
SF 111 - COMMUNITY COLLEGES-BACHELOR OF APPLIED SCIENCE PROGRAMS

What is an Applied Baccalaureate?

Applied baccalaureate (AB) degree programs are designed specifically for students who already have applied associate's degrees or similar credentials in a technical field. AB programs often lead to degrees like the Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS). Credits accumulated in applied associated degree programs do not readily transfer to traditional baccalaureate programs. Thus, the BAS degree programs are specifically designed to provide these students with an opportunity to advance their professional skills. AB degree programs are:

- Generally, more career-oriented and focuses less on the general education course requirements of other four-year degrees;
- Emphasize applied rather than the theory level of a discipline; and
- Intended to allow students seeking a bachelor's degree to complete coursework quickly by utilizing previously completed vocational and technical education and/or training.

Why Community Colleges?

- Community colleges are closer to the target populations, already have relationships with them, and most importantly are already working with the employers they will go to.
 - Most existing associate degree holders in Wyoming are clustered in the communities the college's already serve.
- 24 other states have already figured out the value of the community college AB degree and currently allow for this (including Utah and Colorado)ⁱ.
- 37.2% of the adults in Wyoming, or about 165,000, already possess some college or an associate's degree, the vast majority in applied and technical fieldsⁱⁱ.
- Most applied associate's degree holders are working adults who are place-bound with ties to the community, families, and jobs, making relocation, even temporarily unrealistic. Online is an option, but these students still demand and consume local services.
- It is less expensive for the CC's to do BAS - both to the state and to the students.
 - A student would pay \$3,000 less for the completion of an AB degree program at a CCⁱⁱⁱ.
 - The state would save approximately \$9,000 per student to offer AB programs at CC's^{iv}.

Why Do We Need These?

- Bachelor's degree education is directly linked to economic productivity (percent change in bachelor's attainment correlates to change in state GDP per worker)^v.
- Wyoming has increased bachelor's degree attainment less than 6% since 1980^{vi}.
- Wyoming ranks 3rd in the nation for percent of our population with some college or an associate's degree. But we rank 38th for bachelor's attainment^{vii}. These outcomes reflect the way higher education is currently designed in Wyoming. Our design must change.
- Wyoming ranks 48th in the nation in annual bachelor's degrees produced per 1,000 residents (ahead of only Nevada and Alaska)^{viii}.

- WY currently produces (from UW and Wyoming Catholic College) about 2,805 bachelor’s degrees, or 4.8 per 1,000 residents.
 - To reach the national average (8.32 per 1,000 residents), Wyoming would need to produce at least 2,000 more per year.
 - To reach Utah’s level (14.9 per 1,000) Wyoming would have to triple its annual production of bachelor’s degrees, or about 8,500 per year.
- Doing it alone, UW would have to increase bachelor’s degree production more than 600% for Wyoming to reach Colorado’s bachelor’s degree attainment rate by 2025^{ix}.

The Myths about CC Baccalaureate Degrees

1. Aren’t applied baccalaureate degrees lesser than other bachelor’s degrees? These aren’t lesser degrees, they are different. Applied bachelor’s programs are workforce development focused and are designed to engage different populations of students, primarily working adults who have applied associate’s degrees and/or technical training and credentials.
2. Won’t the Community Colleges all become four-year institutions and lose their mission? After 15 years of community colleges offering bachelor’s degrees, the number of students at these institutions in bachelors programs does not exceed four percent of all enrollments (with one exception in Florida where they are at 4.6 percent). Thus, most enrollments remain in traditional community college programming^x.
3. Won’t this take all the enrollments away from UW? A recent study^{xi} in Florida (arguably the state with the longest history of community college baccalaureates) found that giving community colleges the authority to create bachelor’s degree programs did not significantly impact bachelor’s degree production in similar programs at local four-year public institutions. “Overall, we find that bachelor’s degree programs at for-profit institutions may be negatively impacted by the presence of similar programs at community colleges, but public four-year institution programs may actually benefit from the presence of a local CCB program.”
4. Aren’t Community Colleges only two-year colleges? They don’t offer higher levels of education. For years community colleges have been offering credentials beyond two-years; coursework considered and accepted as upper-division coursework at universities, and post-baccalaureate credentials. These include teacher certifications, advanced occupational endorsements, industry certifications, etc.
5. Do AB graduates earn more than associate degree holders in the same discipline? Washington State has conducted studies^{xii} on the earnings of applied baccalaureate degree holders. They found these types of degrees result s in higher earnings than the associate degree in each of the three programs they studied. They also found that higher earnings are associated to other student characteristics such as age, gender, earnings prior to enrollment, and academic proficiency, indicating a difference in economic benefit for some students, specifically adults.

ⁱ Source: Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2017)

ⁱⁱ Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017 one-year estimates; WCCC State Longitudinal Data Warehouse; LCCC IR Office

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: The University of Wyoming and Laramie County Community College websites, using 2018/2019 catalog and tuition/fee rates.

^{iv} Source: US Dept. of Ed National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

^v Source: LCCC Office of Institutional Research using US BLS Data for gross domestic state product, non-farm job projections, and educational attainment.

^{vi} Source: National Center for Education Statistics Integrated Postsecondary Education System

^{vii} Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017 1-Year Estimates

^{viii} Source: National Center for Education Statistics Table 319.10

^{ix} Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017 one-year estimates; NCES Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS); LCCC IR Office

^x <https://www.accbd.org/articles/index.php/attachments/single/113>

^{xi} <https://www.aera.net/Study-Snapshot-Competing-for-Bachelors-Degrees-Are-Community-Colleges-Cutting-into-the-Market-Share-of-Four-Year-Institutions>

^{xii} <https://www.sbctc.edu/resources/documents/colleges-staff/research/bachelor-applied-science-research/effect-on-earnings-ab-degree-kaikkonen-and-quarles-v2.pdf>