

CONSENT ITEM (RESOLUTION 25-10-44)

October 16, 2025

Tab 5

Edmonds College - Proposed Bachelor of Applied Science, Behavioral Health Support Specialist

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 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

Responding to consistently high workforce shortages identified in reports by the Behavioral Health Workforce Advisory Committee (BHWAC) and the Washington Health Workforce Sentinel Network, with substance abuse disorder professionals ranking among the hardest-to-fill positions, the 2023 Washington State Legislature passed Substitute Senate Bill (SSB) 5189, establishing Behavioral Health Support Specialist (BHSS) as a profession while the University of Washington developed a competency framework and clinical training program for the BHSS role.

This program will prepare graduates for careers in mental health and wellness, focusing on practical skills. Students will learn about population health, community wellness, and trauma-informed care. The program also develops case management and care coordination skills and addresses health equity and social justice. Students will study mental health disorders, evidence-based interventions, and counseling skills. Additional coursework includes behavioral health assessment, screening, referral, goal-setting, telehealth, documentation, laws, and ethics. Students will also complete two

supervised clinical practicum experiences, totaling 150 hours. Graduates will be eligible to apply for Behavioral Health Support Specialist certification through the Washington State Department of Health.

The curriculum and program design leverages evidence-based practices. The curriculum design process involved using the Rigor/Relevance Framework from the International Center for Leadership in Education to examine curriculum and assessment on two dimensions of higher standards and student achievement, with the goal of verifying the upper division (300- and 400-level) courses provide a high level of learning that requires more complex thinking, flexibility in application, and increasing depth of knowledge, all of which builds upon students' prior learning as associate degree graduates from Social and Human Services programs who completed lower division (100- and 200-level courses).

With the BHSS profession being relatively new and Edmonds College seeking to ensure their curriculum is aligned with the BHSS profession, the program has proposed an enhanced review process to inspect and adapt their program design and course designs annually for the first three years of their BAS BHSS program. To inform their decision making, the program team plans to collect input from current students, graduates (in year 3, after the first BAS BHSS class has graduated), and employers while also analyzing data around enrollment trends, completion rates, and employment/placement rates. Additional insight will be sought quarterly from Edmonds College's Social and Human Services Advisory Committee (originally established to serve their long-standing professional-technical programs but extended to serve their baccalaureate program) as well as the state's Allied Health Center of Excellence to help guide alignment with industry practice and needs.

The Statement of Need for the Bachelor of Applied Science, Behavioral Health Support Specialist was presented by Edmonds College at the April 2025 board meeting, which indicated both the industry need and community's need for credentialed and licensed behavioral health support professionals as well as the need to serve students, especially place-bound students, in Snohomish County. This program would mark Edmonds College's seventh bachelor's degree program and Edmonds College would be the ninth college in our system to offer a bachelor's degree in behavioral health.

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 25-10-44 approving Edmonds College's Bachelor of Applied Science, Behavioral Health Support Specialist

Policy Manual Change Yes ☐ No ☒

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STATE OF WASHINGTON

STATE BOARD FOR COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES

RESOLUTION 25-10-44

A resolution to approve Edmonds College's application to offer a Bachelor of Applied Science, Behavioral Health Support Specialist upon recommendation of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges 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 Edmonds 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 Edmonds College's Bachelor of Applied Science, Behavioral Health Support Specialist;

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 October 16, 2025

Attest



Nate Humphrey, secretary

Martin Valadez, chair