

Advancing California's Community College Baccalaureate Degrees

A Focused, Equity-Driven, Workforce Engine to Strengthen California's Communities

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I. Introduction: Expanding Workforce-Aligned Community College Baccalaureate Degree Pathways for California's Communities

California community colleges are expanding affordable baccalaureate degrees that are closely tied to local workforce needs and lead to good-paying jobs. These programs matter most for students who cannot easily relocate, particularly those in rural areas and underserved communities, by bringing high-demand degrees closer to home. Vision 2030 makes this work a priority, alongside improving transfer, because both are essential to expanding opportunity and economic mobility.

State law now allows California community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees on a permanent basis. Under AB 927 (Medina, 2021), the system can approve up to 30 new programs each year, creating a clear and sustainable way to grow access to baccalaureate-level education across the state. This expanded on SB 850 (Block, 2014) which established the community college baccalaureate degree pilot program.

Building on this foundation, the Chancellor's Office is working to expand from about 57 approved programs today to roughly 200 programs by 2030. This growth is being driven by focused outreach to colleges, a more efficient approval process, and hands-on support to help campuses successfully launch and sustain these programs.

II. Issue Statement: Background, Challenges, and Duplication Objections

The Baccalaureate Degree program was created to improve access to high-demand, high-wage jobs in career pathways typically not served by CSU/UC locally, with an explicit statutory non-duplication standard. However, despite initial authorization of 15 pilot programs in 2014 and permanent authorization in 2021, growth has been constrained by statutorily prescriptive application process that includes ambiguously defined duplication criteria in the intersegmental consultation process. This has stalled approval of otherwise strong proposals and hindered the process.

In 2025, a jointly-commissioned comparative analysis of community college proposals was conducted by West Ed. The report included an intersegmental review focused on the legislative intent and existing requirements using a geographic-access lens that accounted

for regional unmet workforce need and examined potential areas of similarity. The analysis is sharpening the system's approach to resolving objections. As of January 2026, thirteen applications remain in limbo pending duplication objection resolution. This has underscored the need for a clearer definition of what constitutes program duplication, earlier intersegmental engagement, and a more structured resolution process.

Meanwhile, recent revisions to California Code of Regulations Title 5 (effective Aug. 8, 2025) have provided new clarity for colleges on upper-division requirements, admissions, minimum qualifications, and district policies. Additionally, a community of practice was established in partnership with the Success Center for California Community Colleges to provide technical assistance and support to college developing baccalaureate degrees. This year's cohort of 25 colleges has generated strong momentum and 1/3 of the participants submitted applications for review in January 2026. To date there are 57 approved baccalaureate degree programs in career education areas, and 2,269 students have earned a California community college baccalaureate degree. Recent data shows that the average time to earn a community college baccalaureate degree is less than two years once a student begins upper division coursework. There will be a dramatic increase in the number of students earning degrees in the short term. Across the 57 currently approved programs, 41 are fully implemented or scheduled to launch, 17 colleges have awarded degrees, and 16 programs are in the process of program implementation.

The net result: demand and legislative authority are in place, but the system must address the duplication objections process, resolve the backlog of programs awaiting approval, build college capacity to develop new programs, and strengthen application and implementation support to deliver on Vision 2030 baccalaureate attainment goals.

III. How We Are Meeting the Moment Now

Over the past year, the Chancellor's Office launched a three-phase expansion plan to maximize the number of approved programs to the annual cap of 30 and build readiness across the field.

Phase 1: Assessment

We are identifying system barriers (staffing, application complexity, program alignment), prioritizing technical assistance and support for rural colleges, previously unsuccessful applicants and first-time applicants, generating custom labor-market reports to ground program design, identifying target colleges, launched a new Community of Practice, and mapped system support needs.

Phase 2: Outreach and Engagement

We simplified the application with step-by-step guides and new FAQs; delivered recorded webinars and regional workshops (including specialized sessions for rural and rural-

serving colleges); and are exploring a Chancellor's Office liaison model to provide structured 1:1 consultations and iterative feedback. We are also structuring incentives and grant funding for colleges where resources and capacity are limited.

Phase 3: Application Support & Capacity Building

In the community of practice, we have instituted pre-submission reviews tied to evaluation criteria, regulatory compliance, labor market data analysis, and mentorship from experienced implementers to accelerate proposal quality and launch readiness to offer baccalaureate degree programs. We are tracking application success rates, adjusting technical assistance where gaps emerge, and showcasing success stories through statewide channels to normalize and scale best practices.

In parallel, we are working to advance California community college baccalaureate degree infrastructure. MIS updates and a public-facing dashboard are in development to monitor application volume, geographic coverage, equity, time-to-launch, enrollment, and completion. We refreshed application resources and opened Cycle 8 (Spring 2026) with support to guide evidence standards and duplication research. Finally, the new Title 5 framework has helped to clarify key requirements (upper-division rigor, minimum qualifications, district policy expectations), giving districts a more stable rule set to plan and launch new programs with quality.

IV. Where We Need to Go: Collaboration, Capacity, Data, and Applied Degrees

To achieve 200 high-quality programs by 2030, we will need to:

Mobilize community college baccalaureate interest holders to formalize education and engagement efforts. This group will build shared understanding of the availability and value of community college baccalaureate degrees. Engage with policy makers and influencers to educate them on access issues related to baccalaureate pathways.

Leverage student voices to involve student leaders in the baccalaureate advocacy strategy to harness their voices for engagement in programs. The student experience also demands a modern 'Find your California Community College Baccalaureate Degree Program' web presence, media campaign and brand refresh to improve discoverability and engagement.

Formalize a UC and CSU collaboration model that emphasizes program-level purpose, workforce demand, and regional access for place-bound learners, consistent with statute and third-party recommendations. This includes earlier pre-consultation, shared definitions of 'program duplication,' clearer process timelines, minimizing course-by-course analysis and centering recommendations and decisions in equity and workforce rationale. A strong collaboration model is essential to establishing a consistent, accountable framework that supports timely decision-making, reduces unnecessary

friction, and reinforces the shared responsibility of all segments to meet California's workforce and equity imperatives.

Scale capacity-building for colleges (Regional Consortia liaisons, Technical Assistance grants, improved mentor network) in rural regions where readiness is lowest and standardize application practice with examples, scoring rubrics, and prechecks that compress cycle time without sacrificing quality. Additionally:

- Develop collaboration with the California Virtual Campus (CVC) for upper-division course sharing will extend access beyond local capacity and smooth course availability for specialized upper-division needs and potential scaling of BDP Collaboratives.
- Strengthen and scale industry partnerships and employer engagement to advance community college baccalaureate degree programs in partnership with the Regional Consortia, local colleges, and statewide sector leaders to maximize workforce impact.
- Emphasize seamless pathways including integrated program design resulting in a coordinated degree program strategy such as dual enrollment to apprenticeship to baccalaureate degree pathways into a unified progression. A recent CAI survey identified multiple apprenticeship pathways that are aligned with community college baccalaureate degrees, representing the strongest form of applied learning integration.

Notable examples include:

- Biomanufacturing (BS) – MiraCosta College, Moorpark College, Solano College, and LA Mission College
- Automotive Management (BS) – De Anza College (structured apprenticeship track)
- Field Ironworker Supervision (Baccalaureate) – Cerritos College
- Cybersecurity (BS) – Moorpark College (approved; apprenticeship alignment under development)

These programs demonstrate that applied baccalaureates can effectively integrate apprenticeship models while meeting upper division academic standards.

Make data accountability a priority through MIS enhancements and a public dashboard reporting applications, rejections, duplication objections, approvals, regional coverage of programs, equity impacts, time-to-launch, enrollments, and completions; published annually to support continuous improvement. The urgency to build a more robust data infrastructure, MIS enhancements, and a BDP dashboard that will underpin transparent growth management and outcomes reporting.

V. Actions/Proposals for Board Consideration

Actions to Advance Community College Baccalaureate Outreach and Engagement

1. Award exemplary programs, recognize community of practice completers, and elevate success stories and case studies from approved programs for replication.
2. Authorize rebranding of “Baccalaureate Degree Program” to “Community College Baccalaureate Degrees” in statute and title 5 regulations.
3. Endorse policy and advocacy strategies that remove systemic barriers to program scaling.
4. Educate policy makers, interest-holders, constituencies and communities about the power and potential of the California community college baccalaureate degree.

Actions to Scale Capacity for Colleges

5. Endorse the Chancellor’s Office Liaison Model with increased staffing to provide service-level expectations for 1:1 consults, milestone reviews, and launch readiness checks; concentrate coverage regionally where need is highest.
6. Approve regulations to enable CVC upper-division course sharing for California community college baccalaureate degrees (policy + technical steps) to broaden access and fill low-enrolled specialized sections via Exchange infrastructure.
7. Provide guidance and infrastructure to simplify intra-community college system transfer. (curriculum pathways mapping, ASSIST integration, etc.)
8. Support the development of applied baccalaureate degrees.

References (Selected) – Paige Door is digging in

AB 927 (2021) – permanent statewide CCC baccalaureate authority; up to 30 approvals per year; required CSU/UC consultation:

https://calmatters.digitaldemocracy.org/bills/ca_202120220ab927 (Digital Democracy);

Assembly Higher Education analysis:

<https://ahed.assembly.ca.gov/sites/ahed.assembly.ca.gov/files/hearings/13.%20AB%20927%20Analysis%202021.pdf>

CCCCO Baccalaureate Degree Program (applications, Cycle 8, templates):

<https://www.ccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/What-we-do/Curriculum-and-Instruction-Unit/Curriculum/Baccalaureate-Degree-Program>

Vision 2030 – Report and microsite: <https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/docs/vision2030/vision-2030-report.pdf> and <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Vision-2030>

Title 5 regulations for BDP (effective Aug. 8, 2025): Academic Senate summary: <https://asccc.org/content/baccalaureate-degree-program-title-5-regulations>

Duplication objections and WestEd analysis coverage: EdSource (Dec. 2025): <https://edsource.org/2025/blocked-by-csu-community-college-bachelors-degrees-closer-to-approval-following-new-analysis/747647>; SFGate summary: <https://www.sfgate.com/news/bayarea/article/edsource-blocked-by-csu-community-college-21259790.php>; Update on programs in limbo (Jan. 2026): <https://edsource.org/updates/community-colleges-board-to-discuss-bachelors-degrees-amid-csu-objections>

CVC Exchange overview (for potential upper-division sharing): <https://www.cvc.edu/about-the-exchange/>

CCCCO press releases on approvals and outcomes (examples 2023–2024): <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/News-and-Media/Press-Releases/2023-ccc-expand-access-to-bachelors-degrees>; <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/News-and-Media/Press-Releases/2024-six-new-bachelors-degree-programs>

Program and Course Approval Handbook (PCAH) 8th ed.: <https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/docs/curriculum/program-course-approval-handbook-8th-edition.pdf>

Internal working drafts informing this brief: Strategic Plan for BDP, Vision 2030 (Sept. 18, 2024). Vision 2030 Workplan for California Community College Baccalaureate Degrees (July 2025)