

Wine cluster grows rural Washington economy

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Education Board

Eleni Papadakis



Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

128 - 10th Avenue SW,
PO Box 43105,
Olympia, WA 98504-3105

360-753-5662, Fax 360-586-5862

www.wtb.wa.gov

E-mail: workforce@wtb.wa.gov

Expansion possible through industry, college partnership

It started as a trickle. In the early 1990s just a handful of wineries were located in the rural, eastern Washington community of Walla Walla, with its abundant sun and ideal grape growing conditions. But by late 1990s, Walla Walla's wine industry was beginning to expand faster than the local labor force could supply it.

Wine producers forged a partnership with Walla Walla Community College, creating a direct link between the wine industry and the college. That led to the creation of the Center for Enology and Viticulture, along with a technical degree and two certificate programs.

College prepares workers for growing industry

WWCC Enology and Viticulture Center has awarded 89 degrees and 144 certificates. Another 24 students are expected to graduate this June.

By early 2007, there were over 90 commercial wineries operating in the Walla Walla Valley.

So far, 20 of the program's graduates have opened their own wineries.

Statistics tell story:

- Taxable retail sales rose by 50 percent between 2000 and 2008.
- Average wages grew from \$25,995 to almost \$35,000 during same years.
- County employment grew by 14.4 percent.
- Number of Walla Walla wineries increased from 19 to over 100.
- Hotel/motel sales increased over 40 percent between 2005 and 2009.

Source: Walla Walla Community College



Grape success: A partnership between Walla Walla Community College and wine producers has fueled exponential growth in this rural eastern Washington economy.

Growing the creative economy

The wine cluster is forecast to account for more than 15 percent of all jobs by 2017. These jobs include tourism, hotels and motels, art galleries, restaurants and more. The wine industry has also sparked a revitalized downtown Walla Walla, where older buildings have been restored and now bustle with new commercial activity.

Total earnings generated by the wine cluster alone: \$46.7 million.

Regional earnings from direct, indirect and induced effects: \$103.2 million.

Source: Walla Walla Community College

Local jobs, local workers

- Vineyard managers
- Viticulturists
- Lab Technicians
- Wine sales and promotion
- Winery equipment sales
- Cellar masters and winemakers

Get more information by contacting the Walla Walla Community College Enology and Viticulture Center.

Contact: Steve Van Ausdle, President
Walla Walla Community College
Steven.vanausdle@wwcc.edu