COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES
Washington State Board

AFFORDABILITY & ACCESS MATTER:

How Washington's Community & Technical Colleges (CTCs) Are Part of the Solution

EIGHT THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

We're the most affordable option for higher education.

Students can earn workforce credentials, degrees, and credits toward a bachelor's degree at a CTC while **saving thousands of dollars.** A full-time Washington resident can earn a two-year associate degree for **about $10,200 in tuition and fees**.

We're a major pathway to bachelor's degrees.

More than ⅓ of bachelor's graduates from Washington's public four-year institutions **transferred from a CTC**.

We offer bachelor's degrees.

CTCs offer **more than 300 programs in high-demand fields** like health care, advanced manufacturing, IT, aerospace, skilled trades, education, public safety, and many others.

We have strong employment outcomes.

Graduates of professional-technical programs earn about **$17,200 more per year** and experience higher employment rates than those without that training.

The majority of students identify as students of color.

CTCs serve an increasingly diverse student population, with **56% of students** identifying as people of color.

Dual credit works, and CTCs deliver.

Ninety percent of high school students take some form of dual credit. Nearly 40,000 students participate in **Running Start**, and at least 5,700 earn an associate degree each year **while still in high school.**

More than 65,000 students take **Career and Technical Education (CTE) Dual Credit**, connecting high school learning with college and career pathways.

College in the High School enrollment **grew 69% in two years**, from 8,452 to 14,304 students, with at least 95% of registrations earning college credit.

We're making a solid economic impact.

The 10-year impact of CTC professional-technical programs is nearly **$17 billion in economic impact in Washington state** and return is about **$2.20 to taxpayers for every dollar invested**.

We serve every region and legislative district in Washington state.

CTCs are making higher education accessible close to home for urban, suburban, and rural communities. During the 2025–26 academic year, CTCs collectively **served more than 311,000 students** across 34 institutions.

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THE CHALLENGE

CTCs face growing financial pressure from:

1. Tuition growth that has not kept pace with the cost of maintaining education programs and services.
2. State-approved compensation and central service costs that are not fully funded.
3. Increasing amounts of funding restricted to specific purposes.
4. Inflation and rising utility, technology, and operating expenses.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Affordability and access matter. Washington's CTCs deliver affordable education, prepare workers for in-demand careers, and provide a strong return on public investment. From workforce certificates to bachelor's degrees, CTCs help students gain valuable skills while supporting employers and local economies.

Employment, economic, and community data provided by the Washington Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board and Brookings.