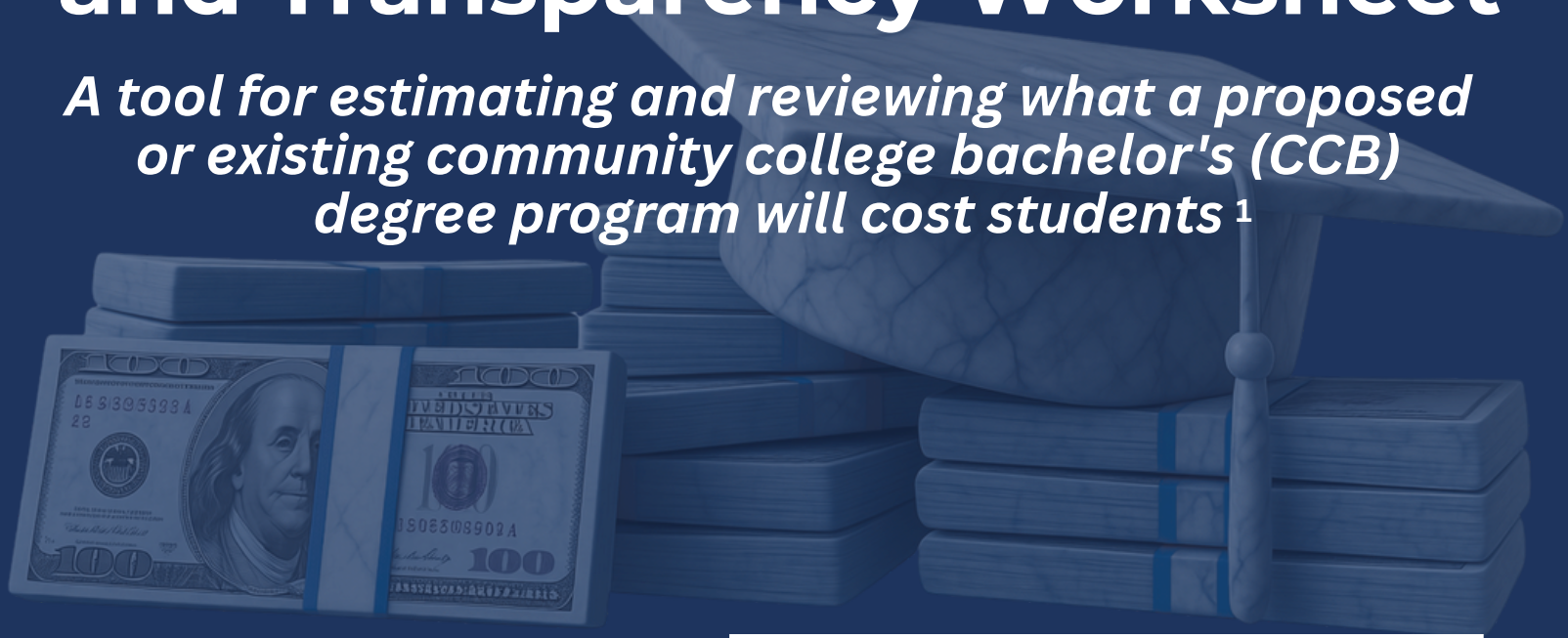
2026

The State Leadership Playbook for Planning and Implementing Community College Baccalaureate Degree Programs

TOOLKIT

CCB Program Affordability and Transparency Worksheet

A tool for estimating and reviewing what a proposed or existing community college bachelor's (CCB) degree program will cost students [1]



Elizabeth Meza

University of Washington

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

bragg +associates

TROY STREET

Contents

03 Key Terms

04 Program Identification

07 Program Price at The Institution

11 Other Colleges That Offer This Degree Program

09 Transparency: Explaining the Cost to Students & the Public

10 Final Check

About This Tool

This tool gives programs, colleges, systems, and/or states a simple, consistent way to estimate and assess the affordability of CCB programs for full-time students, compared with nearby options. Doing so ensures students fully understand the cost of attendance and are able to make informed comparisons and decisions.

Users of this tool include community college students, faculty and staff, state agency staff, higher education/system administrators, accreditors, and others.

The tool asks three questions:

1. How does the proposed CCB program's price compare to nearby colleges offering a similar degree (if any exist)?
2. Is there an extra cost of bachelor's-level (upper-division) courses for the program, compared with the college's own associate-level tuition for the same or similar program? If so, is this cost within the control of the institution?
3. Are tuition, fees, and total cost of attendance for the proposed bachelor's degree program transparent for students and the public?

1 *This tool is adapted from Florida's Baccalaureate Program Proposal Application (Form BAAC-02) — cited in Meza,* ***A State Leadership Playbook for Planning, Implementing and Scaling Community College Baccalaureate Degree Programs****, Brief No. 2, Recommendation 4.*

Recommended citation:
Meza, E. (2026). "CCB Program Affordability and Transparency Worksheet." In E. Meza, D. D. Bragg, and C. Pawlicki, *The State Leadership Playbook for Planning and Implementing Community College Baccalaureate Degree Programs.* University of Washington.

Key Terms Used in This Worksheet

TERM	WHAT IT MEANS
CIP code	A federal code, the Classification of Instructional Programs, that identifies a program's field of study, used for state and federal reporting.
Lower-division / associate-level	Coursework typically taken in the first two years of a bachelor's degree — the same level as an associate degree.
Upper-division / bachelor's-level	Coursework typically taken in the last two years of a bachelor's degree (e.g., junior- or senior-year courses, or 300- and 400-level courses).
Percent increase	How much more the bachelor's-level (upper-division) tuition costs than the associate-level (lower-division) tuition, shown as a percentage.
Comparison college	A nearby or similar college used as a point of comparison because it offers the same or a similar bachelor's degree program.
Sticker tuition	The published tuition rate before any financial aid is applied.
Cost of attendance or Total expenses	The full estimated cost of one year at the college, including tuition, fees, books, supplies, housing, and other expenses. These terms – cost of attendance and total expenses – are used interchangeably in the field.
Net price	What a student actually pays for one year at the college after grants and scholarships (not loans) are subtracted from the cost of attendance. This is calculated based on student financial aid data so is only available after a program has enrolled students for at least one year.
Service area	The geographic region a college is officially designated to serve.

Worksheet

Section A. Program Identification

Institution	
CCB program and degree title	
CIP code (see Key Terms)	

Section B. Program Price at this Institution

Instructions:

- Report both the price per credit and the estimated yearly cost for a full-time student in the program.

Where to get the data:

- [1]Use your own institution's tuition and fees schedule or catalog for these numbers.
  - **Do not** use College Navigator or IPEDS. Those federal sources report only one overall tuition figure per institution and do not separate associate-level pricing from bachelor's-level pricing.
  - Total tuition should reflect the actual number of credits required at each rate. This may provide a more meaningful affordability measure than estimated annual tuition alone. For example, in Florida, some programs like nursing may require 72 hours, which is different than the assumed base of 60 semester hours for an AA degree.

Other notes:

- [2] **Calculating "Percent increase":** Percent increase for bachelor's-level courses refers to how much more the bachelor's-level (upper-division) tuition rate costs than the associate-level (lower-division) rate, shown as a percentage.
  - **Percent increase formula:** Percent increase = (Bachelor's-level rate − Associate-level rate) ÷ Associate-level rate × 100
- [3]**Calculating "Total cost of attendance":** Not all institutions calculate total cost of attendance at the individual program level, and producing a CCB-specific figure may require a special data pull from your financial aid office. If it isn't available, leave the row blank and note the gap in Section E of this tool.

Section B Tool

DETERMINING PROGRAM COST			
COSTS FOR A FULL-TIME STUDENT IN THE PROGRAM	**Associate-Level Rate (Lower-Division)**	**Bachelor's-Level Rate (Upper-Division), Plus Any Additional Bachelor's Fees**	**Percent Increase for Bachelor's-Level Courses [2]**
Tuition & fees per credit [1]	$	$	
Estimated yearly tuition & fees [1]	$	$	
Estimated cost of full degree *(Yearly associate-level rate x two years) + (yearly bachelor's level rate x two years)*	$		
Estimated yearly total cost of attendance [3]	$		

Section C. Other Colleges That Offer This Degree Program (if any)

Instructions:

- List at least two nearby public institutions and any private or for-profit institutions that offer a similar bachelor's degree program (i.e., comparison colleges), if any exist.

Where to get the data:

- Total cost of attendance and net price are often harder to find than the published ("sticker") tuition rate.
- To find data for comparison colleges, College Navigator (https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/) is a reliable single source for published tuition, total cost of attendance, and net price.
  - Note that on College Navigator, total cost of attendance is called “total expenses” and is divided into categories based on student living arrangement. To make comparisons most relevant for CCB students, we recommend using the “in-state” and “off-campus with family” cell for the most recent year available.

Other notes:

- When comparing your program to a comparison college’s average net price, keep in mind that the figure is typically an institution-wide average and that net price depends heavily on which students enroll and the aid they receive. As such, you should treat the comparison college’s net price as context, not a precise 1:1 comparison.

Section C Tool

College Name & College Type (Public, Private, For-Profit)	Located in Service Area? (Y/N)	Annual Tuition & Fees	Total Cost of Attendance	Average Net Price	Source / Year
		$	$	$	
		$	$	$	
		$	$	$	

Section D. Transparency: Explaining the Cost to Students and the Public

Instructions:

- To ensure the cost of CCB programs are thoroughly and clearly known to students and the public, compare the program price from Section B with nearby colleges in Section C and answer the following questions.

Section D Tool

Questions
How does this program's price, including total cost to degree, compare to nearby options?
Explain any gaps or limits in the data you were able to find (for example, total cost of attendance that wasn't available at the program level, or information that wasn't directly comparable across institutions) and any important context from your program/institution.

Section E. Final Check

Instructions:

- Answer the following questions to complete a final check about the transparency of the program cost for students.

Where to get the data:

- College website and other materials readily available to students.

Section E Tool

Questions
1. Can a student easily find the tuition and fees of bachelor's degree programs on your college website?
2. Is the total cost of attendance (i.e., total expenses) figure available to students for bachelor's degree programs?
3. Is the average net price (if applicable) available to students for bachelor's degree programs?
• **If you answered "no" to any of these questions, use that as your action item: Identify what's missing, assign someone to post it, and set a target date for making it publicly available on your website.**

About the Authors



Dr. Elizabeth Meza is a distinguished researcher and faculty instructor at the Evans School of Public Policy at the University of Washington and a UW Public Impact Research Fellow. She is also a New America Education Policy Program Fellow for Community Colleges. A former community college faculty member and administrator, Elizabeth regularly publishes and speaks on community college baccalaureate degrees and STEM transfer education. Dr. Meza's research agenda seeks to identify and address inequities that hinder American higher education from delivering on its promise of equity for all students, and centers community colleges as engines for opportunity and workforce development. Elizabeth earned a Ph.D. from the University of Washington and a M.S. degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Strada Education Foundation; the team at Community College Baccalaureate Association; the members of the CCB State Leadership Advisory group, including Jessica Acton, Brian Durham, Matt Exline, Chèri Fortin, Kendrick Hang, Eric Juenemann, Brian Millner, Tina Parscal, Brad Phillips, and Emily Shields; the members of the CCB Research Advisory Group, including Lorenzo Baber, Mark D'Amico, Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, Michele Van Noy, and Jeremy Wright-Kim; and Carrie Henderson of TSG Advisors for her feedback in the development of the Affordability Tool. Special thanks to Debra Bragg and Colleen Pawlicki for their extensive thought partnership, review, and design of this tool.

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

bragg +associates

TROY STREET