

WHAT RESEARCH ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE BACCALAUREATES TEACHES US ABOUT SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Today's Conversation

- Community colleges in the U.S.
- Evolution of community college baccalaureate (CCB)
- Factors affecting evolution
- Guiding frames
 - Privilege
 - Subordination
 - Opportunity
 - Outcomes
- Next steps for research

Community Colleges in the U.S.

*Community colleges are **public subbaccalaureate** postsecondary institutions with a comprehensive mission of providing academic, vocational, remedial, and continuing education. They are **distinguished from other subbaccalaureate institutions** such as private junior colleges, public and private vocational-technical or trade schools and two-year university branches... **[by] the role they play in providing college access, postsecondary vocational training, and community development...***

Dougherty, K. (2002)

Diversity of Community College Categories

- *2-year campus of university with separate accreditation*
- *2-year campus of university without separate accreditation*
- *2-yr campus of university system (not separately accredited)*
- *2-yr college of university system (separately accredited)*
- *Campus of multi-campus college*
- *Campus of multi-campus college of multi-college district*
- *College of multi-college district*
- *Main campus of multi-campus college*
- *Multi-campus college*
- *Multi-campus college of multi-college district*
- *Single campus college*

AACC (American Association of Community Colleges) (2022)

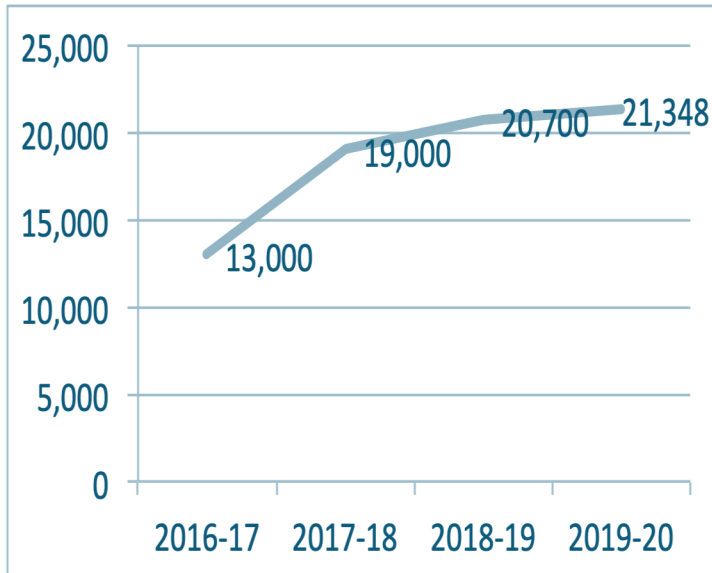
<https://www.aacc.nche.edu/college-finder/>

Evolution of CCB (Community College Baccalaureate) Degrees in U.S.

*The idea of the community college baccalaureate (CCB) degree emerged to provide greater opportunity for individuals to advance their education and to meet national and local needs for a more highly educated workforce. The early CCBs were designed to meet local and specific applied workforce needs, an earmark of the vast majority of those offered now. **Beginning slowly, but gaining momentum over the past two decades, the CCB movement has found its footing.***

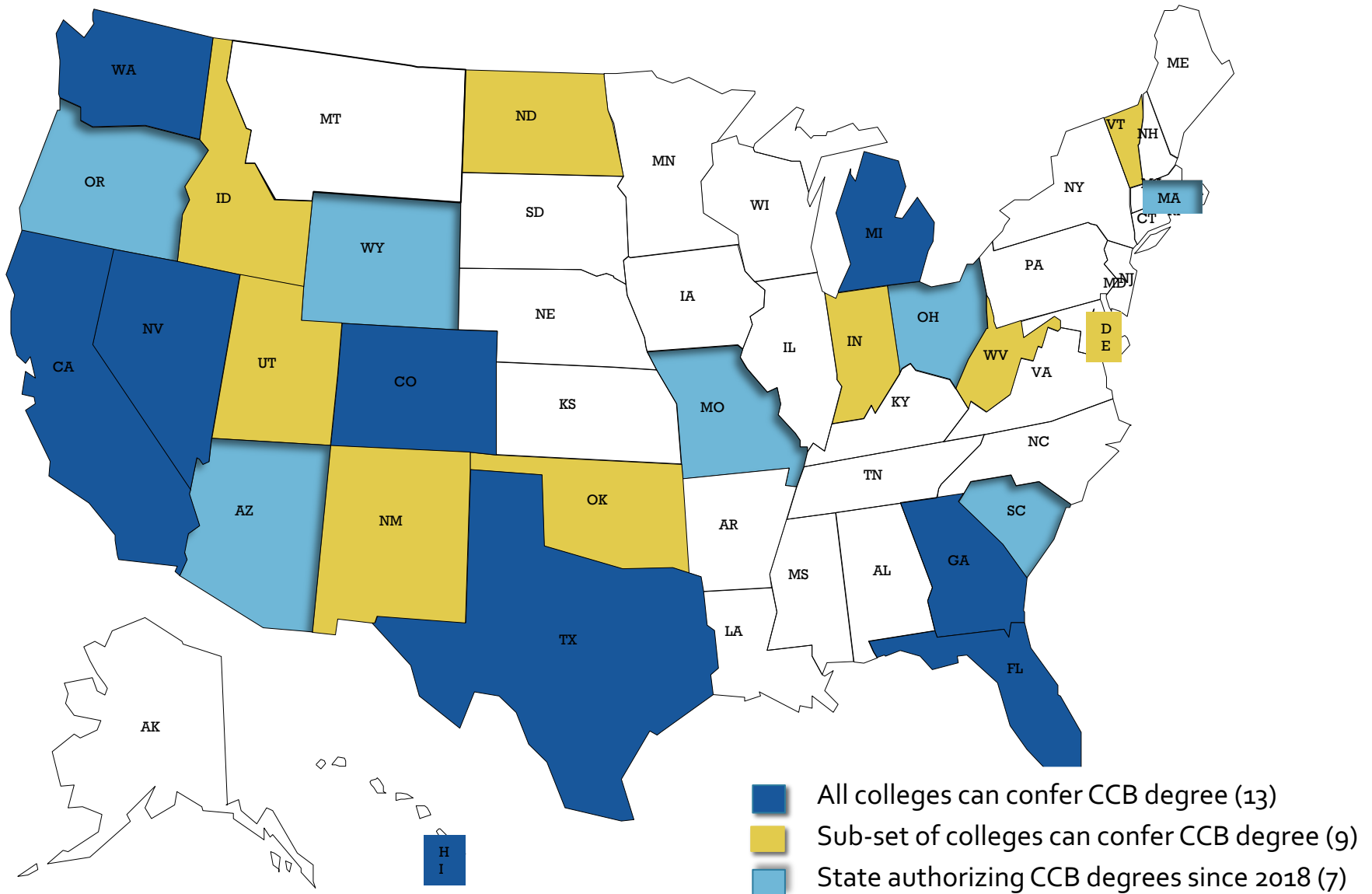
Floyd, D. L., & Skolnik, M. L. (2019)

Status the CCB Degrees in the U.S.



- CCBs authorized **25 states** authorizing at least 1 public community college (CCBA, 2022)
- **13** of these 25 states authorize all public community colleges to confer baccalaureate degrees (Soler, 2019)
- **7 states** enacted new CCB laws from 2018 to 2021 (Love et al., 2021)
- **145 public community colleges** & 46 independent colleges approved to confer baccalaureate degrees, with 21,348 CCB degrees conferred in 2019-20 (AACC, 2022)
- **40% of 34 tribal colleges** and U.S. territories award baccalaureates

25 States Counted as Authorizing CCB Degrees



Rationale for State Authorization (Pro & Con)

- “Unmet workforce needs”
- Changing student demographics
- Geographic need – “education deserts”
- Higher education system history & governance
- Policy forces and politics (champion)
- ***Acknowledged inequities***

Floyd, D. & Skolnik (2019); Skolnik, M. (2022)

CCB Degrees

- *serve as a gateway to advanced career opportunities and economic mobility;*
- *connect to the community's workforce needs and work in partnership to achieve economic development goals;*
- *allow students who desire to pursue a baccalaureate degree to do so in a way that is accessible and affordable;*
- ***Are structural evolution of higher education that provides access to groups not historically well served or represented in higher education;***
- ***Provide culturally and socially-inclusive environment to foster student growth and honor personal stories;***
- ***Ensure access and opportunity to programs grounded in social justice and equity;***
- ***support and protect the vibrancy of communities.***

SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Guiding Frames

Privilege

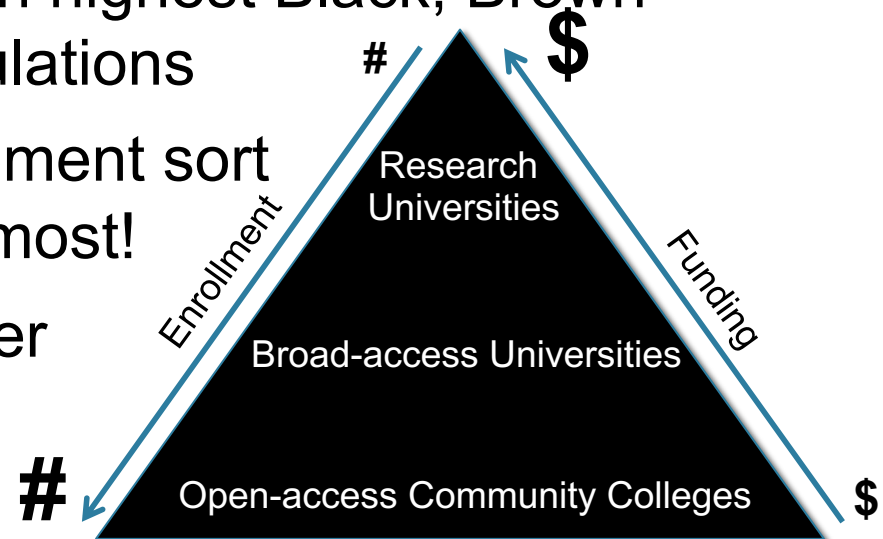
Subordination

Opportunity

Outcomes

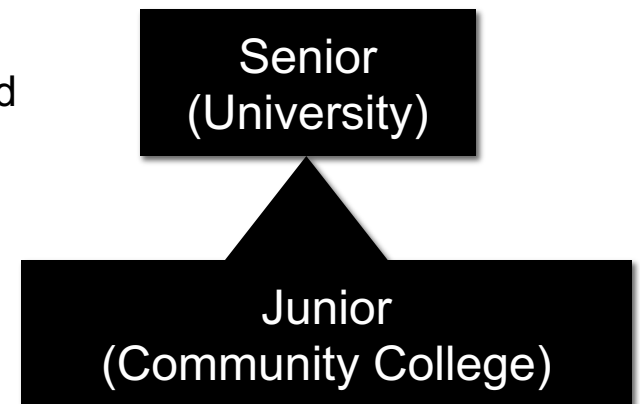
Privilege

- Euro-centric archetype: liberal arts & research = prestige
- Segregated institutions and student populations
- Lower funding of colleges with highest Black, Brown and low-income student populations
- Selective admissions & placement sort students but money matters most!
- More \$ and resources = higher completion rates



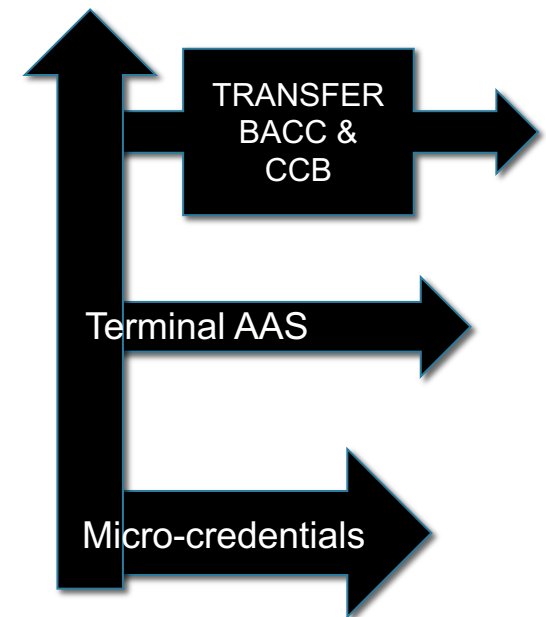
Subordination

- Transfer bureaucracies - rules unevenly endorsed & applied
- Widely different transfer experience by student, campus, programs (liberal arts, STEM, occupational) & degree type
- Inequity in transfer by race, income and age
 - 6-year cohort bacc completion rate only 13%; Strong correlation of bacc completion by income (Shapiro et al., 2017)
 - Systematic disadvantage in completion for minoritized students who transfer (Meza & Blume, 2020)
 - Lower rates of retention, completion and transfer for older students despite academic achievement (Bahr et al., 2020)



Opportunity

- Deficit framing of vocational education (CTE) continues despite shift to occupational & professional majors
- About half transfer students major in occupational & professional majors, including terminal AAS degrees
- AAS transfer may be growing for racially minoritized populations but lower bacc completion (D'Amico et al., 2020)
- “Career Pathways” focus on micro-credentials (short-term, non-credit but not degrees) (Eyster, 2020, 2021; Hedge & Carter, 2020; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2021)



Outcomes

- Declining enrollments accelerated during COVID
 - Existing CCB degree programs remained strong but may be declining
- New CCB degree programs on horizon
- Generally promising outcomes for CCB degrees on:
 - Enrollment of underserved populations (CCB relative to associates)
 - Completion of baccalaureate degrees (on par with transfer bacc)
 - Employment and earnings for baccalaureate (vs associate)
 - Employment and early earnings for CCB compared to university baccalaureate
- **BUT** lagging outcomes for Latinx students and women (Meza & Bragg, 2022; Meza & Love, 2022; Wright-Kim, 2022)
- **Still no studies of community or economic impact**

Lessons

Privilege

Higher education upholds and perpetuates inequities in access, experience and outcomes for underserved students

Subordination

Transfer bureaucracy advantages white privileged students while disadvantaging racially minoritized, low-income and older students

Opportunity

Higher education, including CC, perpetuates barriers to transfer and baccalaureate completion by race, income and age

Outcomes

Promising results on completion, employment and earnings but equity gaps Latinx students & women

Next Phase of Research

Next Phase:

- Study of state legislative landscape
- Institutional case-making, adoption and implementation
- Equity-minded CCB policies, programs, and practices

Questions new research will address:

- *What are the critical elements of high-quality, equitable CCB degrees?*
- *How do these CCB degrees address systemic inequities in higher education?*
- *What should higher education systems do to improve and move forward?*

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References available from author upon request.