baccalaureate movement, highlighting key states, colleges and curricular areas of focus. This section also includes a snapshot of Florida's community colleges as a mini-case study of the state as leading the way with the growing movement of associate-to-baccalaureate programming.

The information and data reported in this section were based on our review of internet sites, conference presentations, published and unpublished reports, authorizing legislation, and governance documents. Our personal observations and previously published works<sup>19</sup> are also considered. Sorting and classifying postsecondary institutions is often messy and this is no exception. We recognize that the list of states and programs provided may be disputed, especially since various criteria for application of key terms has been used to describe these programs. Nevertheless, we are offering this information and tables as our best effort to describe the states, colleges, and programs engaged in the community college baccalaureate movement.

### ***A National Overview***

A true and accurate count of exactly how many states authorized community colleges to confer their own baccalaureate degrees is difficult to ascertain without understanding differences in various state higher education governance structures and specific legislative authorization language. In some instances, like West Virginia University-Parkersburg (formerly Parkersburg Community College), the institution's name includes the word university and the authorizing language allows baccalaureate degrees while ensuring an institutional mission of a community college. In other cases, such as Oklahoma State University-Okmulgee, the name is affiliated with a university but the mission is not described as that of a community college. Nevertheless, the institution offers state-supported associate degree technical programs congruent with that of a community college

<sup>19</sup>Our previously published works are cited throughout this paper and listed in the references at the end. Useful in many ways, especially for comparisons between Canadian and U.S. models and for providing an understanding of statutes and governing language, was the work of John Levin (2004). He first cited Idaho as a state authorizing the community college baccalaureate and this was later confirmed through research of Idaho's statutes. We were unable to find documentation, however, on the exact date Idaho's community colleges were approved to offer baccalaureate programs and continue offering programs "synonymous with a community college," nor did Levin report the date in his article.

and recently added select technical baccalaureate degrees. The University of Hawaii governs independently accredited community colleges, including Maui Community College, which was approved for baccalaureate degrees, and has not assigned the university name to the local community college like some of the states cited above. Utah's authorizing language<sup>20</sup> includes assurances that Utah Valley State College and Dixie State College will operate a lower division that "preserves the philosophy and mission of a comprehensive community college" while also offering upper division courses leading to baccalaureate degrees (Levin, 2004, p. 12).

The 11 states displayed in Table 1 have authorized, in diverse forms, associate-degree-granting institutions to award their own baccalaureate degrees while keeping an emphasis on the community college mission, per authorizing language. While the names of the colleges often changed, their primary emphasis on associate degree and below programming remained while select baccalaureate degree programs were added to their curriculum offerings. The time frames and dates included in this table are often listed as ranges because the authorization process usually did not begin and end in a single year, the accreditation approval processes often crossed years, and the actual year of offering baccalaureate programs was rarely the same year as authorized or approved. The curricular areas are examples and not a comprehensive listing of all baccalaureate offerings by each college. It is clear from this data that the movement toward authorizing and approving community colleges to confer baccalaureate degrees gained significant momentum during the past dozen years or so.

According to our research, the 5 states shown in Table 2 have approved public colleges previously authorized to award associate degrees to add baccalaureate degrees to their offerings. What differentiates states in this group from the 11 listed in Table 1 is that the authorizing language for these 5 states does not explicitly define the community college as a core mission. These 5 states are listed by the Community College Baccalaureate Association as authorizing the CCB, but their status is disputed by others who noted that these colleges have converted to university status or are not classified as community colleges in their state governance system.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup>John Levin's 2002 Utah citation (published 2004) referenced authorizing language that has since changed. According to <http://www.utahsbr.edu/policy/r312.htm>, Utah Valley State College is now Utah Valley University and was authorized in 2008 to offer master's degrees in addition to baccalaureate and associate's degrees.

<sup>21</sup>See the Community College Baccalaureate Association Web site for its listing of states authorizing the CCB. Among those who disagree and thus do not include them in the "count" of total states authorizing community colleges to confer baccalaureates is Karen Glennon (2005).

**Table 1. States authorizing community colleges to confer baccalaureate degrees and affected institutions and selected curricular areas<sup>d</sup>**

State	Institutions	Dates/timeframe <sup>b</sup>	Curricular areas
New York	Fashion Institute of Technology	1970s	Fashion
West Virginia	West Virginia University-Parkersburg	Late 1980s–early 1990s	Teacher education and programs to meet local workforce needs
Utah <sup>c</sup>	Utah Valley State College; Dixie State College	1993–2003	Teacher education and other areas of high demand
Vermont	Vermont Technical College	1993	Business, information technology, architectural and aeromechanical engineering technology and general education
Florida <sup>d</sup>	Broward Community College; Chipola College; Daytona Beach Community College; Edison College; Florida Community College at Jacksonville; Indian River Community College; Okaloosa-Walton College; St. Petersburg College; Miami Dade College; Palm Beach Community College	2001–2008	Teacher education, business management, public safety management, projects acquisitions management, nursing, banking, dental hygiene, orthotics and prosthetics, paralegal studies, veterinary technology
Texas	Midland College; Brazosport College; South Texas College	2003	Technology management
Nevada	Great Basin College; Community College of Southern Nevada	2004–2007	Teacher education, technology management, social work, land surveying, integrated studies, dental hygiene
Indiana	Vincennes University (merger of Ivy Technical State College and Vincennes)	2004–2005	Healthcare management, homeland security and public safety, teacher education, nursing
Hawaii	Maui Community College	2005	Business and information technology
Washington <sup>e</sup>	Belleuve Community College; Olympic College; Peninsula College; South Seattle Community College; Lake Washington Technical College; Seattle Central Community College; Columbia Basin College	2005–2008	Nursing, radiological and imaging sciences, management, hospitality programs, human services, applied management, applied design

Idaho/

None currently delivering solely conferred baccalaureate

Authorized by Title 33, Chapter 21 None  
Idaho legislation (date unknown)

<sup>a</sup>States are presented in chronological order.

<sup>b</sup>The dates/timeframe ranges include the date of first authorization to award the community college baccalaureate and the actual implementation of the program in a later year.

<sup>c</sup>Neither college in Utah considers itself a community college, but rather a state college, despite authorizing language requiring these colleges to “preserve the philosophy and mission of a comprehensive community college” while also offering upper division courses and programs. Campus perceptions of missions and legislative language are not always congruent, it appears. See Deborah L. Floyd and Cheri St. Arnaud. (2007). “An Exploratory Study of Community College Baccalaureate Teacher Education Programs,” *Community College Review* 35(1), 66–84.

<sup>d</sup>Florida Senate Bill 1716 was signed into law, midsummer 2008. This legislation authorized the change of several community colleges names to state colleges. The information provided in this paper is accurate up to the approval of SB 1716 and the formation of a state college system in Florida.

<sup>e</sup>In addition to the original four colleges approved in 2005, three community colleges (Lake Washington Technical College, Seattle Central Community College and Columbia Basin College) were approved by the Washington State Board of Community College and Technical Education on March 13, 2008. According to Board documents posted on the internet, all these degrees are in applied baccalaureate areas and are intended to provide career pathways that lead directly into the workforce. They are in the process of seeking funding to support these programs and moving forward with gaining approval from the Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

<sup>f</sup><http://www3.state.id.us/cgi-bin/newidst?scid=330210007A.K33-2107A>. This Idaho statute addresses the establishment and operation of third and fourth year programs in Idaho’s community college districts. Excerpts from the statute follow: “The board of trustees of a junior college district of an urban area, upon filing with the state board of education a notice of intent to exercise the powers herein granted, shall thereafter be authorized and empowered to organize and operate an upper division consisting of the third and fourth years of college curriculum with powers to grant baccalaureate degrees in liberal arts and sciences, business and education. The operation of the junior college and the upper division shall be kept separate.”

**Table 2. States recently authorizing associate degree-granting institutions to confer baccalaureate degrees: Not universally classified as community colleges, but included on some lists as CCB states**

State	Institutions	Dates/timeframe	Curricular areas
Georgia	Macon State College; Dalton State College (two-year reorganized to four-year)	1996–2005	Teacher education and a variety of other offerings
Louisiana	Louisiana State University-Alexandria (two-year reorganized to four-year)	2001	General studies, liberal studies, biology, psychology, elementary education
Arkansas	University of Arkansas-Fort Smith (formerly Westark Community College) reorganized to four-year	2002	Manufacturing technology
Oklahoma	Oklahoma State University-Okmulgee; Oklahoma State University-Oklahoma City (two-year technical institutions with select four-year offerings governed by Oklahoma State University)	2004–2007	Specialized technical baccalaureates such as emergency responder administration
New Mexico	Northern New Mexico College (plans to convert to four-year)	2005	Teacher education

While institutional missions are shifting as offerings and degrees are added, and since the authorizing language is not consistent from state to state, classifying these colleges neatly is an increasingly difficult challenge. Perceptions of institutional missions vary in that it sometimes depends on whom you ask as to whether or not an associate-to-baccalaureate college is still a community college or is now a four-year college. In some cases, the associate-degree-granting institutions kept their community college names or related terms, while others changed their names to ones that affiliate their institutions with a university. Regardless of what they are called, it is clear that the number of associate-degree colleges gaining authorization to confer baccalaureate degrees and affiliate with, or retain affiliation with, a university is growing rapidly.

These CCB colleges are not, for the most part, delivering baccalaureate degree programs in the traditional liberal arts fields. Rather, the focus of these new baccalaureate degrees are in workforce and applied fields such as business, teaching, allied health, social services, security, agriculture, and technology. These are many of the academic fields that are not high on the status list for research universities, but these programs are essential for local workforce needs.

In our review of the literature and documents, we did not find one current, accurate list of states and colleges approved to offer the CCB. Nor did we find any substantive national data with key descriptors such as student demographics, graduate outcomes, employment impact, curricular focus, or programming costs. Although disappointing, this was not surprising given the relative lack of emphasis this emerging movement has received from policymakers and researchers. Even Florida's Community College System, with the largest number of community colleges authorized to confer baccalaureates, admits that their CCB programs are "far too young to draw empirical conclusions" about their successes and recommends a "complete development of accountability measures for baccalaureate programs" (Florida Division of Community Colleges, 2008a).

### *Snapshot of the Community College Baccalaureate in Florida*

Although Florida is the fourth largest state in population, it ranks among the lowest with respect to baccalaureate attainment, especially among residents above the age of 25.<sup>22</sup> In light of our first section about the importance of baccalaureate attainment individually and collectively, this poor score correlates with lower job earnings and a less prepared workforce, thus negatively affecting Florida's economic health.

To address this concern of low baccalaureate attainment, in 2001 Florida's legislature approved the first community college to offer sole-delivery baccalaureate programs. Since 2001, Florida has expanded its CCB programs to over 45 fields, distributed among 10 of its 28 community colleges. While these degree programs are only now beginning to award the baccalaureate in significant numbers, we do not have access to extensive baseline or longitudinal data to document the outcomes of these programs. In time, however, it will become very important to ensure that student outcomes data and other indicators are readily available for programmatic evaluations.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Fact Sheet: Community College Baccalaureate Degrees (March 6, 2007), Available from the Florida Community College System Office in Tallahassee, Florida.

<sup>23</sup>The consideration of program effectiveness as described in terms of outcomes data, has grown in importance as the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity has required the major regional accrediting associations to more accurately and fully document the effectiveness of degree programs in terms of student success, and not, as in the past, in terms of student in-puts. While this issue is not fully resolved at the federal level, it demonstrates a growing expectation on the part of those with oversight responsibility for institutions of higher education to demonstrate their effectiveness. For a more complete discussion of this issue in its national setting, see the *Chronicle of Higher Education* at <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i14/14a00102.htm>.

While widely discussed, the size and scope of these Florida community college baccalaureate programs should not be overstated. They do not represent a significant shift of resources away from other, equally valuable community college programs in the state. In fact, in spite of severe budget constraints, Florida's 28 community colleges increased full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment in 2007–2008 by 6.63% ( $n = 18,978$  student gain).<sup>24</sup> By comparison, the FTE enrollment in upper division baccalaureate degree courses totaled 1,666.8 students in 2006–2007 and is estimated at 2,001.6 students in 2007–2008 for a 20.10% increase ( $n = 334.8$  FTE student increase). In 2007–2008, Florida's community colleges project enrolling 305,773 FTE students annually in credit programs.<sup>25</sup> Thus, of the total FTE enrollment served, less than 1% (.58%) enrolled in upper division baccalaureate degree courses in 2006–2007 and, similarly, less than 1% (.65%) is projected to be enrolled in these courses for 2007–2008.<sup>26</sup>

Displayed in headcount, not FTE enrollments, Figure 1 shows a steady increase in Florida's community college baccalaureate enrollments. Table 3 compares these enrollments with upper division enrollments at Florida's state universities. It is clear from these data that while Florida's community colleges are contributing to baccalaureate programming, they are not detracting from university program enrollments. While Florida's CCB enrollments and headcounts are increasing, they remain quite small as a proportion of State University System enrollments, which themselves continue to have significant increases. So while Florida's community college baccalaureate enrollments have increased they have not done so to the detriment of state university enrollments.

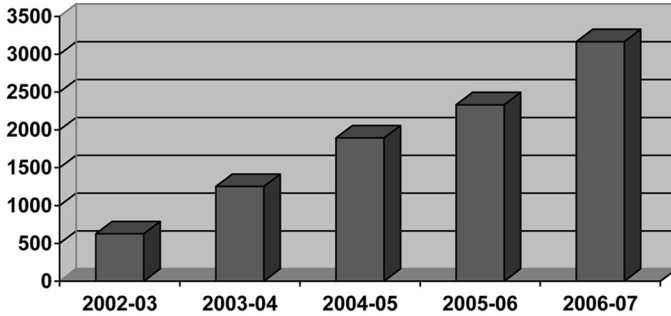
The Florida CCB programs are very new and, as such, the graduation numbers are small, but increasing proportionate to the college offerings. Figure 2 displays information from the Florida program review noting a steady and consistent increase in CCB graduates.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Florida's actual FTE enrollment for 2006–2007 was 286,755 credit students. Projected FTE enrollment for 2006–2007 is 305,733 for a 6.63% gain ( $n = 18,978$  gain). Florida's eight baccalaureate degree-offering community colleges served 1666.8 FTE upper division students in 2006–2007 and projects serving 2001.6 FTE in 2007–2008. These data were provided by the Florida Community College System Office of the Chancellor, November 28, 2007.

<sup>25</sup>Enrollment data based on November 28, 2007 reports faxed from the Florida Community College System from preliminary reports.

<sup>26</sup>This information was provided by the Florida Community College System in response to a request for data to answer outcomes questions.

<sup>27</sup>Information included in Tables 3 and Figures 1 and 2 was taken from Florida Division of Community Colleges, 2008a. A updated version of the report dated March 2008 is available online (Florida Division of Community Colleges, 2008b).



Note: Information was taken from Florida Division of Community Colleges, 2008a. A updated version of the report dated March 2008 is available on-line (Florida Division of Community Colleges, 2008b).

**Figure 1. Baccalaureate student headcount by year—Florida’s community colleges.**

A total of 1,316 baccalaureate degrees were awarded by Florida’s community colleges from 2003–2007. During this period, 41% of the degrees were awarded in education and 41% in applied science fields with 18% in nursing.

It is important to note that Florida’s community colleges did not gain authorization to confer baccalaureate degrees without some resistance from certain universities. Over time, resistance subsided. Six years after the first community college was authorized to confer baccalaureates, the State Board of Education and the Florida Board of Governors signed a formal agreement to support the CCB in the limited areas of nursing, education, and applied sciences. The bachelor of applied science was defined as a workforce degree designed for career and technical advancement and was supported by both boards. Prior to approval of CCB degrees, colleges documented workforce needs and demands.<sup>28</sup>

Florida is leading the nation in the number of community colleges approved to offer and confer their own baccalaureate degrees. Florida is also a leader in offering upper-level courses through concurrent-use programs with the degrees awarded by universities. Through concurrent use partnerships, 22,616 community college students were afforded access to 464 upper division programs (346 baccalaureate, 100 masters, 5 specialist, and 13 doctoral) (Florida Division of Community Colleges, 2008a). As of April 2007, Florida’s

<sup>28</sup>This agreement was signed January 10, 2007 and is posted on the Florida Department of Education’s web site at [http://www.fldoe.org/cc/Educators/bach\\_app.asp](http://www.fldoe.org/cc/Educators/bach_app.asp).

**Table 3. Florida student headcount enrollments by year: State university System (SUS) upper division enrollments as compared with Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) Enrollments**

Year	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07
SUS enrollment	110,255	116,944	122,281	127,749	133,112
CCB enrollment	627	1,252	1,894	2,332	3,166

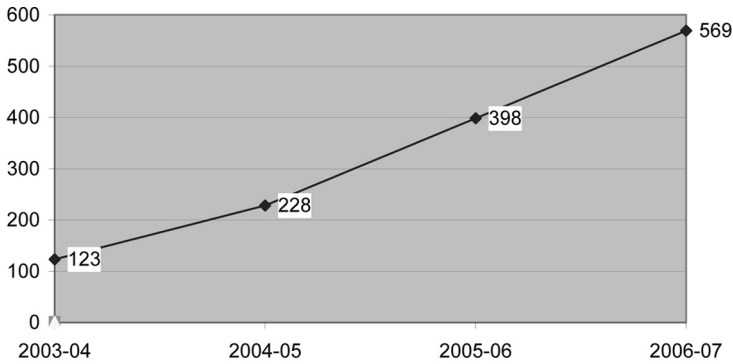
Information was taken from Florida Division of Community Colleges, 2008a. A updated version of the report dated March 2008 is available on-line (Florida Division of Community Colleges, 2008b).

community colleges and partnering institutions delivered dozens of baccalaureate programs, 87 master's degree programs, 5 specialist degree programs, and 14 doctoral programs. A total of 9 (82%) of the 11 Florida public state universities and 6 colleges and universities outside of Florida are partners with these concurrent-use degree programs. Self-reported enrollment in these concurrent-use programs increased 55% between 2000–2001 and April 2007 (Florida Division of Community Colleges, 2007).

Thus, while Florida's CCB programs, enrollments, and graduates have steadily increased, they have not advanced at the detriment of university programs, contrary to critics' fears. As described in Table 3, Florida's state university enrollments have increased steadily since the first community college was authorized to confer baccalaureate degrees.

Further, Florida's community college partnership programming with universities has been, and continues to be, very successful in tandem with these new CCB programs offered concurrently. According to a Florida Community College System Office 2008 report, the number of concurrent-use programs between universities and community colleges increased by 98% from 2000 to 2007 (Florida Division of Community Colleges, 2008b). Officials also reported that, as of April 2007, 464 university degree programs are offered on Florida's community college campuses with over 22,000 students enrolled in these partnership programs (Florida Division of Community Colleges, 2008a).<sup>29</sup> It is not known if other states approved for the CCB have also increased university partnership programming like Florida, although research by Florida's Windham, Perkins and Rogers (2001) and other literature about partnership models support this assertion. Future research is needed.

<sup>29</sup>See Table 3 in this paper for comparison data.



Note: Information was taken from Florida Division of Community Colleges, 2008a. A updated version of the report dated March 2008 is available on-line (Florida Division of Community Colleges, 2008b).

**Figure 2. Florida community college baccalaureate degrees awarded, student headcount by year awarded.**

### ***ISSUES, QUESTIONS, AND CHALLENGES: LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL***

The issues and challenges facing practitioners and policymakers considering adoption and/or the study of the community college baccalaureate movement are extensive and ever-changing. Since they have been discussed in our book (Floyd, Skolnik, & Walker, 2005) and in other published and unpublished works and in conference presentations, we will not repeat them all here. We will, however, offer the following questions for local, state, and federal educators and policymakers to consider.

#### ***Key Questions, Issues, and Challenges for Local Leaders and Policymakers***

As the demand for local access to baccalaureate education increases, what are the best methods of delivering advanced higher education opportunities to local communities? The most popular model has been through partnering with universities, but the partnership models are not always effective or desirable in all locations. We suggest that policymakers and leaders look to states that have authorized the CCB for detailed information about their criteria for approval and needs

assessment processes. Further, we suggest that to ensure balance, these same leaders also seek the counsel of states and colleges that have explored the CCB and decided against this approach in favor of strengthening partnership models.

If the decision is to seriously consider or work toward the authorization of the CCB, the following questions should be addressed.

- **Mission:** Is the addition of baccalaureate degrees consistent with the college's mission? If so, how? If not, why? Will the mission of the college need to change and, if so, what are the ramifications of the changes?
- **Political Support:** Do the senior administration and board support the addition of baccalaureate degrees? Do key political figures locally and state-wide support it? Will this change require legislative authority and, if so, who will champion the cause?
- **Political Opposition:** To what extent are key political figures, media, other colleges, external faculty, boards, or local citizens critical of the effort? How valid are their arguments? To what extent can their views reasonably be integrated into state and institutional plans? To what extent, and in what ways, can their opposition be overcome?
- **Curriculum:** What is the curriculum and degree? Is it new to the state or has it been modeled on other programs? Is the proposed curriculum congruent with the college's mission?
- **Resources:** What resources (fiscal, physical, and human) are needed? What are the start-up costs and recurring costs? Where will the resources come from, and when will they be available? Are there contingency plans if the resources are not available?
- **Faculty and internal stakeholders:** What are the views of the faculty, students, and other internal stakeholders? Will faculty assignments be different for upper division courses than for lower division ones? Will new faculty need to be hired and, if so, are they readily accessible and affordable?
- **Internal infrastructure:** What impact will these programs have on the internal infrastructure such as library services and holdings, counseling and advising, and physical plant services?
- **Accreditation:** What are the accreditation requirements for this new degree? What changes will the college need to make to meet these requirements? What will those changes cost? Does the college have the infrastructure in place to make the changes?

***What are the Key Questions, Issues, and Challenges for State Leaders and Policymakers?***

State policymakers and leaders should carefully assess existing governance structures to determine how the addition of the CCB to the community college curriculum would be governed and funded. In many states, baccalaureate degree authorization and administration is governed by university entities, but new governance models may be in order as degree authorities shift and new workforce related programs are added. Policymakers in states without a state college system (intended for primarily baccalaureate education) may consider establishing a baccalaureate state college system, but only if such a system does not distract from successful community college and university programs. Florida is currently establishing a state college system in an effort to ensure that students have broader access to baccalaureate degrees—a move that is reminiscent of the evolution of normal colleges of a century ago.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the recommendations and questions above, the following issues and questions need to be addressed at the state level.

- **Mission:** Does the addition of the CCB enhance or detract from the state’s higher education mission? If the CCB were approved, would the mission of institutions and state systems need to change?
- **Political Support:** Does this change require legislative action or merely state board action? Do the governor and key political decisionmakers support this change or oppose it?
- **Political Opposition:** Who are the opponents of the CCB at the state level? To what extent are their arguments reasonable? To what extent, and in what ways, can they be accommodated? If the arguments are not reasonable or accommodation is not possible, what strategies should be employed to overcome the opposition?
- **Curriculum:** Is the CCB a duplication of already existing programs that are working well, or is it a replacement for programs not working well? Is it a new program to meet certain workforce needs?

<sup>30</sup>On July 1, 2008, Florida Senate Bill 1716 went into effect as law. This new law provides a plan to reorganize Florida’s community colleges into a new state college system in an effort to provide affordable access to baccalaureate degrees in high need areas such as nursing and teaching. The ramifications of this change are unprecedented change in Florida’s system of community colleges (“Florida moves forward on a new state system,” 2008).

- **Fiscal ramifications:** What will these new CCB programs cost in actual start-up and recurring dollars? Where will the money come from and how will it be sustained? Will community college baccalaureate degrees be funded at the same level as comparable university baccalaureate degrees?
- **Oversight:** Have college leaders and decisionmakers conducted research on the need, plans, and curriculum of the CCB and other details essential for programmatic success? Was the process for program planning inclusive of important stakeholders?
- **Ramifications:** What are the likely results if just one college is approved or if the regulations are changed so several can offer the CCB? What are the projected long-term implications?
- **Policy:**<sup>31</sup> Is the CCB good policy for the state? Why or why not?

### *The Federal Government's Role in Increasing Baccalaureate Attainment, Including the CCB*

The federal government's role in education is quite different from those of local and state governments. Historically, the federal government has left educational policy to the states and local districts, pursuing its goals mainly through grants and the conditions attached to them and maintaining education statistics. The authorization to offer CCB programs rests with state and local governments. However, the federal government should, in our opinion, support local and state efforts to increase baccalaureate attainment, including the CCB, by taking steps such as the following:

- **Setting a national agenda that encourages baccalaureate attainment and workforce preparation.**
- **Supporting uniform data collection, reporting, and classification that accurately represents CCB degree programs and services.**
- **Developing and supporting classification and funding systems that reward community colleges and providing access to the baccalaureate through partnership models, such as university center arrangements.**

<sup>31</sup>Callan, Ewell, Finney, and Jones (2007) outline levers for policy leadership to influence improvements in education. They point out that a key challenge facing the nation and states is to increase the numbers and proportion of Americans with degrees and certificates. Their report offers examples of programs, practices, strategies and policies that are good practices and good policies.

- Ensuring that financial aid eligibility is distributed equitably for CCB students;
- Funding best practice programs and research that encourage the development of relevant workforce baccalaureates;
- Encouraging intrastate planning and accreditation efforts while supporting the value of regional accreditation and state-wide contributions.
- Supporting states and colleges in their efforts to deliver workforce training and baccalaureate education programs in high need areas.
- Providing support for research to improve decisionmaking processes including longitudinal studies of student matriculation and outcomes and best practices research.

### ***SPECIFIC IDEAS TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CCB***

Following are a number of ideas we hope will help shape a dialogue and serve as catalysts for discussion about the roles, policies, challenges, and issues related to the community college baccalaureate.

#### ***Increase Funding and Support for Best Practices and Student Matriculation Outcomes Research***

As the demand for baccalaureate degrees increases and community colleges become more active in delivering various models of baccalaureate attainment, research about best practices, student matriculation patterns, and outcomes is needed. Data-driven decisionmaking will be useful to policymakers and practitioners alike as colleges and universities increase their innovative practices and programming for baccalaureate delivery.<sup>32</sup>

Programs such as Measuring Student Achievement in Washington State could serve as a model initiative to reward practices that encourage student matriculation success at “tipping points.”<sup>33</sup> Comparisons between partnership baccalaureate models and community-college-awarded models should be made, where practical.

<sup>32</sup>The need to strengthen research to support data-driven decisionmaking was one of the key recommendations in Bailey and Morest, 2006.

<sup>33</sup>In September 2007, the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges approved a “Student Achievement Initiative” that rewards community colleges for improvements in student achievement. The first performance year will be 2008–2009.

Funds should be allocated for dissemination of best practices and outcomes.

***Encourage Requirements for Transparency of Student Matriculation and Outcomes Data***

Regardless of the program or model for baccalaureate delivery, the public should have easy access to information necessary to make informed decisions. To that end, community colleges and state systems should be required to make reporting and outcomes of these programs transparent to the public through easy-to-use interactive systems. No national database exists for university centers, for instance, and the public is forced to contact local colleges for information about partnership programs whereby baccalaureate degrees can be earned locally. Further, there is no database on student matriculation in the various baccalaureate models including traditional on-site university programs, community college baccalaureate programs, and university centers. Such reporting is not the norm at present, and the data should be available for consumers, policymakers, education leaders, and researchers.

***Maintain Appropriate Accreditation Oversight***

We urge regional and national accrediting agencies to recognize the value of the CCB and not regard it as a second-class degree. While such agencies should encourage a lively discussion about these new degrees, they should also ensure that the characteristics of the CCB being evaluated are measured fairly. Doing so is clearly in the best interests of students. When a student enrolls in a baccalaureate program delivered by a community college, information about the acceptability of credits toward graduate education and other information should be available to enable him or her to make an informed decision. Most, but not all, CCB programs require a healthy number of general education credits and, as such, the credits should be transferable to a traditional university. But since these CCB degrees are relatively new, the accreditation agencies should provide oversight to ensure that students' rights are protected. The federal government can and should provide leadership and collaboration among accrediting organizations to ensure that this oversight is successful.

***Develop and Fund Student Matriculation Threshold Incentives***

Consideration should be given to shifting state and local funding from attendance reimbursement to completion incentives, including

threshold incentives. Under this arrangement, baccalaureate degree programs with the greatest value to the economy would be encouraged through incentive-based funding. Community colleges would compete for their equitable share of any incentive monies.

These incentive funds would reward the attainment of “tipping points” toward student success. The funds would be part of a system of rewarding student achievement and performance. Tipping points include student achievement in small but important measures such as completion of freshman mathematics, matriculating beyond the first term of study, and successfully completing an exit competency examination. For example, states might allocate degree incentives in four equal shares based on a student’s completion of 30 semester-degree units. For simplicity’s sake, a share would be allocated to that institution that provided at least 50% of the units earned. An alternative would be to define the increments in terms of documented evidence of student success in degree attainment. Since it has been established that students completing 20 semester units within two years are more likely than others to earn the baccalaureate, the first threshold could be set at 20 units. The second increment might be based on providing the 6–12 credit hours in mathematics, which are equally important indicators of student success. Incentive programs like these would encourage all institutions seeking to advance baccalaureate student aspirations to work together to ensure that students are successful, especially if the student moves from one institution to the other. New and creative funding models that encourage partnerships should be explored. Washington State and Florida both recently created threshold-based incentive programs that merit further study. Threshold-based incentive programs not only reward all institutions that contribute to student degree attainment, but also help to pinpoint benchmarks of student attainment that are the best indicators of eventual degree completion.

### ***Level the Funding Field: Improve Equity Funding***

Community colleges are well known for doing more with fewer resources. Although, as their roles shift toward baccalaureate programming, the funding playing field needs to be leveled so that these colleges have the resources to serve students equally.<sup>34</sup> Policymakers should be cautious about funding CCB programs at a lower rate than

<sup>34</sup>In her 2008 address to the American Council on Education, Gail Mellow argued that inequitable funding has worked to the detriment of community colleges as she stated that “We must stop giving community colleges straw and expecting them to spin gold.”

similar university programs, as is the case in Florida. Research is needed on the actual cost of CCB degrees versus similar university baccalaureates; variables such as start-up costs and first-time equipment purchases need to be carefully factored into the equation. Federal, state, and local leaders and policymakers should consider funding that follows student enrollments. For instance, if university undergraduate enrollments decline as more students enroll in community colleges, funds should shift proportionately to support these students, especially in the CCB fields of teaching, nursing, and service.

### ***A LOOK TO THE FUTURE***

None of us have a crystal ball, but if the past is an indication of the future, we know that change is on the horizon for higher education as a whole. Change is not new. Since the founding of Harvard University and of the College of William and Mary, American institutions have shown a willingness to adapt to changing economic conditions and adopt new degrees (such as the bachelor of science), new types of institutions (from the academy to the for-profit university), and new pedagogical methods. These changes have consistently originated in response to the nation's need for a skilled and broadly knowledgeable workforce. At every point in the nation's history, education's leaders and policymakers have sought to expand access and opportunity either by internal change or, where necessary, by external change. At every point in our history, we searched for new paradigms to help shape our approaches to the new problems.

Over time, community colleges have changed and evolved from lower-division junior colleges to more comprehensive community-based organizations. Community colleges are no longer limited to offering only two years of study, as they routinely assume key roles in facilitating pathways from high school to universities and beyond. As the demand grows for higher-level education credentials, including baccalaureate degrees, community colleges will embrace the challenges of delivering quality instruction in relevant formats and fields of study. Known for their entrepreneurial approaches to education, community colleges will continue to be responsive to their communities. Many will embrace the challenges of offering their own baccalaureates while also strengthening baccalaureate partnership pathways.

As we have seen, employers require baccalaureate degrees for entry-level jobs in a growing number of fields. We believe that place-bound workers will increasingly demand that nearby community colleges be authorized to offer the baccalaureate so that they will have access to occupations that require the degree. As more

community-college baccalaureate programs (sole-awarded and partnership) are supported politically and with funding, we believe that students will continue to register strong satisfaction with their local community college courses and programs. Community colleges will be challenged, however, to ensure that upper-division students receive the same personalized attention they have historically afforded lower-division students.

We also predict that, over time, with the addition of more community college baccalaureate programs, universities will become less resistant to the CCB programs (as they have in Florida), and they will increase their focus on traditional undergraduate programming, graduate education, and research. As CCB programs grow, especially in areas such as teacher education, nursing, and services, we believe that student demand for admission to flagship universities will decline and, as a result, universities will shift resources from undergraduate instruction to research and graduate education.

Community colleges may, in time, look to other nations for credentialing models such as three-year baccalaureates and diploma certifications. As we strive to become more globally competitive, our leaders, policymakers, and researchers need to explore global models and, where appropriate, implement new models in the United States.

As the CCB grows in acceptance, state and federal leaders may expect more outcomes data with which to make informed decisions. As Florida's community college system recognizes, accountability systems are needed to assess the effectiveness of CCB programs. But accountability systems for community colleges must not automatically apply a university model to their work. As such, there is much to be done to shape these systems so they provide meaningful, accurate, and useful information for decision making and other purposes.

And, finally, in the field of education, "change in the past has been more evolutionary than revolutionary, and that continues to be the case" (Floyd, 2006, p. 71) with the community college baccalaureate movement in the United States. As community colleges evolve in an ever-changing system of education, it is important to stay true to the basic values of these people's colleges and, as such, stay true to the primary mission of these colleges—educating students.

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