

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 5401

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Authorizing community and technical colleges to offer bachelor degrees in computer science.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Nguyen, Rivers, Cleveland, Das, Dhingra, Gildon, Hasegawa, Holy, Keiser, Kuderer, Lias, Lovelett, Mullet, Saldaña, Stanford, Wellman and Wilson, C.).

Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development
Senate Committee on Ways & Means
House Committee on College & Workforce Development
House Committee on Appropriations

Background: In 2005, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) was authorized to select four community or technical colleges to develop and offer programs of study leading to applied baccalaureate degrees on a pilot basis.

An applied baccalaureate degree is a baccalaureate degree awarded by a community or technical college which expands on the curriculum from an associate of applied science degree, or its equivalent, and incorporates both theoretical and applied knowledge and skills in a specific technical field. In 2010, the pilot status and limitation on the number of colleges was removed. Before offering an applied baccalaureate degree, a college must receive approval from the SBCTC by demonstrating:

- resource capacity;
- the college has the appropriate faculty;
- there is student and employer demand; and
- the program would fulfill a gap in options available for students because the program is not offered by a public four-year institution of higher education in the college's geographic area.

All applied baccalaureate programs must be approved by the SBCTC. Under current law, Bellevue College is the only institution within the community and technical college system

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authorized to offer a bachelor's degree in computer science.

In 2020-21, there were 28 colleges offering applied baccalaureate degrees.

Summary: Subject to approval by the SBCTC, the community and technical colleges are authorized to offer bachelor's degrees in computer science.

The degree programs must be approved by the college board. Prior to approval, the college must submit a proposal for approval which includes:

- demonstrated capacity to build and sustain a high-quality program;
- access to qualified faculty to support a baccalaureate-level program;
- demonstrated demand to make the program cost-effective and feasible;
- employer demand for the program; and
- that the program fills a gap in options available for students not met by other public colleges in the geographic area.

The proposal must be submitted after December 1, 2021. The existing bachelor's degree in computer science at Bellevue College is exempt from the requirements in this bill.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	48	0
House	96	2

Effective: July 25, 2021