



CCBA Beacon

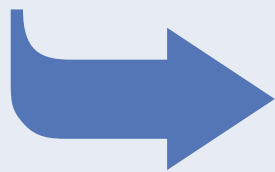
*An International Organization
for the Community College Baccalaureate Degree*

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What is the CCBA Mission?

To promote the development and acceptance of the community college baccalaureate degree as a means of addressing the national problems of student access, demand, and cost.



Find back issues of *The Beacon* on our website at www.accbd.org

Second Annual Conference A Success!

More than seventy community college leaders attended the second annual conference of the Community College Baccalaureate Association in Boston from March 15th until March 17th. The Conference, *The Democratization of the Baccalaureate Degree*, provided an opportunity for participants to discuss many important issues in informal and formal settings. The Marriott Hotel was an ideal setting for this three day event that preceded The League for Innovation Conference.

A cocktail reception, hosted by The Education Alliance, THINQ, Cambridge College, Excelsior College and The Community College Week, kicked off the program and provided an opportunity to thank the sponsors who helped make the conference possible. A lovely dinner at the home of Dr. and Mrs. James Samels followed this reception.

After an early Saturday "Welcome" by Dr. Kenneth P. Walker, President of the Association, a plenary session was held to present the results of a recent survey conducted by The Education Alliance. Concurrent sessions, *The Role of the Community College in Solving the Teacher Shortage* and *Florida Responds to Need for Increased Baccalaureate Access*, *How to Two-Plus-Two* and *Alternative Teacher Certification* sessions followed.

David Lash, consultant and representative of the Ewing Kauffman Foundation, addressed the issues of change and technology during lunch. The afternoon sessions included *How to Two-Plus-Two: Marketing and Authority and Design at Westark College*.

The liveliest part of the afternoon was the Rotating Round Tables session, *The News from . . .*, where each participant spent fifteen minutes with a leader who facilitated discussions about specific topics. Mark Milliron, Executive Director for the League for Innovation, gave a fabulous talk during Sunday morning's breakfast. This was followed by a Panel Discussion.

Overall, 89% of the evaluations indicated that the conference was "a very valuable learning experience." Suggestions from participants will be incorporated into next year's program to provide more in-depth examination of implementation issues.

Next year's conference will be held on March 14th - 16th, 2003 in Phoenix, immediately before the League for Innovation Conference. ■

Model Legislation that Maintains the Community College Mission

by Steven Wallace
Vice President, CCBA

Conversations with legislators and community college leaders across the country reveal a common and significant barrier to the authorization of community colleges to confer baccalaureate degrees. The concern is not so much the inherent validity in supporting a modest expansion in the community mission, but a deep and pervasive distrust of where this could ultimately lead. The fear, which is articulated in many ways, is that once community colleges are allowed to offer even a single baccalaureate degree, the temptation to become a four-year institution over time will be irresistible. In such cases, it is feared communities will lose forever the invaluable resource of their local community college—a result few can support.

While some community college leaders actually do aspire to convert their institution to a four-year college, I have found this to be exceedingly rare. The predominate interest is clearly limited to the addition of a few high demand upper-division programs in response to compelling local needs. Distrust of these colleges' eventual agenda will often preclude, however, their opportunity to pursue even the most modest and well-justified mission expansion.

The public policy issue related to the conversion of community colleges can be resolved through an effective and pro-active leadership. For the necessary trust to be established and maintained, we must first be up-front about our intentions. Colleges seeking conversion should affirm their interest publicly and pursue the necessary statutory authorization. Importantly, colleges seeking to retain their community college mission and be authorized to offer a limited number of baccalaureate degrees should publicly advocate the adoption of a state law which provides both the necessary authority and appropriate statutory constraint.

At least three essential commitments must be met by a community college seeking mission expansion but not conversion. First, the commitment to maintaining open access must be clear. Next, there must be a promise of continued emphasis on lower division and workforce development programs. And finally, the commitment to remaining responsive to the education and economic development needs of the service area must be strongly reaffirmed.

Statutory language which could, and should, be advocated by community college leaders might look something like this:

It is the policy of the state that community colleges authorized to confer a limited number of baccalaureate degrees shall otherwise adhere to all elements of their mission as a community college. Specifically, such colleges shall be required to maintain open access to all eligible students, emphasize lower division and workforce development programs and maintain a high level of responsiveness to their local service area. The conversion of community colleges to the status of state college or university is prohibited unless expressly authorized by the state legislature.

The Community College Baccalaureate Association could serve the interests of community colleges in every state through the development of a model statute similar in intent and effect to the example above. Only when such constraints are established in law will broad support for the community college baccalaureate degree be possible. ■



Dr. Steven Wallace is President of Florida Community College at Jacksonville

Mission Differentiation & Community Colleges Offering Select Baccalaureate Degrees

by Danny A. Gonzales
Director of Institutional Research & Assessment
Great Basin College

"When colleges and universities consider the horizon in terms of their traditional functions, there appears to be little sense of disjunction between past and future. Yet the challenge of educating a population that has grown larger, more complex, and more diverse calls for greater flexibility and a willingness to move beyond tradition. One can think of higher education's increased permeability in fatalistic terms - as the *Titanic's* encounter with the iceberg that brings the undoing of everything, the end of higher education as it has traditionally existed. Or one can consider the infusion of new subject matter, new markets, and new conceptions of higher education as being a source of vitality, stirring the academy to engage its distinctive strengths with a society that is itself in a state of flux and evolution. Ultimately, it is the cross-fertilization, and brushings between academy and society, that will generate productive energy in both settings. The fact of permeability prevents colleges and universities from becoming wholly absorbed in an insular mindset bearing little relationship to society's needs or ambitions" (Policy Perspectives, 2002; p. 7-8).

This passage accurately reflects and summarizes the challenges facing academia. Accordingly, the offering of select baccalaureate degree programs at community colleges is a paradigm in higher education that is being exercised in response to increased student access to higher education, enhanced accountability to the public, and changing workforce needs.

Introduction: At the Community College Baccalaureate Association Conference in Boston in March 2002, it was apparent that community colleges are actively engaged in the process of defining the taxonomy for community colleges presently considering or offering select baccalaureate degree programs. It was also apparent that community colleges are dealing with the community college baccalaureate paradigm as "controversial" and "mission creep." The community college baccalaureate should not be characterized as either contentious or as a hierarchical paradigm in higher education. Matters relating to accountability to the public and institutional effectiveness of community colleges are measured against the mission, as is the case with other institutions of higher education and organizations (public and private alike). In other words, the community college baccalaureate should be considered and examined in the context of mission differentiation.

• Faculty, staff, and administration at GBC are engaged in discussions at the campus and system level that focus on issues pertaining to mission differentiation, ability to preserve the core values of the community college, and use of terms to characterize two-year and four-year degree programs compared to associate degree and bachelor degree programs. This article will primarily focus on these areas.

• **Mission differentiation:** According to Romesburg (2000), expanding the community college mission to include baccalaureate offerings should be in response to student, community, business and industry needs, including the assessment of educational resources not available to the community. He states that "it is less expensive for the student and the taxpayer if community colleges jump into this market; the quality, personalized attention, and more focused experience may possibly better fit the needs of some students; and there could be savings by not duplicating costly facilities" (Romesburg, 2000; p. 3). For the community college baccalaureate paradigm, the goal of increasing access, providing affordable postsecondary education costs, and continued responsiveness to the community must be gauged on an institution-by-institution mission basis to determine whether or not this model is effective.

• **Preserving community college core values:** The offering of select baccalaureate degree programs not only preserves the core principles of the community college, but the core principles are enhanced. For example, community colleges value certificate and associate degrees earned by students. It's important that the admissions and application process for the bachelor degrees provide a seamless transition for students with associate degrees interested in pursuing a bachelor's degree. Moreover, the lower- and upper-division general education requirements reflect the core academic values and expectations of the institution.

• **Two-year v. associate degree and four-year v. baccalaureate degree:** In the last year, Great Basin College has been cognizant of the use of "two-year" and "four-year" degrees in the catalog, course schedules, printed brochures, and information available on the website. Considering the historic enrollment patterns and characteristics of community college students in terms of degree completion times, the reference to two-year and four-year degrees should be removed.

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Mission Differentiation & Community Colleges Offering Select Baccalaureate Degrees

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Agenda for Future Research: It is beneficial to link the research of the academician to the practitioner. The scholarly research of the community college baccalaureate is promising for mainly five reasons. First, the transition that will occur will affect the culture of an institution. The value of discussing strategies to absorb the impact of the addition of select baccalaureate degree programs at a community college should not be underestimated. Similarly, institutions should be prepared to discuss faculty workload issues and development of new policies immediately.

Second, addressing accreditation requirements and reports such as substantive changes and focused self-studies on the upper-division curriculum should be considered in the campus strategic planning process due to the time required to address these issues. GBC recently completed the focused visit on the upper division coursework for the B.A. in Elementary Education and Bachelor of Applied Science degree programs. The College is preparing for the spring 2002 full-scale, 10-year evaluation that will include peer evaluators from both associate and baccalaureate degree conferring institutions.

Third, continuously engage the community college's internal constituencies (faculty, students, staff, administration, foundation board, advisory groups) and external constituencies (community at large, business and industry, city and county government officials, governing board and staff, legislators) in the discussion of considering, implementing, offering select baccalaureate degrees.

Fourth, ensure that the admissions process for the baccalaureate programs involves coordination among faculty and student services, including the communication of program requirements and academic expectations to students.

Finally, the (1) tracking and analysis of student characteristics and trends and (2) course offerings and patterns are essential for campus planning. At GBC, for example, the full-time enrollments have increased and the average age of the students is slightly decreasing. As an institution, the implications of the trends need to be considered.

Conclusion: As an emerging paradigm in higher education, the community college baccalaureate presents a number of benefits to the students and community, including a series of implementation challenges for instruction, student services, and finance. These implementation challenges actively engage campus faculty, administration, and staff. I would agree with Dr. Milliron, President of the League for Innovation in the Community College, that if community colleges are considering and offering select baccalaureate degrees, then approach this paradigm the "community college way." With this statement in mind, community colleges have historically demonstrated a com-

mitment to enhancing student access, responding to workforce development, and providing affordable costs to attend.

"Community colleges distinguish themselves from four-year institutions by their multiple functions and missions, which have been inherent from their early beginnings. Historically, these functions have been part of the foundation of what can be considered American education's most democratic institution" (Laanan, 2001; p. 58). Moreover, from a public policy and accountability perspective in light of budgetary constraints, the community college baccalaureate is a direct response to workforce shortages experienced in the education, health care, and applied technical-vocational fields.

Finally, Walker (2001) contends that the factors and trends affecting higher education such as changes in the marketplace, changes in student profiles, changes in employer needs, and changes in education are influencing the expansion of the community college mission to include baccalaureate degree programs. If this is the case, community colleges must describe in their missions and academic goals and objectives how the offering of select baccalaureate degree programs will address these factors and trends influencing higher education. The modification of an existing institutional effectiveness model or establishment of a new one is critical as public accountability and scrutiny by key decision makers increases. ■



Danny A. Gonzales is the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment at Great Basin College. He is completing his Ph.D. in Political Science and his dissertation is entitled: *Mission Differentiation and Niches: Examining Institutional Characteristics of Student Enrollments and Completions Data for Community Colleges Offering Select Baccalaureate Degree Programs.*

Contact information: Phone: (775) 753-2114 or e-mail dannyg@gbcnv.edu.

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