Washington’s 34 community and technical colleges train people across our state for well-paying careers while providing businesses with the talent they need to thrive. Our college system’s 2024 supplemental budget request focuses on two critical workforce needs: preparing more local residents to fill jobs in the fast-growing computer science field and reducing textbook costs for students in professional-technical programs.

**Strengthening the Computer Science Workforce ($9 million)**

The information and communications technology (ICT) sector is a vibrant pillar of Washington’s economy. In 2022, the ICT industry directly employed 360,900 people, making it the fastest growing industry in the state. Washington also has the highest concentration of tech workers in the nation relative to the state’s overall employment base, with nearly one in 10 workers in the tech industry. Yet local employers looking for tech talent continue to encounter a skills shortage. Currently, colleges and universities do not have the capacity to educate enough students to keep up with employer demand.

Our college system proposes to create at least 15 more Bachelor of Science in Computer Science programs as authorized by the Legislature in 2021 (SB 5401). With sufficient funding, these programs would help our state meet existing and emerging needs in the tech industry while expanding access to well-paying computer science careers for diverse community and technical college students.

**Lowering Professional-Technical Textbook Costs ($600,000)**

The high cost of textbooks is a significant barrier for many students. Nationally, the average community or technical college student pays $1,460 a year for textbooks and supplies. In Washington, that’s about 32 percent of the annual tuition costs. High textbook costs can force students in professional-technical programs to delay buying books until financial aid is awarded, forgo the books altogether, or even leave college due to the added financial stress.

Our college system seeks a legislative investment to advance a project that provides students free, copyright-cleared resources as an alternative to high-priced textbooks. Current resources provide introductory content for students studying healthcare, machining, welding, early childhood education, criminal justice, and hospitality. Funding was provided by a U.S. Department of Education grant. An investment by the Legislature would expand those resources to include information technology; forensic science; computer-aided design; health, safety and nutrition; CNC machining; culinary math; and periodontics. This three-year, $1.8 million project requires a legislative investment of $600,000 in the supplemental budget for fiscal year 2025 and $600,000 in each year of the next biennium.


**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Stephanie Winner
Interim Operating Budget Director
phone: 360-704-1023
email: swinner@sbctc.edu