2026

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

TOOLKIT

The CCB Program Approval Self-Assessment Tool

A tool for designing, assessing, and improving community college baccalaureate program approval processes

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About This Tool

This self-assessment tool helps state leaders examine the current state of CCB program approval processes conducted by states, systems, and institutions. It can also be used to design new CCB program approval processes. The elements included in this tool are aligned to **Section 1: Notice of Intent (NOI), Section 2: CCB Program Application Process, and Section 3: Review Process.** Each section closes with reflection questions to gain a deeper understanding of intent, alignment, meaning, and benefit of the CCB program approval process.

INSTRUCTIONS

For each section, select the scale rating for each anchor description that most closely matches your system's current or proposed CCB program approval process. Then, record supporting evidence and a priority action in the space provided. The anchor descriptions are drawn from the state processes discussed in this brief and are meant to illustrate a range of processes, not to prescribe a single correct model. Users are encouraged to adapt the language to their context, including by adding elements.

The tool can be completed individually to capture one's own perspective, or by a team to reveal where perspectives align and diverge in ways that may lead to improvement.

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SECTION 1: The Notice of Intent

__ **NOI is required by my state/system:** Continue with this section.
__ **NOI is not required by my state/system:** Jump to Section 2.

1. **Informative CCB program description and initial statement of need.**			
Not Addressed	**Emerging**	**Established**	**Exemplary**
A case for program approval, including program description, is not clearly specified at the NOI stage.	A brief program description and statement of need is required but not fully specified.	A structured narrative case for need is required, with a brief program description of workforce, student, and community need.	A staged case for need is required, including program description and statement of need to build the evidentiary record before submission of the full program application.
Evidence / current practice notes		***Priority action***	

2. Reasonable timeline for NOI review and comment.

Not Addressed	Emerging	Established	Exemplary
A defined review period is not clearly specified.	A review period exists but is inconsistently enforced or communicated.	A defined review window (e.g., 30–60 days) is published and consistently applied.	Review timelines are published, consistently applied, and scaled to address program features and complexity.

Evidence / current practice notes	*Priority action*

3. Actionable feedback on next steps.

Not Addressed	Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Applicants receive little substantive feedback or actionable advice on next steps.	Feedback is provided but is generic or inconsistent across applicants and offers limited direction on next steps.	Applicants receive substantive feedback aligned with program approval criteria, noting concerns and needed changes.	Feedback is substantive, timely, and explicitly linked to what the full application will need to demonstrate.

Evidence / current practice notes	*Priority action*

Section 1: The Notice of Intent
Reflection Questions

Questions
Will (or does, if already implemented) the NOI process give applicants a clear sense of what is expected of them to submit a full CCB program application?
Will (or does, if already implemented) the NOI process require an evidence-based statement of need to inform decisions to proceed to full CCB program applications?
What changes are needed to strengthen the NOI process?

SECTION 2: The CCB Program Application Process

The first two self-assessment items in this section *(next page)* ask you to evaluate the measures of CCB program quality and resource use (Venters, 2021). Program quality and resource use each have three sets of measures:

Program Quality

- Program design
- Student demand, access, and equity
- Community impact

Examples:

- *Program design (name, majors, degree types)*
- *Delivery mode*
- *Learning outcomes and assessment*
- *Faculty qualifications*
- *Program implementation*
- *Evaluation*

Resource Use

- Workforce need and economic impact
- Regional coordination, including addressing duplication
- Resources and sustainability

Examples:

- *Regional occupational supply and demand analysis*
- *Student cost and affordability*
- *Impact on graduate employment*
- *Impact on existing community college program budgets*

Please review pages 9-17 of ***Brief 4: How Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) Program Approval Works*** prior to continuing for additional information and examples on program quality and resource use.

4. Meaningful measures of program quality.

Not Addressed	Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Not specified.	Required, but the program quality measures are not clearly defined or specified.	Requirements and guidance on program quality measures are clearly defined and carefully specified.	Requirements and guidance on program quality measures are standardized and cross-checked against existing high-quality CCB programs.

Evidence / current practice notes	*Priority action*

5. Meaningful measures of resource use.

Not Addressed	Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Not specified.	Required, but the resource use measures are not clearly defined or specified.	Requirements and guidance on resource use measures are clearly defined and carefully specified.	Requirements and guidance on resource use measures are standardized and cross-checked against existing high-quality CCB programs.

Evidence / current practice notes	*Priority action*

6. Reasonable timeline for the formal CCB program application process.

Not Addressed	Emerging	Established	Exemplary
A timeline for the formal CCB program application is not specified clearly and enforced inconsistently.	A timeline exists for formal CCB program applications, but it is not consistently communicated or enforced.	A timeline for formal CCB program applications is published and consistently enforced.	A timeline for formal CCB program applications is published, consistently enforced, and scaled to address the strategic approval and scale-up of CCB degrees.

Evidence / current practice notes	*Priority action*

7. Standardized criteria, templates, and methods in the CCB program application.

Not Addressed	Emerging	Established	Exemplary
No standardized criteria, templates, and methods are used.	Standardized criteria, templates, and methods exist but are underdeveloped or are used inconsistently.	Standardized criteria, templates, and methods are used for all formal CCB program applications.	Standardized criteria, templates, and methods are paired with published review criteria and training for reviewers.

Evidence / current practice notes	*Priority action*

Section 2: The CCB Program Application Process
Reflection Questions

Questions
Will (or does, of already implemented) the CCB program approval process produce formal applications demonstrating clear and meaningful detail needed to advance to the review phase?
Will (or does, if already implemented) the CCB program approval process lead to the development and implementation of successful CCB programs?
What changes need to be made to improve the full CCB program application process?

SECTION 3: The Review Process

8. Transparent standards for decision-making on CCB program approval.

Not Addressed	Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Standards are not published or are unclear.	Standards exist but are not consistently published or applied.	Standards are published and consistently applied.	Standards are published, consistently applied, and periodically reviewed to ensure continued relevance.

Evidence / current practice notes	*Priority action*

9. Relevant qualitative and quantitative data used to approve (or deny) proposed CCB programs.

Not Addressed	Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Review relies primarily on applicant narrative without meaningful data.	Some data are used, but validity and reliability are not verified.	Review relies on valid, reliable data across design, implementation, and sustainability.	Data quality standards are explicit and applied consistently across all review dimensions.

Evidence / current practice notes	*Priority action*

10. Engaged and highly qualified state, system, institutional, and expert reviewers.

Not Addressed	Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Review is conducted by a single office or individual.	Multiple reviewers are involved, but qualifications or roles are undefined or inconsistently applied.	A set of reviewers is consistently vetted, trained, and engaged.	Reviewers and reviewer roles are formalized, including internal and outside experts.

Evidence / current practice notes	*Priority action*

11. Timely announcement of CCB program approval decisions.

Not Addressed	Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Decisions are not published.	Decisions are available on request but not proactively published.	Decisions are published and accessible.	Published decisions include rationale, enabling others to understand the status of CCB programs and learn from past approvals and denials.

Evidence / current practice notes	*Priority action*

12. Regular evaluation and improvement of the CCB program approval process.

Not Addressed	Emerging	Established	Exemplary
The approval process has not been revisited since it was established.	Changes occur but could be more transparent and systematically conducted.	Review of the approval process is scheduled on a regular timeline (e.g., every one, two, or three years).	Periodic review is scheduled, uses outcomes data from past program approval decisions, and results in documented process changes.

Evidence / current practice notes	***Priority action***

Section 3: The Review Process
Reflection Questions

Questions
Will (or does, if already implemented) the review process demonstrate a transparent, rigorous methodology and rationale for decisions rendered on proposed CCB programs?
What changes should be made to improve the CCB program review process?

About the Author



Dr. Debra D. Bragg is President of Bragg and Associates, Inc., an equity-minded consulting group dedicated to advancing student success in education and employment. During her career, she founded two community college research centers, Community College Research Initiatives at the University of Washington in Seattle (2016-2020) and the Office of Community College Research and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (1989-2015) where she is Edward William and Jane Marr Gutgsell Endowed Professor emerita. Dr. Bragg's research focuses on transitions to and through education to employment. She has led national studies on a wide range of P-20 education policies, including developmental education, career-technical education and career pathways, transfer (vertical and reverse credit), and community college baccalaureates.

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