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COMMUNITY COLLEGES’ BACCALAUREATE DEGREES – TRENDS IN UNITED STATES AND A PRACTICAL SUCCESSFUL MODEL FOR CHANGE

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Introduction—Philosophical Underpinning: The most critically important aspect of meeting the demands of emerging global markets is linked to successful organizational transformation. Nations must be willing to embrace the restructuring of their current higher education system to meet the workforce demands of the new economies. Today’s major change efforts are riddled with natural ambiguity and fierce competition for scarce resources. As competition for scarce resources in public higher education grows and as the already inadequate funding decreases, colleges will continue to be called upon to bring about needed change quickly and effectively, and will be criticized, among other things, when they are not successful at doing so (Altbach, Gumport, & Johnson, 2001).

Educational organizations must contend with both the “what” and “how” of major change efforts (Fullan, 2001b; Kotter, 1996; Marshak, 1994; Nadler, 1997). Ackerman (1997), makes the same argument as Fullan, identifying the need to clarify the nature of change, which he contends is as essential as developing the leadership skills to lead organizations through major change initiatives (Bryan, 2005). Colleges in the United States of America are approaching transformation in many ways, but this author purports that successful efforts to create change must be orchestrated.

Educational change efforts are successful when marked by a clearly-shared vision, guiding coalitions with an abundance of emotional intelligence, inclusive teams, quick wins, unrushed steps, frequent communication, and finally, anchoring of the change into the fabric of the institution (Kotter, 2003); Broward College followed this formula and successfully transformed in the area of Baccalaureate Degree offerings.

Background Information: Meeting the needs of the community is part of Broward College’s mission and a major aspect of the College’s decision to pursue workforce degrees. In 2001, legislation enacted in Florida authorized community colleges to provide site determined Baccalaureate degrees. The authorization applied to identifiable critical job shortage areas in high-demand, high wage, employment fields. Further, in the United States trend data indicated that at least 23 states authorized community colleges to offer Baccalaureate Degrees. In addition, the cost of attaining a four-year degree at universities can be as much as six times higher than it is at community colleges. With many universities not focusing on workforce education programs, the community colleges are filling the educational gaps in our current system.

Analysis of the Workforce Need for the Baccalaureate Program: With 17.9 million residents in 2005, Florida is the fourth largest state in the country. Before 2030, Florida could surpass New York to become the third most populous state, trailing only California and Texas (Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research, U.S. Census Bureau). Broward County ranks as the 15th largest county in the United States and is Florida’s second most populous county with an estimated population of over 1,700,000 according to the updated Census Report for Broward County (updated in Aug. 31, 2007). Between 2000 and 2010, the county is projected to show a larger increase (28%) in the 15 to 24 age group. The Florida Department of Education projects that the number of high school graduates in Broward County will increase by 3,763 students between 2000 and 2009, an average annual increase of 376 graduates. The Broward County Population Forecasting Model projections show an increase

Of utmost importance across the United States are promoting of high-wages and high-skilled job growth, diversifying of the county’s industrial mix, expanding of the local tax bases, recruiting new industry, supporting existing industries, and creating new value-added employment opportunities for residents.

**Conclusion:** While informal discussions regarding the need for additional Baccalaureate options have been underway for several years, community colleges began their transformations with formal planning beginning at some colleges as early as 1997. With the release of the Pappas Report, which encouraged state legislators and State Boards of Education for Community Colleges to enter the Baccalaureate degree-granting arena, more community colleges, such as Broward College, began their work in earnest. For some colleges, the initial planning process took place over the past several years through effective institutional planning. For this author’s college, following *strategic imperatives*, Broward College’s program developments resulted in an academic and business model that assures seamless articulation, maximum access, increased quantity and quality options; assures a skilled workforce for economic development; and ultimately aligns workforce education programs with skill requirements of the new economy.

Our data-driven decisions based on the results of a student interest survey, workforce demand research, and an examination of the interest of stakeholders, proved to be a successful approach. Ultimately, all of our collaborative efforts and research confirmed the need for new Baccalaureate programs (Bryan, 2008). Careful consideration of our intended outcomes rests on data driven decisions, long and short-term planning, guiding coalitions, removal of barriers, and teams marked by an abundance of emotional intelligence; these elements are some of the critically important ingredients of successful higher education transformation. Having seriously accepted the challenges evoked by rapid organizational change, this author offers guidance to those involved in transforming in the area of Baccalaureate degree.
Citations


