Education Advisory Board | COE Forum

Second Bachelor's Degrees for Career Starters

Industry Futures Series

COE Forum

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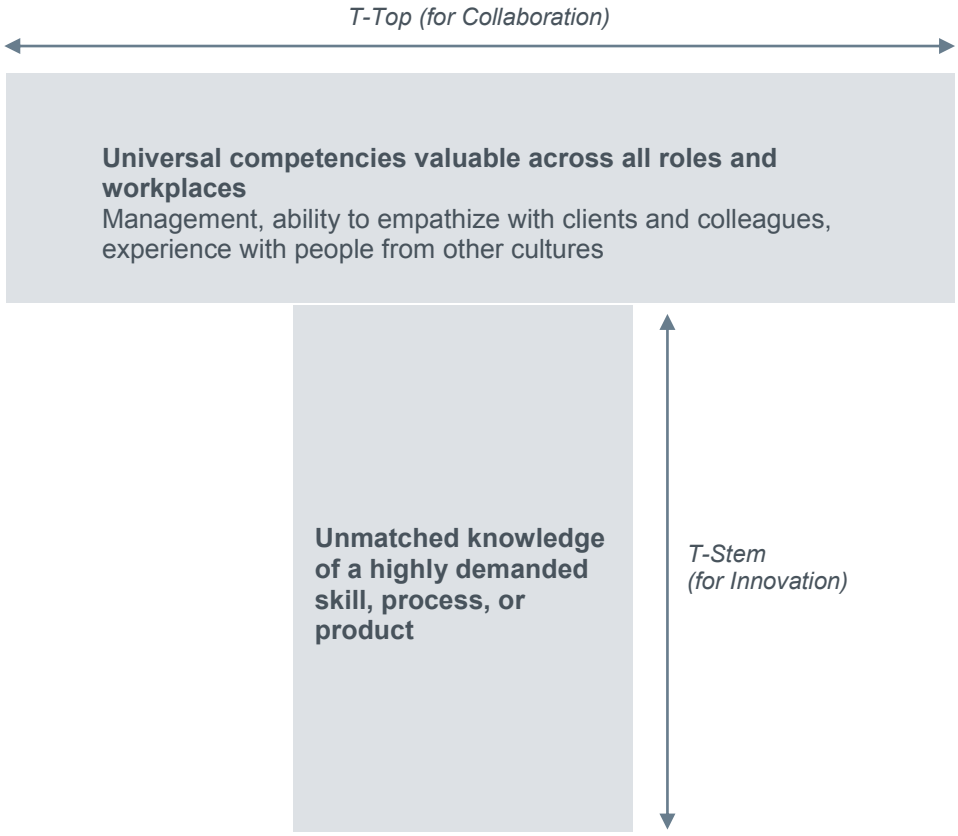
Companies Seeking T-Shaped Candidates

A New Employer Rubric for Skills and Competencies

As the Great Recession draws to a close, many job seekers still struggle to find gainful employment. Years of operating under hiring freezes, coupled with advances in technology, have taught employers how to maintain—and even increase—productivity with a lean staff. As a result, employers can afford to be even choosier in hiring new talent. Although companies have sought out well-rounded candidates for decades, a new concept is turning the search for well-roundedness into a formulaic process.

Large employers like IBM, IDEO, and Cisco are spearheading initiatives to hire "T-shaped professionals." This concept contends that the ideal employee possesses a number of soft skills that allow her to collaborate (the T-top) as well as unmatched knowledge of a skill, process, product, or body of work (the T-stem). Employers like IBM are experimenting with ways to scan and code an applicant's resume to assess her T-score. A study abroad experience, for example, may indicate cultural sensitivity, while a leadership role in a student organization may demonstrate management ability.

What's Your T-Score?[1]



1) Morten T. Hansen, "IDEO CEO Tim Brown," Chief Executive.net, January 2010; "Bolder by Design: Strategic Framework for Advancing Michigan State University," February 2013, http://bolderbydesign.msu.edu/.

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Universities Take Note

Assessing Graduates on a T-Scale

An individual's T-shape is built over the entirety of her career, but college students who possess a mix of T-top and T-stem skills upon graduation face the most promising short- and long-term employment prospects. However, most students only build out one dimension of their T during their undergraduate studies.

Divided Competencies in Undergraduate Studies

Humanities or Liberal Arts Graduate

Writing- and presentation-intensive courses cultivate strong communication skills in these graduates, who often have time in their schedule to pursue study abroad experiences and leadership roles in extracurricular activities. Despite a plethora of soft skills necessary for long-term success in the workforce, these graduates lack the specialized technical skills required for most entry-level employment.

STEM Graduate

Coursework in high demand fields like engineering and computer science lead to multiple post-graduation job offers, but stringent major requirements limit time spent in writing-intensive electives and extracurricular organizations. Despite early success on the job market, these graduates often lack the management skills and creativity required for advancement in competitive technical fields.

"Many programmers find that their employability starts to decline at about age 35. Employers either dismiss them as lacking in up-to-date technical skills or 'not suitable for entry level.. In other words, either underqualified or overqualified."[2]

Recognizing the importance of building out both dimensions of a student's T, several universities are following the lead of companies like IBM, IDEO, and Cisco, making T-shaping a central goal of their curricula.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

"[We must] lead the nation in our reputation for graduating T-shaped people whose frame of reference and skills are a combination of broad and deep—people who are work-ready and highly sought after in the new global, intensively technological, data- and innovation-driven workplace."

Lou Anna K. Simon
President
2013 Founders' Day Address

2) Matloff, Norman, "Software Engineers Will Work One Day for English Majors," Bloomberg, http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2012-04-22/software-engineers-will-work-one-day-for-english-majors.

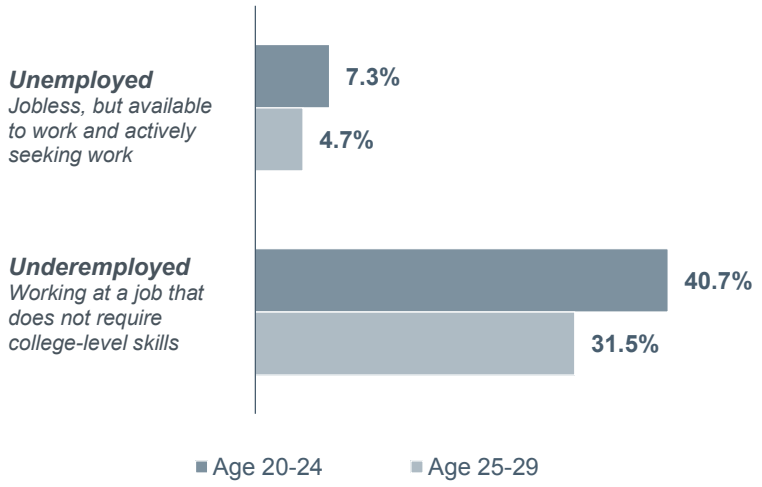
Degree Holders Work for Minimum Wage

Failure to Land Strong First Job Depresses Earnings Throughout Career

Unemployment numbers for recent college graduates align with the rest of the country. However, labor economists suggest that employment versus unemployment is an imprecise measure for the employment success of recent graduates as these statics overlook the extent of underemployment among recent graduates. In 2013, 41% of recent graduates accepted jobs to pay bills and college loans that defeat the purpose of completing a degree, jobs that do not require college-level skills and experience.

Unemployment Masks Larger Problem[3]

Labor Participation by Age Group of College Graduates, 2012



Unemployment also impacts college graduates across the course of their career. Lisa Kahn, a professor at Yale University, tracked the income and employment status of students who graduated college in the 1980s. Students who graduated in an economic downturn are not only less likely to find a job after graduation, but also less likely to recoup lost earnings over a lifetime.

Detriment of Unemployment on Lifetime Income, 1980s to Present[4]

1%	→	- 7%	→	$100K
Unemployment		*Starting Income*		*Lost Income*
For every percentage point in national unemployment…		…starting income drops 7% and rarely catches up across a career		Average income deficit among students who graduated in a downturn, compared to peers who immediately secured employment

3) Neeta P Fogg and Paul Harrington, "The Employment and Mal-Employment Situation for Recent College Graduates: An Update," Center for Labor Markets and Policy, June 2012.

4) Don Peck, "How a New Jobless Era Will Transform America," *The Atlantic*, March 2010.

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Underemployed College Graduates Reach a Tipping Point…

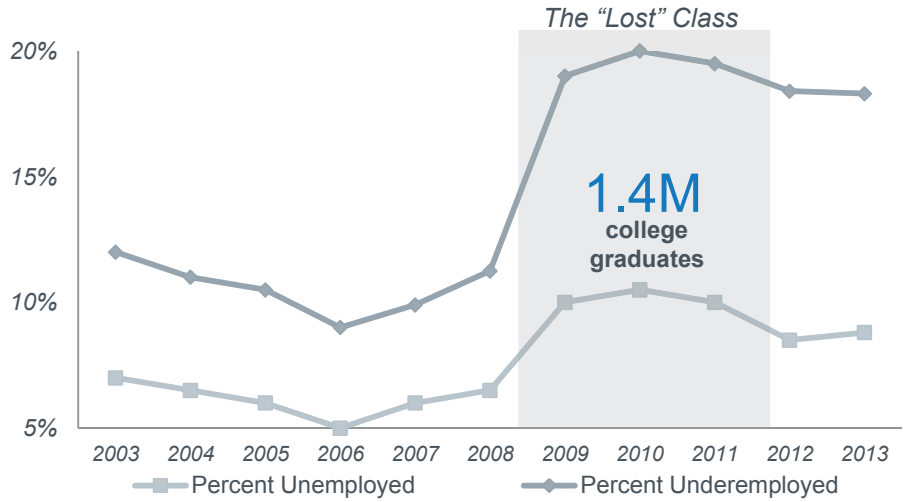
To this day, students who graduated at the height of the Great Recession—2009 to 2011—are disproportionately more likely to be un- or underemployed. Just this segment of graduates represents approximately 1.4 million potential COE students who seek avenues to advance to jobs that require a bachelor's degree.

> **No to Baristadom**
>
> "Three years in, grads who haven't found steady work realize they need a different education to open doors."
>
> *Program Director, Public Research University*

COE Forum members observe that student populations are already skewing younger as un- and underemployed graduates start to enroll in continuing and professional education programs. Members note it takes underemployed college graduates three to four years, on average, to accept that they need additional training to enter the workforce.

Casualties of the Great Recession[5]

Percentage of Un- and Underemployed College Graduates, 2003-2013



…As Typical COE Students Go Back to Work

As recent graduates' underemployment problem reaches a fever pitch, demand from bread-and-butter COE populations is declining for the first time in years. Postsecondary enrollment in the United States dropped by 500,000 students between 2011 and 2012; students aged 25 and above represented 90% of that decline.[6] As mid-career adults comprise a smaller market share for COE units, programs targeted toward recent college graduates are a smart long-term strategy for sustaining enrollments.

5) Heidi Shierholz, Natalie Sabadish, and Nicholas Finio, "The Class of 2013: Young Graduates Still Face Dim Job Prospects," Economic Policy Institute, April 2013.

6) "School Enrollment," Current Population Survey 2012, September 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, "School Enrollment," Current Population Survey 2011, September 2012.

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Second Bachelor's More Hirable Than a Master's Degree

A Little Tech Goes a Long Way

New and Experienced Grads Benefit from Lesser Degrees in Hot Fields

Students with undergraduate degrees in the liberal arts and humanities can qualify for more jobs and elevate earning potential by supplementing their degrees with coursework in high-demand fields. A Burning Glass analysis of entry-level job opportunities reveals that just a sprinkling of skills in high-demand areas like programming, data analysis, and social media can significantly elevate a recent graduate's job prospects and earning potential.

Threshold Skills Open Many Doors

Entry-Level Jobs and Salaries, 2012-2013

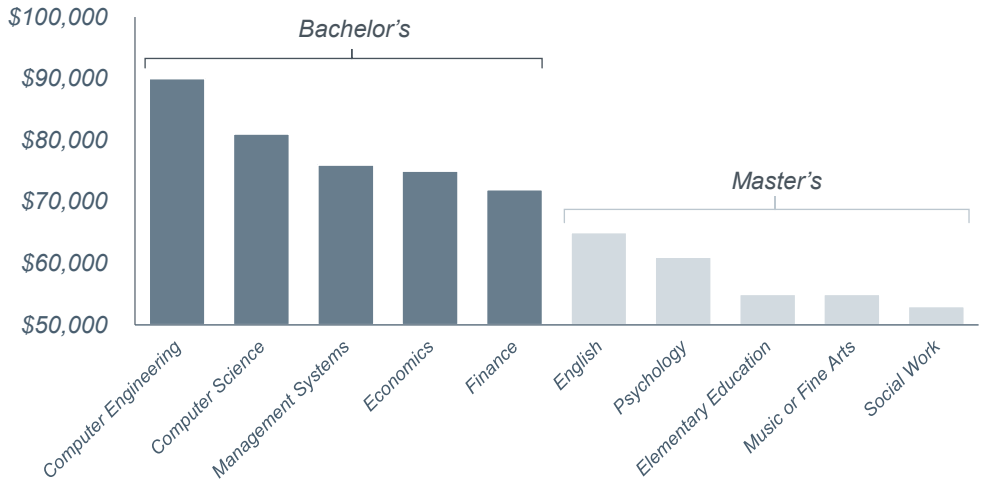
Required Skills	Entry-Level Postings	Average Salary
Bachelor of Arts Alone	954,996	$42,731
BA + Programming	+52,822	+$17,753
BA + Data Analysis	+136,757	+$12,703
BA + Social Media	+399,357	+$3,424

Source: Burning Glass Labor/Insight™

Some un- or underemployed students consider returning to school for a master's degree in their field to increase job opportunities and salaries. However, for students who simply want to improve their employment odds and earning potential, a second bachelor's degree may be a smarter investment. Dr. Anthony Carnevale at Georgetown University Center for Education and the Workforce analyzed adults' average salary by field and level of degree; he found that a bachelor's degree in a hot field can significantly out-earn a graduate credential in lower-demand fields.

Second Bachelor's Can Out-Earn Master's

Average Salary by Field of Study, Ages 30-54



What Is a Second Bachelor's?

Core Skills Learned in Less Time

Second bachelor's programs allow students to earn a degree in a shorter time frame (less than the traditional four years) because they require only core major classes, not electives.

Second Bachelor's Program Components

Curriculum
Students complete only the core courses for their major. Programs eliminate typical general studies requirements as students completed them for their first degree.

Course Schedule
Flexible course schedules accommodate students who work while attending classes. Students complete degrees in one to three years.

Student Profile
Second bachelor's programs primarily target un- or underemployed recent graduates (graduated within five years); however, programs also attract some career changers from fields with poor job prospects (e.g., journalism, law).

Modality
Modality depends on whether programs draw from existing courses or offer courses unique to the second bachelor's program. Online programs predictably allow for larger enrollments; 60% of Oregon State University's online post-baccalaureate students live outside of Oregon.

Prerequisites
Prerequisites vary by institution and program. Independent second bachelor's programs can include foundational courses to accommodate students of all majors. Second bachelors' in nursing typically require prior coursework in anatomy, physiology, and microbiology, and computer science programs may require mathematics coursework.

Admissions Requirements
Independent, online programs can accommodate large cohorts; however, programs that enroll students based on empty seats in existing courses may implement stricter admissions criteria to keep enrollments manageable and ensure students can keep pace with classmates.

Accept MOOCs to Reduce Barriers to Entry

Accepting MOOCs or community college courses increases the number of students qualified to enroll in second bachelor's programs. Given the high attrition rates in most MOOCs, successful completion demonstrates students' level of motivation and dedication to the program.

22%
Percentage of nursing students with a prior bachelor's degree as of 2008, a 70% increase from 2000[7,8]

Relatively Common but Rarely Advertised

Many institutions already allow students to pursue a second bachelor's degree, but policies are not advertised and students must review the fine print in course catalogs to determine eligibility. Consult with the registrar to determine if an approved mechanism exists for second bachelor's degrees; working within an existing policy can significantly improve the speed and ease of formal program development.[7,8]

Nursing programs represent a notable exception; second bachelor's programs in nursing (often referred to as "accelerated BSNs") have attracted a growing number of bachelor's degree holders since the late 1990s. Students can complete an accelerated BSN program in 12 to 18 months; nearly a quarter of nurses earned a bachelor's degree in a field other than nursing before starting their studies.

7) "Accelerated Second Degree BSN Programs," Bestnursingdegree.com, accessed April 2014, http://www.bestnursingdegree.com/programs/accelerated-bsn.

8) "Accelerated Baccalaureate and Master's Degrees in Nursing," American Association of Colleges of Nursing, accessed April 2014, http://www.aacn.nche.edu/media-relations/fact-sheets/accelerated-programs.

Second Bachelor's in Computer Science

Stand-Alone Second Bachelor's

Oregon State University Launches Program to Meet Computing Workforce Needs

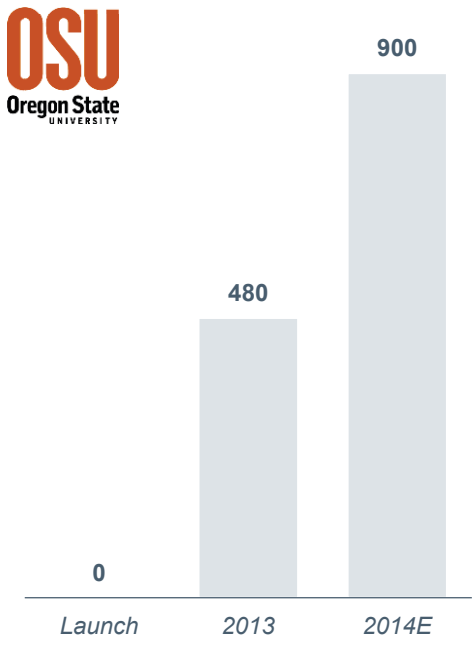
After reading about the pervasive underemployment of recent college graduates and hearing local technology companies lament a lack of qualified employees, the chair of the computer science (CS) department at Oregon State knew her department was well positioned to close the computer science skills gap in the state. Employers demanded a degree, but the institution's master's program was designed for former CS undergraduates—not unemployed liberal arts graduates with a budding interest in CS. Despite initial resistance from the curriculum committee (who initially felt the traditional undergraduate CS program was sufficient), the chair received approval for a post-baccalaureate BS in computer science in conjunction with OSU's Ecampus. She credits the program's approval to two components of her business plan:

- A flexible structure that allows students to progress at their own pace
- Investment in content development over instruction or marketing

To incentivize faculty to create high-quality courses, they received five times the typical stipend for creating new courses; teaching assistants and a full-time advisor assume responsibility for all instruction and student interaction. With just minimal marketing, the program quintupled its enrollment goals within one year.

Record-Breaking Enrollment Offsets High Start-Up Costs

Post-baccalaureate BS in Computer Science



Flexible Program Structure

- 60 quarter-credits
- 1-year intensive and 2- to 4-year part-time tracks
- 15-minute online modules, mixed in with summative activities

Start-Up Costs: $450,000

- Seed funding from associate provost; 20% of tuition revenue returned to central budget
- Per-credit tuition: $461
- Tenured faculty paid $15,000 to develop each course (5x the typical rate)
- 10 teaching assistants and 1 advising FTE in first year

Despite quintupling their enrollment target of 100 students (and setting an institutional record), student quality has not suffered. The students enrolled in the post-baccalaureate program are highly motivated, exceeding traditional-aged computer science undergraduates in job placement and standardized test performance.

Program Appeal Beyond the Target Demographic

Student Composition

40% Students with humanities or social sciences backgrounds

29 Median student age (more career changers than expected)

60% Students with STEM or business backgrounds

60% Percent of students residing outside Oregon

Student Outcomes

7% Percent by which post-baccalaureate students outperformed CS undergrads on standardized tests

100% Post-baccalaureate graduates who received job offers after graduation

Capacity Optimization Post-baccalaureates

Adding Enrollments and Revenues Without Adding Costs

While OSU was able allocate start-up funds to develop an independent second bachelor's program, other institutions with limited budgets implemented low-cost equivalents that capitalize on existing instructional capacity.

Capacity Optimization Program Models

Marketing and Instruction Costs and Tuition Revenue

Capacity-Dependent Admissions

Second Bachelor's, CS
30+ credits
Boise State University

Opportunity: Undergraduates dropped the computer science major, creating capacity in upper division classes

Action: Local college graduates with an interested in computer science were recruited to fill empty seats, filling courses up to the enrollment caps and generating additional revenue without adding new sections

Workforce Development Subsidy

Post-Bac Certificate, IS
18 credits
University of Louisiana Monroe

Opportunity: Local employer received state workforce grant to retrain IT employees

Action: ULM repurposed existing IT and computer science courses to build a certificate program tailored to employer's needs, benefitting from the workforce development funding with minimal start-up costs

Self-Funding Program Expansion

Post-Bac Certificate, CS
30 credits
Virginia Commonwealth

Opportunity: New faculty lines required expanded undergraduate enrollments, but growth in undergraduate enrollments required addition of new faculty lines

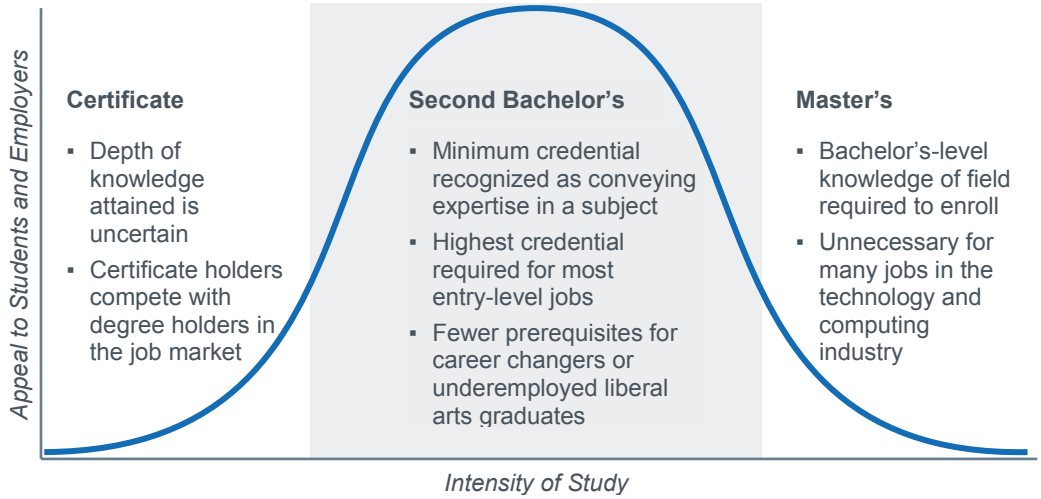
Action: Targeted alumni to and fill courses to the enrollment caps, investing tuition revenue in new faculty lines and further program expansion

Assessing Second Bachelor's for Your Institution

Second Bachelor's Find the Sweet Spot for Students and Employers

Neither a certificate nor a master's degree, second bachelors' degrees occupy the best of both worlds—and circumvent the shortcomings of each. Un- and underemployed college graduates present a unique challenge to continuing education units; these students require the authority and expertise that only a degree can provide, but they lack the academic prerequisites or practical work experience required for a graduate degree. For young adults looking to secure lucrative entry-level employment and build out their T-stem as quickly as possible, a second bachelor's degree in a high-demand field strikes an ideal balance between time-in-seat and content expertise.

Why Does a Second Bachelor's Make More Sense Than a Certificate or Master's?



Certificates Lack Standard Definition

"A 'certificate' can connote everything from a two-hour course to months of work; while a number of certificates provide students with more than enough preparation to excel in a related field, employers are reluctant to take the risk. Only a degree indicates that someone has mastered that body of knowledge."

COE Dean

Master's Pose Too Many Barriers to Entry

"We have a master's degree in computer science, but there are a limited number of computer science undergraduates who are qualified to enroll. Meanwhile, local employers are breaking down our door asking for qualified students—we simply aren't producing enough talent to support their needs."

Computer Science Program Director

Region, Discipline Dictate Suitability of Certificate vs. Degree

Demand for degrees and certificates varies based on region and discipline:

- **Region:** The east and west coast and large cities typically contain higher concentrations of degree holders competing for jobs; therefore, employers can require degree-level expertise. In rural areas with less competition, employers may accept certificates.
- **Discipline:** Topics that append existing credentials (e.g., leadership, social media, customer service) are appropriate for certificates. Disciplines that can stand alone as academic disciplines, such as computer science or nursing, require full degree programs to convey expertise.

Assessing Demand for Computer Science Programs

15 States Exceptionally Ripe for Second Bachelor's in CS

Employers across the country require computer science skills, and young adult unemployment is pervasive throughout the United States. However, due to regional variances in unemployment rates and workforce training needs, some states have a more pressing need for qualified computer science graduates. The darkly shade box below highlights states with higher-than-average young adult unemployment rates and a higher-than-average demand for computer science skills, indicating a disproportionately large market for second bachelor's programs in this field.

Geographic Demand for Computer Science Skills[9,10]

Computer Science Demand (Relative to All Majors)	Unemployment Rate for Workers Under Age 25: *Below Median*		*At/Above Median*	
At/Above Median	Alabama Delaware D.C. Hawaii Maryland	Massachusetts Nebraska New Hampshire Pennsylvania Texas	Arizona California Colorado Georgia Illinois Maine Missouri New Jersey	New York North Carolina Oregon Rhode Island South Carolina Virginia Washington
Below Median	Alaska Indiana Iowa Kansas Minnesota Montana New Mexico North Dakota	Ohio Oklahoma South Dakota Tennessee Vermont Wyoming West Virginia Wisconsin	Arkansas Connecticut Florida Idaho Kentucky	Louisiana Michigan Mississippi Nevada

Beyond Computer Science

Opportunities Abound for Second Bachelor's in STEM/Business

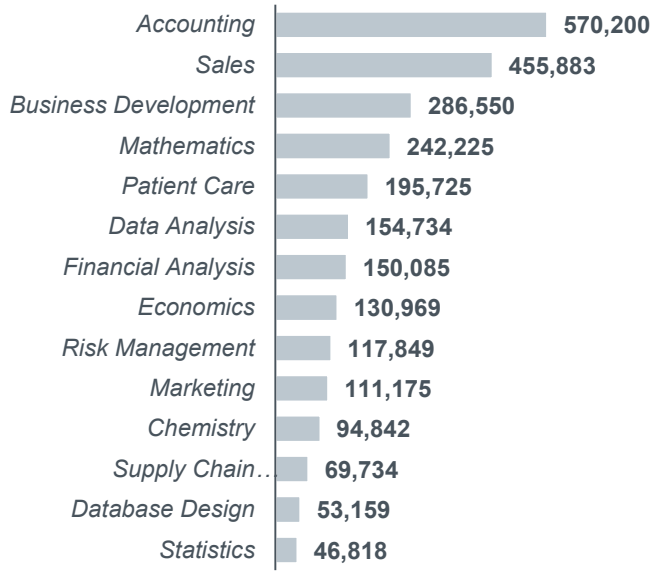
Although the our research profiled programs in computer science, second bachelor's degrees are an appropriate format for dozens of high-demand disciplines, including accounting, data analysis, economics, and supply chain management, among others. The following graph highlights a sample of the most requested skills for bachelor's degree holders nationwide.

9) Heidi Shierholz, "The Class of 2013," Economic Policy institute, April 2013.
10) Burning Glass Labor/Insight; Education Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

High-Demand Skills Conveyed Through Second Bachelor's Programs

National, Bachelor's Degree Preferred/Required, April 2013 – March 2014

n= 5,564,882 job postings with 346,674 unspecified



Source: Burning Glass Labor/Insight™

A Second Bachelor's in T-Top Disciplines?

Universities with a strong national brand may consider offering second bachelors' in fields that build out a student's T-top (e.g., design thinking, international relations). STEM graduates from less prominent universities may enroll in these programs to increase their competitiveness among other job seekers or in other geographic areas.

Positioning Second Bachelor's Degrees

Second Bachelor's Degrees Complement, Not Replace, First Degree

Program directors typically advertise second bachelor's degrees through Google keyword searches and in alumni newsletters; all directors of profiled programs found that minimal marketing was sufficient to meet or exceed enrollment targets.

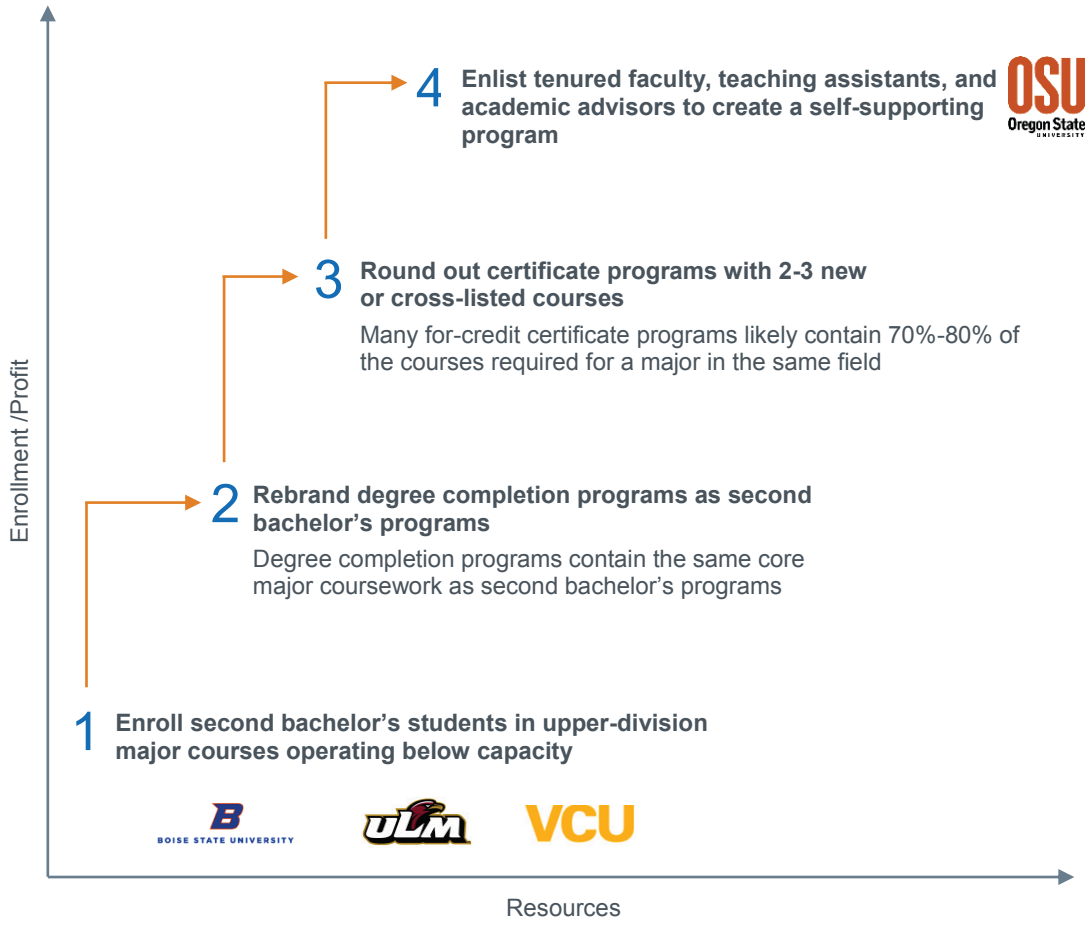
Program leaders initially worried that advertising a second bachelor's to alumni would raise questions about value of students' first degree. However, contacts report that alumni demonstrate the same enthusiasm for their coursework as other students and do not fault the institution for their lack of job prospects. Careful framing of the second bachelor's value proposition—as a complementary experience, not a "do over"—keeps student morale high.

Emphasizing the complementary nature of second bachelor's degrees also offers students greater focus in choosing a career path. A former English major who pursues a second bachelor's degree in computer science, for example, is well suited for a career in digital journalism.

Maturation of Second Bachelor's Programs

Few institutions can afford to develop a self-sufficient second bachelor's program like Oregon State University's. However, COE leaders can work toward a distinct, self-supporting program by taking advantage of unused course capacity and repackaging existing COE programming. All of the opportunities in the graphic below respond to the pervasive unemployment and underemployment of recent college graduates, taking into account regional and institutional differences in funding, demand, and instructional capacity.

Scaling Up Second Bachelor's Programs



About the COE Forum

Serving University COE Administrators

Our Parent Firm: The Advisory Board Company

Founded in 1979 to serve hospitals and health systems, The Advisory Board Company is one of the nation's largest research and consulting firms serving nonprofit, mission-driven organizations. With a staff of over 1,800 worldwide, including 1,150 in Washington, D.C., we serve executives at about 3,800 member organizations in more than two dozen countries, publishing 50 major studies and 15,400 customized research briefs yearly on progressive management practices.

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Encouraged by leaders of academic medical centers that our model and experience serving nonprofit institutions might prove valuable to colleges and universities, the Advisory Board launched our higher education practice in 2007. We are honored to report over 1000 college and university executives now belong to one of our EAB memberships.

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Business Affairs Forum

Research and support for college and university chief business officers in improving administrative efficiency and lowering costs.

Academic Affairs Forum

Strategy advice and research for provosts, deans, and other academic leaders on elevating performance in teaching, research, and academic governance.

Student Affairs Forum

Research for student affairs executives on innovative practices for improving student engagement and perfecting the student experience.

COE Forum

Breakthrough-practice research and market intelligence to help universities develop and grow continuing, professional, and online education programs.

Advancement Forum

Breakthrough-practice research and data analytics to help advancement professionals maximize philanthropic giving and support institutional goals.

Community College Forum

Strategy advice and research for community college presidents on improving college finances and campus management, as well as partnering with four-year institutions.

Performance Technologies

University Spend Collaborative

Business intelligence, price comparison database, and consulting to assist chief procurement officers in reducing spend on purchased goods and services.

Student Success Collaborative

Combines technology, research, and predictive analytics to help institutions positively inflect outcomes with at-risk and off-path students.