

ONE HUNDRED NINTH LEGISLATURE

SECOND SESSION

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 447

Introduced by Jacobson, 42.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this resolution is to propose an interim study to examine how a baccalaureate degree requiring fewer than the traditional one hundred twenty credit hours, or four years, may benefit the state.

The Department of Labor reports that the percentage of jobs in the state requiring a baccalaureate degree is increasing from nineteen and seven-tenths percent for the period from 2012 to 2022 to a projected twenty-seven percent for the period from 2022 to 2032. The department also reports jobs considered to be in high demand, requiring high skill levels, and providing high wages, are increasing significantly over the same periods, rising from forty-two and one-half percent to a projected sixty-two percent.

Currently, there are seven public and eleven private postsecondary institutions in Nebraska that grant baccalaureate degrees requiring at least one hundred twenty credit hours. All but one of these institutions are physically located within the eastern geographic half of the state.

As the number of jobs requiring a baccalaureate degree continues to grow, access to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions becomes increasingly critical to economic development and workforce preparedness in the state. As workforce shortages persist in occupations requiring a baccalaureate degree, it is necessary for the state to consider whether existing postsecondary resources can be leveraged to fill any accessibility gaps and meet workforce demand.

Nebraska is not the first state to examine this issue. In response to gaps in access to bachelor's degrees, nearly sixty institutions across the country have begun to develop and implement baccalaureate programs requiring fewer than one hundred twenty credit hours in select disciplines. In addition, twenty-four states currently authorize community colleges to confer bachelor's degrees,

expanding geographic access and strengthening workforce pipelines in high-demand fields. These developments suggest that alternative baccalaureate pathways may provide the state with additional tools to improve degree attainment, expand access in underserved regions, and better align postsecondary education with evolving workforce needs.

The study shall include, but not be limited to, an examination of the following:

(1) Geographic areas of the state that would most benefit from bachelor's degrees requiring fewer than one hundred twenty credit hours;

(2) Industries and career pathways that would most benefit from such degrees;

(3) Student populations that would most benefit from such degrees; and

(4) Postsecondary institutions, including community colleges, that may be capable of offering such degrees.

In conducting this interim study, the Education Committee of the Legislature may confer with the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, SECOND SESSION:

1. That the Education Committee of the Legislature shall be designated to conduct an interim study to carry out the purposes of this resolution.

2. That the committee shall upon the conclusion of its study make a report of its findings, together with its recommendations, to the Legislative Council or Legislature.