California Community Colleges

SYSTEM WEBINAR SUMMARY:

Bachelors' Degree Programs (August 2026)

This webinar celebrated the 10-year anniversary of bachelor's degrees offered at the California Community Colleges (CCC). Guest presenters included Bridgette Hernandez, Trinidad Linares, and Georgina Bernal from Rio Hondo College, and Amanda Garcia, AnnMarie Leahy, and Luke Johnson from Santa Monica College.

What is the History of Bachelor's Degrees in the CCC?

- It has been 10 years since several CCCs launched the first 15 community college bachelor's degree programs (BDPs), after the Legislature authorized a limited number of pilot programs designed to fill workforce gaps in sectors that are critical to the state's economy. Subsequent legislation passed in 2021 allows the system to establish up to 30 BDPs per academic year.
- The number of BDPs has grown to 66, offered at 49 colleges across the state. To date, 2,269 students have earned a bachelor's degree through these programs.
- Fields covered by these programs include healthcare fields like respiratory therapy, dental hygiene, and health information management, as well as high-demand technical fields like biomanufacturing, industrial automation, airframe manufacturing technology, and automotive technology.
- The programs allow students to earn a bachelor's degree in their own community at a much lower cost and give employers access to a skilled local talent pipeline. The programs are the deciding factor for some students in concluding that seeking a bachelor's degree is a realistic possibility.

What are Some Examples of Bachelor's Degree Programs?

- Rio Hondo College offers a bachelor's degree in Automotive Technology that marges advanced technical training with robust business, operations, and management training that will support career advancement.
    - The program's lower-division coursework fulfills industry standards for certifying automotive technicians. It awards students credit for prior learning through evaluation of military transcripts, industry certifications, and years of hands-on experience as an automotive technician.
    - The program's upper-division curriculum provides students with operational and managerial skills covering product development and distribution, dealership management, professional ethics and

communication, and small business management and entrepreneurship.
    - The college developed partnerships with the Greater Los Angeles New Car Dealers Association, whose members provide scholarships, equipment, and hiring pipelines into management-track positions. An industry advisory board with representatives from manufacturers and dealerships ensures that the curriculum aligns with evolving industry needs.
    - The program uses a hybrid format, allowing students to complete research and theory on their own schedule and come to campus for intensive in-person experiences using modern equipment, vehicles, and case studies. The program includes electric vehicle, battery, and alternative fuel technologies. It is transitioning to a cohort model for the upper division.
- Santa Monica College offers a bachelor's degree in Interaction Design, blending the fields of graphic design, user experience, and technology to prepare students for jobs that ensure products are appealing, effective and intuitive for their users.
    - Admission to the program is largely portfolio based, with the ideal candidate being a student who has completed an associate degree in graphic design or who has experience in the field.
    - The upper-division curriculum guides a cohort of students through technical coursework in design methodologies as well as career skills in project management, communications, and teamwork. Career planning and preparation are built into the curriculum.
    - The college has industry partners who engage students in hands-on collaborative projects, provide scholarships and internships, and serve as a hiring pipeline for graduates.

What Are Some Outcomes of These Example Programs?

- Rio Hondo College has awarded 41 degrees in the program since 2021-22, with a recent survey finding that all graduates were employed. Graduates have found jobs as automotive technicians with local dealerships and shops, started their own businesses, found work in organizations that regulate the automotive industry or as educators training new technicians, or continued on to graduate programs in automotive engineering.
- Santa Monica College has awarded 158 degrees in the program since its inception, with a graduation rate of 98%. Graduates have found positions as designers, web designers, mobile designers, information architects, user experience designers and interaction designers. Graduates have formed a 501c3 called After Hours to serve as an alumni network, through which they do portfolio reviews, network with each other, and mentor current students.