



# Baccalaureate Degree Programs

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## What are Community College BDPs?

California Community College baccalaureate degree programs (BDPs) are an accessible and affordable way for students to earn the advanced degrees required of the current workforce. Community colleges seeking to offer BDPs meet the local business or industry demand, ensuring that students gain sustainable employment post-graduation, and that the workforce need is adequately met.

## Why Are They Necessary?

These programs serve students who may otherwise not seek baccalaureate degrees, including working adults, economically disadvantaged individuals, people of color, and place-bound students. For many of these students who are balancing competing priorities, community college is the only viable option for earning an advanced degree.

## Why Haven't Community Colleges Always Offered Baccalaureate Degrees?

In 1960, the California Master Plan for Higher Education was adopted to establish a tiered system of public higher education, outlining specific functions for all three higher education segments. Over time, the roles and capacities of the segments have evolved with changing student demographics. As these changes unfold, California's educational institutions must evolve and meet the needs of today's students. California Community Colleges are uniquely equipped to fill the workforce skills gap by offering accessible and affordable baccalaureate degrees.

## What is the Workforce Demand?

In the Master Plan for Higher Education, community colleges were framed as vocational schools and the primary agents for workforce education. However, community colleges were only authorized to grant certificates and associate degrees. Today, it is projected that by 2030, 38% of jobs will depend on workers with at least a baccalaureate degree.





# Case Study

## Workforce Demand: A Case Study of Nursing

The 2023 UCLA Civil Rights Project Report highlights that the architects of the California Master Plan did not account for growth in the credential society and changes in training requirements, particularly for professions like nursing. In 2011, the Institute of Medicine recommended an 80% baccalaureate degree target for nurses by 2020, predating the pandemic. Since 2020, the demand for nursing has significantly risen.

There have been many efforts to meet this goal and reduce the nursing shortage, including developing more RN to BSN pathways; however, according to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the capacity of four-year colleges and universities remains a limiting factor in further progress.

In the 2021-2022 academic year, California nursing schools turned away 26,295 qualified BSN applicants due to insufficient capacity. Students continue to face obstacles in obtaining degrees that meet professional credential requirements, and this is where community colleges can help. Community colleges can play a transformative role in the lives of students by educating and training the next generation of nurses through BSN degree programs.

## Data: Nursing Shortage

- According to the Hospital Association of Southern California, nursing vacancy rates among local hospitals exceed 30%. Prior to the pandemic, the average vacancy rate was 6%.
- Estimates show California faces a shortage of about 36,000 licensed nurses, according to the UC San Francisco Health Workforce Research Center on Long-Term Care.
- The need for registered nurses is expected to grow by 9% from 2020 to 2030, as fast as the average growth across all occupations, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## Solution

Higher education is changing, and community colleges are well-equipped to meet the moment. The only sustainable route forward is for community colleges to expand their baccalaureate degree offerings in fields where there is a clear student need and workforce demand, such as nursing.

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