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CONSENT ITEM (25-04-16)

Date: April 10, 2025

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Columbia Basin College - Proposed Bachelor of Science in Computer Science

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. In 2021, the state board's authority was expanded to include Bachelor of Science degree programs in computer science. The final step in the approval process requires 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

Columbia Basin College's proposed Bachelor of Science in Computer Science degree program is designed to meet current and future employment needs within its service area of Benton and Franklin Counties. The curriculum design was based on information gathered at an SBCTC-hosted DACUM, a structured analysis that identifies the duties and tasks of an occupation, focused on regional needs.

Graduates of Columbia Basin College's Associate of Applied Science in Computer Science (a professional-technical program with a workforce focus) were surveyed and the results indicated interest in a BS Computer Science program with a desire to access opportunities to advance into senior technical roles including technical management roles. In response, the general education courses that are established in the program design includes technical writing, professional communication, ethics, diversity studies, and organizational behavior.

In 2023-2024, over 50% of students at Columbia Basin College identify as Hispanic or Latino and

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Columbia Basin College is a federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution. In addition to establishing recruiting efforts to serve existing computer science associate degree students and graduates of Columbia Basin College, the college's recruitment team visits high schools in rural areas within 100 miles, and information about the program will be presented in both English and Spanish for bilingual students.

Alignment with regional industry needs and trends is supported by the Washington State Center of Excellence for Information and Computing Technology and by the program's advisory committee, which consists of industry professionals employed at organizations across industry verticals such as Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Lockheed Martin, GESA Credit Union, HAPO Credit Union, Bechtel, TiLite, and Washington State University Tri-Cities.

The Statement of Need for the BS Computer Science was presented by Columbia Basin College at the May 2024 board meeting. If approved, this program will be Columbia Basin College's eleventh bachelor's degree offering and the first offering of BS Computer Science by a community college east of the Cascades.

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 25-04-16 approving Columbia Basin College's Bachelor of Science in Computer Science

Policy Manual Change Yes ☐ No ☒

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STATE OF WASHINGTON
STATE BOARD FOR COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES
RESOLUTION 25-04-16

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

WHEREAS, Substitute Senate Bill 5401, passed by the 2021 Washington State Legislature, authorizes the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to approve bachelor of science degree programs in computer science 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 Science in Computer Science;

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

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Chris Bailey, interim secretary

_____
Martin Valadez, chair