



**ARIZONA STATE SENATE**  
***Fifty-Fifth Legislature, First Regular Session***

**FACT SHEET FOR H.B. 2523**

four-year degrees; community colleges

Purpose

Allows a community college district governing board (district board) to offer accredited baccalaureate degrees with prescribed limits. Outlines approval criteria and reporting requirements.

Background

A community college is an educational institution operated by a district board that provides a program not exceeding two years' training in the arts, sciences and humanities beyond grade 12 of the public or private high school course of study or vocational education. Programs may include terminal courses of a technical and vocational nature and basic adult education courses ([A.R.S. § 15-1401](#)).

Each district board adopts policies for community colleges under its jurisdiction to offer programs meeting the educational needs of the community, enforcing courses of study, appointing and employing officers and employees, and awarding degrees, certificates and diplomas on the completion of courses and curricula ([A.R.S. § 15-1444](#)). It also sets standards for the establishment, development, administration, operation and accreditation of community colleges in the district ([A.R.S. § 15-1445](#)).

H.B. 2523 could increase a community college's full-time equivalent student count and state aid, resulting in a potential increase in general fund formula costs beginning in FY 2024.

Provisions

***Baccalaureate Degree Guidelines***

1. Allows a district board to offer four-year baccalaureate degrees, accredited by a regional accreditation agency approved by the U.S. Department of Education, at a community college:
  - a) outside of Maricopa or Pima county; or
  - b) in Maricopa or Pima county with the following guidelines:
    - i. for the first four years, limits four-year baccalaureate degrees to 10 percent of a community college's total degree and certification offerings;
    - ii. for the fifth and subsequent years, limits four-year baccalaureate degrees to 15 percent of a community college's total degree and certification offerings; and
    - iii. for the third and fourth years of a four-year baccalaureate program, limits tuition per credit hour to 150 percent of the tuition per credit hour of any other district program.
2. Requires each community college offering a baccalaureate degree program to meet all applicable requirements for regional accreditation and state licensure.

***Degree Evaluation Criteria***

3. Directs a district board to determine whether to approve a baccalaureate degree program based on:
  - a) student demand and workforce need for the degree program in the region served by the community college;
  - b) a financial analysis showing the short-term and long-term impacts to initiate and sustain the degree program, including:
    - i. the source of monies;
    - ii. requirements for facilities;
    - iii. faculty and personnel; and
    - iv. administrative costs;
  - c) duplication of degree programs offered by other Arizona higher education institutions; and
  - d) a community college's ability to support the degree program with student enrollment and the adequacy of facilities, faculty, administration, libraries and other resources.

***Reporting Requirements***

4. Directs a community college, before receiving authorization to offer a baccalaureate degree program, to submit a report to the district board that includes:
  - a) the name of the proposed academic program including the department offering it;
  - b) whether the instructional modality would be immersion or online, or both;
  - c) the total credit hours required to complete the degree;
  - d) the proposed inception term and program description;
  - e) a learning outcomes and assessment plan, including concepts, competencies and assessment methods and measures;
  - f) the annual projected enrollment during the first three years;
  - g) evidence of market demand for the degree;
  - h) similar programs at other Arizona higher education institutions; and
  - i) the new required resources, including a long-term plan for faculty recruitment indicating the ability to pay the increased salaries of doctoral faculty and recruitment strategies.
5. Requires each community college, during the fifth year of offering a baccalaureate degree program, to submit a report to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee by October 1 reviewing the first five years of the degree program and include:
  - a) the number of applicants to each degree program, including the degree programs implemented at the community college;
  - b) the number of persons admitted, enrolled and receiving degrees from each degree program;
  - c) the costs, including the cost per degree, and the funding sources;
  - d) current workforce demands requiring four-year degrees in each specific degree program offered;
  - e) current completion and continuation rates for each student cohort participating in each degree program, if available;
  - f) the impact of each degree program on underserved and underprepared students;
  - g) the extent to which each degree program fulfills identified workforce needs for new degree programs;
  - h) information on each degree program regarding the places of student employment and the subsequent graduate job placement;
  - i) the student costs of each degree program, including the financial aid offered and student debt levels; and

- j) time-to-degree rates and completion rates for each degree program.
6. Requires each district board, offering a baccalaureate degree program, to include the following in its annual report:
- a) the total number of students pursuing a baccalaureate degree;
  - b) the total number of completed baccalaureate degrees;
  - c) workforce data showing demand of the baccalaureate degree programs being offered; and
  - d) the average cost of tuition per credit hour for the baccalaureate degrees.

*Miscellaneous*

- 7. Contains a legislative intent clause.
- 8. Makes technical and conforming changes.
- 9. Becomes effective on the general effective date.

House Action

ED	2/9/21	DP	9-0-1-0
3 <sup>rd</sup> Read	2/22/21		57-3-0

Prepared by Senate Research  
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JO/gs