

BUILDING A PROSPEROUS ECONOMY



We're everyone's business

Washington's community and technical colleges are a collective, powerful, unmatched resource for advancing prosperity through education. Our 34 colleges not only connect with employers in the regions where they operate, but also with each other through common programs – like advanced manufacturing and allied health – that align with Washington's overall job-growth strategy. This approach connects every community to the full range of economic possibilities locally and regionally. People land good jobs, businesses grow and thrive, and our economy prospers.

According to a recent economic study, Washington's two-year colleges and former students add \$11 billion annually to the state's economy.¹

Filling and creating jobs

Employers are desperate for workers with mid-education level skills. From 2016 to 2021, Washington is predicted to produce 59,472 people a year with associate degrees, certificates, or one year of college-level credits. That's roughly 6,577 short of what the state predicts it will need each year.²

Community and technical college students are not only filling existing positions, they're creating jobs. Our graduates bring talent and innovation to the state through their own entrepreneurial endeavors, providing new jobs and boosting Washington's economic growth.

Focus on STEM

Washington faces an alarming shortage of people trained in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

It's not only a matter of filling jobs in research, engineering or other professions that require a four-year degree. Critical shortages exist for technicians and skilled workers in advanced manufacturing, computer technology, and other STEM industries as well. Our colleges specialize in education and training for good, middle-class jobs and careers in just these kinds of fields.

According to Georgetown University, Washington will be third in the nation in STEM jobs by 2018.³ Washington can't count on importing talent from other states and nations to fill gaps. Competitor states are vying to keep their own talent in-house.

Aligning with the economy

Ten Centers of Excellence across the state serve as economic development drivers for industries that create jobs: agriculture; allied health; aerospace and advanced materials manufacturing; clean energy; construction; education; homeland security; information and computing technology; international trade, transportation and logistics; and marine manufacturing and technology.

Each center develops strong relationships with industry partners. Centers connect businesses to flexible, quality programs that can be deployed quickly throughout Washington's community and technical college system.

Narrowing skill gaps

Through high-impact business partnerships, two-year colleges track local and state job needs and respond quickly to meet critical labor market shortages. Colleges discontinue programs that have become less relevant for the workforce and realign resources and students to meet the need.

For example, Washington's community and technical colleges produced 77 percent more registered nurses between 2003 to 2011 to help fill a nursing shortage. From 2006 to 2011, two-year colleges reprioritized their lean budgets to increase training for high-demand aerospace and manufacturing jobs by 37 percent to grow these vital industries.⁴ Our colleges are in-synch with the jobs of today – and tomorrow.

Community and technical college education pays

With a certificate or degree from a Washington community or technical college in hand, graduates enter the workforce and land good family-wage jobs.

- At career mid-point, the average annual income of the typical associate degree graduate in Washington is \$49,400, 35 percent more than someone with a high school diploma alone.⁵
- Seventy-eight percent of the students completing professional-technical programs in 2011-2012 were employed seven to nine months after leaving college.⁶

Understanding skill gaps: the game of musical chairs

Walla Walla Community College President Steve VanAusdle likens skill gaps to two games of musical chairs. In the “high skills” game, there are 100 chairs representing job openings, with 48 people playing the game. When the music stops, more than half the chairs are empty. Employers search elsewhere – in other states or countries – to fill the chairs.

In the “lower-skills” game of musical chairs, there are 60 chairs but 100 people are playing the game. When the music stops, 40 people are left on their feet, unemployed.

The problem gets worse as the number of chairs grows in the high-skills game and shrinks in the low-skills game. The solution: Move more people to the high skills game so they have a seat at the economic table and businesses thrive.

Sources:

1. Economic Modeling Specialists, January 2011
2. WSAC presentation to House Higher Education Committee Jan. 14, 2014, based on A Skilled and Educated Workforce, 2013 Update (see above).
3. State-level tab analysis: <http://cew.georgetown.edu/stem/>
4. SBCTC data warehouse
5. Economic Modeling Specialists, January 2011
6. SBCTC data warehouse