



**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Graduates Making History as the First to Earn a Bachelor's Degree from a California Community College**

*SACRAMENTO, Calif.* – Nearly 140 students throughout the state are making history this graduation season as the first in the California Community Colleges to earn a bachelor's degree through the groundbreaking Baccalaureate Pilot Program.

“This spring we congratulate the first bachelor degree earners in the California Community Colleges. With this pilot program we are furthering the mission of providing tomorrow’s workforce with the education and the skills needed to earn solid middle-class wages and realize the promise of upward social mobility,” said California Community Colleges Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley. “We are proud of these graduates for breaking new ground and proud of all graduates at all 114 colleges who earned certificates and degrees.”

The Baccalaureate Pilot Program was created after Gov. Jerry Brown on Sept. 28, 2014 signed legislation authorizing the California Community Colleges Board of Governors, in consultation with representatives from the California State University and University of California systems, to establish a baccalaureate degree pilot programs meeting workforce needs at no more than 15 campuses as long as they did not duplicate existing options at the state’s public universities. Several of the 15 colleges began offering bachelor degree programs in the fall of 2015.

The Public Policy Institute of California projects that the state will face a shortage of 1.1 million workers with a bachelor’s degree unless it ramps up college access and completion. That would mean a population that is less skilled, relegated to working in jobs with less pay, resulting in more people relying on social services, with less tax dollars to fund those services.

Each baccalaureate program is uniquely designed for colleges that were carefully chosen based on the workforce demands in each region. A respiratory care baccalaureate program at Skyline College, for example, will help replenish a labor force in which up to half of respiratory therapists – who earn an average of nearly \$76,000 annually statewide and more than \$90,000 annually in the Bay Area – are nearing retirement age, and it will serve an area projected to add 2.1 million people by 2040. A bachelor’s degree in interaction design from Santa Monica College is preparing students for the skills required to work in a growing technology sector with an anticipated 47,000 job openings in 2019 alone.

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“The first week we started the baccalaureate program, Sharp Healthcare called me to collaborate in creating an employment pipeline straight from our college,” said Associate Professor Connie Renda, director of the health information management program at San Diego Mesa College, where 16 students graduated with a bachelor’s degree.

Similar dynamics are playing out elsewhere in the state. At Bakersfield College, for example, five of the seven students earning a bachelor’s degree in industrial automation have job offers, and the other two have internships that promise to evolve into full-time opportunities. Virtually everyone graduating with a bachelor’s degree at Mesa College is looking at career advancement opportunities once they pass a national certification exam sponsored by the American Health Information Management Association that marks the last step needed before becoming a registered health information administrator.

“A bachelor’s degree goes a long way in the health information management field, especially on the information technology and systems analysis side of things,” said Mesa College graduate Henry Cunningham. “This being a community college where the cost is next to nothing compared to some of the online programs that are out there, I’m saving a lot of money and I’m not going into debt, all while having a lot of doors opening for my career.”

Indeed, the average cost of earning a bachelor’s degree through the pilot program is \$10,000, a fraction of what students are paying elsewhere.

Community Colleges with a 2018 graduating class earning bachelor’s degrees include:

- **Bakersfield College** – Industrial Automation (7 graduates)
- **Cypress College** – Mortuary Science (5 graduates)
- **Feather River College** – Equine and Ranch Management (15 graduates)
- **Foothill College** – Dental Hygiene (23 graduates)
- **San Diego Mesa College** – Health Information Management (16 graduates)
- **Santa Monica College** – Interaction Design (18 graduates)
- **Shasta College** – Health Information Management (2 graduates)
- **Skyline College** – Respiratory Care (20 graduates)
- **West Los Angeles College** – Dental Hygiene (29 graduates)



*Health information management graduates from San Diego Mesa College celebrate during commencement on May 19.*

*The California Community Colleges, the largest provider of workforce training in the nation, offers Career Education programs at 114 community colleges across the state. With more than 200 programs taught by instructors and professionals in their field of study, Career Education programs allow students to learn by exploring, collaborating and doing with hands-on training and skills for the jobs of today and the future. The colleges also provide basic skills education in English and math, and prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions. To learn more, please visit [CaliforniaCareerEducation.com](http://CaliforniaCareerEducation.com). Visit [doingwhamatters.cccco.edu](http://doingwhamatters.cccco.edu) for information on the system's workforce initiative.*

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