WASHINGTON STATE COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES
FIELD GUIDE
2019
Better Jobs, Brighter Futures, a Stronger Washington
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Meet Cedric Harris

After six years in the Navy, Cedric Harris wanted to get back into the workforce quickly. “I wanted to get in and get back to work,” he said. “[I] saw this as a more direct route to be able to get educated and get back into the workforce.”

Cedric was a student at ITT Technical Institute when the school closed its doors, leaving him and hundreds of others in Washington state in educational limbo. Wanting to stay in college, Cedric turned to Lake Washington Institute of Technology for its Computer Security and Network Technology program. He graduated in the summer of 2018, and while looking for a job, decided to enroll in LWTech’s Auto Repair Technician program that fall.

Welcomed rigor, welcomed support

LWTech’s high academic expectations at first took Cedric by surprise. “I was surprised it was so rigorous and not a cakewalk. I had to put in the work to get a passing grade,” he said. To get away from the stress, Cedric took advantage of the college’s Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success. “The Veterans Center has saved me,” he said. “It’s allowed me a place to relax.”

Serving those who served

Cedric is one of over 16,000 active duty and veteran students and their dependents enrolled at Washington’s community and technical colleges. Each of our 34 colleges welcomes students and their families in a veterans’ resource center designed to help them navigate college and use their benefits. In addition, all colleges award credit for military training, coursework and occupational specialty. “I tell people all the time — mostly military guys I meet who are looking to do something like college while they’re working — this is the best school to go to. They offer almost every program — auto, computers, medical — they have everything and it’s challenging,” Cedric said. “It was the right time and a great experience.”

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Education beyond high school — options for today’s jobs

A 2016 report by the Washington Roundtable found that more than half of the 740,000 job openings predicted by 2021 will require education beyond high school. Community and technical colleges are affordable, accessible to all kinds of students, and connected to universities and businesses. At community and technical colleges, students get to choose the educational options that are right for them, whether it’s to train for a career, learn a skilled trade, earn an industry certificate or transfer to a university.

Guided Pathways

Guided Pathways is a research-based approach for students to get through college in a purposeful way. Courses are grouped together to form clear paths through college and into careers, whether students enter those careers directly after graduation or transfer to a university for further study. In addition, students get intensive, targeted advising to choose their path, stay on their path, learn what they need to know and graduate.

Tuition

Community and technical colleges provide flexible, affordable higher education. At $4,027 per year for a full-time student, tuition remains an excellent value. High school juniors and seniors can get a jump start on college with the Running Start program. In 2017-18, 28,451 high school students took classes at community and technical colleges through Running Start, earning both high school and college credit. The program can trim thousands off the cost of a bachelor’s degree.

Earning and using associate degrees

In 2017-18, colleges awarded students 30,315 associate degrees. These degrees can lead directly to jobs or satisfy the first two years of a bachelor’s program at a fraction of the cost. The community and technical college system works with Washington’s four-year universities to make transferring a seamless process. Washington transfer students who earn bachelor’s degrees graduate with similar GPAs and total credits as those who start at four-year universities as freshmen. Students earn their degrees efficiently, without taking many unnecessary classes, saving time and money.

Washington MESA

Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement (MESA) serves students traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields, including African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic/Latinos, Pacific Islanders and women. Most students are low-income, the first in their families to attend college, and have not been exposed to STEM curricula and career choices. At MESA colleges, STEM students are more likely to persist, transfer to a university and earn a STEM-related bachelor’s degree than their peers pursuing STEM studies at those colleges.

High school/college alignment

Under a landmark agreement reached by the two-year college system, 10th graders scoring at the college-ready level on the Smarter Balanced Assessment automatically place into college-level math and English classes when they enroll in college, without having to take a placement test. Students enrolling in a community or technical college or Eastern Washington University who score lower on the assessment have a second chance to catch up in 12th grade with “Bridge to College” classes. These courses, developed by high school and college faculty with assistance from curriculum professionals, address agreed upon essential college and career readiness standards. The course also develops students’ essential habits so they’re ready to be successful in college.
Increasing access to post-secondary education
Educational value means economic value
A 2016 economic impact study showed community and technical colleges, and their current and former students add $20.5 billion to the state’s economy. This translates to 321,549 jobs and about 5.1 percent of the gross state product. The study also found that for each dollar a student spends on a community or technical college, that student receives a $2.80 return in higher future income. And for every taxpayer dollar the state invests, it gets back $1.70 in tax revenue.

More bachelor’s degrees for Washington
About 20,000 community and technical college students transfer to state four-year public institutions each year. Nearly 39 percent of public bachelor’s degree holders in all fields transferred from a community or technical college to a four-year university. Transfer students graduate from universities in all subjects and comprise 39 percent of all business majors, 44 percent of all health fields and 37 percent of all STEM majors (science, technology, engineering and math). Bachelor’s degree programs also are available on nearly every college campus, through University Centers or other campus-based partnerships with four-year universities. In addition, 26 colleges currently offer applied baccalaureate degrees which build on two-year programs in high-demand areas. Colleges awarded 1,005 applied baccalaureate degrees in 2017-18, and that number continues to grow.

Employer job training
Through the Customized Training Program and the Job Skills Program, community and technical colleges provide customized, affordable training programs for businesses across the state. Employees can learn at colleges or at a work site, and costs are offset by tax breaks or matching funds.

Professional and technical credentials
Colleges train students for in-demand jobs in communities and growth industries around the state. Colleges engage employers, business associations and labor unions to develop training programs for the state’s career pathway system. Employers are partners, not simply customers, of our system.

Centers of Excellence
Located on our campuses, 10 Centers of Excellence build and sustain Washington’s competitive advantage through statewide leadership. Each center focuses on a targeted industry that drives the state’s economy and is built upon a reputation for fast, flexible, high-quality education and training programs.

Service to veterans
Community and technical colleges are a perfect fit for veterans transitioning to civilian life and private-sector jobs. All 34 colleges award credit for military training, coursework and occupational specialty.

Opportunity Grants
Opportunity Grants help low-income adults train for high-wage careers. The grant covers one year of tuition and helps pay for books, supplies and other expenses, such as child care and transportation. In the 2017-18 academic year, 4,239 students received job training with the help of Opportunity Grants.
Building on the system’s strength and success

Basic Education for Adults
Basic Education for Adults programs teach foundational skills — reading, writing, math, technology and English language — so adults can move through college and into high-demand jobs.

Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)
I-BEST uses a team-teaching approach to combine college-readiness classes with regular, credit-bearing academic or job training classes. This nationally-recognized teaching approach allows students to work on college-level studies right away, clearing multiple levels with one leap.

Integrated Digital English Acceleration (I-DEA)
Funded with a grant from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, I-DEA is transforming instruction for adult English language learners who experience the most difficulty learning English. Teams of college instructors and community-based partners use I-BEST practices to deliver 31 week-long instructional modules both online and face-to-face.

Open Educational Resources
Students save thousands when they use free or low-cost textbooks and classroom materials, and community and technical colleges are working to make those a bigger part of classes. Through the system’s Open Course Library (OCL), students can access resources from 81 of the highest-enrolled courses throughout the college system in which textbooks cost $30 or less. The OPEN Attribution Builder helps users properly cite open educational resources, while the award-winning OPEN Washington website connects faculty with openly-licensed resources and materials.

Worker Retraining program
Laid-off or dislocated workers turn to Washington’s community and technical colleges to update their job skills and return to the workforce. Colleges provided job retraining for 10,963 workers in 2017-18.

High School 21+
Adults who are at least 21-years-old and lack a high school diploma have a way to get a second chance with “High School 21+,” a competency-based high school diploma offered at all 34 community and technical colleges. Advisors review transcripts and knowledge gained from life experience. They then work with the student to craft an educational plan to fill knowledge gaps. This approach recognizes life skills and competency in addition to classroom time and tests, and opens one more door to federal financial aid.

Corrections Education
Twelve colleges partner with prisons to provide education programs to incarcerated individuals to help give them the skills to successfully re-enter communities. In the 2017-18 school year, 8,587 students participated in college-offered programs, giving them a fresh chance to thrive upon release while giving communities a safeguard on crime. Taxpayers see a substantial return — up to $19.77 in savings for every dollar invested in these programs.  

81 High-enrollment courses in the Open Course Library

5. Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP). (Cost-benefit data last updated 2017). Inventory of Evidence-Based and Research-Based programs for Adult Corrections. WSIPP.
6. Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. (December 2016.)
8. Note: The calculation for students receiving need-based financial aid has been revised to include only those students who were eligible to receive aid rather than all students.
College system key facts

Data from 2017-2018 academic year unless otherwise noted.

Attendance

- 48% full-time
- 52% part-time

38% Students receiving need-based financial aid in eligible programs

24% Students with children

Type of Student

- 38% academic/transfer
- 7% other
- 10% basic skills
- 46% workforce education

Enrollment

1. Headcount (all sources) 369,709
2. Headcount (state-funded) 260,912
3. FTES (all sources) 174,300
4. FTES (state-funded) 127,994

26 Students’ median age

Data from 2017-2018 academic year unless otherwise noted.
45% students are students of color.

44% male

56% female

46% Students who work

$20.5 billion

Amount community and technical colleges, their current students, and former students add annually to Washington’s economy.¹⁷

58% Students enrolled in Washington’s public higher education system are enrolled in community and technical colleges.⁸

Race/Ethnicity*
1. White/Caucasian 60%
2. Hispanic/Latino 18%
3. Asian 13%
4. African American 8%
5. Native American 3%
6. Pacific Islander 1%
7. Other, Multiracial 2%

* May not add up to 100% because students may be counted in more than one race. Percentages calculated on reported value.

Students in Selected Programs
1. Running Start 28,451
2. International 15,593
3. Apprentices 13,255
4. Worker Retraining 10,963
5. Corrections 8,587
6. I-BEST 5,577
7. Applied bachelor’s 3,960

45% of community and technical college students are students of color.

58% of students enrolled in Washington’s public higher education system are enrolled in community and technical colleges.