

Baccalaureate Pilot Program in Respiratory Care at Skyline College

Frequently Asked Questions

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On March 16, 2015 the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges gave final approval to Skyline College and 11 other colleges to participate in a new pilot program offering 4-year baccalaureate degrees. Below are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about Skyline College's participation in the pilot program, and its potential benefit to students and our local community.

Q. How was Skyline College selected as one of the community colleges to participate in a four-year degree pilot program?

A. On September 28, 2014, Governor Jerry Brown signed a bill that created an 8-year pilot program for 15 community colleges across the state to fill a growing workforce demand for college-educated, skilled workers in fields such as health, science and technology. The bill required the selected programs to offer bachelors degrees in fields not available through University of California and California State University systems. Skyline College submitted an application, along with 33 other California community colleges, in December 2014 to participate in the pilot program. Skyline College's proposal was one of 15 selected by the Board of Governors and Chancellor's Office of California Community Colleges on January 20, 2015. At that time, initial approval was granted to these 15 institutions pending additional evaluation of their proposals by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and further consultation with the California State University and University of California. On March 16, 2015, having completed this additional evaluation, the California Community Colleges Board of Governors granted final approval to 12 community colleges including Skyline College.

Q. What is the new four-year degree that will be created at Skyline College?

A. Bachelors of Applied Science in Respiratory Care.

Q. What is a Respiratory Care Practitioner?

A. A Respiratory Care Practitioner (formerly known as a Respiratory Therapist) is a licensed health care professional who cares for patients with heart and lung problems, and provides oxygen therapy, pulmonary medications, diagnostic testing, life support, and mechanical ventilation. Respiratory care practitioners care for a variety of patients, including newborn infants in respiratory distress, children with asthma or pneumonia, victims of trauma, and older patients with emphysema or heart failure. Most practitioners participate in three phases of patient care: diagnosis, treatment, and patient management under a medical prescription.

Q. Why did Skyline College choose respiratory care as the field of study for its pilot program proposal?

A. Skyline College has a robust, well-established Associate's degree program in respiratory therapy, with demand far exceeding availability in recent years.

Workforce demand for respiratory care practitioners is significant and growing. Increasingly, respiratory therapists are taking on tasks formerly conducted by physicians, requiring a greater level of critical thinking and analytical skill and expertise than ever before. As a result, to meet these evolving health care demands, the American Association for Respiratory Care and California Society for Respiratory Care have recommended the baccalaureate degree as the minimum standard for licensing in California.

California holds the highest number of licensed respiratory care practitioners in the nation, but most practitioners hold Associates degrees; there is a significant gap between the level of preparation of the workforce and what employers are seeking. Currently, only one private university in Southern California offers a 4-year degree program, at considerable expense.

By offering this degree in the San Francisco Bay Area, Skyline College will help to close this gap and enable our local community to benefit from the availability of more advanced, higher paying jobs in the field.

Q. What are the key benefits of this new 4-year program to students versus the current 2-year degree program?

A. The availability of nearby baccalaureate education is essential for community college students who may be place-bound as a result of work and family responsibilities. The baccalaureate degree in respiratory care offers students a greater ability to advance to management and leadership roles within the profession, to become advanced caregivers, to conduct health related research, and to become educators in the field.

Q. What is the timeline for development of this new four-year degree?

A.

March 2015 - early 2016: Skyline College to work at the state level with the other pilot groups developing coursework

Fall 2016: First new class at Skyline College is expected to begin (Expected start date is one year earlier than the State requirement)

Q. When will the new four-year degree pilot program begin, and how many students will be admitted?

A. The first cohort of 25-40 students to the program is planned begin as soon as fall 2016, with expected graduation in summer 2018. The second cohort of 25-40 students will begin fall 2017 and graduate in summer 2019. Subsequently Skyline College will enroll 25-40 students each year until the pilot period ends in 2022.

Q. How can I apply for the new degree program?

A. The application process is currently in development and will be announced in the near future. Because the baccalaureate program will be built upon the foundation of the College's Associates degree program, interested individuals are encouraged to apply to the Associates degree program to get started; more details are available here: <http://skylinecollege.edu/respiratorytherapy/application.php>.

Q. Will individuals who have already completed an A.S. degree in Respiratory Therapy be able to apply for the 4-year program?

A. Yes.

Q. What will be the criteria for selection/admittance to the four-year program?

A. The selection process and criteria have not yet been established for the B. S. program. However, students may continue to enroll in the College's two-year A.S. program in Respiratory Therapy.

Q. Will you still offer the Associates degree program once the new program begins?

A. Yes, our current Respiratory Care Associates degree program will continue to be offered as usual.

Q. What is some of the upper division coursework students will take during the second half of the four-year program?

A. The baccalaureate curriculum builds upon the Associate level coursework and focuses on employer-identified areas including advanced cardiopulmonary pathophysiology, advanced respiratory disease management, health education in respiratory care, research methodology and quantitative principles, and respiratory care leadership and management.

Q. How much will it cost to participate in the four-year degree program?

A. Lower division courses (generally completed in the first two years of study) will cost \$46 per unit, and upper division courses are expected to cost \$84 per unit. The cost is subject to change by the State. The total estimated cost is approximately \$10,000 to complete one of the new Bachelor's degrees – much less than a baccalaureate degree from an average four-year school.

Q. What are the job prospects and opportunities available for graduates with a degree in respiratory care?

A. Currently, job prospects are very good for graduates of this program. Jobs in respiratory care are expected to increase over the next decade, with the Bureau of Labor Statistics projecting a 28% increase in practitioners in the next six years.

Students completing a four-year degree program in respiratory care may work in acute care hospitals, durable medical equipment companies, sub-acute facilities, home care agencies, physician's offices, managed care organizations, sleep labs, and pulmonary function labs.