

OUR OPINION

Should Fouryear Degrees be Offered at VVC? Why not?

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There's a move afoot to allow the state's community colleges — including, of course, our own Victor Valley College — to offer four-year baccalaureate degrees in certain majors, such as nursing, physical therapy and information technology.

Why? Because those fields have high workforce demands, demands that apparently aren't being met by the state's universities and fouryear colleges.

This has apparently come about because increasingly job openings for some fields — nursing, for instance — there is a growing preference by employers for bachelor's degrees instead of two-year associate degrees.

The state's Community Colleges Chancellor Brice Harris is about to make public a report on the four-year degree proposal, and some critics aren't enthused because they apparently believe community colleges will begin to compete with the state's universities and four-year colleges on price, offering cheaper programs to replace their two-year programs and drawing potential students away from the bigger schools. We suspect those critics work for the very same four-year colleges and universities they're protecting.

Which sounds like a conflict of interest, doesn't it?

But if the workplace demand for four-year degrees in some vocational and technical fields is real — and it apparently is — what's the problem? When we wondered earlier in the week how the economic malaise that exists in most of central and eastern California is to be overcome, we emphasized that a skilled and educated workforce is the leading candidate for a cure. And if Victor Valley College, as an example, is given the latitude to offer four-year courses, that can only help the Victor Valley economy.

It's worth noting at this point that a key part of the community college mission in California— under the California Master Plan for Higher Education — is “workforce training.” Meeting the workforce demand, then, by expanding its program, seems more than appropriate.

We say let's get on with it, and we hope that Chancellor Harris's report concurs. And that the concurrence is followed by the introduction, and approval, of legislation in Sacramento to enable the change.

Of course, this all may be moot if VVC isn't returned to full and unencumbered accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. As far as we're aware, that's still being weighed.