



## 10 MYTHS... AND 10 REALITIES

### Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) programs

**MYTH #1:** "Community Colleges only offer two-year degrees."

**THE REALITY:** To date, approximately **187 community colleges nationwide** offer four-year baccalaureate degrees that align with community and workforce needs.

It's true! The "two-year college" has evolved to meet the rising demand for accessible higher education pathways. Currently, approximately 187 colleges in 24 of 50 U.S. States<sup>1</sup> offer four-year baccalaureate degree programs, bridging workforce gaps in essential sectors like Business Administration, Healthcare, Information Technology, Education, and more.

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**MYTH #2:** "Baccalaureate degrees from community colleges do not hold the same quality as those from a university."

**THE REALITY:** Community colleges adhere to **the same accreditation standards** as universities.

Students at a community college can expect the same quality of curriculum and instruction they would encounter in a university baccalaureate program. Community colleges, like universities, adhere to regional accreditation standards such as those from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), and the Accrediting Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). CCB grads have gone on to succeed in graduate programs in business, education, healthcare, and more, thanks to the academic foundation provided by their community college baccalaureate degree, and the support and encouragement of their baccalaureate program faculty and administration<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, community colleges seek program input from leaders in local industry to shape relevant workforce programs for these highly motivated adult students.



### **MYTH #3: "Students enroll in CCBs because they can't get accepted to a university."**

**THE REALITY:** Students choose community college baccalaureate programs for their **superior affordability, flexibility, relevancy, and accessibility.**

CCBs offer a rigorous, academically challenging educational experience designed to the same standards as university programs but with added benefits like affordability, convenience and direct connections to local workforce partnerships and opportunities. Whereas *fewer than a quarter* of community college transfers obtain a baccalaureate degree within six years, *more than two-thirds* of CCB students complete their baccalaureate program in half that time.<sup>2,3</sup> CCBs have proven especially effective in expanding access to students historically excluded from higher education. Research shows, on average, 50 percent of CCB grads are people of color, while women account for 64 percent of all CCB degrees<sup>4</sup>.

The "access-for-all" philosophy tends to define institutions offering CCBs. Half of all CCB-conferring colleges are minority-serving Institutions. It is also estimated that more than half of all Tribal Colleges authorize bachelor's degrees.

Furthermore, while 80 percent of community college students say they intend to transfer to a university for a baccalaureate degree, only about 16 percent ever enroll<sup>2</sup>, demonstrating the critical need for more accessible and streamlined baccalaureate pathways.

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### **MYTH #4: "CCB programs prepare students in the exact same way as traditional bachelor's degree pathways."**

**THE REALITY:** While CCB programs offer the same quality as university programs, they are uniquely designed to **fill regional workforce demands and foster local career opportunities.**

Community college baccalaureate programs provide unique access to workforce partners, connecting students directly to family-sustaining career opportunities with companies who are committed to hiring CCB grads. Students who complete CCB programs enjoy career success, earning approximately \$10,000 more than their associate degree peers in similar fields<sup>4</sup>. Meanwhile, research suggests that CCB grads gain employment and have positive earning outcomes within the first year of program completion<sup>1</sup>.



### **MYTH #5: "Community College Baccalaureate degrees are not respected."**

**THE REALITY:** More than ever, the value of a degree is determined by its **relevance, return on investment and potential to deliver successful workforce and life outcomes.**

Employers recognize CCB grads for their relevant and practical knowledge and skills. Communities value CCB programs as they provide a continuing pipeline of opportunities for local talent to stay local while achieving a living wage to sustain their families and foster strong socioeconomic growth. Studies in Florida and Washington show 3 in 4 CCB grads match to a career in their field of study within four terms of study, with the Washington group outmatching their university counterparts by six percent<sup>4</sup>.

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### **MYTH #6: "In the long run, CCB degree programs are just as expensive as those found at universities."**

**THE REALITY:** CCBs charge a **lower tuition** than traditional four-year universities and private colleges and many offer **access to tuition reimbursement opportunities** from local employers.

By keeping upper- and lower-division classes at the same or similar cost (as in states like Florida, Ohio, Oregon, and Wyoming), and allowing students to remain local, community colleges can lower bottom-line expenses (such as housing) for degree-seekers while offering financial aid resources and student support programs. In California, a community college baccalaureate degree costs an average of \$10,560 – *less than half* the average cost of comparable programs at a public university. Similarly, in Maricopa County, Arizona, a tuition cap of approximately \$3,000 per term allows students to graduate for as little as a quarter of the cost of a state university. In keeping with the promise of accessibility, most Florida and Texas community colleges are committed to providing CCBs that do not exceed \$10,000 in tuition costs<sup>6</sup>.



### **MYTH #7: "CCBs take students away from enrolling into four-year universities."**

**THE REALITY:** Community College Baccalaureate programs **fill a workforce gap** that traditional four-year universities cannot meet alone. They also appeal to a different demographic of students, such as working adults.

CCBs focus on specific areas of workforce demand, making them vital in sustaining the economic engines for the communities they serve. At the same time, they comprise a small percentage of total bachelor's degrees earned nationwide. In 2022, community colleges awarded 25,023 of the nation's *two million-plus* baccalaureate-level degrees<sup>6</sup>. Research suggests CCBs can bolster university graduate admissions by broadening ground-floor access for low-income and traditionally underserved students. Fifty percent of CCB degree completers are students of color, many attending Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) or colleges with similar equity-focused designations. Meanwhile, more than 50% of CCB grads said they would not have pursued a bachelor's degree if not for the program at their local community college<sup>5</sup>.

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### **MYTH #8: "Community college faculty are not experts in their field."**

**THE REALITY:** CCB programs are taught by **highly qualified scholar-practitioners** hired for their educational excellence, practical experience, and strong ties to industry.

Community college faculty hold the same credentials and qualifications as university instructors. CCB professors typically have vast workforce experience, deep industry connections, and higher education degrees. Vetting for CCB professors typically goes beyond the usual qualification-matching process by garnering input from relevant regional industries to ensure faculty inspire and uplift the local labor pipeline<sup>1</sup>. In addition, CCB students benefit from small class sizes, nimble, adaptable curriculums, and faculty with strong connections to local industry.



**MYTH #9: "CCB programs are slow to develop and require too many expensive resources."**

**THE REALITY:** Community Colleges represent **the most practical, efficient baccalaureate program options**, leveraging local resources and existing program infrastructure.

CCBs build on established workforce-focused associate degree programs and typically use existing labs and resources, which helps keep start-up costs affordable. By building on existing program infrastructure, colleges can move more rapidly to develop and offer needed community college workforce baccalaureates. Once approved by legislators, CCBs typically take 1-2 years to develop and implement, often building on previous groundwork to streamline the process<sup>1</sup>. Today, there are more than 678 CCB programs nationwide, with more states, institutions, and degrees added every year. In California, the number of available CCBs (31) has more than doubled since 2021, whereas Arizona has seen its CCB program expand from zero to 15 during the same time frame<sup>7</sup>. Community colleges are uniquely positioned to offer efficient and cost-effective baccalaureate programs, making them a practical solution to enhance equitable access to baccalaureate education.

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**MYTH #10: "CCBs are diluting the mission of community colleges."**

**THE REALITY:** CCBs are powered by the same philosophy of **access, equity, and opportunity** that define the community college mission.

CCB degrees help to fulfill the mission, services and values that are the hallmark of the nation's community colleges. Like associate degrees and career certificates, they fill a critical community need for affordable, accessible, and flexible higher education pathways, particularly for low-income and historically underserved students. By offering these needed baccalaureate programs, the college supports the working learner, community needs, and economic development initiatives, which are central to the community college's mission.



## RESOURCES

1. "Twenty frequently asked questions about community college baccalaureate degrees" [CCBA x Bragg & Associates](#)
2. "Community College Baccalaureate Research Roundup." [New America](#).
3. "New Measures of Postsecondary Education Transfer Performance: Transfer-out rates for community colleges, transfer student graduation rates at four-year colleges, and the institutional dyads contributing to transfer student success." [Homeroom](#). U.S. Department of Education
4. "Comparison of the Employment and Earnings Outcomes of Washington Community College Baccalaureate Graduates and University Graduates." [Community College Research Initiatives](#)
5. "Cost makes the difference for community college bachelor's students." [CC Daily](#).
6. "Fast Facts 2023." [American Association of Community Colleges](#).
7. "Mapping the Community College Baccalaureate." [New America](#).