



Mission Study

Washington State
Community and
Technical Colleges



Preface

In September 2008, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges commissioned a task force of Board members, trustees, presidents, faculty and SBCTC staff to gain a better understanding of where Washington's community and technical college system is today and where it needs to be in the future.

Using the Higher Education Coordinating Board's *Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education* and the SBCTC's own *System Direction* to inform its work, the task force focused on current and future needs in the areas of:

- **Economic Demand** – Strengthening state and local economies by meeting the demands for a well-educated and skilled workforce.
- **Student Success** – Achieving increased educational attainment for all residents across the state.
- **Innovation** – Using technology, collaboration and innovation to meet the demands of the economy and improve student success.

The purpose of the study was to:

- Understand how well the community and technical college system is serving the people of Washington State in all three mission areas: academic transfer; workforce education and basic skills;
- Understand future needs and strategic challenges based on demographic, economic, financial and cultural trends over the next 20 years;
- Identify emerging, effective means of delivering education to adults from our own experiences and from the successes of others; and
- Make policy recommendations to the State Board about the future size and shape of the college system, including recommendations about future investment of resources.

The overarching goal of this Mission Study is to find more and better ways to reduce barriers and expand opportunities so more Washingtonians can reach higher levels of education. This study provides a long-term outlook at how community and technical college education will need to change and grow to meet the needs and expectations of future learners.

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

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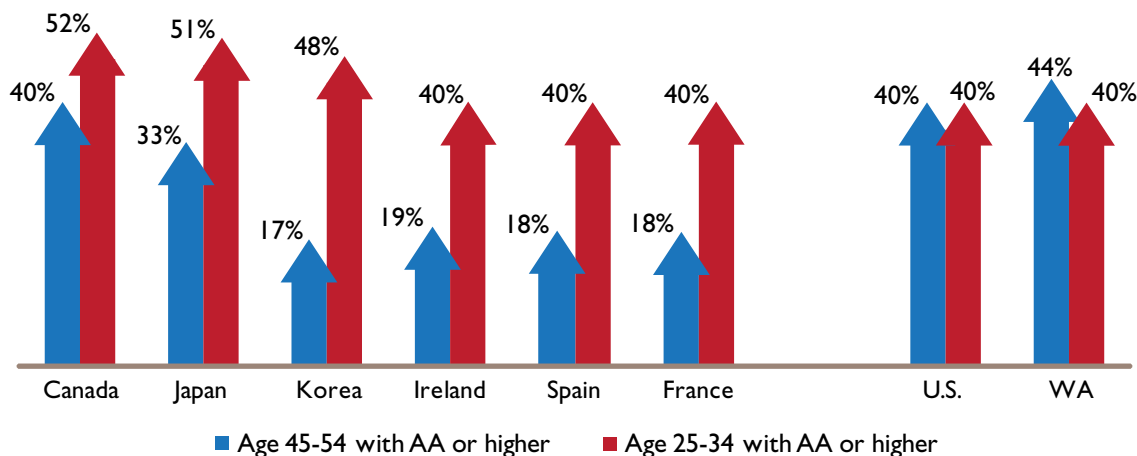
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Our State's Most Urgent Need: Educating more people to higher levels of skill and knowledge

Our state's most urgent need is to educate more people to higher levels of skill and knowledge. This is the only way we can hope to sustain a prosperous economy that will provide opportunities for all of us, and for our children.

While other nations are increasing the educational attainment of new generations of citizens, the U.S. and Washington are not. Instead, the percentage who are well-educated stagnates or even declines.



Source: Higher Education Coordinating Board's Implementing the 2008 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education

Educating a higher percentage of our young people to higher levels isn't just a challenge of needing **more**. We need both **more** and **different** educational opportunities to rise to this challenge.

The current model of classroom learning is the product of centuries of academic tradition – tradition that is moving towards multiple modes, personalized learning, and increased success for today's students. New technologies, dramatic changes in student demographics and learning styles, and a new imperative for greater productivity all demand greater attention to how people learn, where they learn, and what skills and knowledge we need to provide.

A primary challenge is to educate those who have been under-represented in our higher education system: people of color; Latinos, low-wage workers who are raising children, immigrants with limited English, and youth and adults who lack college-level academic skills. We simply can't increase our state's overall educational attainment unless we find ways to recruit, retain and succeed with these potential students, because these are the fastest growing demographic groups in our state.

Our colleges can do more to help students succeed in school. Many of today's students struggle with barriers of time, distance, and competing work and family obligations. We need to find more ways to dismantle those barriers and make more of our programs accessible anytime, anywhere. We need to ensure that more of the students we enroll stay in college long enough to earn degrees and certificates to gain the skills they will need to move up a career ladder and contribute to our state's economic growth.

To do that, we have to accelerate the work we are doing to make our system more user-friendly. Enrolling in college is a daunting and sometimes intimidating experience. Students need to be encouraged and supported rather than stymied by lack of financial aid, lack of child care or transportation, or lack of access to the computer technology that can eliminate the barriers of time and distance.

We also need to ensure that once students enroll, we prepare them for success at the next level, ensure they won't have to backtrack or repeat classes, and provide the personalized guidance and academic support they need to achieve their goals.

The Call to Action: Achieving our mission in the 21st century

During the past year, the faculty, leaders and stakeholders of Washington's community and technical colleges have engaged in a lively, productive, system-wide dialogue about how to rise to these challenges.

This document is a result of that dialogue. It is a call to action, and a new vision of how we can serve a diverse population with a wide range of skills, knowledge and hopes for their future. It presents new ways to build on our strengths, and to venture beyond academic traditions to adapt to the 21st century.

Washington's 34 community and technical colleges are already diverse in student population, course offerings, and career pathways. We welcome college graduates who need specific technical skills, new immigrants who may never have sat in a classroom, and busy working parents who want to improve their prospects for career advancement.

Our colleges have earned a reputation as nimble, responsive and innovative institutions that nurture hope and opportunity

for students from all walks of life, and provide our state's employers with skilled and confident workers, managers and leaders.

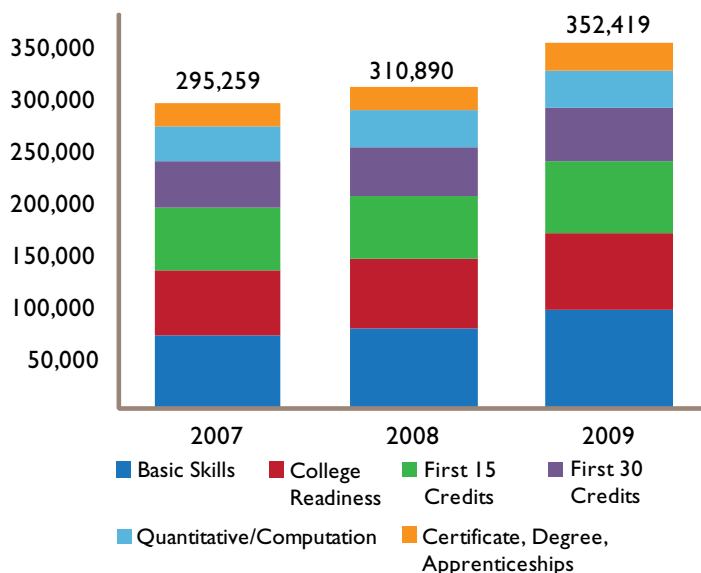
Washington's community and technical colleges are already key to Washington's progress and prosperity, and to our students' ability to succeed in today's competitive global economy. Today, nearly half a million people are enrolled in one or more of our programs, and over the years, countless Washington residents have launched their careers from one of our campuses. Our colleges are gateways to opportunity, known for transparent public accountability, and continuous, research-based improvements to meet changing student needs.

But we are in no position to rest on our laurels. On the contrary, our successes simply lead to greater challenges.

The Challenges We Face

To help more people attain higher levels of skill and knowledge as our state becomes more diverse, we need to attract, retain and succeed with more low-income youth, more Latinos, more under-educated adults, and more people who don't live close to one of our campuses, especially those in central and southwest Washington. All of these groups are now less likely than others to get the education they need to thrive and to contribute to our prosperity.

In just two years, colleges increased overall student achievement by 19%



Our community and technical college system has earned national recognition for creating funding incentives to increase degree completions. The [Student Achievement Initiative](#) rewards colleges for increasing the number of students who reach critical benchmarks towards degree completion by gaining college-level skills, completing first year coursework and gateway math classes, and by earning degrees and certificates or completing apprenticeship programs. This new system has improved student outcomes. Still, our dropout rate is unacceptably high, and we need to do more to reduce it.

To keep pace with employers' needs for technically skilled workers, by 2030 we need to increase by 9,000 the number of people who earn technical associate degrees, complete apprenticeships and earn skill certificates. With three-fourths of newly trained mid-level workers receiving their education at Washington's community and technical colleges, it's clear the system must play a critical role.

Washington also needs more people with baccalaureate and graduate degrees. Community and technical colleges must expand their contribution to help meet this need. Currently, four out of every ten people who earn a four-year college degree started at a community or technical college before transferring to a university. Bachelor's degree programs are now available on 24 of the 34 community and technical

college campuses, some through collaborations with universities, and some in our own [applied baccalaureate](#) programs. But we can do more to help place-bound working adults earn more of these degrees to stimulate innovation and economic growth.

Our colleges' Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) programs combine academic, English language and job skills training to help people achieve their goals faster. Other innovations, such as the creation of learning communities and new classroom assessments, are also helping to improve student retention and achievement. But despite their success, limited funding constricts the expansion of these innovations that benefit both students and prospective employers.

eLearning is the fastest-growing mode of instruction in our system, with enrollments growing 20-35 percent per year for the past five years. Today, more than 130,600 students learn in online and hybrid (mixed online and in-person) courses. Colleges currently offer more than 17,500 online and hybrid classes, and more than one third of our faculty now teach online. Students can earn degrees completely online at 27 of our colleges in more than 100 different degree and certificate programs.



By 2020, we anticipate all students will take courses with online components and all students will use online student services for registration, course selection and business functions. In fact, student demand for online classes and services now outstrips our ability to provide them, making it harder for colleges to attract, retain and succeed with place-bound students and busy, working parents.

Technology-driven changes in the way students learn are requiring faculty to develop new skills and become guides who help students integrate knowledge across disciplines and teach them how to gather and assess information. A global explosion of online learning resources now allows faculty to borrow, remix and share “open source” curricula and free online textbooks. This is both a wonderful opportunity and a daunting challenge. To keep pace with the evolution of online learning, we need a significant increase in faculty professional development, and new recognition and rewards for faculty leaders, innovators and early adopters.

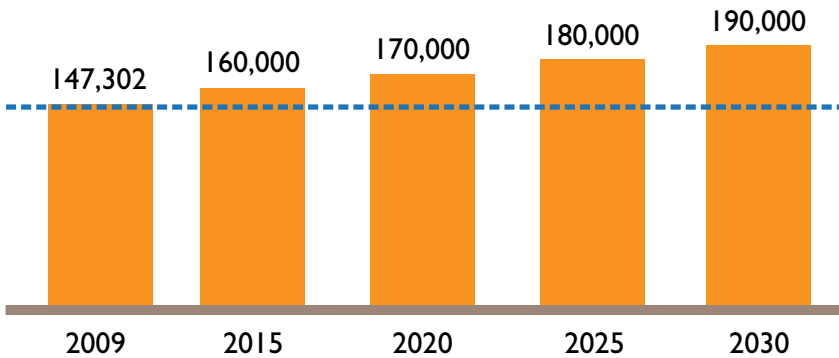
Washington's community and technical colleges spend less on administration than their peers in other states and the system is working to reduce administrative costs even further by centralizing and out-sourcing online functions such as email, servers, network applications and database administration. We want to further reduce these costs, so that we can deploy a larger share of our resources directly to student learning.

Perhaps the most daunting challenge we face is the collision between growing needs and reduced resources. It will take many years to recover from this recession, the state's budget cuts, and the increasing competition for reduced revenues. We will do all we can to focus scarce resources on teaching and learning and redouble our efforts to achieve more administrative efficiencies to improve student success rates. At the same time, however, we will need sustained and effective advocacy to compete for the resources we need to keep the American promise of hope, opportunity and upward mobility through educational advancement.



Our Twenty-Year Action Plan:

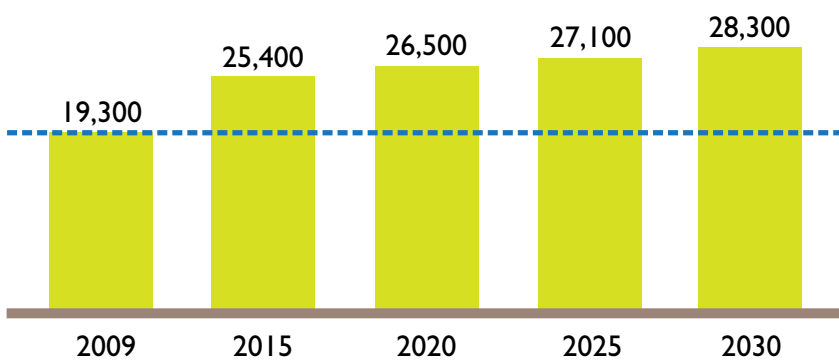
Colleges will need to serve 43,000 more full-time students by 2030



1. Serve more people, including groups who have been underserved in the past.

We will increase our capacity to meet population growth and close the gap in access and participation for underserved populations. We will create an innovation fund to provide resources for colleges to test new locations and try new strategies to attract and succeed with low-income young adults, students of color – especially our growing Latino population – and underserved areas of our state such as southwest and central Washington.

Professional-technical graduates will need to increase by 50%



2. Close the statewide skills gap for technically trained workers.

As the state's major provider of new, technically trained workers, the community and technical college system will expand capacity in workforce training programs, especially in high demand fields such as health care, information technology, engineering technology, math and science to meet the needs of Washington employers. We will continue to provide incentives to colleges to expand high demand, [I-BEST](#) and other integrated training programs. We will also cultivate new partnerships with employers, invest in high-quality, flexible short-term job training programs, and award credit for work-based learning to provide incentives for workers to earn degrees and certificates.

3. Increase funding for [adult basic skills](#) programs. Currently, programs for people who need to learn English and those who lack college-level skills are systematically under-funded. Since students in these programs cannot afford tuition, they are charged a nominal \$25-per-quarter fee, which does not cover the cost of instruction. We must do more for this under-educated segment of our population for three reasons: First, our economy needs higher levels of skill and literacy even for most entry-level jobs. Second, multiple studies have shown that when we educate these adults, their children do better in school, benefiting the next generation and beyond. Third, those who have the least education and the lowest incomes should not be further disadvantaged by chronic under-funding of the programs they need to lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

A system-wide study of how to equalize funding for adult basic skills will produce specific recommendations.

To meet the educational needs of the State—and to sustain our economic prosperity into the future—the community and technical college system will pursue ten challenges

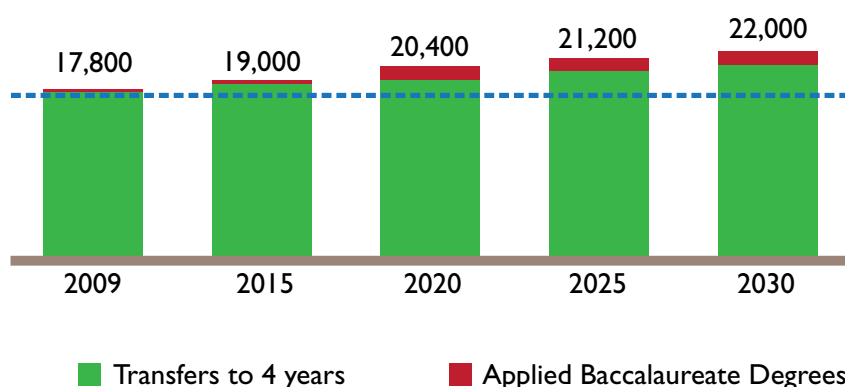
4. Contribute more to the production of baccalaureate degrees. Many transfer students cannot leave their jobs and families behind to pursue bachelor's degrees. The community and technical college system will work with universities and the Higher Education Coordinating Board to expand access for transfer-eligible students who want to earn baccalaureate degrees. We will work toward improving access to university campuses and to co-located university programs on our own campuses. We will also expand community and technical college programs that lead to [applied baccalaureate degrees](#).

5. Work with our partners in the P-20 education system to create seamless, easy-to-navigate pathways for all students. [Tech Prep](#), [Running Start](#) and other dual-enrollment programs are helping thousands of high school students get a head start on college, while reducing costs for both students and the taxpayer: [I-BEST](#), [Direct Transfer Agreements](#) and [common course numbering](#) are making the educational system more transparent and easier to use. But there is much more to be done to ensure curricula are transferable from one institution to another; pathways from high schools to community and technical colleges to universities are clear to students, and high school students know what the post-high school education system has to offer and how to navigate it.

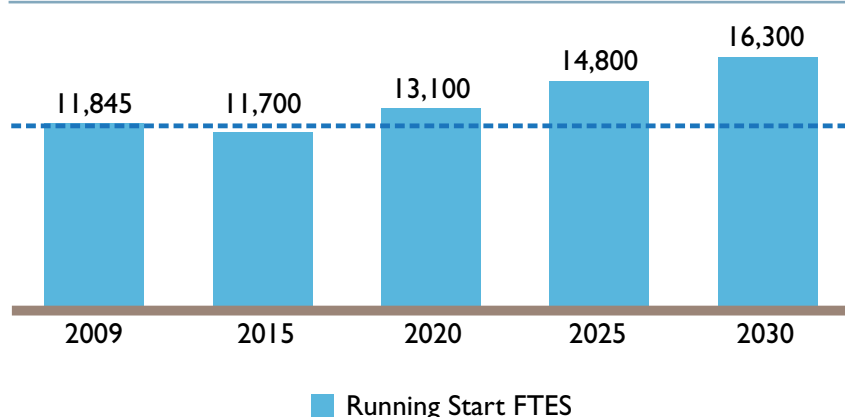
6. Use performance measures and funding as incentives to improve student retention and achievement. In 2007, the community and technical college system adopted the [Student Achievement Initiative](#), which has earned national recognition for rewarding colleges that improve student persistence and degree completion. This accountability and achievement system should be more fully funded over the next three years and it should be used to identify and promote effective practices for increasing achievement gains, with a special focus on moving students from pre-college to college-level coursework and improving degree completion.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges will work with the Governor, the Legislature and the Higher Education Coordinating Board to consolidate multiple state-level accountability measures to build on the success of the Student Achievement Initiative. The community and technical college system will also advocate for improving system-wide capacity for data-driven performance evaluation and decision making.

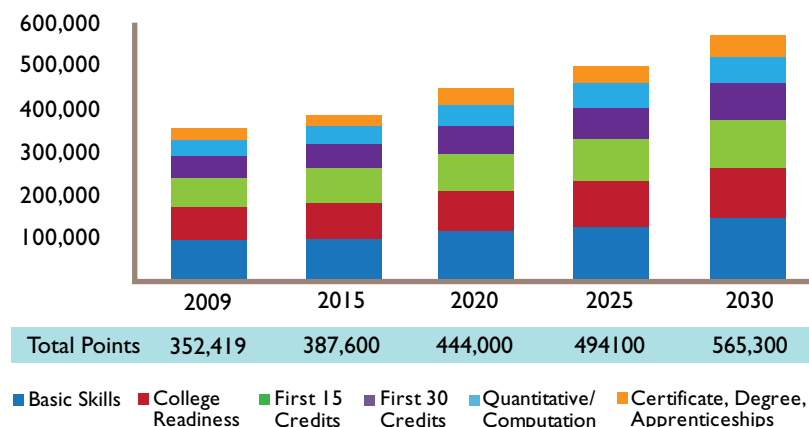
Transfer students need to increase by 25%;
Applied Baccalaureates need to grow by 1,400



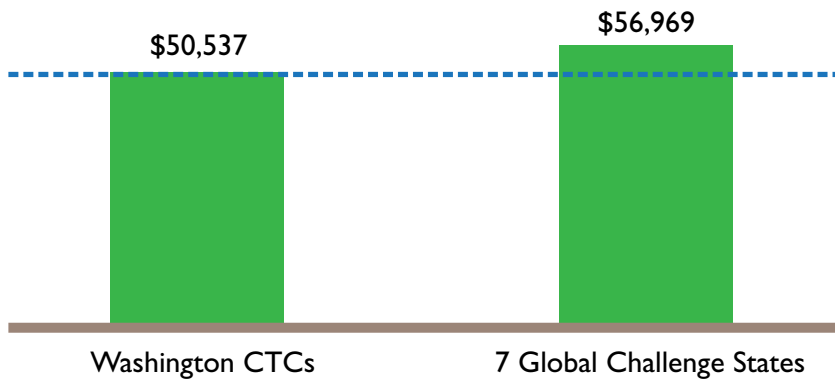
Running Start will increase by 4,200 FTEs or 35%



Colleges will increase student achievement by 60%



Washington's community and technical college faculty salaries lag by nearly 13%



The Global Challenge States (GCS) comprise the top-ranked states in the Progressive Policy Institute's New Economy Index. The Index, used by the Governor in her "Washington Learns" report, is based on several factors, including: jobs, globalization, economic vitality and competition, and technological innovation capacity. The 2007 GCS used in this 2008 study were: CA, CO, CT, MD, MA, NJ and VA. In making this comparison, average salaries were adjusted using a cost-of-living index to account for the cost of living in each of the states.

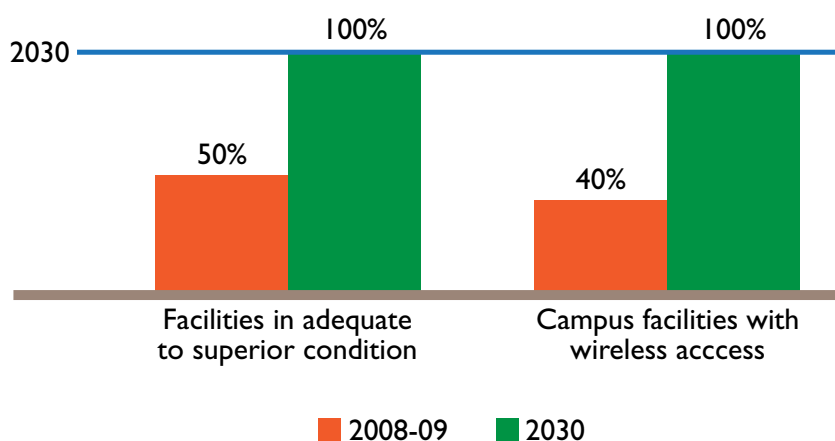
7. Invest in sustaining faculty and staff excellence.

Growth in student demand, dramatic changes in technology, and increasing diversity of students' cultural expectations and learning styles all combine to create new challenges for faculty and staff. To recognize and reward faculty and staff for rising to these challenges, the community and technical college system will continue to work towards implementation of the recommendations of the [Compensation Study](#) Task Force on cost of living adjustments, peer average salaries, faculty increments, part-time faculty salaries, and converting part-time faculty positions to full-time. We will also create new strategies to attract and retain high quality faculty and staff that reflect the diversity of our students, and plan for succession for the large number of faculty and staff who will retire during the coming decade.

The system will offer accessible, affordable, system-wide professional development opportunities to support the work colleges are doing to accelerate improvements in student learning and retention and

to meet the educational needs of traditionally underserved student groups. Professional development to expand the integration of web-based and mobile learning technologies will be essential to meet students' growing demands for web-based learning and services.

21st century education requires 21st century facilities



8. Build a 21st century learning infrastructure.

The community and technical college system will expand online learning and other technology-based services to reduce the capital and maintenance costs of additional buildings and classrooms. Colleges need the technology investments outlined in the Board's recent [Strategic Technology Plan](#), including campus-wide wireless web access and expanded eLearning and online student services. This will reduce – but not eliminate – the need for energy-efficient buildings with smart classrooms and new, web-based communications infrastructure.

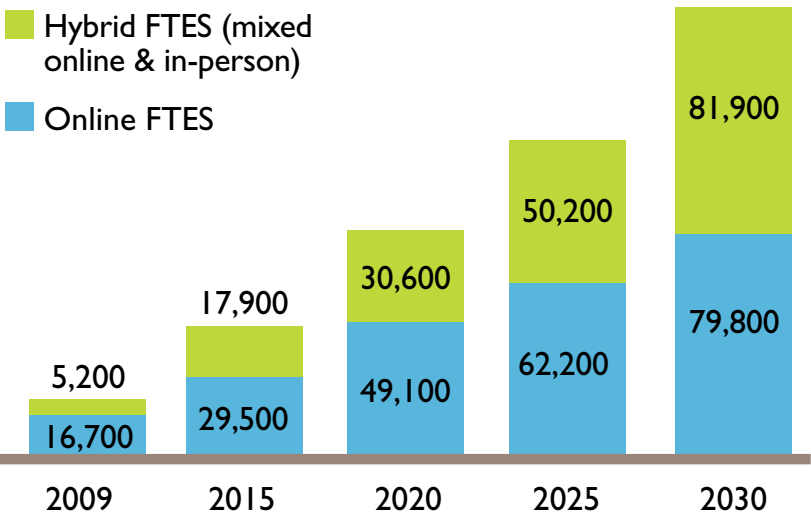
As new population centers emerge around the state, new college locations will be established based on

evidence of where people are underserved, and where there are growing populations within commute distance. Where new locations are needed, leased facilities will test student demand. Online delivery and collaboration with neighboring colleges will avoid unnecessary duplication, and new locations will be operated by existing college districts to keep overhead low.

Action Plan, continued

9. Promote the adoption of web-based and mobile technology tools for eLearning and online student services. Student demand for eLearning and online student services has outstripped the community and technical college system's ability to provide them. The system's [Strategic Technology Plan](#) calls for centrally purchased services so that all colleges will have the capacity to offer “anywhere, anytime” learning and student services. Central purchasing and deployment of these services will be less costly, more efficient, and provide greater consistency and ease of use for students. The system will develop strategies to ensure that all students – especially low-income students – have access to the technology they need. Last year, nearly 40 percent of our graduates took at least 15 credits through eLearning. Modest projections show it will grow to all students by 2030.

Every student will enroll in at least one eLearning class by 2030



The community and technical college system will deploy an online [Open Course Library](#) that supports the 80 most commonly enrolled courses. This web-based repository of course content, learning resources and open textbooks will improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning and can substantially reduce textbook costs for students. It will be faculty-driven, shared by all colleges and faculty, and designed to provide all colleges with an opportunity to participate in its creation and evolution.

10. Devote a larger share of system resources to teaching and learning by making smarter use of technology and promoting efficiencies in college district governance. The community and technical college system will invest in shared technology to reduce costs and improve administrative efficiency. We will centralize commodity-based technical services and functions, outsource functions that can be provided at less cost and with better service, standardize technology infrastructure across colleges, and encourage and share local innovations.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and local colleges will analyze the benefits and limitations of college district boundaries, and the extent to which consolidations or shared services could improve service to students and communities in each region of the state.

The Work Ahead

These ten strategies for change are our agenda for the years ahead. They signify our willingness to re-examine long-held assumptions about the enterprise of teaching and learning, to be early adopters of new technologies, and to embrace radical changes in our roles and responsibilities.

Some of the recommendations in this Action Plan build on initiatives already underway. Others will require more detailed analysis to develop implementation plans. The next steps will be to set specific priorities, timelines and assignments. Limited resources will make this work very challenging.

Collaborate with system stakeholders to set priorities and implement change

To achieve these goals, we will collaborate closely within the community and technical college system, with stakeholders, and with public and private partners. We will use the existing, well-organized decision and implementation structure of associations, commissions, councils, and faculty organizations to develop implementation plans and timelines. The State Board is committed to leading this effort to increase productivity, achieve greater student success, and keep pace with the evolution of our economy and technology.

Mobilize advocacy for sustained investment in the community and technical college system

No matter how successful these efforts are, the community and technical college system will still be challenged to compete for and win sustained state funding and special support for targeted innovations.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges will continue to educate opinion leaders and citizens about the value of our system and enlist their aid in advocating for the resources we need to make the most effective possible contribution to sustained economic growth and prosperity.

Innovate, experiment and stay focused on improving productivity

There is a real danger that a constriction in the capacity of community and technical colleges to produce well-prepared employees will become a bottleneck that slows Washington's recovery from the current recession. We cannot let this happen. We must rise to the challenge by creating faster, better, less costly ways to teach and learn.

We must innovate our way out of today's crisis. There is a world of promise for improving productivity through eLearning, greater administrative efficiency, smarter and faster pathways for students, and stronger linkages between school-based and work-based learning.

If we use 21st century technology, tools and innovations to break free from centuries of education tradition, we can create a truly student-centered system of personalized education that serves every student well, meets the demands of a growing and ever more diverse population, and accelerates Washington's economic recovery.



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Page 5	Clark College, Bates Technical College
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Back Cover	Whatcom Community College, Skagit Valley College, Lower Columbia College (L to R)



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