

NATIONAL LEADERS IN INNOVATION

“SBCTC has an enviable national reputation as a coordinating entity that works effectively. This reputation is justified by three sets of accomplishments: 1) establishing a cohesive system mission of public value; 2) facilitating policy changes at scale; and 3) balancing and mediating relationships among multiple participants.”
Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy, California State University, Sacramento, July 2012

Transforming education, lives

Washington's community and technical colleges set a national example for innovative policies, practices and research for student success.

National recognitions

High ranking in completions

Washington's community and technical college system ranks 12th in the nation for graduation rates, and 7th for certificates and degrees produced.¹

Aspen Prize: best college in the nation

Olympic College and Renton Technical College in March 2015 were named as part of the top 10 finalists for the prestigious Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. Walla Walla Community College in 2013 was named the top community college in the nation by Aspen Institute, along with Santa Barbara City College in California.

The Aspen Institute also named Columbia Basin, Skagit Valley, Walla Walla and Whatcom among the top 150 community colleges in the country in 2015. The Aspen Prize is awarded every two years.

Diversity award

Highline Community College won an Award of Excellence for Advancing Diversity from the American Association of Community Colleges. Highline was one of six colleges in the nation awarded at the association's April 2014 annual convention in Washington, D.C.

Student success

Performance funding

Washington's performance-based funding system, known as the "Student Achievement Initiative," awards colleges points and funding when students reach key academic milestones that lead to certificates and degrees. The milestone metrics have influenced performance funding models across the country and have been incorporated into national campaigns that promote accountability.



The goal is to propel students to and through the "tipping point" – the level of education that means the difference between struggling in a low-wage job and having a career that leads to a better life. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges' tipping point research has made national news in higher education circles.²

Centers of Excellence

The National Governor's Association credits Washington with undertaking bold, comprehensive strategies to align postsecondary education with state economic goals, spotlighting the community and technical college system's Centers of Excellence.³

I-BEST

Washington's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training program (I-BEST) uses a team-teaching approach to combine adult education classes with regular, credit-bearing academic or job training classes so students get through school and into jobs faster.

I-BEST was named a Bright Idea by Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government in 2011 and has been designated by the U.S. Department of Education as one of the most significant national innovations.⁴

Open Course Library

A leader in developing and promoting open resources, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges partners with four organizations to provide training and support to all U.S. Department of Labor TAACCCT grantees (Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training). Products resulting from the grants must be openly licensed. The other training partners are Creative Commons, Stanford University, Carnegie Mellon University and CAST.

Project I-DEA

English language learners who face the largest language gaps are learning English quickly and in practical ways with project I-DEA (Integrated Digital English Acceleration).

Unlike the traditional approach – in which learners are expected to learn English before pursuing job-training – I-DEA teaches English in tandem with job and life skills. Students receive computers and 24-7 internet access to learn topics that matter most to them. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation provided grant funding with the expectation that I-DEA will become a national model.

Limited License Legal Technician training

Four colleges – Highline, Edmonds, Tacoma and Spokane – will start training students to become "Limited License Legal Technicians" (LLLTs) as early as spring 2014. The state Supreme Court authorized the new license in 2012, making Washington the first – and currently only – state to endorse this exciting new profession.⁵

Sources:

1. CollegeMeasures.org, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
2. The national references are too numerous to list, but can be found easily through a web search.
3. "Degrees for What Jobs? Raising Expectations for Universities and Colleges in a Global Economy," National Governors Association report, March 2011.
4. Martha J. Kanter, U.S. Undersecretary of Education, "American Higher Education: First in the World" featured in May-June 2011 Change magazine.
5. "2014 State of the Judiciary" report presented by Chief Justice Barbara A. Madsen on behalf of the courts of Washington, page 4.
6. "GED Achievement in the DRC," Correctional Institution Inspection Committee (Ohio) research report, Jan. 8, 2014.
7. Presentations from higher-education institutions before the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, Feb. 5, 2014.

Core-to-College

Washington is one of 11 states that will serve as a national model for implementing Common Core State Standards – rigorous new math and English standards adopted by most states to prepare students for college, work and a global economy. Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors in January 2011 distributed grants to help the 11 states align K-12 schools and colleges to the Common Core Standards and to the assessments that will measure students' success. The 11 states are expected to share their expertise with other states across the nation.

Pre-college education

Innovative pre-college programs (also known as remedial education) in Washington's community and technical colleges caught the attention of the federal Government Accountability Office. Representatives visited colleges in 2013 to hear success stories and challenges in preparing students for college-level work.

Correctional education

The state Department of Corrections contracts with community and technical colleges to provide basic skills and job training at the state's 12 adult prisons. Washington was ranked first in the nation for the rate of offenders completing their GEDs, according to a policy brief by the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee, an Ohio legislative committee.⁶

Basic Food and Employment Training

SBCTC is a partner agency in implementing Washington's SNAP program, Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) which helps move people out of poverty by providing food, basic education, vocational training, and job search assistance. A provision in the 2014 federal Farm Bill creates a three-year grant fund to encourage states to provide targeted employment and training programs similar to Washington's BFET program.

Nursing transfer agreement

The community and technical college system and universities in 2014 struck an agreement to create a shorter, smoother process for registered nurses to earn bachelor's degrees. The agreement is thought to be among the most collaborative and creative in the nation.⁷