

Survey of Illinois Community College Students about the Community College Baccalaureate

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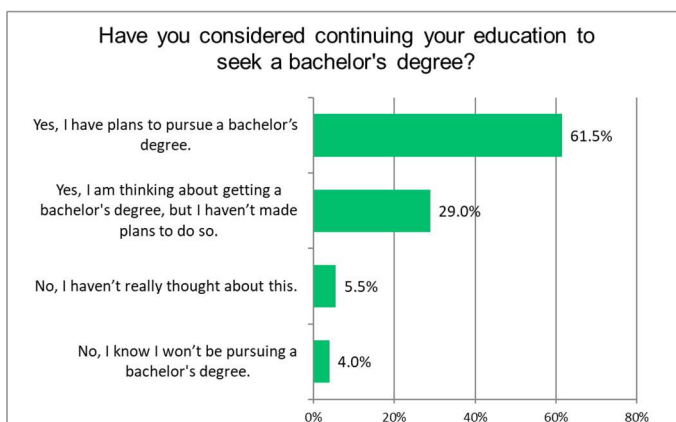
The Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA), with funding from the Joyce Foundation, conducted a survey of community college students as part of its research on the implementation of the community college baccalaureate (CCB). Ten colleges participated in the two rounds of the survey, and 2,400 responses were obtained.

The following are the main things we learned through this survey project. The full report can be found [here](#) and is available through the [CCB page](#) on the ICCTA website.

Most community college students plan to continue their education following the completion of their community college degree or certificate. Over three-fourths of survey respondents planned to continue their education, including two-thirds of working students and six in ten job-seeking students. In addition, over 60 percent had made plans to pursue a bachelor's degree, and another 29 percent were thinking about getting a bachelor's degree but hadn't made plans to do so. This strong interest in bachelor's degree attainment held true regardless of whether the respondent was not working, working full-time or working part-time.

Only about ten percent of respondents did not have plans to pursue a bachelor's degree, either because they knew they wouldn't be seeking this degree, or because they had never really thought about getting a bachelor's degree. Of these, half said they did not need a bachelor's degree to achieve their personal goals. The others were about equally divided between those who had to work and would not have time for school, and those who said they couldn't afford the cost.

Community college students are very interested in pursuing a bachelor's degree at the college they are attending now. About 75 percent of respondents indicated that they would be much more interested in pursuing a bachelor's degree if their community college offered one at a lower cost, and another 11 percent indicated that they would be somewhat more interested in pursuing a bachelor's degree under these conditions. It is notable that 40 percent of students who *hadn't* thought about getting a bachelor's degree would be much more interested if their college offered one. Even among those students who said that they knew they *would not* be pursuing a bachelor's degree, 22 percent said that they would be much more interested in getting one if they could do so at their community college.



"If Sauk Valley Community College were to offer a Bachelor's degree program, it would genuinely be life-changing for me. In order to go into a Bachelor's degree program that I like and am qualified for, I would need to travel over 2 hours every single day in order to make it to physical classes. If Sauk were to offer the same degree, I would travel 30 minutes to get to school. This would save me an obscene amount of money and time, which I could then put into my children. The price and the availability of the degree alone would make it more than worth it to me."
- Sauk Valley College student

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Community colleges offer shorter commuting times compared to the closest university, based on the student’s own estimates of commuting time. The average time for students to travel to their community college was 24 minutes, and the average time for them to travel to their nearest university was 43 minutes. The average additional commutation time (based on individual responses) was 20 minutes. Students with longer additional commuting time estimates were not less likely to intend to pursue a bachelor’s degree, however.

Community college students are working. Nearly half of respondents were working full-time (25 hours or more per week), and another third were working part-time. However, working did not have much effect on the students’ interest in pursuing a bachelor’s degree: 60 percent of students who were working full-time had made plans to pursue their bachelor’s degree.

Community college students had many suggestions on the programs they would like to see included if CCB is enacted in Illinois. 189 respondents provided suggestions on programs of study they would like to see included if CCB was approved for their college. The most popular programs included the Bachelor of Science in nursing (BSN), business administration, psychology, accounting, computer science, and education.

“I would much rather earn a bachelor’s degree at my current community college. As of right now I don’t have any future plans on applying for or completing a bachelor’s degree, but my current community college is extremely close to home and at a great price with high-quality education. I would 100% consider getting a bachelor’s degree if it was at my current community college.”
- Parkland college student

Community college students offered overwhelming support for the idea of allowing their colleges to offer a baccalaureate degree. 440 respondents provided comments regarding the idea of CCB at their college. 90 percent of these comments were supportive, and cost was by far the most frequently mentioned reason for this support.

We hope that this survey project will provide useful insights for state decision-makers, college administrators and other stakeholders. We appreciate the assistance of the ten community colleges that participated in this project and express our thanks to the students who took the time to respond to the survey.

ICCTA has also conducted focus groups with employers to assess their needs and interest in the community college baccalaureate. This report is available on the ICCTA website.

Illinois Senate Bill 3787, introduced in 2024, would have authorized Illinois community colleges to offer bachelor’s degrees in high-demand occupations, with approval of the ICCB and IBHE. The legislation was the subject of a legislative hearing and formed the basis for several constructive conversations with lawmakers. While it was not enacted, similar legislation is expected to be introduced in the 2025 session.