
Re-conceptualizing the Relationship Between Community Colleges and Universities Using a Conceptual Framework Drawn From the Study of Jurisdictional Conflict Between Professions

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between community colleges and universities in Canada and the United States based on increased involvement of community colleges in offering baccalaureate programs. The article employs a theoretical framework borrowed from the study of jurisdictional conflict between professions. After considering the types of possible and occurring jurisdiction settlement over baccalaureate preparation between universities and community colleges, the author concludes that the older, simplistic criterion—based on credentials awarded—that defined the division of labor between postsecondary sectors should be replaced with newer, more complex and multifaceted criteria that relate to program and client characteristics.

Keywords

community college baccalaureate, interinstitutional relationships, professional jurisdiction, universities

In the 1990s, in both the United States and Canada, small but increasing numbers of community colleges began to award the baccalaureate (Floyd, Skolnik, & Walker, 2005). As of October, 2010, according to Russell (2010), 54 community colleges in

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18 states had received approval to offer a total of 465 four-year degree programs; up from 21 institutions in 11 states offering 128 programs just six years earlier. Community colleges in four of Canada's five largest provinces, accounting for two thirds of the population, are now eligible to award the baccalaureate, and 32 colleges are offering 135 baccalaureate programs.¹ The surge in community college baccalaureate activity allegedly occurred in response to two related pressures. One is a general increase in the demand for improved opportunities for people to attain a baccalaureate both for their own benefit and for the benefit of society (Clark, Moran, Skolnik, & Trick, 2009; Lumina Foundation for Education, 2009; National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2006). The other is the increased demand for a particular type of baccalaureate, what has been called the applied, or workforce-focused, baccalaureate (Floyd & Walker, 2009; Skolnik, 2005; Townsend, Bragg, & Ruud, 2009; Walker & Floyd, 2005). Underlying the increase in demand for the baccalaureate and the growth of the community college baccalaureate in particular are economic pressures associated with global competition (Levin, 2004).

Attempts by community colleges to obtain the authority to award the baccalaureate have in nearly all cases been opposed by universities and have injected a significant new competitive element into the relationship between community colleges and universities. For example, in Florida, the community college baccalaureate generated "significant concerns" about competition with universities (Russell, 2010, p. 5), and in Michigan, the attempt by community colleges to get authorization to award bachelor's degrees has "stirred tensions between community colleges and universities" (French, 2010, p. 4A). In Ontario, there has been open conflict over territory between the universities and community colleges since the colleges obtained the authority to award baccalaureate degrees (Urquhart, 2004), and in British Columbia, the baccalaureate in nursing has become contested territory between community colleges and universities (Chapman & Kirby, 2008). To date, there have not been any in-depth studies of the impact that awarding baccalaureate degrees by community colleges has had on their relationship with universities or on the perceptions of stakeholders from both sectors about the magnitude of any resulting problems. Still, the examples just cited suggest that this might be a fruitful area for investigation. These examples suggest also that the impact on the relationship between community colleges and universities should be an important consideration in state and provincial policy making regarding the community college baccalaureate.

The purpose of this article is to examine the relationship between the community college and the university in the context of the increasing involvement of community colleges in offering baccalaureate programs on their own. The article employs a theoretical framework, borrowed from the study of professions, which deals specifically with the settlement of conflict among professions over the scope of their respective jurisdictions. Levin (2004) has observed that "theoretically based explanations of community college behavior are the exception rather than the rule" (p. 2), and neither the community college baccalaureate nor the broader subject of the relationship

between community colleges and universities are exceptions in this regard. Theoretical frameworks can be helpful both in understanding the behavior of higher education actors, including their interactions with each other, and in the development of research. In an earlier study (Skolnik, 2009), the author attempted to explain the emergence of the community college baccalaureate in Ontario by adapting the models developed by Brint and Karabel (1989) and Dougherty (1994) to explain the historic shift of emphasis in the community college toward vocational programs. That study considered not only the actions of community colleges and universities, but also the role of others whose behavior may have a bearing on the introduction of baccalaureate programs in community colleges (i.e., state or provincial higher education agencies and departments, accreditation bodies, employers, and students). In contrast to the earlier study, this article focuses just on the relationship between community colleges and universities.

The article looks at developments in both the United States and Canada and refers frequently to examples in Ontario, a jurisdiction where the author has been studying the relationship between community colleges and universities for over four decades (Skolnik, 1995, 2009, 2010). There is some question as to what terms are most appropriate for referring to the institutional types that are the focus of the article. The distinction that the terms *community college* and *university* are intended to convey is similar to the distinction between *associate's degree-granting institutions* and *traditional baccalaureate degree-granting institutions* that is employed by Townsend, Bragg, and Ruud (2008) in their inventory of applied baccalaureate programs in the United States. As the associate's degree is awarded in only one province of Canada, the term *community college*, rather than associate's degree-granting institution, is used to refer to institutions that traditionally have not awarded the baccalaureate and whose programs normally are of 2 years or less in duration (except in Ontario where these institutions also offer 3-year programs).² The word *university* is used in this article to refer to institutions that traditionally have been authorized to award bachelor's and higher degrees, and in which these degrees constitute the large majority of their academic awards.

Although the article focuses on the distinction between community colleges and universities, examining issues associated with the historic authority to award the baccalaureate, it is important to note that there is considerable diversity within both groups of institutions, particularly the universities, and more so within the United States than within Canada (Jones, 1998; Leslie, 1980; Skolnik, 1991). These differences in institutional missions and characteristics are associated with differences in the work of the academics that populate the institutions. As Clark (1997) expressed it, the institution, along with the discipline, is responsible for "induced and enforced differences" among academics (p. 22). The categories of universities that Clark regarded as particularly important in this regard are research universities of "high research intensity," other doctoral granting universities that "grant only a few doctorates and operate off of a small research base," master's-granting institutions, and

baccalaureate-granting institutions (p. 22). Clark discussed how the nature and conditions of work vary among faculty members in these—and other more disaggregated—categories of universities. Such differences include the types of students encountered, the amount of time spent in teaching and research, the extent of professionalism, and the amount of professional autonomy. Within the diverse matrix of postsecondary institutions that historically have awarded bachelor's degrees, it is likely that there are substantial differences in the extent to which these institutions would be affected by the entry of community colleges into baccalaureate programming, and in the ways that universities might react, if at all, to the appearance of a new provider of bachelor's degrees. To focus on key variables and avoid excessive length, the following discussion treats all baccalaureate-granting institutions as a single group. As research on the community college baccalaureate develops, it would be useful to document differences in the responses of and impacts on different types of baccalaureate-granting institutions.

The next section presents the rationale for and describes the theoretical framework used in this article to examine the relationship between community colleges and universities. The following three sections of the article summarize the main components of this theoretical framework and apply it to the relationship between community colleges and universities. The article ends with a section discussing implications and conclusions.

A Theoretical Framework for Studying the Relationship Between the Community College and the University

Although the relatively recent entry of some community colleges into the market for baccalaureate programs has raised concerns about competition with universities, the potential for competition between these two types of institutions is hardly new. Flagship state universities provided important support for the establishment of junior colleges in several states such as California, Washington, and Illinois, but in other cases, such as in Indiana, these institutions opposed the idea because of their concern about potential competition (Dougherty, 1994). Similarly, in one Canadian province, British Columbia, the president of the flagship university presented the government with a formal proposal and a plan for the establishment of independent junior colleges, whereas in another, Ontario, the universities lobbied strongly against the establishment of junior colleges (Skolnik, 2010). Moreover, Dougherty points out that even among the universities that were generally supportive of the idea of junior colleges, enthusiasm for the corresponding reality waxed and waned with the vicissitudes of their own enrollment and financial situations. The implication is that the junior college has sometimes been viewed by the universities as a complementary institution, and at other times as a competitive threat. Judging from the vigorous opposition that universities have mounted against the idea of community colleges being given the authority to award baccalaureate

degrees in most places where this has been proposed, one might infer that universities view the community college baccalaureate mainly as a competitive threat. Nevertheless, it will be argued later that the community college baccalaureate also has the potential to complement the work of the university.

As the relationship between the community college and the university is both complementary and competitive, a theoretical framework for studying that relationship would be most useful if it focused attention on the ways in which each type of institution influences the nature and scope of activities of the other. On the surface at least, a process through which institutions dominated by professional workers interact and determine their mutual scopes of activity would seem to have much in common with a process through which professional groups interact and determine their mutual scopes of jurisdiction. The theory of competition between professions is a central area of the literature on professions.³ As Andrew Abbott (1988) observed in a book devoted to this subject, the history of jurisdictional disputes “is the real, the determining history of professions” (p. 6). Abbott’s work arguably provides the most comprehensive and detailed theoretical framework for the study of the division of jurisdiction among professions, and in this article Abbot’s theoretical framework is applied to the relationship between community colleges and universities.

Transferring a theory about the determination of professional jurisdiction to the study of community colleges and universities involves applying a theory of the relationship between professional groups to the study of the relationship between institutions. However, such a transfer may not be too great a stretch, because professional groups are so intimately connected with institutions. Noting that most professionals work for organizations, Lee Clarke (1989) argued that it “is the constellation of institutions and institutional forces that are the keys to professional powers” (p. 285). Moreover, in his study of the academic profession in the United States, Burton Clark observed that “the academic occupation clearly fits the scholarly and commonplace conceptions of profession” (Clark, 1987, p. xxiv), and he emphasized the important role that the institution plays in determining the work of members of this profession. The struggle between professional groups over jurisdiction is a struggle over the types and nature of work performed by members of the groups. In situations where the identity of a profession is closely associated with the kind of institution in which its members tend to be employed, the types and nature of work performed by members is determined in considerable measure by the missions, functions, and powers of their institution. For example, until recently community college faculty members did not teach upper-division undergraduate courses, because doing so did not fall within the mandate of the institution in which they are employed.

Despite several commonalities between university and community college professors, the two remain distinct professional groups in some important ways. The major thing that the two groups have in common is that teaching is a substantial activity for both. However, there are differences between the teaching functions of community colleges and universities. Even when the broadest definition of the term *postsecondary* is employed, some of the teaching that community college faculty members are called

on to do is not at a postsecondary level. In addition to providing university-level arts and sciences courses and longer duration career education programs, community colleges devote considerable resources to remedial education and to various courses and short-term programs for adults for which completion of secondary school is not an admission requirement. These include general interest courses, life skills instruction, vocational retraining, workforce training contracted by industry, and trades courses. Second, the majority of community college teachers in many colleges concentrate on teaching vocationally oriented courses. In contrast, the majority of professors in most universities concentrate on courses which, although they may have value in the labor market, are more academic in nature.

One other possible difference between the teaching functions of community college and university faculty members takes on particular significance in the context of considering jurisdictional disputes between the sectors over degree-credit activity. This is the notion that much of the teaching done by university professors is at a "higher" level than the teaching done by community college faculty. One aspect of this hierarchical differentiation is that many university professors teach in master's and doctoral programs, whereas community college faculty members do not.⁴ Another aspect of differentiation by level is that many community college faculty members teach first- and second-year courses in hierarchically sequenced 4-year programs. By definition, these courses taught by community college faculty members are at a lower level in the knowledge hierarchy than the third- and fourth-year courses taught by university professors.

It is more difficult to establish the hierarchical relationship between occupational courses in the community colleges and disciplinary courses in the universities, because the two are so different. The perception within the universities would likely be that community college occupational courses are lower on the knowledge hierarchy because there is less abstract or theoretical content, and because admissions requirements are lower in terms of the types of secondary school courses students are expected to have completed and the grades they are expected to have earned. The view in the community colleges, however, would likely be that the courses are so qualitatively different that they cannot be ranked on a common hierarchical scale. The difference in viewpoints between the two sectors about the level of knowledge in occupational programs is central to the controversy over the appropriateness of community colleges awarding baccalaureate degrees, as well as to the controversy concerning the awarding of transfer credit for occupationally focused community college courses. An indicator of the way that this distinction is viewed in universities is that in the United States about three fourths of community college liberal arts courses transfer to universities, compared to only one third of vocational courses (Roksa, 2006).

Besides differences related to teaching, another, perhaps larger difference between the two groups pertains to their role in regard to research. Research is a major activity for university faculty members who may be expected to spend approximately the same proportion of their time on research as on teaching. Research has not generally been expected of faculty members in community colleges, and even those faculty members

who want to conduct research have found that their substantial teaching loads and lack of institutional support make it difficult for them to do so. Over the past decade, many community colleges in Canada have been developing their capacity for applied research. However, in these colleges, applied research is not expected of all faculty members, and on the whole, there remains a considerable difference between community college and university faculty members with respect to both the extent of their involvement in research and the type of research that they do (Association of Canadian Community Colleges [ACCC], 2006; Fisher, 2009).

On the basis of the differences between the normal expectations for faculty members in the two institutions, London (1980) concluded that community college faculty members constitute a distinct “professional segment” of the professoriate, with different values and interests from their university counterparts as well as a different sense of belonging (p. 64). London was struck particularly by the difference in academic preparedness and self-confidence between the students that community college teachers serve and the students in universities. For London, it was the special expertise of community college faculty members and their commitment to help underprepared and at-risk students in large numbers that more than any other factor “distinguish[ed] community college teachers from the larger professoriate” (p. 64).

Another distinguishing feature identified by London is that community college faculty members are relatively isolated from the discipline-specific academic culture of the larger professoriate. Community college faculty members are less likely than university professors to publish in academic journals, and when they do publish, the focus is more likely to be related to teaching and learning. The primary identification of community college faculty members is with teaching, whereas for university faculty members, it is with their disciplines. In summary, there would seem to be sufficient difference in the institutional expectations and typical duties between community college and university faculty members to regard them as distinct professional groups.

Abbott (1988) observed that what has been a stable division of jurisdiction between different professional groups can be disrupted by many factors, both external and internal to the workplace. In this case it would appear that a reasonably stable division of jurisdiction between community colleges and universities was disrupted in the 1990s—the precise dates vary from place to place—by several factors: changes in the knowledge and skills required in the workplace in many of the occupational fields in which community colleges had been offering subbaccalaureate programs; personal and societal perceptions of the increased importance of higher levels of education, and particularly of career-focused education; and growing concern in many jurisdictions about barriers that prevented persons who had completed career programs in a community college from subsequently attaining a baccalaureate. This article gives particular attention to that disruption in the context of a broader examination of the relationship between community colleges and universities.

Abbott’s framework for the study of interprofessional conflict over jurisdiction includes three main elements that are helpful in understanding how professional groups deal with such conflicts: the factors that affect a professional group’s ability to

withstand challenges to its jurisdiction; the types of settlements over competing claims of jurisdiction; and the arenas in which competing claims over jurisdiction are resolved. The next three sections address these three elements, with the greatest amount of attention devoted to the second element.

Factors Affecting the Strength of Claims to Professional Jurisdiction

Abbott (1988) identified several factors that influence a professional group's ability to withstand a challenge to its jurisdiction and that seem relevant to the struggle for jurisdiction between universities and community colleges. The first such factor, efficacy, refers to adequacy of the performance of the group that has jurisdiction in the exercise of that jurisdiction. Related to efficacy is measurability, which is reflected in the availability of objective data that may confirm assertions about efficacy. During the past few decades, concerns have been expressed frequently about the inadequacy of data on the quality of the education received by baccalaureate graduates of universities (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006; Saunders, 2006; Secretary of Education's Commission, 2006). Opinion is divided as to whether this is because quality of education is not amenable to meaningful measurement, or whether the task simply requires a greater commitment of effort and resources than has been devoted to it thus far. If the former, then a monopoly on this type of education (i.e., the monopoly universities have in baccalaureate education) is inherently vulnerable because of the difficulty that the monopolist faces in demonstrating efficacy. If doing a better job of measurement is only a matter of making that task a sufficient priority, then a challenge to jurisdiction should give the monopolist incentive to muster the effort.

In regard to creating the conditions for a challenge of jurisdiction, it does not matter whether community colleges are doing better than universities in measuring the quality of education and the competence of graduates. The existence of concerns about how well the universities are doing these things—if sufficiently strong—can make their monopoly over the awarding of baccalaureate degrees susceptible to challenge. In the absence of data on the quality of education, there are rhetorical arguments, whether valid or not, that community college challengers of the university monopoly on degree granting might use in urging that such monopoly is broken. For example, community colleges might argue that in contrast to community colleges, universities treat teaching as secondary to research. They might also argue that what employers view as a quality education today is one that is more practical than that which a traditional baccalaureate experience provides.

Another factor that is related to efficacy is variability of client characteristics with regard to the type of professional intervention that is needed for successful results. Abbott (1988) suggested that a profession “derives general social prestige from meeting clients on *its* own, rather than on *their* own, ground” (p. 47). However, he added that a profession that forces clients to take treatment on its own terms risks competition from others “who talk to clients in their own language” (p. 47). In our context, an

example of the first approach would be an institution that takes a “swim or sink” attitude toward its students. An example of the second approach would be an institution that attempts to diagnose each student’s learning needs and prescribe particular learning strategies and supports for each student. It is more common for community colleges than for universities to claim to have adopted learner centeredness as an operating principle, though resource limitations and institutional inertia often make it difficult to follow through on the pursuit of such ideals (Barr & Tagg, 1995; O’Banion, 1997). Many community college students have stated that they wished that their college would offer the baccalaureate so that they could continue to receive the individualized attention that they have become accustomed to at their college, rather than having to leave for what they expect—rightly or wrongly—will be the more impersonal atmosphere of the university.⁵

In contrast to the notion of individualized interaction with each client, a profession may employ routinized procedures for at least some aspects of its work. In interprofessional competition, routinization often invites poaching. There are many routinized procedures in both community colleges and universities (e.g., the procedures used in registration, advising, and evaluation). One area where routinized procedures might make universities vulnerable to poaching consists of those associated with very large lower division classes; students who might otherwise attend universities might be attracted to the relatively small classes of community colleges instead. However, the downside of this form of routinization may be offset for many students by the opportunity to attend the lectures of highly prestigious scholars and to have the opportunity for personal interaction with these scholars.

Another factor that influences a profession’s ability to sustain its jurisdiction is the power and prestige of its professional knowledge. Because of their involvement in research and advanced studies, university professors possess the more powerful and prestigious subject matter knowledge in disciplines that are taught in both sectors, primarily the conventional arts and sciences. However, in some of the areas in which community colleges offer specialized occupational programs whose graduates are highly sought by well-known companies, the power and prestige of this occupation-specific knowledge has been sufficient to attract university graduates in a process that has become known as reverse transfer (Meek, 2002; Townsend & Lambert, 1999). Such areas of high-level occupational knowledge, like computer animation, integrated advanced manufacturing technologies, and process automation, were among the first in which approval was granted for community colleges to offer baccalaureate programs in Ontario.

The last factor influencing a profession’s claims of jurisdiction is the social organization of the profession. Abbott (1988) asserted that other things being equal, the more strongly organized a profession, the more effective its claim to jurisdiction. University professors in Canada and the United States are represented by national organizations such as the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). In theory, an organization representing the community college teaching profession could be even stronger

than the organizations that represent university faculty members, because with their primary identification with teaching, community college faculty members might be less fragmented by discipline than their university counterparts. However, the reality is that no national organization of community college teachers comparable to those that represent university faculty members has emerged.⁶ Unionization has tended to be more pervasive in the community colleges than in the universities. However, faculty unions in the community colleges have other concerns (e.g., salary and working conditions) that may deflect attention away from issues related to professional or institutional roles, and the extent of faculty support for offering baccalaureate programs among community college faculty members is not known. Community college faculty members who look forward to teaching in baccalaureate programs may tend to welcome the change, whereas others may fear a reduction in status and job security and oppose the idea (Laden, 2005). Perhaps this division of opinion explains why during the public hearings on the bill to allow community colleges in Ontario to award the baccalaureate, the union representing the faculties of those institutions took no position on that issue ("Committee Transcripts," 2000).

Settlements of Disputed Claims to Jurisdiction

The four major types of settlement of interprofessional disputes over jurisdiction identified by Abbott (1988) are full and complete jurisdiction for one profession, subordination of one profession to another, division of jurisdiction on the basis of the kinds of cases handled, and division of jurisdiction according to client characteristics. Each can be applied to an examination of the settlement of university–community college jurisdictional disputes as community colleges move to baccalaureate programming.

Full Jurisdiction

Abbott (1988) noted that historically, claims to full jurisdiction have been made only by professions that are formally organized. With its ambiguous boundary, limited control over entry, and fragmentation by discipline, university teaching does not display the classic characteristics of a profession that is successful in maintaining full jurisdiction over its domain. Moreover, full jurisdiction can be burdensome, as certain parts of professional work can be—to at least some members of the profession—dull, repetitive, tedious, and stressful. Subordination enables a profession to offload some of its less glamorous or more repetitive activity to others—as long as there are other professions that are willing to perform this work—while retaining the more interesting and prestigious tasks for itself. This rationale was evident in some university presidents' statements of support for the development and expansion of junior and community colleges. Robert Hutchins (1933), President of the University of Chicago, said that junior colleges would allow the universities to "be free to devote themselves to the promotion of scholarship" (p. 729). Clark Kerr (1978), former president of the University of California reflected that the expansion of community colleges protected

the University from being “overwhelmed by large numbers of students with lower academic attainments” (p. 267). Junior colleges willingly accepted, even sought out, a responsibility that many university leaders were willing to give up.

Subordination

What made the community college subordinate to the university was the latter’s control over the awarding of credit toward bachelor’s degrees for courses taken in the former. Abbott (1988, p. 75) defined intellectual jurisdiction as a variant of subordination in which one profession retains control of cognitive content but not of the actual day-to-day practice by competing professions. If the university specifies only the general content that junior college courses must contain to qualify for transfer credit, then the relationship with the junior college would fit within the model of intellectual jurisdiction. However, if, credit recognition also involves consideration of the educational process and instructor qualifications, then the arrangement is more like a typical form of subordination.

A danger of subordination is that the subordinated group may after a while challenge the primacy of the other group on the basis of the knowledge and skills acquired, the recognition of which by the other group is at least to some extent inherent in the nature of the relationship. The recognition that universities have given to community colleges in the form of approval of college courses for transfer credit has helped to give community colleges the stature and credibility necessary to award baccalaureate degrees on their own. Thus, a university that fears the competition that could result from a community college obtaining the authority to award the baccalaureate may be wary of awarding generous transfer credit for the community college’s courses. However, by improving opportunities for transfer, universities might lessen the chances that community colleges will obtain the authority to award bachelor’s degrees on their own. This appears to have happened in Arizona, where community colleges began seeking authority to offer applied baccalaureate degrees in the 1990s. Recently, a more cooperative relationship seems to have developed between the two sectors as universities have reduced the academic and financial barriers to transfer and created more integrated arrangements for student mobility (Lumina Foundation for Education, 2010). Although there is still some push for the community college baccalaureate in Arizona, the recent accommodations made by the universities may have reduced the likelihood that community colleges will get financial support from the state to offer their own baccalaureate programs (Office of Community College Research and Leadership, 2010).

Although efforts to improve the process of transfer from community colleges to universities are often seen as complementary to the awarding of baccalaureates by community colleges (Floyd, 2006; Ruud, Bragg, & Townsend, 2010), they may in fact be contradictory. The first involves the different institutions developing programs in collaboration with one another, whereas the second encourages the development of programs in isolation. A development in nursing education in British Columbia provides a

good example of this contradiction. Prior to legislation that gave community colleges the opportunity to award bachelor's degrees, a group of community colleges developed a collaborative arrangement with a university for the delivery of a bachelor's program in nursing. However, after community colleges obtained the right to offer baccalaureate programs, some colleges that had been partners in the collaborative nursing arrangement withdrew from it to offer the baccalaureate program on their own (Molzahn & Purkis, 2004).

Rather than challenging its subordination, the subordinated group may look for an alternative to continued subordination. Brint and Karabel (1989) argued that the expansion of career education programs in the community colleges was motivated by the desire of the colleges to find an area of activity in which they could be in control and at the top of the institutional hierarchy. As long as occupational programs were regarded as terminal educational programs, community colleges were independent of universities with regard to this area of their activity. However, when transfer became important for students in occupational programs, the same situation of subordination that had been experienced earlier with arts and science programs reappeared. From this perspective, the development of applied baccalaureate programs in community colleges could be seen as an extension of the earlier institutional strategy that was alleged by Brint and Karabel to underlie the expansion of applied associate's degrees. That is, advocacy for applied baccalaureate programming at community colleges could be viewed as a strategy employed by community college leaders to create an educational niche that does not leave them subordinate to universities. However, it should be pointed out that the explanation for the expansion of applied associate's degree programming in community colleges offered by Brint and Karabel (1989) has been widely criticized (e.g., Clark, 1990; Vaughan, 1992), and alternative explanations that focus more on the role of government have been offered (Dougherty, 1994). Similarly, there are other possible explanations for the recent expansion of baccalaureate provision by community colleges, including the desire by governments to meet workforce needs or increase access to higher education in a more economical way (Floyd & Walker, 2009; Russell, 2010).

Jurisdiction by Type of Case Handled

Insofar as community college baccalaureates are differentiated from those awarded at universities by virtue of being restricted to applied areas of study, particularly in fields where there is no corresponding university program, the awarding of baccalaureate degrees by colleges would be an example of another type of settlement, division of labor between professions based on the kinds of cases that different professions handle. To date, all baccalaureate programs offered by community colleges have involved preparation for specific occupations and have frequently been referred to as "applied" or "workplace" baccalaureate programs (Walker & Floyd, 2005). As an example of the workforce orientation of these programs, in Alberta the community college baccalaureate was "designed in response to employer demand in emerging occupations"

(Campus Alberta Quality Council, 2010, p. 68). Walker and Floyd (2005) have noted that the applied baccalaureates differ from traditional baccalaureates in that they make considerable use of “applied and contextual learning methods, and significant learning on the job while traditional baccalaureates depend principally on academic pedagogy” (p. 96). The guidelines for community college baccalaureate programs in Ontario state that “students in applied programs learn by doing with a focus on preparing for entry into an occupational field of practice” (Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, 2010, p. 17). Although hands-on learning and work experience are features of some baccalaureate programs in some universities, these are normal features of applied baccalaureate programs in community colleges. For example, in Alberta community college baccalaureate programs must include one year of directed field study, and in Ontario the programs must include at least 14 weeks of paid work experience. (Campus Alberta Quality Council; Postsecondary Education Quality Assurance Board).

The emphasis on applied and experiential learning in community college baccalaureate programs is an extension of the use of the same pedagogical approaches in applied associate’s degree programs in the United States and diploma and certificate career programs in Canadian colleges. Although there has been a paucity of empirical investigation of the pedagogies employed in career education (Achtenhagen & Grubb, 1999), the few who have addressed this subject have commented on the apparent popularity of experiential learning in occupational education in community colleges. For example, Grubb and Associates (1999) observed that “legions of vocational teachers have asserted the virtue of ‘hands-on’ instruction” through such activities as working on engines, baking cakes, or constructing houses (p. 106). Similarly, Paquet (2006) has contrasted the emphasis in community college occupational programs on contextual learning through reflection on experience with more traditional approaches that begin with learning general principles. This difference in approaches to learning is evidenced by the fact that even in the few fields in which community colleges and universities are now both offering baccalaureates, the community college programs may be different pedagogically from those offered at universities. For example, in designing its bachelor of education program in elementary education, Great Basin College in Nevada made a deliberate decision to make its program more field based and collaborative than existing university programs of elementary education in Nevada (Remington & Remington, 2005).

Jurisdiction by Client Characteristics

Another form of settlement of professional jurisdiction is driven by client characteristics. Abbott (1988) noted that this form of settlement is common in situations where the demand for a particular type of professional service far exceeds the size of the profession which has been the traditional provider of the service. He cited the example of psychological treatment, the demand for which rapidly grew to exceed the capacity of psychiatrists to meet it, and consequently a variety of other providers of psychological counseling came along. In such cases of excess demand, the higher status

profession tends to get the higher status clients, and the lower status professions tend to get the lower status clients.⁷

In the world of education, status at any level is very much a function of academic performance at the previous educational level; it is also a function of the tuition level as well. Thus, it is hardly surprising that as the higher-status institutions, the universities have tended to get students who performed better in secondary school and who are disproportionately the offspring of higher income parents, whereas community colleges have drawn more of their students from the groups that did not perform as well academically in secondary school and that have lower parental incomes. In Canada, the participation rate for individuals from the lowest income categories is about 50% greater in community colleges than in universities (Drolet, 2005). Moreover, enrollment at universities is highly correlated with parental income, whereas enrollment at community colleges is not (Berger, Motte, & Parkin, 2007; Drolet, 2005).

Consistent with their mandate, community colleges have devoted considerable effort to developing strategies for helping previously low-achieving students improve their academic performance. In spite of the help that such students may receive while at a community college, they often still face considerable academic, economic, and cultural barriers that prevent many of them from continuing their education at a university (Burke & Garmon, 1995; Floyd & Walker, 2009). It is possible that the success that community colleges have had in helping students who have relatively weak academic backgrounds complete 2 years of postsecondary study could be extended an additional 2 years to completion of a baccalaureate degree in the college. In terms of Abbott's model, insofar as the baccalaureate programs of community colleges serve students who would otherwise find it difficult to complete the baccalaureate at a university for academic and financial reasons, the offering of programs that meet these needs at community colleges would be an example of division of labor between postsecondary institutions based on client characteristics.

Another student characteristic that is relevant to this discussion is geographic location. Baccalaureate programs offered by community colleges that are located in regions where there is no university, or no university that offers a program in the student's field of study, may meet the needs of students who, because of family, work, and financial constraints, would otherwise not be able to complete the baccalaureate. Though the needs of some place-bound students might be met by university centers located on community college campuses (Lorenzo, 2005) or by electronic distance education, these options may be unavailable or unsatisfactory for many students. Indeed, some of the earliest instances of community colleges being given the authority to award the baccalaureate were in regions not adequately served by a university, for example, in British Columbia, Nevada, and Utah.

Resolving Differences

The avenues for resolving differences between community colleges and universities over the role of the former in baccalaureate credit activity are bilateral negotiations

between institutions, negotiations between the agencies that represent the institutions in their respective sectors (a sectoral rather than an institutional approach), and appeals to the government, directly or through attempts to influence public opinion in general or specific agencies that have the ear of the government. The ultimate authority over the division of jurisdiction between colleges and universities rests with government, and in some cases, agreements made through bilateral negotiations may have to be formally ratified by government or a government agency. Of course, government action is usually necessary for community colleges to obtain the right to award the baccalaureate.

The advantages of the bilateral approach to resolving disputes about jurisdiction between colleges and universities are that it respects the autonomy of the institutions involved and can produce results that are tailored to the needs of the communities they serve. A disadvantage is that it can result in very uneven opportunities for baccalaureate attainment across a state or province. From the perspective of the community colleges, another major disadvantage of the bilateral approach is the asymmetry of power at the negotiating table, because the university tends to have broader legal authority to award baccalaureates and greater prestige as a baccalaureate-granting institution.

A sectoral approach to resolving disputes over jurisdiction could produce greater equity in treatment of students across the state or province, but negotiations could also be impeded by the need for agreement among all institutions in each sector. A former head of the association of universities in Ontario observed that when the collectivity of institutions moves, “it moves convoy-like, at the pace of the slowest vessel” (Monahan, 2004, p. 10). If the slowest vessel opposes a particular initiative, such as a new approach to facilitating transfer from community colleges to universities, the sectoral approach to negotiations might prove to be a barrier to the initiative.

Insofar as community colleges and universities are unable to resolve their dispute through direct negotiations—either between a particular college and a particular university or between agencies that represent the respective postsecondary sectors—their only other recourse is to appeal to regulatory bodies such as state higher education commissions or government departments of postsecondary education. Often professional groups take their case to the public in the belief that getting public opinion on their side will influence government or the appropriate regulatory bodies. It has become common in cases where the introduction of the community college baccalaureate is being considered to see stories in the media that contain opposing views of representatives of universities and community colleges, respectively (e.g., French, 2010; Pluviose, 2008; Talton, 2005).

Community colleges might have an advantage in a public relations war with universities, because the values that they could appeal to are access, opportunity, and realization of human potential for the benefit of the individual and society. In contrast, the universities’ position could be made to look exclusionary and elitist. In any case, as the institution that is challenging the status quo, the community college is often the source of contentious statements in such adversarial proceedings. For example, in supporting a bill that would have allowed Harper College in Illinois to offer two baccalaureate

programs on a pilot basis, the president of the institution told a newspaper that if 4-year institutions were unwilling or unable to offer bachelor's programs in high-demand areas, "community colleges are duty-bound to step in and fill the void" (Pluviose, 2008). Still, it is not clear how much influence the advocacy efforts of community colleges, or the resistance efforts of universities, have had on government decisions pertaining to jurisdictional disputes between the two types of institutions. One commentator in Ontario suggested that for government to sort out the respective claims of community colleges and universities was like "opening a can of worms" (Urquhart, 2004, p. A29).

Implications and Conclusions

Examining the relationship between community colleges and universities through the lens of a model that was developed for the study of jurisdictional conflict between professions leads to the observation that there was a stable division of jurisdiction over baccalaureate education in much of the North American continent at the beginning of the 1990s. The settlement was not the same in all states and provinces. Although the predominant settlement pattern was one of subordination, in a few cases, such as Indiana, Ontario, and several other Canadian provinces, the universities had been able to maintain something close to complete jurisdiction over baccalaureate activity. The stability was disrupted by the perception of increasing demand for the baccalaureate in particular geographic areas and fields of study (Russell, 2010). The recent emergence of the community college baccalaureate in response to this increased demand has implications for the roles of both community colleges and universities and for the alignment of activity between them.

Attempts by community colleges to obtain the authority to offer baccalaureate programs on their own frequently elicit the charge of *academic drift* or *mission creep* (Fisher & Rubenson, 1998; Russell, 2010). These terms are generally used to describe a situation in which an institution takes on some new function or functions that had not been part of its mission and, in the process, runs the risk of giving less attention to other components of its mission. Although over the long term, changes in institutional mission have been responsible for important advances in higher education, such as the spectacular development of research and the extension of access to previously unrepresented groups, in the short run, the terms *academic drift* and *mission creep* are frequently laden with pejorative connotations. Thus, Neave (1979) portrayed *academic drift* in the United Kingdom as "that process by which categories of students, usually of sub-degree level, are sloughed off the better to concentrate the resources of the institute upon degree—and in some cases, postgraduate—work" (p. 144). In similar fashion, Berdahl defined *academic drift* as "the tendency of institutions, absent any restraint, to copy the role and mission of the prestige institutions" (as cited in Morphew & Huisman, 2002, p. 492).

The way that the terms *academic drift* and *mission creep* have been used in discussions of the community college baccalaureate implies that the missions of post-secondary institutions are defined exclusively in terms of the academic credentials that

they award. Thus, mission creep is alleged to have occurred when an institution that previously has offered only 2-year programs starts to offer even a single 4-year program. An exception to this line of thought is Hanson (2009), who argued that because community colleges originated as institutions whose primary mission was to prepare students to complete the baccalaureate, “the real mission creep has been a long and slow but decisive creep away from the baccalaureate and toward narrow career-related associate degrees and certificate programs” (p. 987). Hanson added that when community colleges crept away from the baccalaureate, the critics were silent.

In contrast to defining mission creep solely in terms of movement toward or away from the baccalaureate, the conceptual framework employed in this article directs attention toward other characteristics that are involved in the division of labor between institutions. These characteristics reflect differences in types of cases handled and in types and locations of clients served. Thus, even if both kinds of postsecondary institution are offering bachelor’s degrees, the community college bachelor’s programs may be in applied, occupation-focused areas of study for which there are often no corresponding university programs; they may differ significantly from typical university programs in regard to their emphasis on hands-on and experiential learning and the way that they are integrated with the academic content of the program; and they may serve a somewhat different clientele from university programs in terms of academic background, preferred learning style, socioeconomic status, and location. In addition to these differences, most community colleges that have been granted the authority to award the baccalaureate have indicated their continuing commitment to the traditional community college mission, and often maintaining this commitment has been a condition of being allowed to award the baccalaureate. Thus, although baccalaureate-granting community colleges may give an appearance of academic drift according to one aspect of their mission (or one definition of academic drift), they may give the opposite appearance according to numerous other aspects of their mission (or alternative definitions of academic drift).

However, as a community college moves more into baccalaureate programming, it may adopt the values of the university. When that happens, “the institutionalizing of baccalaureate degree programs at community colleges reflects not only the expanding mission of the community college but also the altering identity of the institution” (Levin, 2004, p. 17). Where a community college seeks to offer a baccalaureate program that is not differentiated from university programs in one of the ways just noted, we would have the unstable situation of direct competition for exactly the same professional jurisdiction. In Abbott’s (1988) model, where other types of settlement are not acceptable, such conflict over jurisdiction can end only with the aspirant backing down on its claim or being absorbed into the other profession. Analogously, a community college that seeks to offer exactly the same kinds of programs as universities in exactly the same way and for exactly the same kinds of clientele will either be forced to back down or become a university, as some have done.

As we have noted, in almost all cases where community colleges have sought to offer baccalaureate programs, universities have opposed the move, viewing it as an

inappropriate and hostile incursion into their jurisdiction. However, there have been a few cases in which a university chose to transfer some of its own baccalaureate programs to a neighboring community college, or support the development of such programs in a community college, as part of a broader settlement of jurisdiction. Officials at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) agreed to transfer its bachelor of applied science degrees in computer technology and in public services management to Edison College because they felt that with the heavy emphasis on workforce skills in these programs there would be a better fit at Edison College than at the University (Reed, 2004). In return for FGCU's help in starting these two baccalaureate programs, Edison agreed to open its Charlotte campus to FGCU as the University attempted to move the catchment area for its traditional programs northward. In a somewhat similar case, the University of Central Florida decided to drop some baccalaureate programs because of overcrowding, and it encouraged the local community college to offer the programs (Moltz, 2010). As a consequence, Valencia Community College—although it had not been intending to get into baccalaureate programming—decided to offer baccalaureates in engineering technology and radiology imaging so that these programs would be available in the Orlando area. It is difficult to find examples in other states or provinces in which a university encouraged a community college to offer bachelor's programs, although in the debates about the community college baccalaureate in Arizona, one commentator suggested that allowing community colleges in that state to offer 4-year programs “might free Arizona State University for more academic excellence” (Talton, 2005, p. V5).

In the Edison-FGCU example, a community college and a university viewed their respective missions more in relation to program goals than type of academic credential awarded. When universities reflect on their missions in this way, they might find it helpful to focus on the challenge that globalization and prolonged economic stagnation have presented in regard to maintenance of commitment to traditional academic values. In remarks that are similar to those made by many commentators in the United States, such as Derek Bok (2003), James Downey (2003), former president of the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, suggested that universities have become

. . . too economy-centric in our focus, at the expense of some other values and considerations that go to the heart of our enterprise, notably the qualitative aspects of undergraduate education and the role of universities in a civil society, as distinct from in a knowledge economy. (p. 29)

Similarly, Fisher and Rubenson (1998) have suggested that as Canadian universities have become more commercial and entrepreneurial, they have given less attention to their “civilizing mission” (p. 95).

To the extent that there has in recent years been a substantial increase in the demand for workforce-oriented bachelor's programs that respond to specific occupational needs of industry, it is not necessary that all postsecondary institutions respond to these pressures in exactly the same way. Flexner (1930) argued that just because an

educational activity was worth doing, it did not follow that the university should be the institution to do it. He maintained that universities should concentrate on doing “supremely well what they almost alone can do” (p. 27). The existence of a major sector of postsecondary education, one of whose primary missions is to respond rapidly to the changing needs of industry, could allow universities to be more cautious and selective about behaving in similar fashion. A university sector that was concerned with maintaining a healthy balance between serving its economic objectives on the one hand, and its broader civic, cultural, and intellectual ones on the other might welcome the movement of community colleges into offering bachelor’s degrees in selected areas of applied knowledge and practice that respond to the needs of industry. The university sector that welcomes these programs would recognize that even though it has an important role to play in serving society’s economic needs, it alone of all societal institutions also has other vital roles in relation to the advancement and conservation of knowledge, roles that can be jeopardized by excessive preoccupation with responding to the immediate instrumental needs of industry. Such a perception of its own strengths and responsibilities could lead the university sector to seek out new forms of settlement of jurisdiction with community colleges. As both universities and community colleges continue to evolve within a global environment of ever new challenges, constraints, and opportunities, the older criterion that defined the division of labor between the sectors on the basis of credentials awarded may be replaced with newer, more complex, and multifaceted criteria that relate to client characteristics, function, and purpose.

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Notes

1. This is the author’s estimate derived in October, 2010, from institutional websites in Manitoba, where colleges have only recently had the opportunity to submit applications to offer baccalaureate programs, and in Alberta; data are from the web site of the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board in Ontario (www.peqab.ca) and from the data base for all postsecondary education programs in British Columbia (www.educationplanner.ca). Four former community colleges in British Columbia and two in Alberta that have recently been designated as universities are excluded from the figures presented here.
2. The fact that only five of the 131 members of the ACCC formally call themselves community colleges illustrates how broadly the term *community college* is used in Canada. The other ACCC institutions use the terms *college*, *university college*, *institute*, or in one case, *center* (ACCC, 2010).

3. The author is indebted to a departmental colleague, Linda Muzzin, for drawing the relevance of this body of literature to his attention.
4. An exception to this generalization would be a community college professor who teaches part-time in a university postgraduate program. Individuals who teach in both a community college and a university obviously complicate the task of treating community college and university faculties as separate and distinct groups.
5. For many years the Community College Baccalaureate Association (CCBA) has run an annual contest in which community college students submit essays explaining why they would like to see their college award the baccalaureate degree. Being able to continue their studies in an environment in which they have become comfortable is often one of the major arguments made by students in these essays. Information on this competition, including the award winning essays for recent years, can be found on the web site of the CCBA, <http://www.accbd.org/>.
6. The American Association of Community Colleges and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges represent community college teachers to some extent as umbrella organizations covering all college constituencies. However, the prominence of administrators and board members in these organizations prevent them from playing a role for college teachers that is analogous to what AAUP and CAUT do for university teachers. This may be one of the reasons why some community college faculty associations and local unions have affiliated with AAUP and CAUT, although the membership in those organizations continues to be predominantly from the university sector.
7. An exception to this generalization could occur where public funding of certain treatments may bring about the opposite result. In the nineteenth century, physicians served higher status clients, whereas apothecaries, homeopaths, and other dispensers of potions and elixirs served lower status clients. Today, however, because of universal health insurance, the services of a physician are within the financial means of every Canadian, whereas only the more affluent can afford to be treated by some alternative health practitioners because their services are not covered by the public health system.

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Bio

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