

For Immediate Release

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Harper Board Passes Bachelor's Degree Initiative

Harper becomes first Illinois community college to pursue bachelor's degrees

PALATINE, IL – By a vote of 5-2 the Harper College Board of Trustees authorized the College to begin lobbying for a change in state law that would allow Harper to offer bachelor's degrees in select areas.

If state law were changed, Harper would be the first community college in Illinois to offer bachelor's degrees.

Ten states currently allow community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees under certain circumstances. Generally, community colleges offer bachelor's degrees in workforce-related technical areas such as nursing, dental hygiene, specialized teaching and applied technology.

Under its proposed pilot program, Harper would offer bachelor's degrees in areas that would **not compete with nearby public four-year universities**. The pilot program would be self-supporting and would not use property tax dollars for direct program costs.

An independent survey of 1,200 Harper district residents in the Northwest suburbs found 66% of those polled strongly support Harper offering select bachelor's degrees, only 5% were against; the rest did not express a strong preference.

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Harper - Continued

“The poll results sent a clear message: our residents want Harper to pursue offering select bachelor’s degrees,” said Harper College President Dr. Robert Breuder. “Pursuing selected bachelor’s degrees is first and foremost about meeting the access needs of a select group of students who are looking for particular degrees that nearby, public four-year universities don’t offer. It’s also a response to the unmet workforce needs of local businesses, industries and health care providers.”

Illinois law would have to be changed for Harper College to begin a pilot bachelor’s degree program. The Illinois Community College Board, which was on-record as opposing the program, has agreed to form a committee to study the idea.

“The Illinois Community College Board believes this would be a major change in Illinois higher education policy that deserves thoughtful deliberation by higher education representatives and state policy makers,” said Guy Alongi, Chairman of the ICCB Board and ICCB President/CEO, Geoffrey Obrzut, in a recent memo to Illinois community college presidents.

If a pilot baccalaureate program were approved by the state legislature, Harper would not become a four-year college. Harper would remain a two-year community college that would simply offer a few baccalaureate programs in select areas.

The College would also continue to explore and expand its relationships with public and private universities through transfer agreements, 2 + 2 programs, early entry, 90/30 and other programs. Additionally, the College would pursue offering baccalaureate degrees in career programs and applied sciences in conjunction with four-year universities **first** before exploring offering its own baccalaureate degree program.

“Selected baccalaureate degree programs at community colleges are a logical progression of what community colleges were created to do; that is, serve the changing educational needs of the community,” said Dr. Breuder. “The movement is also consistent with Harper’s core mission of open access, responsiveness to the community, emphasis on teaching and learning and responding to the changing needs of today’s students.”

For more information on Harper College’s bachelor’s degree initiative, log onto www.harpercollege.edu and click on “Bachelor’s Degree Initiative” on the home page.