

## CONSENT ITEM (RESOLUTION 25-04-15)

Date: April 10, 2025

Tab 4

### Columbia Basin College - Proposed Bachelor of Applied Science in Respiratory Therapy

#### Brief Description

In September 2014, the State Board adopted a revised approval process, selection criteria, and application materials for community and technical colleges seeking to offer an applied baccalaureate program. The final step in the approval process requires the state board action on the college's application to offer the proposed bachelor's degree.

#### How does this item link to the State Board's Strategic Plan?

In June 2023, the state board adopted an updated strategic plan, which focuses on four goals: increase access and retention among populations who can benefit the most from college; improve completion and transfer rates for students across all program types; provide flexible career-training options that are responsive to the needs of businesses and industries; and secure resources and develop systemwide strategies to support colleges' financial sustainability and resiliency. Colleges offering baccalaureate degrees meet the needs of changing economies by increasing the number of skilled employees in the areas of greatest demand. Through bachelor level degrees, colleges create greater access to higher education by enrolling underserved populations, particularly place-bound working adults, and ensure community and technical colleges are affordable and accessible for students. Community and technical college bachelor's degree programs provide access for students who have been historically underserved by and had limited access to bachelor's-level education. They also meet the local workforce needs and allow students to remain in their home communities.

#### Background information and analysis

Respiratory Therapy is a specialized area of healthcare that focuses on the assessment, management, and treatment of patients with cardiopulmonary disorders, involving a range of therapeutic and diagnostic services that are essential for both in-patient and out-patient settings. With the increasing prevalence of chronic respiratory diseases such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), interstitial lung diseases, and COVID-19, the role of the respiratory therapist is more crucial than ever.

The Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) in Respiratory Therapy at Columbia Basin College is designed to prepare students to excel in advanced roles within the rapidly evolving field of respiratory care. One specific evolution in the field is the minimum educational preparation required for entry to practice. An issue paper published in 2019 by the American Association for Respiratory Care, *Entry to Respiratory Therapy Practice 2030*, demonstrates the need to advance the minimum education of a respiratory therapist from an associate degree to a baccalaureate degree, with a call for proposed

requirements to be implemented for respiratory therapists newly entering active practice in 2030 and beyond. Consultation with local employers and a survey of employers' job listings indicates a preference for a bachelor's degree for entry-level roles.

Among the thirty-four community and technical colleges, two colleges currently offer a BAS in Respiratory Therapy, and two colleges offer a respiratory therapy specialization track within a broader BAS in Allied/Community Health. Given that entry-level roles in respiratory therapy are shifting to require a bachelor's degree, Columbia Basin College is proposing to build their new BAS in Respiratory Therapy to serve students who graduate with an Associate of Science in Health Science.

The Statement of Need for the BAS in Respiratory Therapy was presented by Columbia Basin College at the February 2025 board meeting, which indicated that the program proposal was developed with both local employers and labor organizations as partners to serve students and meet workforce needs in Benton and Franklin counties. This program would mark Columbia Basin College's tenth bachelor's degree offering.

### **Recommendation/preferred result**

These proposals meet criteria established by statute and Board policy based on staff review and feedback from peer reviewers from the community and technical college system. Staff recommends State Board action on the following:

- Resolution 25-04-15 approving Columbia Basin College's Bachelor of Applied Science in Respiratory Therapy

Policy Manual Change Yes ☐ No ☒

Prepared by: Kendrick Hang, Policy Associate for Baccalaureate Programs

360-704-3917, khang@sbctc.edu

## STATE OF WASHINGTON

### STATE BOARD FOR COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES

### RESOLUTION 25-04-15

A resolution to approve Columbia Basin College's application to offer a Bachelor of Applied Science in Respiratory Therapy upon recommendation of State Board for Community and Technical College staff.

**WHEREAS**, Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 2483, passed by the 2012 Washington State Legislature, authorizes the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to approve all applied baccalaureate degree programs offered by community and technical colleges; and

**WHEREAS**, consistent with the Washington State Legislature's requirement, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges developed objective criteria for the approval of community and technical college applied baccalaureate degrees; and

**WHEREAS**, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges staff found that Columbia Basin College's application provided evidence that met or exceeded all objective selection criteria and will expand baccalaureate degree capacity in the state;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges approves the recommendation to authorize Columbia Basin College's Bachelor of Applied Science in Respiratory Therapy;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges authorizes the Executive Director to make adjustments to this action, including any necessary changes to the state board's policy manual, as necessary, for actions taken by the Governor, Legislature, data corrections, externally imposed restrictions or guidelines, uniform accounting and reporting requirements, and unanticipated changes in state or federal law.

**APPROVED AND ADOPTED** on (April 10, 2025)

Attest



Chris Bailey, interim secretary



Martin Valadez, chair