

Bachelor of Science Nursing – SB 523

Background

In 2019, Senate Bill 3 passed, giving community colleges the ability to offer applied baccalaureate degrees (AB) if authorized by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). These workforce-oriented degrees are continuations of existing associate degrees (usually in career and technical fields), aimed at providing higher-level skills to the existing associate degree program.

HECC needs additional statutory language to clarify that the HECC may approve a Bachelor of Science in Nursing at a community college. The colleges would otherwise have to title the degree as a Bachelor of Applied Science in Nursing. Because the nursing industry does not recognize that degree title, students with such degrees would be at a significant disadvantage making the degree much less valuable. This means students would have a degree equivalent to a BSN with a title (BASN) that is unrecognized by employers and nursing boards.

OCCA is pursuing legislation that would clarify that the HECC may authorize BSN degrees at community colleges that have met all the relevant requirements.

Key Talking Points

Better, More Equitable Opportunities for Students

- A community college option for earning a BSN degree would increase access to 4-year nursing degrees across Oregon and particularly in rural areas.
- A student with a BSN has more opportunities for promotion and higher pay.
- Today, many community college RN graduates are paying more expensive out-of-state, online providers to attain a BSN. Local community college alternatives would provide a lower cost option.
- At one institution, Chemeketa Community College, 100 out of 175 nursing graduates over the last five years did not go on to earn a BSN. If this (and other) community college(s) were able to offer the BSN, it would provide a valuable local option to RN graduates who are not pursuing the BSN to continue their education with familiar faculty, learning environments, student supports and – critically – a more affordable career pathway than currently exists.
- An RN to BSN program from a community college will provide the opportunity for more equitable outcomes for underserved, often marginalized populations, as education from community colleges is a more accessible, affordable option.



TALKING POINTS

Addresses Local Healthcare Workforce Needs

- A community college BSN helps address the nursing shortage by giving more students the credentials they need (a BSN) to continue on to a master's degree (MSN), which is required to teach at the RN level. A shortage of nursing educators is one of the key chokepoints in the postsecondary nursing pipeline.
- The [Institute of Medicine \(IOM\) Future of Nursing Initiative](#) has recommended that organizations like hospitals should strive to achieve 80% BSN prepared nurses by 2020. Currently only 61-62% of Oregon nurses are educated at the BSN level or higher.
- In rural areas, where there are well-documented so-called "health care deserts," having a viable *local* and affordable option for nursing students to obtain credentials and educationally advance is critical to meeting health care needs.

Community Colleges Have the Capacity to Offer the RN to BSN

- Sixteen* out of 17 Oregon Community colleges currently offer 2-year Associate Degrees in Nursing (ADN) with a very successful track record for students. Successful completion of the Registered Nurse (RN) certification exam in 2021 is 85.8% for ADN programs statewide compared to 86.4% for BSN programs. (*Talk about that student passage rate at your college*)
- While it is true that clinical space is limited for nursing education programs, most of the bedside training in a hospital or other setting takes place in the first two years for the RN degree. In fact, an RN to BSN program does not require clinical training.
- All nursing programs that result in RN licensure require master's prepared nurse educators, which means that community college nursing faculty already have the credentials necessary to teach to the BSN.

**The one remaining community college will soon have an ADN program.*

