WASHINGTON'S
COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES

2024 SUPPLEMENTAL OPERATING BUDGET

January 8, 2024

Our community and technical college system's 2024 supplemental budget request focuses on preparing more Washington residents to fill jobs in the fast-growing computer science and clean energy industries.

Strengthening the Computer Science Workforce ($9 million)

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). The demand for high-tech workers in Washington is high. Our state ranks first in the nation for the concentration of tech workers relative to the overall employment base: Nearly one in 10 workers (9.4%) in Washington is employed in the tech industry. High tech careers pay well: The median annual salary for people employed in tech occupations in Washington is $130,000.[1]

Despite this good news, local employers looking for tech talent continue to encounter a skills shortage. Additionally, access to high-paying jobs is not equitably distributed; Black, Hispanic, and women workers are under-represented in Washington's high tech industry.[2]

Expanding access to computer science bachelor's degrees would help fill skill gaps for Washington employers and provide community and technical college students — half of whom are students of color — access to these in-demand degrees within their local communities.

Expanding climate solutions curriculum ($950,000)

Climate change is a health issue, an economic issue, and an equity issue that affects every community. Green jobs in Washington state are growing exponentially and require new skill sets and competencies, along with a thoughtful redesign of existing programs to be more accessible and responsive to changing employer and community needs.

A legislative investment would support the integration of climate education and training into professional-technical programs across Washington community and technical colleges, including developing new curricula and workforce training partnerships with Tribes. The training prepares students for well-paying jobs in the green economy, gives them skills to create equitable community-based solutions, and ultimately helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the impacts of climate change.

The Legislature provided one-time funding for climate solutions curriculum in the 2022 supplemental operating budget, which engaged approximately 500 faculty in developing hundreds of new curricular modules to teach critical skills and competencies for the green economy and climate solutions. This investment would enable colleges to continue this important work.

Sources: 1) CompTIA. (2023). State of the Tech Workforce. Downers Grove, IL: CompTIA 2) Ibid

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