

Community College Bachelor's Degrees

The state universities and the Michigan Association of State Universities have been steadfast in their opposition to legislation that seeks to authorize the state's community colleges to offer bachelor's degrees. Allowing community colleges to offer bachelor's degrees will result in higher costs for students and taxpayers. In duplicating already-existing four-year programs available at the state's public universities, community colleges will incur costs for salary and benefits of additional faculty and support staff, as well as operating costs for administration, materials and supplies, travel, information technology, meeting accreditation requirements, and providing other support services. Capital expenses related to equipment and facilities may also be incurred. Significant increases in community college tuition prices and local taxation would result from community college bachelor degree programs. The cost of offering these programs will be covered through tuition increases, higher local millages, and requests for higher state appropriations. Lower priced tuition at community colleges hides the fact that these institutions are subsidized *twice* by taxpayers: once through local property taxes (\$696.6 million in FY2024ⁱ) and again through state appropriations (\$507.1 million in FY2024). Investing future state monies in a duplicative set of bachelor's degree programs would represent a remarkably inefficient use of taxpayer dollars

Allowing community colleges to offer bachelor's degrees would incur wasteful spending to address no unmet need. It would result in the creation of 31 additional public four-year degree granting institutions in Michigan, representing an enormous legislatively-directed expansion of institutional mission creep through a mass duplication of existing programs and services. In a state with a significant forecasted decline in the number of high school graduates in the decade ahead, such a profound expansion in the number of public four-year degree institutions is completely counter to prudent state fiscal policy.

State policy should seek to build upon the collaboration taking place between the state's public and independent four-year colleges and universities and its public two-year institutions, providing even more ladder degree programs and further enhancing the ease of student transfer among institutions—rather than encouraging programmatic duplication that will only serve to increase costs borne by students, families, and taxpayers. The state's public universities, through the Michigan Association of State Universities, will continue to collaborate with our community college partners to provide new baccalaureate or degree completion programs for which there is a sufficient labor market need within a reasonable proximity of a community college district. Indeed, this collaboration is currently being demonstrated via a state-subsidized partnership among public universities and private colleges that is providing Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree completion programs on community college campuses. This type of collaboration

is the way forward for all sectors to help our students succeed and to strengthen the quality of the state's healthcare workforce.

Policy Actions:

- Oppose legislation that authorizes Michigan's community colleges to offer four-year degree programs.
- Reinforce the respective and distinct missions of the state's public universities and community colleges and promote continuance of the historical model of programmatic collaboration, not duplication, between the two higher education sectors.

ⁱ Source: Michigan Community College Data Inventory Report, Center for Educational Performance and Information. [View](#).