



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Santa Ana College Receives Initial Approval to Offer Bachelor's Degree ***New program is historic milestone for college in its centennial year***

(Santa Ana, CA)— Santa Ana College (SAC) has been selected to offer a baccalaureate degree in the high-demand field of Occupational Studies. Currently, SAC students can earn an associate degree in the college's Occupational Therapy Assistant program. To become an occupational therapist, a master's degree is required. However, the profession's accrediting arm, the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education, is considering raising that requirement to a doctorate. This new program, awaiting final approval by the California Community Colleges Board of Governors in mid-March, will create a more highly skilled occupational therapy assistant workforce and will prepare occupational therapy assistants for entry into a master's degree program.

Santa Ana College, now celebrating its centennial, is among 15 California community colleges selected to begin offering a baccalaureate degree program. SAC and the other selected colleges will be among the first community colleges in California to expand student opportunities through the granting of four-year degrees. This historic leap forward was made possible by SB 850, sponsored by Sen. Marty Block and signed by the Governor last year, allowing the establishment of a pilot baccalaureate degree program at 15 community colleges in a field of study not offered by the California State University or the University of California.

"We are thrilled that Santa Ana College has been selected to launch this landmark program during its centennial," said Santa Ana College President Erlinda J. Martinez, Ed.D. "Of our college's many excellent academic programs responding to workforce needs, the occupational studies program stood out because of the vigor of our occupational therapy assistant program and the robust labor market in this field."

SAC's Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program, the largest existing OTA community college program in the state, prepares students to provide service to help develop, recover, or maintain daily living and work skills of people with a physical, mental, or cognitive disorder. The major requires general education courses, including biological, social, and behavioral sciences, in addition to occupational therapy courses. The program utilizes classroom instruction and field work experiences to prepare the student to meet certification and employment standards. The college's OTA program is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education.

The job outlook for occupational therapy professionals is very positive. According to *U.S. News & World Report*, occupational therapist ranks number nine and occupational therapy assistant ranks number 13 among the “Best Health Care Jobs.” According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics, OTA is one of the 20 occupations with the highest percent (43 percent) job growth rate between 2012-2022. According to the California Employment Development Department (EDD) 2014 first quarter statistics, the hourly mean salary for an OTA is \$31.98, with a range of \$29.79 to \$36.04 hourly. In addition, *U.S. News and World Report* cites the City of Santa Ana, California, as one of the best-paying cities for OTAs.

A recent survey of SAC’s OTA program graduates indicated that 78 percent of the 53 respondents had found work within two weeks of commencing their job search and 66 percent reported a starting salary of greater than \$30.00 per hour. The program graduates found jobs in Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties.

Upon approval of the Santa Ana College bachelor’s degree by the California Community Colleges Board of Governors, the curriculum development and state approval process would begin. Students in the OTA associate degree program would need to complete that program and apply for the bachelor’s program if they wish to continue. The baccalaureate-level program would launch in fall 2017. The first bachelor’s degrees in Occupational Studies could be awarded in 2019. By the end of the pilot program in August 2023, SAC would potentially have five graduating classes of Occupational Studies students for a potential total of 200 baccalaureate-level graduates.

A minimum of 124 semester credits will be needed to fulfill the requirements of the four-year degree in Occupational Studies. Students will need to complete 75 units of lower-division coursework in the OTA program at a cost of \$46 a unit (assuming that community college enrollment fees do not increase). The 49 additional upper division units will cost another \$84, for a total of \$130 per unit of the last two years of the program. In total, the cost of the four-year program, excluding books or other costs, would be about \$9,820.

SB 850 sunsets after the 2022-23 academic year, after which the Legislature and Governor may renew it pending two Legislative Analyst’s Office reviews of the pilot program – one in 2018 and another in 2022.

For a complete list of the bachelor’s degree programs receiving initial approval statewide visit <http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/Newsroom.aspx>

For information about Santa Ana College’s centennial celebration. visit www.sac.edu/100.

About Santa Ana College

Santa Ana College (SAC), which is turning 100 years old in 2015, serves about 18,000 students each semester at its main campus in Santa Ana. The college prepares students for transfer to four-year institutions, provides invaluable workforce training, and customized training for business and industry. In addition, another 11,000 students are served through the college’s School of Continuing Education located at Centennial Education Center. Ranked as one of the nation’s top two-year colleges awarding associate degrees to Latino and Asian students, the college is also recognized throughout the state for its comprehensive workforce training programs for nurses, firefighters, law enforcement and other medical personnel. SAC is one of two comprehensive colleges under the auspices of the Rancho Santiago Community College District. Visit www.sac.edu to learn more. For information about Santa Ana College’s Centennial, please visit www.sac.edu/100.

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