



# Washington's Community and Technical Colleges Getting People Back to Work

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*“Weakness in the demand for goods and services is the main restraint on hiring, but ... a mismatch between the requirements of existing job openings and the characteristics of job seekers appears to be hindering hiring as well.” ~ Douglas Elmendorf, Director, Congressional Budget Office, Sept. 13, 2011.*

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## Filling the skills gap

Current projections show that between now and 2018 more than 46 million jobs will need to be filled in the United States, with nearly two-thirds requiring at least some postsecondary education.

As highlighted in a recent News Tribune editorial, “while legions of Washingtonians are out of work, 60,000 jobs are going begging for lack of qualified applicants – an increase of 28,000 over the last two years. The missing link in this disconnect is often education. A jobless construction worker may be hungry for work but lack the qualifications needed to move into aerospace, nursing, software or other expanding fields.”

Washington employers have jobs to fill and need well-trained workers to fill them. Aerospace, manufacturing, and health care employers depend on community and technical colleges for skilled workers to fill thousands of jobs currently available. Programs such as maintenance and repair, accounting, bookkeeping and nursing now have long waiting lists at many of our colleges.

- Washington's fastest growing industries, such as aerospace, high-tech and biotechnology, require highly skilled workers with a strong basic education, as well as technical, trade, college, and advanced degrees.
- The industrial sector needs engineers and scientists, but also needs middle-skilled workers and craftspeople. Middle skills jobs, which require at least one year of college, have been forecast to account for 42 percent of job openings through 2017.
- Amazon.com recently sought 1,900 skilled workers in information technology, graphic design, and business professionals for its new Seattle office.
- As baby boomer employees retire, we must increase skills of lower level workers for higher level jobs.

With recent and proposed higher education cuts, people born and raised in our communities are at risk of not having the opportunity to train for these jobs. Washington businesses must be able to hire well-educated workers in Washington rather than importing workers from other states and nations.

## Keeping a pulse on demand

Colleges modify, revise, change, and grow programs for which jobs are available while culling programs where employer demand has dwindled. Despite budget cuts, in the first half of 2011 colleges added programs in aerospace, alternative energy, business services, hospitality, healthcare, and sustainable agriculture: critical growth areas in Washington State.

## STEM starts here

STEM—Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics—fields encompass aerospace, nursing and allied health careers, manufacturing, green energy, and information technology. The community and technical colleges are the pipeline for students in these fields.

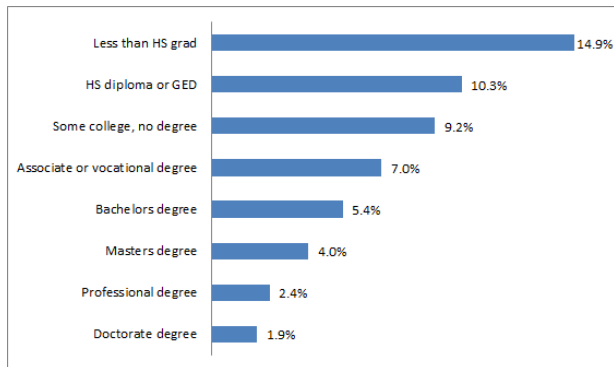
CTC transfer students comprise nearly 38 percent of public 4-year graduates earning bachelor's degrees in all fields. From the graduating class of 2006, CTC transfers made up:

- 37% of Health graduates
- 50% of Education graduates
- 43% of Business graduates
- 32% of STEM graduates

# Education Pays

Education pays in higher earnings and lower unemployment rates.

## Unemployment rate in 2010 by level of education



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2011, [www.bls.gov/emp/ep\\_chart\\_001.htm](http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm). Data are 2010 annual averages for persons age 25 and over.

## Worker Retraining gets results

Worker Retraining program participants return to work at high rates and good wages, with the most recent statewide average results showing 69 percent of program completers were re-employed within six to nine months after completing training.

## Demand for retraining exceeds funding

Since the Worker Retraining program was established in 1993, colleges have consistently enrolled more workers than the program has been funded to serve. Colleges have maximized worker retraining investments and stretched other resources to meet the needs of laid-off workers.

Last year, the equivalent of 13,400 full-time students trained for new careers through the state-funded Worker Retraining program, a five percent increase over the prior record-setting year and 27 percent above the state's funded enrollment level.

Last year, funding was provided for 11,220 Worker Retraining FTES. This year, we have funding for only 8,406 FTES. Demand is expected to continue to be strong as the economy struggles to recover.

## I-BEST

Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) pairs workforce training with Adult Basic Education or English as a Second Language courses so students learn literacy and workplace skills at the same time. This dramatically reduces the traditional time it takes these students to learn critical job skills.

I-BEST students are three times more likely than their peers to earn college credit and nine times more likely to earn a college credential. I-BEST enrollments have expanded to nearly 170 programs with 3,342 students served in 2009-10, an increase of 53 percent in the last three years. All 34 colleges offer I-BEST in high demand job fields.

## Opportunity Grants

The Legislature created Opportunity Grants to help low-income adults train for living wage careers. The program helps these students reach the educational tipping point of 45 credits and a credential, which increases their chance of earning a family wage.

The grant covers tuition and helps pay for books, supplies and other assistance, such as child care and transportation. Last year, 5,174 students received workforce training with the help of Opportunity Grants.

Opportunity Grant students who received Pell Grants had retention/completion rates 18 percent higher (81 percent retention) than non-Opportunity Grant Pell students enrolled in the same programs.

Employment rates and post-training earnings were markedly higher for Opportunity Grant students who completed training and reached the tipping point than the comparison population.

## Applied Baccalaureates

The call for bachelor degree options for workforce program graduates arose from changes in the job market. Students with two-year workforce degrees needed a path to a BA without having to "start over" to meet prerequisites. And employers showed a need for more people with advanced technical skills, not available in existing bachelor's programs.

Eight applied bachelor degrees are currently offered at seven colleges, increasing access to baccalaureate options for citizens across the state.

- Bellevue College – Bachelor of Applied Science in Radiation and Imaging Sciences, and Bachelor of Applied Arts in Interior Design
- Columbia Basin College – Bachelor of Applied Management
- Lake Washington Institute of Technology – Bachelor of Technology in Applied Design
- Olympic College – Bachelor of Science Nursing
- Peninsula College – Bachelor of Applied Science in Applied Management
- Seattle Central Community College – Bachelor of Applied Behavioral Science
- South Seattle Community College – Bachelor of Applied Science in Hospitality Management