Degree programs; Associate of Arts Transfer Degree programs; Associate of Science Transfer Degree programs; certificates; economic and workforce development and basic skills instruction”. This program will prepare students to meet the respiratory health care needs of our regional community through the development of the intellect, creativity, character, and abilities of the students enrolled in the program. The Respiratory Care Baccalaureate Degree Program will shape students into thoughtful, culturally aware, and engaged citizens and professionals in the field of respiratory care.

Discussion of the rationale for the change including but not limited to labor market analysis

Healthcare reform has impacted California’s workforce, and particularly impacted the labor market demand for trained healthcare workers in the Central Valley. Prior to healthcare reform, more than 1 million residents in the Valley were uninsured. As these residents obtain coverage and participate in preventative care services, the need for qualified healthcare workers in the Valley will drastically increase. The Central Valley historically has a pronounced need for respiratory care practitioners due to air quality issues in the region. (Appendix H)

Students completing MJC’s Respiratory Care Baccalaureate Degree Program will be able to work in a wide variety of facilities, including acute care hospitals, durable medical equipment companies, sub-acute facilities, home care agencies, physician’s offices, managed care organizations, sleep labs, and pulmonary function labs. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment opportunities for respiratory care practitioners are projected to increase 28% in the next six years. California has a particularly high vacancy rate for respiratory care practitioners, largely because there are few accredited education programs in the state. Additionally, the existing respiratory care workforce in California has a large percentage of workers nearing retirement age. In 2014-2024, a 12% employment surge is anticipated in the labor market for respiratory care practitioners resulting in over 14,900 jobs. (Appendix I)

Graduates with an Associate Degree in Respiratory Care are eligible to take the Therapist Multiple Choice Board Exam and after passing this exam are eligible to take the Clinical Simulation Exam. The Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) credential is conferred on candidates who successfully pass both exams. The Respiratory Care Board in the State of California requires the RRT credential to obtain a Respiratory Care Practitioner license. Currently, there are conversations in progress discussing the Bachelor of Science degree as the minimum qualification for licensure. The American Association of Respiratory Care (AARC) and the California State Respiratory Care (CSRC), two professional organizations of Respiratory Care, support the Baccalaureate degree minimum. (Appendix J, Appendix K)

In the Central Valley, there are currently two community colleges with state-approved respiratory care programs: MJC and Fresno City College. The most current data states that these two institutions have an average of 35 annual completions for 42 job openings in the Central Valley, resulting in an unmet workforce need for respiratory care practitioners. Respiratory care practitioners will be needed to serve as educators, researchers, managers,
and clinical specialists. Graduates with a bachelor’s degree are eligible for enhanced career opportunities in areas such as management, patient education, research, and teaching. In addition, the profession is progressing to a baccalaureate degree minimum for entry into the profession. As mentioned before, professional associations in Respiratory Care support the change in the degree minimum requirement. The CoARC is proposing a change of standards in January, 2018 which will result in the acceptance of applications for accreditation for newly developed baccalaureate degree programs only.

There are no providers in the region with bachelor’s degree programs. Statewide, there are 18 community colleges with respiratory care programs and two private universities with bachelor’s degree programs (Loma Linda University and California College, San Diego). There are no California State University or University of California campuses with a bachelor’s program in respiratory care. (Appendix L)

B. Description of the new program to be offered; level and rigor of upper division courses commonly accepted as appropriate to the baccalaureate degree; program length; identification of delivery mode for the courses

The Respiratory Care Baccalaureate Degree Program will attend to the needed education and training to prepare respiratory care practitioners for practice in an evolving and dynamic workforce. Rapidly changing technology has increased expectations for the respiratory care practitioner and the profession. Both the California Society of Respiratory Care (CSRC), the state professional organization and the American Association of Respiratory Care (AARC), the national professional organization have advised programs that the baccalaureate level will be required for tomorrow’s respiratory care practitioners. The profession of respiratory care has evolved over the past sixty-eight years from an on-the-job trained workforce to a college-educated and licensed profession in forty-nine states. Today, respiratory care practitioners are expected to efficiently perform patient assessment while appropriately applying algorithmic protocols in the provision of respiratory care. Critical thinking, decision-making, and competency in performing the responsibilities of an advanced practitioner are among the demands of the current workforce employers. Amplified education can only improve the ability of respiratory care practitioners to contribute to the cardiopulmonary health of community members within the Central Valley.

The Respiratory Care Baccalaureate Degree Program at MJC will be built upon a well-established and respected associate of science respiratory care program. Students will complete Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) requirements for the associate degree as well as complete required lower division general education courses.

Following a 2+2 model, the CoARC accredited Respiratory Care Baccalaureate Degree Program will accept applications from licensed respiratory care practitioners who hold an associate’s degree in respiratory care. The major curriculum will build upon the associate level coursework at an advanced level. In 2014, California employed 15,060 practitioners with the majority holding an associate degree. These practitioners will potentially seek a baccalaureate degree. (Appendix M) The program courses will be offered within the classroom on the MJC campus and as online and hybrid modalities to allow greater access.