

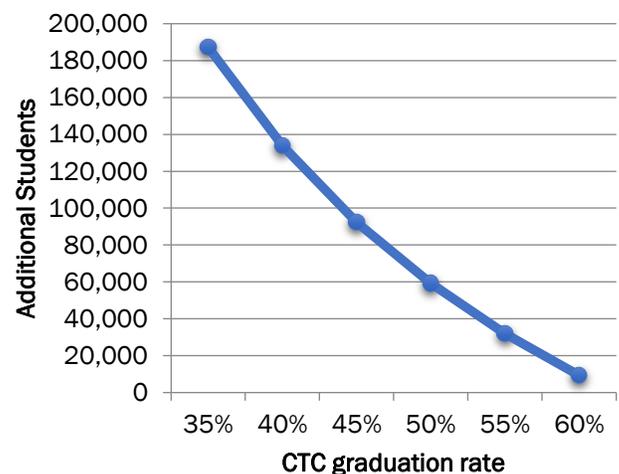
IMPROVING ACCESS AND COMPLETION: CTC ROLE IN POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT GOAL

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) and Washington State Legislature have adopted the goal that by 2023, at least 70 percent of Washington adults, ages 25-44, will have a post-secondary credential (see the [WSAC Roadmap Goals Webpage](#)). This ambitious goal would require Washington postsecondary institutions to approximately double the number of students earning a postsecondary credential during a ten-year period. State Board analysis estimates that the bulk of these credentials are likely to be awarded by public two-year colleges (approximately 228,000 of the 380,000 additional credential holders needed to reach the goal). This estimate is based on the large number of new credential holders that would need to come from populations more often served by the two-year colleges (see this [CTC share of educational attainment goals report](#)).

Reaching the goal through improved access and completion

At current rates of retention and completion, an additional 228,000 credential-holders over 10 years would require an average additional headcount of 190,000 award-seeking students each year. The additional number of students needed to reach the goal drops dramatically with improvements in graduation rates (see Figure 1). No additional students would be required with double the current graduation rates. Considering the limitations to such dramatic increases in postsecondary participation or graduation rates, it is likely that reaching the goal will require significant improvements in both access and completion.

Figure 1. Additional students vs. increased graduation rates needed to reach goal



Strategies for completion

Whether focusing on improved access or completion, the end goal of more postsecondary credential holders means helping more students to complete a credential. Based on current patterns in student progression and completion, the following areas of focus were identified for increasing completions among academic transfer students, nursing students (the largest selective entry workforce program), and other workforce students.

Academic Transfer Students

A focus on early interventions, as well as real-time tracking and interventions for students struggling to complete classes at all levels of credit completion:

- Over 50,000 transfer students exit the CTCs each year. About 30 percent leave as degree

holders, 20 percent transfer to another institution without a degree, and 50 percent leave with no degree or transfer.

- For those students leaving with no degree or transfer, most (74 percent) leave with less than a year's worth of college credits and many (43 percent) leave with less than a quarter's worth of college credits.
- Not completing classes is a better predictor of leaving with no degree or transfer than initial measures of academic preparedness (54 percent of transfer students who took precollege level classes left with no degree or transfer; 70 percent of students with more than 10 percent unearned attempted credits left with no degree or transfer).
- This target group of students who leave with more than 10 percent unearned attempted credits and no degree or transfer are spread across the different levels of college credits earned, suggesting an emphasis on real-time tracking and interventions for students who are struggling to complete classes at all levels of credit completion.

Workforce Students: Nursing

More intrusive advising for students aspiring to careers in nursing, with clearer alternative options for the many that are never accepted into programs:

- Nursing attracts the highest interest of any workforce program based upon headcounts for students aspiring to get into or participating in programs (one in every ten workforce students).

- Nursing programs have some of the highest completion rates (about 75 percent). Most graduate within 4 years of their initial applicant status.
- However, nursing is a double-edged sword. The majority (60 percent) of students attracted to nursing never moves beyond their applicant status and ultimately leaves college with no completion.
- Davis Jenkins, from the Community College Research Center at Columbia University, has made a point of indicating better initial guidance and alternative options for students who have identified a nursing credential as their goal.

Other Workforce Students

Early watch on workforce students that start out part-time in their first quarter:

- Over half of workforce students exiting college every year earn no award.
- About one in six leaves with less than 10 credits. Nearly half (45 percent) of these students started their program part-time.
- Nearly one in four leaves with less than a year's worth of credits, but no award. Of these, about four in ten (37 percent) started out part-time.
- Students earning degrees and certificates are less likely to start out part-time (about three in ten).
- This suggests more careful examination of how laddering is and is not working for the many workforce students who leave with no award.



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