FLORIDA COMMUNITY COLLEGES:
Meeting Workforce Needs Through
Alternative Tracks to Baccalaureate Degrees

AN ACTION REPORT SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
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OF
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY

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TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA
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April 18, 2005

Phil Handy, Chairman  
State Board of Education  
325 W. Gaines St.  
1415 Turlington Bldg.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Mr. Handy:

Enclosed is an analysis of alternative methods for increasing baccalaureate degrees in Florida by targeting place-bound, nontraditional students. This report was conducted as partial fulfillment of a Master’s Degree in Public Administration and Policy at Florida State University.

While working in the Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education, I was specifically interested in the public policy issue of baccalaureate degree offerings by community colleges. As you may know, since 2001, four community colleges have been authorized to issue baccalaureate degrees: St. Petersburg College, Chipola College, Miami Dade College, and Okaloosa-Walton College. The issue of allowing community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees is controversial because of the potential for “mission creep” within community colleges.

Three alternative options for increasing the baccalaureate degree were considered: Maintaining the current policy as stipulated in the Florida Statutes; strengthening the current policy while considering the option of offering BAS (Bachelor of Applied Science) degrees; and increasing partnerships with established public and private institutions through incentives. These options were analyzed with respect to four evaluative criteria: mission, cost, availability of resources and public policy support. Even if the current policy continues, there still exists the need for better coordination and alignment between the community college system and state university system in terms of strategic initiatives and long-range goals for higher education.

Thank you for your time. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Michelle Schmidt

cc: John Winn, Commissioner of Education
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research paper analyzes various policy options for increasing access to the baccalaureate degree in Florida while targeting place-bound, nontraditional students. The current policy as stipulated in s. 1007.33, Florida Statutes, authorizes community colleges to issue specific baccalaureate degrees in high-demand areas based upon economic need and student demand.

The issue of allowing community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees is controversial because of the potential for “mission creep”. Community colleges have a strong connection to the economic development and workforce needs of their communities. In addition, the traditional role of community colleges is growing in importance due to the technical nature of projected employment growth.

The following policy options were analyzed: Maintaining the current policy; strengthening the current policy while considering allowing BAS (Bachelor of Applied Science) degree offerings by community colleges; and increasing partnerships with established public and private institutions. These options were evaluated based upon certain criteria including mission, cost, availability of resources, and degree of public policy support. Interviews were conducted with professionals within the education field and related government agencies.

Based on a review of the professional and academic literature and interviews with stakeholders and knowledgeable observers, the study recommends that more partnerships be established with existing public and private institutions to increases baccalaureate access. One of the main benefits to this option is that community colleges are more likely to remain true to their original mission.
Acknowledgements

While I extend my gratitude to many people for the accomplishment of this report, I am particularly grateful to Mr. Edward L. Cisek and Mr. Howard V. Campbell of the Florida Department of Education for their continual encouragement and support. I also thank the people interviewed for their time and willingness to share their knowledge and opinions for this paper. I am very fortunate to work in an environment that truly advocates its educational mission.
I. PROBLEM STATEMENT

While Florida ranks third in the nation in terms of the number of associate degrees awarded, it ranks 47th in the number of bachelor degrees awarded. In an attempt to improve educational access and respond to the workforce needs of the community, beginning in 2001, community colleges have been given authority to offer specific four-year baccalaureate degrees based upon economic need and student demand. Section 1007.33, Florida Statutes (F.S.), is intended to increase baccalaureate offerings to place-bound, nontraditional students by authorizing “site-determined baccalaureate degree” offerings by community colleges. Currently, four community colleges have been approved to offer bachelor’s degrees: St. Petersburg College, Chipola College, Miami Dade College and Okaloosa-Walton College.

This expansion to the community college mission has caused numerous debates over the necessity and benefits of community college baccalaureate programs. This is a controversial issue because of the potential for “mission creep” within community colleges and concerns about whether they will be able to retain their original mission. Community colleges have a strong connection to the economic development and workforce needs of their communities. According to academic and professional literature, the traditional role of community colleges is growing in importance due to the technical nature of projected employment growth. Since the community college baccalaureate movement is a fairly recent issue, very little research has been conducted and limited resources are available for this purpose. Even so, this paper presents a preliminary analysis of this newly emerging trend by considering various policy options. These include: (1) Maintaining the current policy of offering specific 4-year degrees to
those community colleges which can show economic need and student demand; (2) Strengthening the current policy while considering the option of allowing BAS degree offerings (newly emerging baccalaureate degrees directly related to the workforce) and (3) Increasing partnerships with public and private institutions through incentives. These options are analyzed with respect to several evaluative criteria including the ability to maintain original mission, cost, availability of resources and the degree of public policy support.
II. BACKGROUND & LITERATURE REVIEW

Background

Community colleges play an important role in American higher education. Historically, they originated to increase access to four-year programs and to provide technical degrees directly related to local employment needs. Recently, rising numbers of college-age Floridians and rising costs in higher education have led policy makers to allow a few community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees. However, this policy must be evaluated in the context of the historical mission of community colleges and projected economic trends. The background information gives a brief history on the development of community colleges within the U.S. and the emergence of community college baccalaureate offerings. The literature review focuses on projected employment growth as well as arguments both for and against the community college baccalaureate movement.

The Development of Community Colleges

The first “junior” college or community college in America was created in 1901 in Joliet, Illinois. The founding president of the University of Chicago, William Rainey Harper, developed the plan for a junior college in order to increase access to higher education without hindering the already existing four-year colleges. The burgeoning of community colleges in America occurred after World War II when millions of former servicemen and women were given a tuition voucher under the GI Bill to attend college.

The 1947 Truman Commission Report on Higher Education gave rise to the further expansion of American community colleges. This report requested a major expansion of educational services to assist all Americans in attaining their educational
potential. The report stated in part, “The American people should set as their ultimate goal an educational system in which at no level…will a qualified individual…encounter an economic barrier to the attainment of the kind of education suited to his aptitudes and interests” (Floyd, Skolnik & Walker, 2005, p.11). The report made no mention that community colleges were limited to offering two-year programs. Instead, it emphasized the importance of the main goals of community colleges: open-door policy and responsiveness to community needs. Thus, the name “community college” was suggested for colleges designed to serve local educational needs.

The final phase of the community college expansion occurred in the 1960’s as a result of the Baby Boomers reaching college age and the Vietnam War veterans returning home. During the 1960’s, the number of junior colleges more than doubled and enrollments quadrupled. The explosion in community college enrollment was mainly due to the increase in part-time students. Between 1970 and 1995, part-time enrollments increased 222 percent whereas full time enrollments increased by 63 percent (Kane & Rouse, 1999, p.2). Today approximately 65 percent of community college students attend part-time and almost half of all undergraduates who attend college, including the majority of first generation and minority students, attend one of the nations community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges and American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AACC), 2004, p.vii).

While four-year colleges and universities generally target traditional college students, community colleges often appeal to nontraditional students. Almost 36 percent of community college students are at least 30 years old versus 22% of public four-year college students. In addition, 84% of community college students work while attending
college compared to 78% of students at public four-year colleges (Kane & Rouse, 1999). The approximate breakdown of community college students in terms of ethnicity is 70% White, 11% Black and 11% Hispanic.

The original focus of community colleges was to serve as a “transfer function”, whereby students would complete two years of general undergraduate education. Those students who chose to continue education and were capable, would then transfer to a four-year college to complete a bachelor’s degree. More than 1,100 community colleges across the United States are serving the educational needs of approximately 11 million students (Milliron & Wilson, 2004, p.52). America’s community colleges have expanded more in the past 50 years than any other form of public education. As a result, they have developed a broad range of additional programs whereby community colleges are granting degrees, certificates and diplomas in both credit and non-credit areas. In addition to providing standard academic education, such as AA and AS degrees, they provide occupational training, workforce development, remediation, adult basic education and life-long learning. Thus, community colleges are strongly linked to the economic, educational and social development of the community in which it serves. Community college students usually find the lower cost of tuition along with the convenient location and course time offerings most appealing.

Florida’s Community College System

Florida’s Community College System began in 1933 with the establishment of Palm Beach Community College as Florida’s first public two-year college. This remained the only public two-year college in the state until 1947, when St. Petersburg Junior College was changed from private to public and Pensacola Junior College and
Chipola Junior College were established. With the creation of Pasco-Hernando Community College in 1972, the Florida Community College System was completed with 28 community colleges (Florida Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education (FDCCWE), 2004).

A report titled “The Community Junior College in Florida’s Future,” issued to the 1957 Legislature, recommended a state plan to provide for 28 junior colleges located within commuting distance for 99 percent of the state population (Florida Association of Community Colleges (FACC), 2004, p.2). This report became accepted as the master plan for Florida’s community colleges and in 1957, the legislature created the Division of Community Colleges as a separate entity within the Department of Education. In 1968, the legislature approved measures to release colleges from the jurisdiction of the local school boards and established locally autonomous district boards of trustees to govern each of the community colleges.

In the early 1990’s, the legislature added economic development as a primary mission of the colleges, and in 1996 and 1997, the legislature addressed the substantive role of colleges in workforce development. In 1996, Florida’s community colleges became the first state agency to embrace performance-based budgeting.

Many changes have occurred in the political structure of the Department of Education in the past few years. In November 1998, Florida’s voters approved a constitutional revision to reduce the number of elected members of the Florida Cabinet from six to three effective in January of 2003. As part of the revision, the Commissioner of Education, along with the Secretary of State, were eliminated from the Cabinet. In addition, the positions of Comptroller and Treasurer were combined. The constitutional
revisions eliminated the previous role of the Cabinet as the State Board of Education. Article IX, Section 4 of the Constitution of the State of Florida established a state board of education consisting of seven members. The 2000 Legislature adopted the Florida Education Governance Reorganization Act of 2000, which created a seven-member board called the Florida Board of Education. This was a temporary board, which coexisted with the elected State Board of Education (SBE) until the constitutional amendment went into effect.

An eleven-member Education Governance Reorganization Transition Task Force appointed in 2000 was assigned to investigate and make recommendations to the legislature on issues regarding mission and goals, performance measures and standards and implementation strategies. Many of the recommendations of the Transition Task Force concerned the governance of higher education and were incorporated in the Education Code Rewrite (SB 1162), which was considered by the 2001 Legislature. This bill conformed the Florida Statutes to the constitutional amendments passed by the voters in 1998. This bill also abolished the State Board of Community Colleges and the Board of Regents effective July 2001 and created a local board of trustees for each of the state universities, similar to that of the community colleges. The bill provided that the seven-member Florida Board of Education and Commissioner of Education would be appointed by the Governor and approved by the Senate. The Chancellor of the Florida Community College System was to be appointed by the Florida Board of Education. In November of 2002, put forward by U.S. Senator and former Governor Bob Graham, Florida voters approved a constitutional amendment to re-establish a governing body called the Board of Governors, to oversee the state university system.
One of the main issues considered by the 2001 Legislature concerned increasing access to the baccalaureate degree in Florida, especially for place-bound and nontraditional students. In addition, there was a strong need to fill such high-demand job areas as teachers and nurses. Several proposals were considered including the following: Increasing enrollment funding for undergraduate programs in the university system; creating a middle-tier of colleges (which would only focus on baccalaureate degrees); expanding access through increased funding for partnerships with private colleges and universities; and authorizing community colleges to offer specific baccalaureate degrees.

Currently, the most significant and critical occupational shortfalls in Florida are in the areas of teachers and nurses. Approximately 200,000 new teachers will be needed in Florida within the next decade (FDCCWE, 2005). Concerning the shortage of educators, in 2004, Senate Bill 2986 was passed for the establishment of Educator Preparation Institutes (EPIs). This bill allows accredited postsecondary institutions to seek approval from the Department of Education to create EPIs to provide the following: (1) Professional development for teachers for classroom improvement and for recertification purposes; (2) Trainings for substitute teachers; (3) Paraprofessional instruction; and (4) Competency-based instruction for baccalaureate degree holders leading to temporary and full teacher certification.

Educator Preparation Institutes will provide an alternate route to certification for mid-career professionals and college graduates who were not education majors. All EPIs that offer competency-based alternative certification must meet the same standards and same accomplished educator practice as any 4-year teacher education program, including field experience and a passing score on the Professional Educators Certification Test.
Currently 25 of the 28 community colleges have submitted proposals for the EPIs and many are planning to begin offering these competency-based certification programs by this summer or the fall. Thus, the establishment of EPIs is another method by which the state is attempting to meet the high demand for classroom teachers.

**The Emergence of Community College Baccalaureate Programs**

The newly emerging “baccalaureate movement” has occurred in Canada as well as several states within the U.S. including Texas, Utah, Arkansas, Nevada, and Florida. In 2003, Hawaii began to authorize baccalaureate programs in a few community colleges. Currently the states of Georgia, Louisiana and Arizona are pursuing legislation related to this issue. Supporters of this trend tend to feel that just as community colleges democratize higher education through their open-door philosophy and offering of associate degrees, they must also democratize higher education by offering bachelor’s degrees.

In Canada, for example, the community college baccalaureate movement began in the 1980’s. Today, more than a quarter of Canada’s community colleges offer at least one baccalaureate program. Vocational training institutions are generally more prominent in Canada as compared to the United States. Whereas there are 76 universities in Canada, there are at least twice as many community colleges. In contrast, in 2000, the United States had 1,406 universities and 1,184 community colleges (Floyd, Skolnik & Walker, 2005, p.53). Canada has focused on having community colleges meet the workforce needs by offering an applied type of baccalaureate degree in fields where programs are not commonly offered by universities. The baccalaureate programs in Alberta and Ontario were centered round this goal. A rather different approach was taken
in British Columbia’s community colleges, where the main motivation was to increase access to conventional university degree programs. As a result, several community colleges in British Columbia were intended to transform into university-colleges, thereby providing the best of both university and college programs and services to the region.

**The Baccalaureate Movement Within Florida’s Community Colleges**

In an attempt to meet the workforce needs of the community, several community colleges in Florida have recently begun offering baccalaureate degrees in high-demand areas. In 2001, Florida’s community colleges were granted authority by s. 1007.33, F.S., to offer “site-determined baccalaureate degree access.” This was done in large part to increase access to the baccalaureate degree for place-bound, nontraditional students. St. Petersburg College, which was the first college in Florida to offer targeted baccalaureate degrees, is specifically authorized in section 1004.73, F.S. It states in part “The primary mission of St. Petersburg College is to provide high-quality undergraduate education at an affordable price for students and the state. The purpose is to promote economic development by preparing people for occupations that require a bachelor’s degree and are in demand by existing or emerging public and private employers in this state.” St. Petersburg College was followed by Chipola College, Miami Dade College and Okaloosa-Walton College. The initial degrees offered were in high-demand areas including education, nursing, and computer technology. Currently among the four colleges, a total of 19 baccalaureate degrees are being offered. Thirteen of the programs offered are in education areas of elementary education, exceptional student education, secondary mathematics, secondary sciences, and technology. One program offers a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing (at St. Petersburg College) and five Bachelor of
Applied Science degrees are offered in a variety of disciplines. (FDCCWE, 2005 March). At the present time, Edison College and Daytona Beach Community College are pursuing legislation related to baccalaureate offerings.

A newly emerging degree, called the Bachelor of Applied Science or BAS degree, is designed to articulate with the community college Associate of Science (AS) degree or Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree (Proctor, 2005). The BAS degree combines applied technology course work from the AS or AAS degrees with general education and elective courses. Whereas most general bachelor degrees have the general studies taught in the first two years of school, the BAS degree is reversed in the sense that it offers general studies in the last two years while the specific, career-based studies are taught in the first two years. The BAS degree is designed to enhance job progression rather than career entry. In promoting career advancement, it allows students to enhance their technical specialization and work experience by gaining leadership and higher education skills.

This specialized degree may be better aligned with the economic development and workforce mission of community colleges than general baccalaureate degrees. In addition, most state universities do not offer such degrees. Currently, the University of South Florida is the only state university offering a BAS degree and the University of Central Florida is proposing to offer a BAS degree by fall of 2005. St. Petersburg College offers the BAS degree in twelve areas of concentration and Okaloosa-Walton College offers a BAS degree in Project and Acquisitions Management.

According to s.1007.33, F.S., community colleges are to follow certain guidelines before becoming authorized to grant baccalaureate degrees. The colleges are to develop a
proposal, which must include the following information: (1) Demand for the baccalaureate degree program as identified by the workforce development board, local business and industry, local chambers of commerce and potential students; (2) Substantiation of unmet need for graduates of the proposed degree programs; and (3) Assurance that the community college has the facilities and academic resources to deliver the program.

The proposal is submitted to the Council for Education Policy Research and Improvement (CEPRI) for review and comment and then sent to the State Board of Education for final approval. CEPRI evaluates the proposal according to certain criteria including need, impact, use of resources, implementation, accountability and cost-effectiveness. Upon approval by the State Board of Education, the community colleges are to pursue accreditation by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Each additional baccalaureate program to be offered must be approved by the State Board of Education.

Section 1007.33(4), F.S., states, “A community college may not terminate its associate in arts or associates in science degree programs…The Legislature intends that the primary mission of a community college, including a community college that offers baccalaureate degree programs, continues to be the provision of associate degrees that provide access to the university.” The recent trend of allowing community colleges to offer specific baccalaureate programs is related to the legislature’s new K-20 educational goals, which include providing a more seamless and student-centered approach to achieving a high level of learning and achieving a more coordinated and cost-effective use of available resources.
Literature Review

Conflicting Views on Employment Growth (the Need for Baccalaureate Degrees)

While literature and previous research on this recent issue are fairly limited, several sources indicate conflicting views on projected employment growth. In addition, some literature expresses varying views concerning reasons for either being in support of or against the community college baccalaureate movement.

In regards to job projections, some literature suggests that the need and importance for access to baccalaureate degrees is growing. A study titled “Tomorrows Jobs” conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor, projects that employment opportunities requiring a bachelor’s degree will increase by 22 percent whereas those jobs requiring an associate degree will increase by 32 percent (Floyd, Skolnik & Walker, 2005, p.98). On average, a worker with an associate degree will earn 20 to 30% more than a high school graduate, whereas a worker with a baccalaureate degree will earn 40% more than a high school graduate (AACC, 2004, p.1). Besides the individual economic returns, higher education can provide increased personal and societal benefits such as improved health care, increased tax revenues, higher levels of civic participation and lesser reliance on government. Approximately 42% of community college students indicate attaining a baccalaureate degree as their goal, yet only an estimated 26% of students manage to transfer to bachelor-level programs (AACC, 2004, p.11).

The Fact Book Bulletin of the Southern Regional Education Board states, “From 1983 to 1994 occupations requiring college degrees were the fastest growing part of the economy. The projections for 1994 to 2005 are that this trend will continue. Of the 191
occupations projected to have above average growth rates, 34 percent require a four-year college degree or higher. “(Walker, 1997).

Alternate views indicate a more pressing need for blue-collar jobs and vocational training in the years to come. According to a report by CBS News recently, there is a shift towards the blue-collar comeback in America. This is mainly due to the baby boomers retiring, thereby creating worker shortages in areas such as auto repair, health care, construction and skilled trades. The Labor Department predicts approximately 2.5 million new skilled trade workers will be needed over the next eight years. It is projected that there will be a growing demand for blue-collar workers over the next thirty years. Thus, community colleges are experiencing an in-flux of workers seeking job skills (CBS News, 2005). Community colleges also play an important role as an increasing number of students with bachelor’s degrees attend community colleges to obtain technical training and certification past their bachelor’s degrees.

Another view on future education trends is held by Mr. Ed Barlow, President of Creating the Future, Inc. Mr. Barlow, who is considered a “futurist,” is a professional speaker on the influences, which will affect industry, organizations, professions, and community settings. According to Mr. Barlow, the largest area of job growth in the near future will be in higher paying jobs. Because of population growth and retirement of the baby boomers, higher skills and advanced postsecondary education will be required for “knowledge technologists.” As a result, the importance of two-year degrees will become more necessary than higher education degrees. Sixty-five percent of high-paying newly created jobs will require 2-year degrees. In approximately ten years, the entry-level wages for those people with 2-year degrees will equal the wages for those with 4-year
degrees. Mr. Barlow pointed out that there will still be a necessity for advanced degrees and higher education such as held by doctors and scientists, but for every one of these professions, four people with 2-year degrees will be needed to assist in carrying out the work (Telephone Interview, 2005, March 25). Concerning education, Mr. Barlow feels “The biggest change is that education will be taken to the learner.” He has previously advised community colleges that, “by 2005, they will have to be organized so their delivery is one-third campus-based, one-third on the job, and one-third electronic.” (Barlow, 2005).

The 2002-12 employment projections published by the United States Department of Labor indicate an associate or bachelor’s degree is the most significant source of post-secondary education or training for 6 of the 10 fastest growing occupations. In addition, short-term on-the-job trainings is the most significant source of post-secondary education or training for 6 of the 10 occupations with the largest job growth (United States Department of Labor, 2005). According to the Council for Education Policy and Improvement, “Florida’s economic development demands a variety of skilled workers, most of which do not require a bachelor’s degree. For projected occupational needs through 2008, less than 20% of the projected new job openings are in occupations that require university level education….Ensuring that these students have adequate skills is an important function of the K-20 system as it relates to integrating what is needed in Florida’s workforce and what is being produced by Florida’s education system.” (Council for Education Policy Research and Improvement (CEPRI), Revised 2003, March).

Concerning the economic aspect of community colleges, in June of 1999, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, noted the importance of community colleges in his
speech to the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the US House of Representatives: “This process of stretching toward our human intellectual capacity is not likely to end anytime soon. Indeed, the dramatic increase in the demand for on-the-job technical training and the major expansion of the role of our community colleges in teaching the skills required to address our newer technologies are persuasive evidence that the pressures for increased learning are ongoing” (Milliron & Wilson, 2004, p.2).

While attempting to meet the economic challenges and workforce needs of the economy, community colleges are increasingly sought for their cost-effective, flexible, fast-tracked, and high-quality programs.

Arguments For and Against the Community College Baccalaureate Movement

Other literature seems to focus on arguments either for or against the community college baccalaureate movement. For instance, according to Kenneth Walker, President of Edison Community College, the benefits of offering baccalaureate degree offerings include:

- Increased geographical, financial and academic access to higher education
- Greater cost efficiencies due to utilization of existing infrastructure
- Maximization of human resources (i.e. community college faculty qualified to teach upper division courses
- Greater success among nontraditional or returning students through smaller classes and greater scheduling options
- Expanded community college commitment to economic development and greater response to community needs for specialized programs

Concerning the mission of community colleges, Walker points out that when the mission of community was expanded during the 1960’s to include programs in vocational, technical and adult education, the change in focus and culture did not alter the fundamental philosophy of the colleges or its local governance. Being responsive to the fluctuating needs of society is a basic purpose of community colleges. According to
Walker, community colleges can educate bachelor-degree recipients at about one-half the cost that states pay universities to do the same job (Evelyn, 2003).

An alternate view giving arguments against the baccalaureate movement is taken by George Boggs, President of the American Association of Community Colleges. A main issue of allowing community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees is whether or not they will maintain their original mission. George Boggs is concerned that there is always the possibility community colleges will lose sight of their intended missions. According to Boggs, “History has shown us that it’s hard for an institution not to lose its original values when it makes this kind of leap.” (Evelyn, 2003). For example, community colleges receiving baccalaureate degrees in Arkansas and Utah eventually became state colleges. In addition, the four community colleges in Florida offering baccalaureate degrees chose to drop the word “community” from their names. The Chronicle of Higher Education has reported that Miami Dade College has slowly begun to behave like a four-year institution and wants to add more bachelor’s degrees and expand its honors college (Floyd, Skolnik & Walker, 2005, p.89). Mr. Boggs is more inclined to support an alternate option involving university partnerships with community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees. “The university-partnership model not only increases access but gets the two sectors of higher education to work together. That’s something we can all agree that we need a little more of.” (Evelyn, 2003).

The expansion to the community college mission has caused numerous debates over the necessity and benefits of the baccalaureate degree offerings. A main concern involves the potential for “mission creep” within community colleges and whether they will be able to retain their original mission. According to literature, the traditional role of
community colleges is growing in importance due to the technical nature of projected employment growth. Although previous research is fairly limited on this recent topic, a preliminary analysis will be conducted in an attempt to consider various policy options. These include: (1) Maintaining the current policy of offering specific 4-year degrees to those community colleges which can show economic need and student demand; (2) Strengthening the current policy while considering the option of allowing BAS degree offerings (newly emerging degrees directly related to the workforce) and (3) Increasing partnerships with public and private institutions through incentives. These options will be analyzed with respect to several evaluative criteria including the ability to maintain original mission, cost, availability of resources and the degree of public policy support.
III. METHODOLOGY & EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

Methodology

The analysis for this report involved the use of the following sources:

- Current statutes and legislation
- Departmental newsletters and publications
- Interviews with professionals within the education field and related governmental agencies
- Articles and media sources
- OPPAGA Report

Interviews (n=14) were conducted during March and April of this year. The people interviewed included professionals within the education field and related governmental agencies. To increase responsiveness and protect anonymity, they were informed prior to the interview that no names would be mentioned in the report. The following questions were asked of each interviewee in addition to any further information he/she wanted to provide:

- What is your overall opinion of the baccalaureate offerings by Florida’s Community Colleges?
- Do you think it is the most effective means of extending baccalaureate offerings and if not, what alternatives would seem more effective?
- What do you feel is the greatest obstacle for community colleges to overcome while offering baccalaureate degrees?
- Do you have any suggestions for improvement in the current policy related to this issue?
Evaluative Criteria

Evaluative criteria were used to pinpoint some of the more important aspects, which the legislature would most likely consider when deciding policy related to this issue. The evaluative criteria chosen for this analysis were the ability to maintain the original mission, cost, availability of resources, and public policy support. Most of the criteria used to evaluate the proposed options were qualitative in nature.

Each criterion was scored on a scale of 1 to 5 with a rating of 5 being the most favorable and a rating of 1 being least favorable. This will allow for trade-offs to be considered among the criteria since it is expected that no single alternative option will be rated above the others for all criteria. The scores will then be summed with the policy option receiving the highest aggregate score being selected as the best option. A description of the four criteria are listed below:

- Ability to maintain original mission refers to how well the policy allows the community college system to retain its original intended mission, which is closely related to the workforce and economic needs of the community. Interviews and academic articles assisted in determining the rating of this criterion.

- Cost refers to both the cost to the students as well as the cost to the state. Data for this criterion was obtained from the financial section of the Division of Community Colleges as well as a report from OPPAGA.

- Availability of resources includes the necessary space and buildings as well as the accreditation required to offer baccalaureate degrees. Those colleges proposing to offer baccalaureate degree must fulfill accreditation requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). This includes meeting guidelines regarding library holdings, facility upgrades, and the minimum number of course hours to be taught at the upper level by faculty holding a PhD.

- Public policy support refers to the amount of support for the policy option from professionals within the education field and related governmental agencies. This was determined from academic articles, interviews and the appropriations history for the past several years.
IV. MANAGEMENT POLICY OPTIONS

This section analyzes three possible policy options for increasing the baccalaureate degree offerings in Florida while targeting place-bound, nontraditional students. While there are innumerable options to consider, these options seem to be the most viable and have been previously considered by the legislature. These options will be analyzed and evaluated based upon the criteria established in the Methodology section.

Option One: Maintain Current Policy

The current policy as stipulated in s. 1007.33, F.S., allows a Florida community college to seek authorization to provide upper division coursework and award baccalaureate degrees in specific high-demand fields. In this process, a college must submit a proposal to the Council for Education Policy Research and Improvement (CEPRI) for review and comment. The college is required to obtain final approval from the State Board of Education. Approval is dependent upon three criteria: documented demand for the program, unmet need in the area and the existence of necessary infrastructure to deliver the program.

Mission: The greatest argument against this option is the likely possibility that community colleges will lose sight of their original intended mission. According to s. 1004.65(6), F.S., the primary mission and responsibility of community colleges includes providing lower level undergraduate instruction and awarding associate degrees as well as preparing students directly for careers requiring less than baccalaureate degrees. Section 1004.65(7), F.S., states that a separate and secondary role for community
colleges includes providing upper level instruction and awarding baccalaureate degrees as specifically authorized by law. Even so, when money gets tight in the future and funding is cut back, there is the question as to what programs would be reduced in funding. Thus, there is great concern that allowing community college baccalaureate offerings by community colleges will dilute their original mission.

**Cost:** Just as retaining the mission is one of the greatest arguments against the current policy, the cost to students is one of the strongest arguments in support of this option. In 2004, the legislature capped tuition for community college baccalaureate degree programs at 85% of the tuition charged by state universities. This was done to reflect the fact that universities receive funding to support their research missions, which community colleges do not share. In 2004-05, this difference amounts to $10.22 per credit hour or $306.60 in savings for a student taking 30 credit hours over an academic year (Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability (OPPAGA), 2005). Concerning cost to the state, Senate bill 2254 is presently being considered by the House and Senate to fund the community colleges at 85% of the state funding per student provided to state universities for enrollment growth. This would be a savings to the state of approximately 15%. Currently community college expenditures per credit hour are higher than those of state universities due to high start up costs and low initial enrollment. In order to avoid creating programs with high long-term costs, it is extremely important that community colleges plan their programs accordingly to ensure they have enough students to lower expenditure cost to meet the credit hour average of state universities.

**Availability of Resources:** For the most part, community colleges have the necessary buildings and space required to expand the baccalaureate degree offerings.
However, the accreditation process must be overcome. Those colleges offering baccalaureate degrees must fulfill the accreditation requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). This includes meeting criteria regarding library holdings, facility upgrades and the minimum number of course hours to be taught at the upper level by faculty holding PhDs (OPPAGA, 2005). According to SACS, at least 25% of the discipline course hours in each undergraduate major are to be taught by faculty members holding a doctorate’s degree. If community colleges do not have enough resources to meet accreditation requirements on an ongoing basis, this puts at risk not only the accreditation for baccalaureate programs but the associate degree programs as well. This is the case at Chipola College, which is currently under probation for accreditation.

Public Policy Support: The current policy on community college baccalaureate offerings has gained wide support, especially from people in larger communities. By looking at the appropriations history for baccalaureate offerings over the past three years, the trend shows a definite increase in funding. For the 2001-02 fiscal year, the total amount appropriated was $937,611. For the 2002-03 fiscal year, the amount increased to $5,069,400 and in 2003-04, the funding had actually dropped to $3,748,825. This was due to non-recurring funds for start-up costs. Even so, the amount appropriated had jumped to $7,132,144 for 2004-05 and the projected appropriations proposal for the 2005-06 fiscal year is $8,539,491 (FDCCWE, 2005, March 11). Thus, by looking at the funding trend over the past several years, there has been an increase in public policy support for the community college baccalaureate movement. However, a definite
majority of people interviewed did not indicate strong support for this option and instead preferred other options, including partnering.

**Option Two: Strengthen the Current Policy While Considering Authorizing Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) Degrees at Community Colleges**

The current process for authorizing community colleges to issue baccalaureate degrees does not ensure that resulting programs are coordinated with the strategic planning goals of the Board of Governors, which oversees the State University System. Thus, the community colleges and state universities have implemented separate strategic planning initiatives. Presently, the university strategic plan does not take into consideration the potential impact of community college baccalaureate degrees. As a result, long-term effects may create excess capacity for university and community college baccalaureate programs (OPPAGA, 2005).

**Mission:** The current policy could be enhanced to ensure future baccalaureate degree programs at community colleges meet workforce needs. Before seeking authority, community colleges could be statutorily required to show documentation of having pursued alternatives such as partnering with a state university. An improved policy could require the State Board of Education to coordinate the strategic plans of the community college and state university systems.

A new type of degree, known as a Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) degree, seems better targeted toward the workforce mission than a general bachelors degree. Basically this degree is an extension of the AA and AS degrees, which are currently offered by community colleges. Thus, the workforce orientation of this type of degree seems to fit better with the economic development and workforce mission of community
colleges. In addition, most state universities do not offer this type of degree so the option of partnering would not need to be considered (OPPAGA, 2005). At the present time, the University of South Florida is the only state university offering a Bachelor of Applied Science degree. The Board of Trustees at the University of Central Florida is considering a proposal to offer this degree by fall of 2005.

**Cost:** The current policy could be strengthened to ensure baccalaureate degree programs at community colleges are cost-effective. For instance, community colleges could be statutorily required to submit a five-year financial plan to ensure that the per-credit costs of the program will be no greater than the costs of similar state university programs at the end of the five-year period (OPPAGA, 2005). Baccalaureate degree programs should be discontinued if the following conditions exists: (1) excessive per-credit hour costs; (2) workforce needs are no longer being met; or (3) evidence of the erosion of the primary mission.

**Availability of Resources:** Under a strengthened policy, accreditation would still be required if community colleges choose to offer BAS degrees, however these degrees would be more related to the workforce mission of community colleges and therefore accreditation should be somewhat easier to obtain. The library holdings and facility upgrades would probably not require extensive additions since the BAS programs are a continuation of programs already offered at community colleges.

**Public Policy Support:** A strengthened policy, which makes it more difficult for community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees while considering allowing BAS degree offerings, may not receive as much support as the current policy. A strengthened approach would somewhat limit the types of baccalaureate degree offerings by
community colleges while attempting to align the degrees with the community colleges’ mission.

**Option Three: Increase Partnerships With Public and Private Institutions Through Incentives**

Section 1004.03, F.S., encourages cooperative programs, especially between those institutions located in the same regions of the state. Currently, 22 of the 28 community colleges within Florida partner with at least one state university. In addition, 12 private universities have partnered with community colleges to deliver upper division coursework leading to approximately 20 baccalaureate degrees at 18 community colleges (OPPAGA, 2005). According to the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida (ICUF), in 2004 their member institutions served approximately 3,000 students working toward baccalaureate degrees on community college campuses.

A main concern over partnering is that no uniform partnering process has been created. Perhaps a monetary incentive could be used to increase partnerships with established institutions. For instance, performance funding could be included in the funding formula, whereby more money is placed on AA and AS transfers seeking baccalaureate degrees in high-demand fields. Performance funding for community colleges is currently determined by the number of graduates, job placements and transfers to the universities.

**Mission:** By partnering with established public and private institutions, community colleges are able to maintain their original mission. Thus, there is virtually no concern over “mission creep” within community colleges.

**Cost:** The state’s start-up costs for partnering programs are generally low and the only additional funding needed is to cover additional enrollments generated by the
participating students. Utilizing partnerships with state universities would allow students to remain in their community while paying the same tuition rate as charged to all state university students.

Partnering with private institutions is generally a little more expensive than state universities. However, this additional cost can be offset by increasing funding for the Florida Resident Access Grant (FRAG) program. Private colleges that are members of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida (ICUF) have a mean cost per hour of $96 whereas community colleges offering upper division courses have a mean cost per hour of $70 (OPPAGA, 2005). More emphasis could be placed on providing resources to colleges to encourage partnering or contracting.

**Availability of Resources:** The accreditation process is a very strong argument for the partnering option. Since the partnering institution is required to be accredited, community colleges have no accreditation process to overcome.

**Public Policy Support:** This option retains the original mission of all partners involved, although it restricts the growth of community colleges. Interestingly, a definite majority of people interviewed for this paper tended to prefer the partnering option, while considering the community college baccalaureate offerings as a last resort. Thus, a fairly positive score was given for this criterion.

In summary, the option to increase partnerships through incentives scored very high for the ability to maintain the original mission of community colleges. It also scored very high in the availability of resources. A moderate score was given concerning the cost criteria and a fairly positive score was given for public policy support since most people interviewed preferred this option.
V. CONCLUSIONS

In an attempt to increase baccalaureate access in Florida by targeting place-bound, nontraditional students, beginning in 2001, the legislature authorized community colleges to issue specific baccalaureate degrees in high-demand areas. Section 1007.33, F.S., specifically addresses this issue of “site-determined baccalaureate degrees.” This expansion to the community college mission has caused numerous debates over the necessity and benefits of baccalaureate offerings by community colleges. A main concern involves the potential for “mission creep” within community colleges.

This report examines three policy options for increasing baccalaureate access to place-bound, nontraditional students. These options were analyzed with respect to several evaluative criteria that would most likely affect policy-making by the legislature. The results of the analysis are summarized below.

Summary of Policy Options and Evaluative Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Policy Options</th>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Availability of Resources</th>
<th>Public Policy Support</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain current policy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen policy while considering allowing BAS offerings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase partnerships through incentives</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The score for the two options of maintaining the current policy and strengthening the current policy while considering allowing BAS degree offerings were very close. The main difference was that the strengthening option was more in line with the traditional economic and workforce roles of community colleges. Thus, the criterion of maintaining the original mission scored higher for the strengthening option. Also, the availability of resources scored higher for the strengthened option since the BAS degrees are an extension of the current AA and AS degrees currently offered by community colleges.

The option of maintaining the current policy scored the lowest in terms of maintaining the original mission of community colleges and the availability of resources. A majority of people interviewed expressed concern over the potential “mission creep” within community colleges and preferred to utilize other options for increasing baccalaureate degrees. The availability of resources scored moderate. Although community colleges would most likely have the necessary space and buildings required for offering baccalaureate degrees, accreditation would have to be obtained. Several concerns brought up by people interviewed included workload, research, salary and tenure by community college faculty teaching upper division courses. There were also concerns about how universities would evaluate bachelor’s degrees from the community colleges and whether this degree would allow admission to a master’s degree program. In addition, questions were posed as to whether community colleges would retain their open-door policy while offering baccalaureate degrees.

Based on the four criteria analyzed, the option of increasing partnerships with established public and private institutions received the highest overall score. This was mainly due to the very high scores regarding maintaining the mission of community
colleges and the availability of resources. In addition, a definite majority of people interviewed (11 out of 14) tended to prefer the partnering option. Thus, a fairly positive score was given for public policy support.

Evaluation of these three options indicates that perhaps more emphasis should be placed on establishing partnerships with public and private institutions in an attempt to increase baccalaureate offerings to place-bound, nontraditional students. This analysis is limited by the criterion used to evaluate the policy options. If other criterion had been analyzed, perhaps studies on this issue would result in different findings and conclusions.

The traditional role of community colleges is growing in importance due to the technical nature of projected employment growth. Better alignment should be established concerning the mission of higher education and the labor market. While Florida ranks 47th in the nation in terms of the number of baccalaureate degrees awarded, it ranks third in terms of the number of associate degrees awarded. The Florida Community College System is a role model for the nation. Florida should focus on retaining this exemplary status of its community colleges and take pride of this fact.

Even if the current policy continues, there still exists the need for better coordination and alignment between the community college system and the state university system in terms of strategic initiatives and long-range goals for higher education.
REFERENCES


