

## 15 California community colleges in first wave of bachelor's programs

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Fifteen California community colleges — none in the central San Joaquin Valley — were presented by the system chancellor Tuesday as those that he thinks should be authorized to offer bachelor's degrees for the first time.

Chancellor Brice Harris presented the list of selected colleges to the system's Board of Governors in Sacramento. The board is scheduled to take a preliminary vote on the proposal and then final approval in March.

Until now, the state's 112 community colleges have offered only two-year degrees. But a bill authored by Democratic State Sen. Marty Block last year established a seven-year pilot program that allows a maximum of 15 college districts to offer a single four-year degree each in subjects not currently offered by the University of California or California State University systems.

Harris' recommendations include degrees in emergency services, dental hygiene, automotive technology and mortuary science.

Fresno City College applied — but ultimately wasn't selected — to offer a dental hygiene bachelor's program. Fresno City was one of 34 community colleges that applied to offer four-year degrees.

Bakersfield College was given initial approval to offer an industrial automation degree and Modesto Junior College was picked to offer a respiratory care bachelor's program.

During a meeting with The Bee's editorial board Tuesday before the announcement, Fresno State President Joseph Castro said he supports community colleges' foray into bachelor's programs, so long as they don't overlap with similar programs across the state.

"Finding those areas, those sweet spots of need where there's not a competing program, that's where I'd focus," he said.

Associated Press and The Bee's Hannah Furfaro contributed to this report.

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