

Editorial: Calif. higher education needs to evolve

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The California Master Plan for Higher Education decreed that it was the job of the state's community colleges to train students for technical careers and for the sort of semi-professional occupations that generally require a two-year associate's degree. Those who wanted a bachelor's degree – and the sort of jobs that go with one – could move on to either California State University or the University of California.

But the master plan was written during the postwar baby boom, and like many of us who were born back then, it's beginning to develop wrinkles. In 1960, the year the plan was approved, office manager jobs required only a high school diploma. Now most employers require a bachelor's degree for this job and others like it. At the same time, fewer Californians are able to afford a four-year education. Many don't live within commuting distance of a Cal State or UC campus, and living expenses are the greater part of college costs.

So it makes all the sense in the world to expand the degrees that community colleges are allowed to confer. A proposal now under consideration by the chancellor's office, for instance, would allow community colleges to grant bachelor's degrees in nursing.

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