



CCBA Essay Contest Winner

CCBA conducted this contest to find out what students think about community colleges offering baccalaureate college degrees on their campuses, the challenges of finding degree programs close to their homes and obstacles students must overcome in order to earn a baccalaureate degree. The \$1,000 scholarship was provided by Community College Week. The winner is:



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The Importance of Receiving My Baccalaureate Degree at a Community College

While the majority of people graduating with baccalaureate degrees do so at four-year universities, there is an emerging group of students such as myself, who are taking advantage of new opportunities to receive their baccalaureate degree from their local community college. The option to stay at my community college without having to transfer to another college or university is a chief motivator in my pursuit of an advanced degree in radiation therapy studies at Bellevue Community College (BCC). Other factors of importance in staying at BCC, where I earned my associate degree, are ease of transition, familiarity with the program and its instructors, the excellent national reputation that the program enjoys, and the chance to be on the leading edge of Washington students receiving their baccalaureate degrees at a community college.

Transitioning from one educational institution to another is usually fraught with the challenges that credits already earned may not be honored at the next stop. Because a four-year degree is now available at BCC, my associate degree credits recently earned at this institution easily apply toward their baccalaureate. Now each class builds on the other, and the continuity of the program makes it easier to reach my goal. By not having to transfer, there is no disappointment of losing credits and having to start over.

Furthermore, transferring makes it necessary to become accustomed to new instructors and their way of teaching. By staying at BCC, I am aware of what instructors expect and am assured they know of my educational abilities and achievements. This also helps instructors mentor me through the program smoothly from beginning to end. The stress of adjusting to new instructors and their differing approaches to teaching is no longer a factor. Ultimately, the educational experience for both me and my instructors is enhanced.

BCC radiation therapy graduates (two-year degrees) continually rank high in American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT) reports. This is quite noteworthy as this national certification report includes not just associate programs nationwide, but baccalaureate and hospital based programs as well. Because BCC already ranks so high, I prefer to stay at BCC to complete my education as most cancer centers already acknowledge the quality of the program and its reputation for graduating qualified radiation therapists.

In closing, BCC will be one of only four Washington State community colleges recommended by the Board of Education and approved by the legislature to offer more than just an associate or transfer degree. With this new opportunity, I plan to be in the first group of graduates in order to show the legislators and the people of Washington that BCC, a community college, is on the forefront of providing the region with highly-trained individuals in the field of health care. It is important and exciting for me to earn my baccalaureate at the community college where my studies began.