



2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION REPORT

**A Summary of Legislative Impacts to
Washington's Community and Technical College System**

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This report, which includes active links to legislation and other information, is available on the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) [Legislative Outreach webpage](#).

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A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Legislators returned to Olympia in January for the 2026 session, facing a significant operating budget shortfall. Focusing on passing balanced operating, capital, and transportation budgets, they adjourned 60 days later on March 12.

In response to the budget gap, the community and technical college system set priorities to minimize budget cuts and continue work to maximize educational opportunities, ensure equitable access to postsecondary education, and prepare Washingtonians for current and future workforce needs.

State Board staff and leadership met with legislators and staff in numerous virtual meetings to share the system priorities. Committee testimony, even in policy committee testimony, was focused on the fiscal needs of the college system.

Engagement and attentiveness through this difficult and fast-paced legislative session resulted in several positive outcomes for Washington's community and technical colleges. Successes included:

- Minimal cuts to the community and technical college system in the 2025-2027 biennial operating budget.
- A capital budget that funded \$20 million in new funding for the college system.
- Passage of several bills supported by the college system.

As with past legislative sessions, leadership from across the college system — including presidents, college trustees, state board staff, vice presidents, deans, faculty, students, and community partners — advocated for system priorities. All who participated shared their stories with members of the Legislature, positively impacting decisions and outcomes during a very challenging session.

During the interim period before the start of the 2027 legislative session, the community and technical college system will continue to build relationships with legislators and stakeholders to continue telling the story of our colleges and the benefits we provide to our state. We look forward to continuing our work together as a college system as we focus on our students by preparing them to enter or reenter the workforce, to transfer to continue their education, to build basic skills and knowledge, and to continue their pathways to a better life in Washington state.

Warm Regards,



Nate Humphrey
Executive Director
State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

BUDGET SUMMARIES

Capital budget

On March 12, 2026, the Legislature passed the 2026 **supplemental capital budget**, [Senate Bill \(SB\) 6003](#). The enacted budget included \$20 million in new funding for community and technical college (CTC) system projects. The appropriation includes:

- \$5 million for breaking ground on Cascadia College's CC5 Gateway Building project.
- \$11 million for Seattle Central College, Eco District decarbonization project.
- \$2 million for the CTC Building Tune-Up SBCTC grant program.
- \$2 million for CTC building HVAC controls-to-schedule upgrades SBCTC grant program.

The Legislature also included several policy and financing provisions that will benefit CTCs and improve project delivery:

- \$3 million in alternative financing authority for Lower Columbia College David Story Field project.
- \$15 million in alternative financing authority for Spokane Community College main building east wing renovation project.
- An increase to the pre-design threshold for major capital projects from \$10– \$15 million.
- Funding for the Department of Commerce to convene a workgroup to prioritize district energy and campus-scale energy upgrades statewide.

Operating budget

On March 12, 2026, the Legislature also passed the 2026 **supplemental operating budget**, [ESSB 5998](#). Considering the significant budget challenges the Legislature faced during the session, reductions to the CTC system were relatively modest. We appreciate the efforts of Washington's lawmakers to preserve core programs and services that have the greatest impact on student success.

The two most substantial adjustments to overall funding levels include the reduction of the Running Start full-time equivalent (FTE) and a \$2.2 million reduction to the state general fund.

Policy eliminations and reductions

- A base funding reduction of \$2.2 million in fiscal year 2027.
- Elimination of funding for all industry-specific Centers of Excellence (COE), starting fiscal year 2027.
- Temporary reduction in the Running Start FTE from 1.4 to 1.3 in the 2026–27 and 2027–28 school years.
- Requirement for SBCTC to study and make recommendations that may reduce redundancies and expenses that do not directly support student success, with a report required to the Legislature by December 1, 2026.

2026 LEGISLATION

SBCTC staff monitored about 150 proposed bills during the 2026 legislative session. Staff represented the interests of the CTC system by analyzing bills, providing testimony to legislative committees, and collaborating with legislators, their staff, and CTC employees on potential amendments and impacts of the legislation.

The section below lists the bills the Legislature passed that affect the CTC system. Descriptions of each bill include:

- Bill number
- Prime sponsor
- Bill short title
- Bill description as signed into law
- Link to the session law
- Any SBCTC or college implications

Administration and governance

House Bill (HB) 2353 (Keaton): Concerning pre-design thresholds

HB 2353 updates the statutory cost threshold that triggers pre-design requirements for major capital construction projects. The bill establishes a new pre-design threshold of \$15,000,000 and provides for annual inflationary adjustments beginning July 1, 2027. This reflects increased construction costs since the threshold was last updated.

The bill also amends provisions governing the Office of Financial Management's review of capital projects, including requirements related to cost comparisons, facility planning, and alignment with agency capital plans.

[Session Law](#): Laws of 2026; amending Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 43.88.110, RCW 43.82.035, and RCW 43.88.0301 (effective date as provided in session law; inflationary adjustment begins July 1, 2027).

SBCTC and college implications

- Reduces upfront planning costs and burden for projects below the updated threshold by not requiring a formal pre-design.
- The updated threshold aligns with the Intermediate project threshold.
- SBCTC will update capital planning guidance and internal processes to reflect the new threshold and inflation adjustment.
- Modernizes the pre-design threshold to reflect rising construction costs, allowing CTCs to advance more capital projects without incurring the time and expense of formal pre-design when it is not warranted. By introducing an inflation-adjusted threshold, the bill provides long-term predictability and reduces administrative friction in the capital planning process. This helps CTCs and SBCTC focus limited planning resources on higher-risk and higher-cost projects while maintaining appropriate oversight.

SHB 2420 (Zahn): Small works roster limits

SHB 2420 increases the maximum dollar thresholds under which state agencies and local governments can use the small works roster process as an alternative to full competitive bidding for public works projects. Beginning January 1, 2027, the bill establishes a phased schedule that increases the small works roster limit from \$350,000 to \$650,000 by July 1, 2030. The bill also clarifies that sales tax is excluded from the estimated project cost when determining eligibility for the small works roster process.

[Session Law: SHB 2420](#), Laws of 2026 (effective dates vary by threshold; phased increases begin January 1, 2027, with final increase effective July 1, 2030).

SBCTC and college implications

- CTCs can use the small works roster process for a broader range of minor public works projects. This allows for more flexible and timely procurement of construction, repair, and improvement work.
- CTC can reduce administrative burden and project delivery timelines for eligible projects, particularly in the minor works and preservation space, while still complying with statutory public works requirements.
- By increasing small works roster thresholds on a phased basis, SHB 2420 allows CTCs to deliver more minor capital, preservation, and infrastructure projects more quickly and efficiently without full competitive bidding, while maintaining public works oversight. The bill aligns procurement authority with rising construction costs and clarifies that sales tax is excluded from project cost estimates. This helps colleges better manage preservation backlogs, respond to operational needs, and stretch limited capital and local resources.

SHB 2472 (Bronoske): Fire sprinkler work

SHB 2472 strengthens enforcement of existing licensing and certification requirements for fire protection sprinkler system work. The bill requires contractors and fitters performing installation, modification, inspection, maintenance, or repair of fire-protection sprinkler systems to provide proof of proper licensure or certification.

The bill authorizes local fire code officials and the State Director of Fire Protection to investigate violations, issue stop-work orders, and require removal or replacement of sprinkler systems when unlicensed or uncertified work poses a public safety concern.

[Session Law: SHB 2472](#), Laws of 2026; amending RCW 18.270.070 (effective date as provided in session law).

SBCTC and college implications

- Colleges must ensure that contractors and people performing fire protection sprinkler system work on campus facilities are properly licensed and certified, consistent with the bill's requirements.
- Local fire code officials or the State Director of Fire Protection may issue stop-work orders or require removal and replacement of sprinkler systems if unlicensed or uncertified parties perform work. This could affect project schedules and costs if noncompliance occurs.
- The bill does not change SBCTC capital funding programs, approval authority, or capital budget prioritization. Still, it reinforces existing life-safety and public works compliance expectations for capital and minor works projects.
- SHB 2472 reinforces life-safety and code-compliance expectations for public facilities by

strengthening enforcement of licensing and certification requirements for fire protection sprinkler system work.

Education and instruction

ESSB 6260 (Wellman): Public education funding

ESSB 6260 lowers the total amount of state-funded enrollment a Running Start student can receive. Today, students can be funded up to 1.4 FTE, which allows them to take a full load of college classes through Running Start while still enrolling in one or two high school courses.

Under this bill, the 1.4 FTE limit remains in place for the 2025–26 school year. In the 2026–27 and 2027–28 school years, the combined maximum enrollment is 1.3 FTE, and commits to restoring the 1.4 FTE, if the millionaire’s tax law is implemented in 2029.

[Session Law](#): Delivered to the Governor.

SBCTC and college implications

- SBCTC will need to work in collaboration with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and Council of Presidents to provide policy guidance on the change in FTE from 1.4 to 1.3.
- Colleges will need to re-adjust advising practices based on SBCTC guidance.

Human Resources

HB 2091 (Reed): Bargaining/employee information

Under HB 2091, the requirement for public employers to provide the exclusive bargaining representative with employee contact information is extended to include the employers covered by the Personnel System Reform Act. These employers include state agencies, the Attorney General's Office (with respect to assistant attorneys general), and the Office of Administrative Hearings (with respect to administrative law judges).

Until the Human Resource Project (Phase 2) of the One Washington Enterprise Resource Management project is complete and fully implemented, an employer is not liable if the employer is unable to provide the required information because of limitations of the employer's technology system. Employers will be required to provide certain information about their employees who bargain under RCW 41.80 (i.e., classified) to the exclusive bargaining representative, if the employer has the information in the employer's records.

[Session Law](#): Chapter 195, 2026 Laws (effective June 11, 2026).

SBCTC and college implications

- It is not clear what an “employer record” is.
- Information requested in status reports will likely expand.
- CTCs may need to collect additional information to respond to status reports.
- ctcLink may need to be configured to adjust status reports, or employers may have to pull information from other records.

2SHB 2105 (Ortiz-Self): Concerning immigrant worker protections

Beginning October 1, 2026, an employer must post and distribute notices to its workers and their representatives within five business days of receiving a Notice of Inspection (NOI) of Forms I-9 and any related worker records from a federal agency. This includes the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Justice Immigrant and Employee Rights Section, the U.S. Department of Labor, and any other agency enforcing civil immigration laws or employment eligibility requirements.

[Session Law](#): Delivered to Governor.

SBCTC and college implications

- Requires an employer to notify its workers within five business days of receiving a federal Notice of Inspection of Employment Eligibility Verification Forms I-9.
- Requires an employer to notify affected workers within five business days of receiving the results of any inspection of Forms I-9.
- Allows the Office of the Attorney General (AG's office) to bring civil actions for violations and allows injured workers to bring private civil actions.
- The AG's office will provide templates and outreach related to compliance.

HB 2264 (Berry): Unemployment insurance/layoffs

Beginning June 14, 2026, the Employment Security Department (ESD) rule regarding unemployment benefit eligibility for an employee voluntarily participating in an employer-initiated layoff or reduction-in-force (RIF) is codified in statute for separations. The rule is modified by removing the requirement that the employer take the final action in the separation process by accepting the employee's offer to be included in a layoff or reduction-in-force. Instead, the rule requires only that the separating employer terminate the individual's employment because of the layoff or reduction in force plans; and providing that a separating employer may allow employees to rescind an offer; and allowing the option to rescind an offer does not disqualify an individual from benefits, provided that the separation from employment meets the other requirements.

[Session Law](#): Chapter 150, 2026 Laws (effective June 11, 2026).

SBCTC and college implications

- Allows for a person to be eligible for an unemployment benefit when voluntarily participating in an employer-initiated layoff or RIF, so long as the separating employer terminates the employment because of the layoff or RIF plan.
- Could allow for additional unemployment claims/approved unemployment claims by ESD at an institution based on college-initiated employment RIF/layoff actions.

Tuition and financial aid

SB 5963 (Nobles): Passport to Careers program

Students in the Passport to Careers Program automatically qualify for income eligibility under the Washington College Grant. SB 5963 aligns the Passport to Careers formula for calculating financial need to match the federal formula. It also requires all Passport to Careers funds to be deposited into the State Financial Aid Account.

[Session Law](#): Chapter 44, Laws of 2026 (effective June 11, 2026)

SBCTC and college implications

- SBCTC may need to collaborate with the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) to configure adjustments to show Passport to Career students as income-eligible for the Washington College Grant (WCG).
- SBCTC will need to provide policy guidance.

Workforce

SHB 2339 (Simmons): Regulation of nursing

SHB 2339 modifies the titles used by advanced registered nurse practitioners to reflect their practitioner type. This allows certified registered nurse anesthetists who have not obtained prescriptive authority prior to July 1, 2026, to continue administering certain substances. This bill removes the requirement that applicants for nursing licenses provide official transcripts from their nursing programs to the Washington State Board of Nursing (WABON). It also allows WABON to issue interim permits directly.

[Session Law](#): Chapter 139, Laws of 2026 (effective June 11, 2026).

SBCTC and college implications

There are no direct implications for SBCTC or colleges. Nursing program graduates no longer need to provide transcripts to WABON, which helps simplify the licensing process.

SB 6278 (Wellman): Teacher/principal preparation programs

SB 6278 requires the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) to conduct ongoing reviews of approved teacher and principal preparation programs that include the following components: program standards; educator role standards; evidence submitted by programs; and input from community constituents and pre-kindergarten through grade 12 partners.

This bill provides a process and directives for when the performance of a PESB-reviewed preparation program is out of alignment with standards and requirements. SB 6278 also changes how often student teacher field placement plans are submitted for review. It would change from every 3 years to every 2 years.

[Session Law](#): Chapter 49, Laws of 2026 (effective June 11, 2026).

SBCTC and college implications

- Potential increase of administrative burden on BAS in Teacher Preparation programs because of the review process. The process will include additional components, such as soliciting input from educators and administrators with direct experience with the programs. However, most programs already include this information in their review.
- District partnership plans will be required less frequently (every three years, as opposed to every two).

SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT

CTC system representatives are essential to a successful legislative session. College presidents, district chancellors, college trustees, system advocates, and students made extra efforts to meet with legislators and staff from their home and college legislative districts. Members of the State Board, under the leadership of Chair Martin Valadez, also participated through meetings, letters, emails, and phone calls with key legislators. See the full list of participants below.

A total of 36 CTC system representatives and SBCTC staff testified 71 times before House and Senate committees. They spoke:

- Approximately 68 times on bills and trustee appointments.
- Three times during work sessions.

SBCTC staff

- Nate Humphrey, Executive Director
- Darrell Jennings, Capital Budget Director
- Arlen Harris, Legislative Director
- Jamie Traugott, Director of Student Services and K12 Alignment
- Ruffaro Guzha, Student Legislative Intern
- Stephanie Wahl, Program Administrator
- Julie Huss, Human Resources Director

Presidents and chancellors

- Kevin Brockbank, Spokane Colleges
- Eric Murray, Cascadia College
- Ivan Harrell, Tacoma Community College
- Tim Stokes, South Puget Sound Community College
- David May, Bellevue College
- Carli Schiffner, Grays Harbor College
- Justin Guillory, Whatcom Community College
- Chio Flores, Pierce College, Puyallup
- Teresa Rich, Yakima Valley College
- Joyce Loveday, Clover Park Technical College
- Suzy Ames, Peninsula College
- Rebekah Woods, Columbia Basin College
- Amy Morrison, Lake Washington Institute of Technology
- Chantae Recasner, Seattle Central College
- Jenni Martin, Spokane Community College

- Chemene Crawford, Everett Community College
- Sara Thompson Tweedy, Big Bend Community College

Students

- Owen Sharp, Centralia College
- Ronin Wachter, Centralia College
- Kayla Linadi, Edmonds College

Faculty, staff, administrators, and associates

- Daimon Doyle, South Puget Sound Community College
- Lori Christmas, Grays Harbor College
- Bryce Humphries, Big Bend Community College
- Owen Sharp, Centralia College
- Ronin Wachter, Centralia College
- Amy Parris, Big Bend Community College
- Michelle Andreas, South Puget Sound Community College
- LaTasha Wortham, Tacoma Community College
- Debra Entenman, State Board member
- Bryce McKibben, Pierce Colleges
- Christine Rolfes, Olympic College

SENATE CONFIRMATIONS

Trustees and state board members play a critical role in shaping the vision, governance, and accountability of the CTC system. Their leadership helps ensure that schools remain responsive to the educational and workforce needs of local communities. Below are the trustees and state board members confirmed by the Washington State Senate during the 2026 legislative session:

- Ann M. McQuade to Bellingham Technical College
- Aliza Munoz Esty to Grays Harbor College
- Phylicia Hancock-Lewis to Wenatchee Valley College
- Rosa Peralta to Seattle Colleges
- Steven Zimmerman to Wenatchee Valley College
- Tara Leer to Walla Walla Community College
- Glenn Ellis to Peninsula College
- Suzanne Donaldson to Clark College
- Jesse Johnson to Highline College
- Christine Rolfes to Olympic College
- Debra Entenman to the State Board
- LaTasha Wortham to Tacoma Community College
- Rosendo Alvarado to Big Bend Community College
- Dona Ponepinto to Tacoma Community College
- Bryce McKibben to Pierce College District
- Sharmila Swenson to Highline College

- Kelly K. Fukai to Spokane Colleges
- Robert A. Zappone to Renton Technical College
- Denise E. Gideon to Clark College
- Adria Buchanan to Clover Park Technical College
- Michelle R. Smith to Columbia Basin College
- Edison A. Valerio to Columbia Basin College
- Amy E. Parris to Big Bend Community College
- Carl Bruner to Skagit Valley College
- Laura Flores to Yakima Valley Community College
- Robert H. Malte to Lake Washington Institute of Technology
- Elisa K. Graceffo to Lake Washington Institute of Technology
- Robert Decoteau to Bellingham Technical College



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