



Workforce Training and
Education Coordinating Board

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Washington machinist apprentices gain faster path to engineering career *“Mobile training unit” to help apprentices earn college credits statewide*

SEATTLE— Machinist apprentices will now be able to apply life and work experience toward a two-year degree that can build toward an engineering career. In addition, those who lack sufficient skills to enter a machinist apprenticeship will get the help they need to become apprentices.

It’s one of three pilot programs to help workers gain college credit and advance their career prospects through workplace-supported education.

With the help of other partners, the Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee (AJAC) and South Seattle Community College will identify 25 first- and second-year machinist apprentices interested in pursuing a college degree and higher level engineering positions. These apprentices will document their knowledge and learning from previous work and life experience. College credits earned through this prior learning assessment will help fulfill college credits needed for a two-year degree.

In addition, more than 10 machinists who do not yet qualify to be an AJAC apprentice will participate in online math and specialized GED courses to prepare them for entry into apprenticeship.

Those who earn a two-year degree will have a foundation for a variety of engineering-related career paths. Machinists have the practical, hands-on experience many Washington employers seek but are unable to find in traditional engineering graduates. Meanwhile, machinists interested in engineering are effectively blocked because they would need to start fresh on a four-year degree.

“This opens up significant opportunities in the world of manufacturing—for the machinists interested in engineering, and the employers who rely on their expertise,” said Eleni Papadakis, executive director of the state’s Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board).

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In January, the state's Workforce Board awarded South Seattle Community College a \$200,000 Workplace-based Learning grant with the goal of helping machinist apprentices move ahead further and faster with their education and career goals. It's one of three programs to pilot a variety of learning laboratories statewide. Funds come from the U.S. Department of Labor and were championed by U.S. Sen. Patty Murray.

Mobile training unit brings classroom to student

AJAC will bring the classroom to the student by deploying a fully equipped 53-foot mobile training unit, so apprentices have access to computers and online learning at the worksite. Employers will provide their employees learning time to accomplish their course work and they will identify supervisors to serve as on-site educational facilitators and mentors.

"This pilot will bring educational opportunities directly to workers where they work--during work time--with the help of their employers," Papadakis said. "Workplace-based learning gives workers a chance to advance their education and careers as they work, and helps employers boost their bottom line."

Two other Workplace-based Learning grants from the state's Workforce Board are funding programs that help Vancouver, Wash., hospital workers advance into nursing assistant positions and northwest Washington child care workers become lead teachers. The lessons learned through the initiative should lead to the expansion of workplace-based learning opportunities to other low-wage, lower-skilled workers statewide as additional colleges adopt the model.

"Ultimately, we would like to see many more workplace-based learning opportunities in Washington," Papadakis said.

Learn more about the Workforce Board's Workplace-based Learning Initiative at <http://www.wtb.wa.gov/LearningLaboratoryPartnerships.asp>

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The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board is a partnership of labor, business and government, dedicated to helping Washington residents obtain and succeed in family-wage jobs, while meeting employers' needs for skilled workers.