



CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

DECEMBER 19, 2018

Sustaining Economic Advantage

Washington state's 11 Centers of Excellence serve as a statewide resource to prepare students for career-connected learning and well-paying jobs. Of the 740,000 job openings predicted in Washington by 2021, more than half will require postsecondary education or training.¹ The centers — at the nexus of education, labor and business — help ensure Washingtonians are well-prepared for those jobs.

The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges in 2004 established the Centers of Excellence to help the state maintain its competitive economic and industry advantage. The Washington state Legislature passed a bill in 2009 in support of the centers, tasking them with building “a diverse workforce for strategic industries”² and closing the skills gap.

Strategic Attention on Local Industry Needs

Each Center of Excellence specializes in an economic area important to the region it serves, benefiting the economies and knowledge base of not only that area but that of the entire state. Advised by representatives from the business, labor and education communities, the centers serve as a way for each sector to stay up-to-date on emerging trends and training and workforce needs.

Centers are housed at their local community or technical college, ensuring strong links between the education, business and labor sectors. Because of the centers, colleges — already able to quickly adapt their programs to changing business and economic needs — are better prepared to teach the next generation of that center's industry employees.

Four Core Expectations

At the heart of each Center of Excellence lies four core expectations:

- **Economic development:** Each center supports workforce development and its local economic driver industry by serving as the link between local, regional, national and international education, labor and business organizations.
- **Industry sector strategy:** As the link between education and industry, the centers ensure teachers, counselors and others have the latest knowledge of the field, and that curriculum accurately reflects evolving business needs.
- **Education, innovation and efficiency:** The centers continually look for ways to improve what and how students learn. In addition to keeping curriculum current, the centers advocate for expanded apprenticeship opportunities, credit for prior learning and industry-recognized credentials.
- **Workforce supply and demand:** The centers research, analyze and distribute to their partners the latest information specific to their driver industry. Sectors use that information to find ways to close skills gaps, expand training capacity and incorporate best practices into educational programs.

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Sources

1. Washington Roundtable and The Boston Consulting Group. (2016, Oct. 5). Washington Kids for Washington Jobs.
2. Office of Program Research. (2009, April 10). Final Bill Report SHB 1323. Retrieved from Washington State Legislature: <http://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2009-10/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/House/1323-S%20HBR%20FBR%2009.pdf>

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Agriculture and Natural Resources

Walla Walla Community College's Agricultural and Natural Resources Center of Excellence provides collaborative leadership in addressing the emerging workforce and economic development interests of rural, urban and related agriculture in Washington. It's a hub for accessing fast, flexible services and education to meet employer needs.

Allied Health

The Allied Health Center of Excellence at **Yakima Valley College** is dedicated to addressing Washington's health care workforce needs of today and tomorrow. In collaboration and cooperation with industry partners, the center provides innovative programs to prepare qualified health care professionals and leaders for the future.

Aerospace and Advanced Manufacturing

Everett Community College hosts the Center of Excellence for Aerospace and Advanced Manufacturing. The center's mission is to increase the competitiveness of manufacturers using composites and other advanced materials through workforce training and education.

Under the umbrella of the Aerospace and Advanced Manufacturing center, the new Center of Excellence for Unmanned and Autonomous Systems (COE UAS) focuses on drones, unmanned aerial and aircraft systems/vehicles, autonomous vehicles, autonomous trailers and tractors, taxis, self-driving cars, flying cars and automated transportation and logistics systems.

Clean Energy

The Pacific Northwest Center of Excellence for Clean Energy at **Centralia College** provides leadership for a growing alliance of energy industry and college partners. Together, industry and educational partnerships provide comprehensive degree and certificate programs, online courses, and regional classroom training opportunities that focus on the future of the energy industry.

Construction

The Construction Center of Excellence at **Renton Technical College** is a resource for industry professionals, colleges and others interested in preparing a diverse workforce for the construction industry. The center showcases innovative educational offerings and promotes construction career pathways.

Careers in Education

The Washington State Center of Excellence for Careers in Education at **Green River College** provides support, mentoring and advising to community and technical colleges and K-20 partners to create and expand career-ladder programs in education. It provides a yearly best practices conference, a comprehensive website, curriculum development and dissemination, and training for K-20 instructors and para-professionals.

Homeland Security Emergency Management

Pierce College's Center for Excellence in Homeland Security Emergency Management facilitates and coordinates Homeland Security initiatives with a coalition of 34 community and technical colleges, public agencies and private sector organizations. The center provides and brokers dynamic education and training to prepare a skilled workforce to maintain our national security.

Information and Computing Technology

The Center of Excellence for Information and Computing Technology (CoE for ICT) at **Bellevue College** serves as an information resource and solution-provider for model information technology education programs, best practices, up-to-date research, information dissemination, and instructor professional development in new and emerging technologies. It also provides information on industry trends impacting employment, education and business growth across Washington.

Global Trade and Supply Chain Management

The Center of Excellence for Global Trade and Supply Chain Management housed at **Highline College** facilitates links and partnerships among education, business, industry, community and workforce partners. It advocates for Washington across the country and the world in international trade, transportation and logistics.

Marine Manufacturing and Technology

Skagit Valley College is home to the Northwest Center of Excellence for Marine Manufacturing and Technology. It's a hub for innovative discussions, resources, training and education services. These combine to create a repository of information and illuminate best practices related to industry trends and emerging technologies to foster economic vitality.