

- SUBJECT:** Increasing community college baccalaureate degree programs
- COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 10 ayes — Murphy, Pacheco, Cortez, Frullo, Muñoz, Ortega, Parker, Raney, C. Turner, J. Turner
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — P. King
- WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Dana Harris, Austin Chamber of Commerce; Logan Spence, Lone Star College; Stephanie Hoffman)
- Against — None
- On — Mike Flores, Alamo Colleges District; Richard Rhodes, Austin Community College District; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Thomas Parkinson)
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code subch. L allows certain community colleges to offer baccalaureate degree programs in the fields of applied science, applied technology, and nursing if authorized by the Higher Education Coordinating Board. Sec. 130.306(b) limits community colleges to offering three baccalaureate degree programs, although community colleges that previously participated in a pilot project to offer baccalaureate degree programs may offer five such programs.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 3348 would raise the cap on the number of baccalaureate degree programs a public junior or community college could offer from three to five.
- The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2021.

SUPPORTERS  
SAY:

C SHB 3348 would allow community colleges to offer additional affordable bachelor's degree programs aligned to area workforce needs. Since the Legislature in 2017 authorized most community colleges to offer bachelor's degrees, demand for additional degree programs has grown, particularly in areas related to healthcare, technology, manufacturing, and construction.

The programs commonly serve adults who already are in a job such as nursing or information technology but need to acquire a bachelor's degree to move into management or earn a higher salary. Community college baccalaureate programs are developed in coordination with local business and industry leaders to ensure they are meeting an area workforce need. Most of the students entering these programs would not otherwise obtain a four-year degree, often because of family responsibilities or financial concerns. These students should have the opportunity to obtain a bachelor's degree without having to incur significant student debt.

Baccalaureate degree programs at community colleges must be approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, which must consider whether the program would unnecessarily duplicate degree programs offered by other higher education institutions and whether the college has long-term plans to finance the program and recruit any necessary faculty, among other factors.

CRITICS  
SAY:

No concerns identified.