



Hot workforce topics for Higher Education

High employer demand fields

Even with fewer job openings and more workers eager to fill them, an estimated 28,000 Washington employers had difficulty finding the right person for at least some job openings last year, based on the Workforce Board's 2010 Employer Survey. As education resources tighten, postsecondary programs must continue to focus on high employer demand fields—that is, fields of study where employer demand for people with a certain type of education exceeds the supply of graduates coming out of community and technical colleges, state universities, colleges and apprenticeships.

Worker Retraining

Worker Retraining programs focus on high demand professional-technical education and are aligned with the training needs of industries in Washington's diverse regions. Between 2008 and 2009, program enrollment increased 60 percent to 11,000 and hit 15,000 in Fall 2010. Community and technical colleges require resources to continue to train unemployed workers with the skills local employers want.

Customized Training

Employers report that state-assistance with job training, including grants and tax credits, is very attractive to them when considering whether to move to Washington or expand here. Washington ranks near the bottom of states in the amount of public support provided for customized job training for employers.

Opportunity Grants

The Opportunity Grant program pays for up to 45 credits, or one year of college, and helps cover the cost of books for low-income workforce education students. Participating students must study a high employer-demand program of study, improving their likelihood of getting a living-wage job. Over 60 percent are parents; 45 percent are students of color.

Integrated Basic Education Skills Training (I-BEST)

Workforce Board evaluations of Adult Basic Education show that employment and earnings outcomes on average do not improve unless basic education is combined with occupational skills training (I-BEST). All community and technical colleges have started delivering I-BEST. However, there are still Adult Basic Education courses that provide few links and no integration with job skills training.

Credit for Prior Learning

Increasing the type and quantity of credits that can be granted for prior learning can help working adults more quickly complete a credential or degree, while also meeting employer demands for a skilled and credentialed workforce.