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Summary

Community colleges in Michigan primarily offer students the chance to complete courses that lead to a certificate in a technical field or an associate degree or that can be transferred to a four-year institution. A new path for students was created by 2012 PA 495, which allowed community colleges to offer four-year bachelor's degrees in four designated fields: cement technology, maritime technology, energy production technology, and culinary arts.

Background

The Community College Act, 1966 PA 331, which serves as the statutory foundation for community colleges in Michigan, originally prohibited the 28 colleges from awarding baccalaureate degrees. If a community college student wanted to obtain a bachelor's degree, they were required to transfer to a four-year public or private institution to complete the four-year degree. While transferring is generally still required for a bachelor's degree, 2012 PA 495 enabled community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees in certain technical fields. The rationale given was that community colleges could address the need of certain business sectors for highly skilled employees, while designating four fields would limit encroachment on the mission of four-year institutions.

Current Offerings

Table 1 shows the five community colleges and the bachelor's degree programs they offer.

Table 1 Community Colleges and Bachelor's Degree Offerings	
College	Degree
Alpena	Electrical System Technology
Henry Ford	Culinary Arts
Jackson	Energy Systems Management
Northwestern Michigan	Marine Technology, Maritime Technology
Schoolcraft	Culinary Arts

Community College Bachelor's Degrees Awarded

Table 2 shows the number of bachelor's degrees awarded by community colleges and public universities since the 2013-14 academic year, the first year the degrees were conferred by community colleges.

Table 2 Bachelor's Degrees Awarded by Community Colleges and Public Universities			
Academic Year	Bachelor's Degrees Awarded by Community Colleges	Bachelor's Degrees Awarded by Public Universities	CC Degrees % of Total
2013-14	31	45,247	0.1%
2014-15	34	46,082	0.1%
2015-16	51	46,787	0.1%
2016-17	54	47,958	0.1%
2017-18	52	48,086	0.1%
2018-19	77	47,726	0.2%
2019-20	56	48,276	0.1%
2020-21	71	48,586	0.1%
2021-22	49	46,839	0.1%

The number of degrees awarded by community colleges has grown over time but is still very low compared to the total number of bachelor’s degrees awarded at the 15 public universities in the state. Apart from the 2018-19 academic year, community college bachelor’s degrees represented 0.1% of all bachelor’s degrees awarded by both four-year public universities and community colleges.

Data from the federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) shows that 85.5% of community college bachelor’s degrees over the nine-year span between the 2013-14 and 2021-22 academic years have been conferred by one institution, Northwestern Michigan College, for marine or maritime technology. **Table 3** shows the number of total bachelor’s degrees awarded by institution over the same nine-year span.

Table 3 Total Bachelor’s Degrees Conferred by Institution, Academic Year 2013-14 Through 2021-22		
College	Total Degrees Conferred	% Awarded
Alpena	7	1.5%
Henry Ford	25	5.3%
Jackson	22	4.6%
Northwestern Michigan	406	85.5%
Schoolcraft	15	3.2%