

Support SB2482 and HB3717 - Community College Baccalaureate Degrees to Expand Illinois' Skilled Workforce

Community College Baccalaureate degrees will increase baccalaureate attainment in Illinois.

- Adopting Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) degrees is a natural extension of Illinois' commitment to improving career pathways for all students, including adult learners.
- Twenty-four states have allowed community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees. States such as Ohio, Washington, and Florida have successfully launched these programs in partnership with local and regional employers to map career pathways and improve baccalaureate attainment.¹
- **Local students who attend community colleges are not traditional students—most are working adults with job and family responsibilities, making baccalaureate attainment difficult due to commuting barriers, schedule conflicts, and cost.**
 - 78% of prospective graduates surveyed from ten Illinois community colleges work while attending school, making relocation, commuting, and rigid class schedules unrealistic.²
 - Without a flexible, local, and affordable pathway to a bachelor's degree, these students are left without viable options to advance their education and careers.
- Community colleges are already equipped to serve these students, offering affordable tuition, flexible scheduling, and localized support. By offering bachelor's degrees locally, community colleges can ensure that students don't have to choose between education and their jobs, families, or communities.

"I want to pursue higher education, I am a bit older than my typical community college peers. I am 25 and will complete my Associate's Degree in Business Administration in the spring of 2025, at age 26. I work almost full-time with 5 classes right now. I worry about the cost of studying for my Bachelor's and how a university operates because I need something flexible if I'm working and in school."

- Illinois Community College Student

¹ (Bragg, D. D., & Harmon, T. (2023). *Twenty Frequently Asked Questions about Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) Degrees in Illinois*. Springfield, IL: Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA).

² Harmon, T. (2024). *Survey of Illinois Community College Students about the Community College Baccalaureate*. Illinois Community College Trustees Association.

Illinois students want access to Community College Baccalaureate degrees.

- 75% of students surveyed from ten Illinois community colleges said they would be more likely to pursue a bachelor's degree if it were available at their local community college at a lower cost.³

"[My community college] has played a significant role for me, a 48-year-old woman. I am realizing dreams that I had given up on. I would appreciate the opportunity to complete my bachelor's degree here!"

- Illinois Community College Student

CCBs expand career pathways without disrupting existing systems.

- Across Illinois, key industries like advanced manufacturing and healthcare are struggling to find qualified workers. Healthcare and manufacturing employers in Illinois have expressed a strong need for qualified candidates with baccalaureate degrees in their respective industries, supporting Community College Baccalaureate programs as a solution to bridge this gap.⁴
- **CCB programs primarily serve Associate of Applied Science (AAS) graduates, who often lack clear transfer pathways to a bachelor's degree.**
 - For example, in Illinois, there is no direct pathway for a baccalaureate degree in respiratory therapy, despite an expected employment growth of 12% between 2022 and 2032.⁵
 - Without a Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) option, many Associate of Applied Science (AAS) students face credit loss, extended time to degree, or non-completion, as traditional university transfer pathways often do not align with their programs.
- **Research shows that Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) programs do not harm enrollment or transfer rates at public universities or private non-profits.**
 - A study in Florida found no negative impact on university enrollment or bachelor's degree completions, though it did note a shift away from private for-profit institutions enrollment.⁶

"Community colleges offering bachelor's degrees would increase the ability to continue education for returning students that have already started families and single parents. This would help improve living standards and the ability to provide for their families as well. I have been waiting for this opportunity myself for over 10 years."

- Illinois Community College Student

³ Harmon, T. (2024). Survey of Illinois Community College Students about the Community College Baccalaureate. Illinois Community College Trustees Association.

⁴ Harmon, T. (2024). Focus Groups with Employers and Workforce Stakeholders for CCB. Illinois Community College Trustees Association.

⁵ Harmon, T., & Bragg, D. (2024). Illinois Community College Baccalaureate: Occupational Brief – Respiratory Therapist. Illinois Community College Trustees Association.

⁶ Bragg, D. D., & Harmon, T. (2023). Twenty Frequently Asked Questions about Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) Degrees in Illinois. Springfield, IL: Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA).