

APPLIED BACCALAUREATE DEGREES

Opening doors for professional-technical graduates

Washington's community and technical colleges believe every degree should lead to bigger and better things for students, whether it's a well-paying career or step toward a higher degree-level. This commitment, along with increased degree requirements in certain professions, is at the heart of our applied bachelor's degrees.

Building upon a 2-year degree

Applied bachelor's degrees fill skill gaps in practical, market-driven fields where job requirements have advanced beyond the associate degree level. They add junior and senior levels to two-year professional-technical (vocational) degrees — such as a radiation technology degree — that would otherwise not transfer and count toward bachelor's degrees at universities. The degrees vary from a two-year management track on top of a two-year technical education, or a continuation of a professional-technical degree.

The idea is not to offer degrees in liberal arts fields, such as history or art, but to offer practical applied bachelor's degrees in specific fields that are in-demand within local communities.

Students build upon their already valuable two-year degrees to land higher-paying jobs and promotions, while employers get the rounded skill sets they seek in bachelor's degrees.



Increased opportunities, learning

Applied bachelor's degrees arguably offer the best of both worlds: hands-on training in a career embedded within a four-year degree. Employers seek graduates because they have technical expertise combined with communication, computation, critical thinking and people-management skills.

- In 2013-2014, 857 students were enrolled in bachelors of applied science programs. ¹
- For 2012 graduates, students earnings increased by an average of 38 percent, or \$17,451, after graduation. ²

Fifteen of our 34 community and technical colleges currently offer applied bachelor degrees in fields such as radiation and imaging sciences, cybersecurity, data analytics and manufacturing operations. For the most up-to-date list, visit www.SBCTC.edu and search for "applied bachelor's degrees."

Rigor matching demand

For colleges, getting permission to offer applied bachelor's degrees is a rigorous process. It requires an extensive review of employer demand, approval from the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and new accreditation as a baccalaureate-granting institution from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. The proposed degree must align with the college's mission and fill a need unmet by other colleges in the region.

More bachelor's degrees for WA

Applied bachelor's degrees are just one example of the important role community and technical colleges play in helping Washington residents pursue four-year degrees.

- Forty percent of public baccalaureate graduates in Washington start at a community or technical college.³
- Students who transfer from two-year colleges to four-year universities do just as well as those who started as freshmen, with similar GPAs and credits earned.⁴
- Transfer students make up 47 percent of business majors, 46 percent of health field majors, and 35 percent of majors in science, technology, engineering and math fields.⁵

Along with applied bachelor's degrees, traditional bachelor's degree programs also are available on nearly every community and technical college campus, through University Centers or other campus-based partnerships with four-year colleges and universities. Students with work and family responsibilities can pursue four-year degrees where they live, work and raise their families.

Doing what we do best

Applied bachelor's degrees build on the strengths of the two-year college system and fill local skills gaps. As the workforce changes with lightning speed and job demands outpace employees' credentials, applied bachelor's degrees at community and technical colleges serve Washington well.

Sources:

1. State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. (August 2014). Bachelor of Applied Sciences: Policy & Outcomes Evaluation. Olympia.
2. Ibid. Refers to 2012 graduates who had both pre and post earnings.
3. Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. (2013). *The Role of Transfer in the Attainment of Baccalaureate Degrees at Washington's Public Bachelor's Degree Institutions, Class of 2011*. Olympia.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

