

December 14, 2022

To: Daisy Gonzales, Interim Chancellor, California Community Colleges

Lizette Navarette, Interim Deputy Chancellor

Marty Alvarado, Executive Vice Chancellor

Aisha Lowe, Vice Chancellor, Educational Services

David O'Brien, Vice Chancellor, Governmental Relations

Members of the Board of Governors

The recent challenge raised by the Academic Senate of the California State University has prompted me to write in solidarity with my colleagues at Feather River, Moorpark and San Diego City colleges, and on behalf of community college students statewide.

As you know, California joined the national movement to empower community colleges to offer bachelor's degrees in workforce fields. The passage of SB 850 (Block) in 2014, which was signed into law by former Governor Jerry Brown, enabled 15 colleges to offer baccalaureate programs in fields that did not duplicate baccalaureate programs in public universities. This national trend addresses the issue of changing workforce requirements that give job eligibility preference in certain fields to individuals with bachelor's degrees rather than associate degrees.

With the passage of AB 927 (Medina) in 2021, these pilot programs became permanent, and the opportunity was provided to all of California's community colleges to develop and propose baccalaureate programs under essentially the same conditions as the pilot programs. These conditions were thoroughly discussed with representatives of the California State University (CSU) system and changes were made in the bill as a result, notably limiting the number of degree programs approved to thirty per year and reiterating the condition that the new proposals would not duplicate existing bachelor's degree programs offered by the public universities.

These discussions were conducted as part of the process of improved communication called for by the bill and in concert with the strong consultation and communication efforts carried out by the CCC Chancellor's Office staff with representatives of the CSU, with the early involvement of our association. These adjustments were made in good faith and resulted in the unanimous passage of the bill by both houses of the legislature, as well as the final approval by Governor Gavin Newsom.

While our college's baccalaureate program was not challenged, it cannot be understated that workforce education is an important function of community colleges, and the baccalaureate programs fill a gap which public universities did not and do not address. We were fortunate that we had support for our histotechnology program from local CSU and UC campuses, and industry partners. Our students will have better opportunities for employment at a time of a nationwide shortage. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Outlook Handbook projects 11% job growth among clinical laboratory technician and technologist occupations between 2020 and 2030. This growth rate is faster than the average projected growth rate among all occupations. The BLS also indicates that the aging population likely will lead to a greater need to diagnose medical conditions through laboratory procedures. In this region, the demand for these occupations is projected to grow 17.8% by 2028, an increase of 2,280 positions, with the highest growth in Orange County. Mt. SAC students are in high demand for this high-skill, high-wage profession and often get hired before completing the program.

It is unfortunate that the CSU objected to three proposals, claiming that "these proposed academic degrees duplicate one or more existing baccalaureate degree programs offered by the CSU /or UC." A review by the California Community College Baccalaureate Association and others show this not to be true. I stand with colleagues at the three colleges, and strongly recommend approval of these urgently needed and excellently conceived programs. It is clear in the resolution published by the CSU Academic Senate that their goal is to have veto authority over the community college baccalaureate programs, which would be both unprecedented in California higher education and would hamper the progress of addressing the student, community, and workforce needs of the state. I urge you to move forward with all 10 proposals and resist this incursion on community college rights by the CSU.

Sincerely,

William T. Scroggins, PhD  
President & CEO