



Workforce Board

Electronic Newsletter

From the desk of Ellen O'Brien Saunders, Executive Director

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BREAKING NEWS: Legislature Passes State Strategic Plan for Workforce Development

The State Senate has passed the resolution endorsing the update to the Workforce Board's workforce development state strategic plan, "High Skills, High Wages." Because it is a joint resolution of the Legislature, it does not need to go to the Governor for signature. Watch for our Special Legislative Wrap-Up next week.

Workforce Board Looks for Answers on HECB Admissions Proposal

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board has requested that the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) not adopt its proposed new minimum admission standards until certain questions have been answered.

In a unanimous vote at its March 27 meeting, the Workforce Board noted the current proposal does not clearly state that school districts may determine whether courses are equivalent to required college courses and meet college admission requirements. Also, that requiring a fourth year of math or an additional year of science does not make sense for all students planning on entering a four-year institution. Moreover, a preferable method for aligning high school programs with postsecondary programs, and thus reduce remediation (a major motivation for the HECB's raising the admission standards), is to define required competencies.

In taking its action, the Workforce Board acknowledged HECB's legislative duty to set admission standards, and also that more math and science might be appropriate for some students.

What concerns the Workforce Board, however, was the potential impact of the new proposals on the more than 60,000 students who graduate each year. The Workforce Board believes that when taken in combination with current high school graduation requirements, the impact of the new proposals could lead to:

- Tracking of students into either a college preparatory track or career and technical education.
- Increased barriers for students who are at risk of dropping out or have dropped out and reentered the education system to continue their education due to a lack of courses aligned with their career interests, or a lack of courses that accommodate alternative learning styles and engage students in the high school education (ex. The arts, music, etc.)
- Reduced career and technical education offerings and a variety of other offerings at high schools that accommodate alternative learning styles.
- Reduced options for skills center students to enter baccalaureate institutions as there would not be enough time left in the day to attend skills centers; and meet the proposed admission requirements.

HECB has already held several public meetings on the new admission requirements around the state, and two more are scheduled:

April 25 4:00 PM Tacoma Community College, Baker Room
May 3 4:00 PM WSU Vancouver, Rooms SS 129-130

HECB action is anticipated at its July 28 meeting.

For more information on the HECB admissions proposal, contact Madeleine Thompson at 360.753.5653, or mthompson@wtb.wa.gov.

Partnering for Strong Communities Theme for Workforce Strategies 2005 Conference

"Partnering for Strong Communities" is the theme of this year's Workforce Board annual leadership conference at the Ridpath Hotel in Spokane, October 24-26. The conference is the state's premier event for Washington workforce development, postsecondary, and career and technical education leaders, labor, and business, and annually draws more than 500 delegates.

Guest speakers from around the country and across the state have been invited, and among those confirmed are Kimberly Green, Executive Director, National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education Consortium and Stephanie Powers who is the Chief Executive Officer for the National Association of Workforce Boards. Ms. Green's insights into what is happening with federal legislation,

What 2004 Conference Participants Had to Say:

"---networking, which is one of the best things about the conference."

"this is information I could take back and implement!"

especially Perkins and the Workforce Investment Act, should prove invaluable as the state grapples with the new measures likely to come out of Congress later this year. Ms. Powers, who was former President Clinton's National School-to-Work Director, has an extensive background in community organizing, human services, education partnerships, and legislative advocacy, and her experience at both the state and federal level will offer attendees an all-encompassing view of the conference's theme.

As in the past, the conference promises to be THE event, culminating with the popular Governor's Awards for Best Practices in Workforce Development which this year will have new categories and a new presentation format. Applications go out May 1, so start thinking about your entry now!

More details about the conference in our next newsletter.

Momentum Growing for WIA Plus?

Support appears to be growing for the President's proposed Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Plus Consolidated Grant program. At an April 14 Senate meeting of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) subcommittee, support for consolidating four Department of Labor programs and up to an additional five federal employment and training streams was voiced not only by the Secretary of Labor, Elaine Chao, but also by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, as well as Governors, and representatives from business and higher education.

Speaking before the committee, Ms. Spellings said, "through increased flexibility and accountability, this proposal (i.e. WIA Plus) would: improve the employment outcomes of individuals served through the consolidated program; serve more individuals; improve access to a full array of educational and job training, employment, and supportive services available from all funding streams; and ensure a connection to a workforce investment system that is directly linked to and accessed by employers."

Ms. Chao expressed similar support, as did Governors from both Kansas and Kentucky. One speaker, Steve Gunderson, a senior consultant with a strategic planning and research consulting firm and former congressman from Wisconsin, argued the need for posthigh school training and education. What we need, he argued, "is to connect the programs. I encourage one of you to consider introducing legislation that reauthorizes the WIA, the Higher Education Act, and the Perkins Vocational Education Act in one unified piece of legislation.--the mission of these programs is totally connected within a strategy appropriate to the 21st century workforce."

The HELP committee had indicated early on in the process that the Senate reauthorization bill would be bipartisan and work continues to make it so. Ms. Chao's comments at a press conference held two days before the HELP meeting, and those of Ms. Spellings to both Senate and House committee chairs, have workforce development and career and technical education organizations more than concerned. As the National Association of Workforce Boards noted in a recent newsletter, the WIA Plus language "will pave the way for the implementation of the Department of Labor's budget-cutting

consolidation plan in the '06 appropriations request as well opening the door for Governors to consolidate funding streams and redesign the workforce system.”

To hear testimony before the HELP committee, click on help.senate.gov/bills/hlh_73_bill.html. For more details on what is happening with WIA reauthorization, contact Bryan Wilson at 360.753.0891, or bwilson@wtb.wa.gov.

Pierce County Targeting Youth with \$2,000 High-Demand Scholarships

The Tacoma-Pierce County Workforce Development Council and its Health Care and Construction Partnerships are serious. They want their youth to be educated for the jobs that will be open when the baby boomers begin to exit the workplace.

To deal with the shortage of skilled workers in Pierce County, the Council, its two partnerships, and various stakeholders launched a Youth Workforce Development Initiative this year. The first phase involves a cross-industry awareness campaign for K-12 students; the second a scholarship program which provides students interested in pursuing postsecondary education or training in high-demand fields. As many as 25 scholarships (each valued at up to \$2,000) are available and can be used for either apprenticeship or on-the-job training, or community and technical college or university education. The first recipients are expected to be announced in May.

For more details about the program, contact Linda Nguyen at 253.591.5810, or lnguyen@pic.tacoma.wa.us.

Briefly

- Industry Skill Panels 2005 Published

The Workforce Board has issued an update on the status of skill panels in Washington State. This 25 page booklet talks about skill panels, what they are, and how they have grown to become a major strategy in closing the state's skill gap. The publication is grouped by workforce development area, and each of the state's 41 skill panels is described briefly along with contact names, phone numbers, and email addresses. The publication is available at <http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Skill05.pdf> or can be ordered by contacting Gena Anderson at 360.586.4530, or ganderson@wtb.wa.gov.

- Still Time for Comments on the Workforce Board's WIA State Plan

Comments on the state's two-year plan for workforce development are still being taken. Final suggestions and input will be taken until April 30. Questions or suggestions for improving this draft plan should be jointly directed by e-mail to Kathy DiJulio at kdijulio@esd.wa.gov and to Martin McCallum at mmccallum@wtb.wa.gov.

- Work Readiness Credential Website Goes National

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Center for Workforce Preparation, the new national home for the Work Readiness Credential, has launched a website full of information about the credential, who is involved, related links, etc. Check it out at <http://www.uschamber.com/cwp/default>.

Upcoming Meetings and Conferences

The *Washington State Quality Award Annual Baldrige Performance Excellence Symposium* takes place **May 3** at the SeaTac Doubletree Inn. Keynote speakers include Joe Alexander, Dean of Kenneth W. Monfort College of Business; Christy Stephenson, CEO of Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital; and Paula Marshall-Chapman, CEO of The Bama Companies. Registration is \$195 for the 8-3:30 PM conference. More details at www.wsqa.net.

Renton Technical College is holding a free *Construction Workforce Conference* on **May 9 and 10**. May 9 is earmarked for educators, government agencies, and community-based organizations that will have an opportunity to learn more about the industry (that includes “hands-on” activities such as working with bricks and tiles) and the resources available to it. On May 10, the emphasis is on industry professionals who will have an opportunity to hear labor market economist Paul Sommers, Workforce Board Executive Director Ellen O’Brien Saunders, and be able to participate in a number of workshops. Judy Amico at 425.235.2352, ext. 2217 has more details, or email her at jamico@rtc.edu.

May 20 is the date for the *Marine Manufacturing and Technology Summit* taking place at the Kitsap Conference Center at Bremerton Harborside. Topics being covered include marketing the trades, emerging technology processes, and training and employment strategies. Contacts for this 8:00-3:30 event are: Dolores Blueford, Dolores.blueford@skagit.edu; Lu Jewell, jewell@co.thurston.wa.us; or Jim McKenna, jmckenna@pic.kitsap.wa.us.

Various Dates-Spring Through Autumn. The National Council on Employment Policy and the Sar Levitan Center at John Hopkins University are offering a seminar series entitled *Building Blocks for Youth Program Success* in seven cities around the country. Targeted at youth program managers, directors, and practitioners, each day-long seminar costs \$175. The series kicks off in Boston in early May before heading to Los Angeles, Kansas City, Dallas, Chicago, and Atlanta. Please contact Darnell Adams at 410.516.7169, levitan@jhu.edu for more details.

The Center for Homeland Security is holding a conference **June 9** from 9:00-3:45 in the Performance Lunge at Pierce College, Fort Steilacoom branch campus. Keynote speaker is the state’s Attorney General Rob McKenna, and the event will include panel discussions, facilitated group work, and presentations from Homeland Security experts. For more information call 253.964.6645 or visit www.pierce.ctc.edu/HomelandSecurity/event.

Workforce Innovations 2005 will be held in Philadelphia from **July 11-13**, and is being co-sponsored this year by the American Society for Training and Development. Register online at <http://www.workforceinnovations.org> or contact Ed Trumbull, Project Manager for Workforce Innovations 2005, 202.693.3896.

Mark the dates **August 14-17** for the *Washington Association for Career and Technical Education’s* annual summer conference in Yakima. Keynote speakers are Dr. Terry

Bergeson, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Gene Bottoms, Senior Vice President of the Southern Regional Education Board's "High Schools That Work" Initiative, which is the largest effort in America to improve high schools for career-bound students; and Randy Dorn, Executive Director of the Public School Employees of Washington. More information at <http://www.wa-acte.org/summerconf.html>.

Save **October 24-26** for the *Workforce Board's* annual Workforce Strategies conference in Spokane.

And mark the dates: **November 16-19** for the *Washington State School Directors' Annual Conference* at the Westin Hotel in Seattle. More details later this spring.

Funding Opportunities

The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy is seeking nominations for a New Freedom Initiative award. Open to individuals, nonprofits and small businesses that have made innovative strides in advancing employment for those with disabilities, the award carries no monetary attachment but the recipients will receive national recognition for their Best Practice. Closing date is **May 22**, and more details are available at www.dol.gov/odep/regs/fedreg/notices/2005002498.htm.

The Hasbro Charitable Trust manages a grants program to provide support for direct service programs for children, with emphasis on health, hunger, homelessness, and after-school programs. Although funding is limited this year, Letters of Inquiry for grants are still being accepted at www.hasbro.org/.

Local Initiative Funding Partners has up to \$6 million available for the 2006 grant cycle for community-based projects designed to improve the health and healthcare for society's most vulnerable. To be eligible for this program, projects must offer collaborative, community-based services that are new and innovative or are significant expansion into new regions or to new populations. Projects must be nominated by a local grantmaker interested in participating as one of the funding partners and dollar-for-dollar match requirements exist. More details at lifp.org; deadline for Stage 1 is **June 30**.

Seventy \$2,000 scholarships are available for Spanish-speaking, bicultural high school students who want to pursue careers in the healthcare industry. Funded by the PacifiCare Foundation, the scholarships are open to high school seniors with a minimum grade-point average of 3.0 who are fluent in Spanish and English are eligible to apply. Guidelines and application forms available at www.pacificare.com/commonPortal/index.jsp and closing date is **June 30**.

Community colleges with programs that are helping less-advantaged youth and adults succeed should consider applying for a MetLife Foundation Community College Excellence Award. The program is administered by Jobs for the Future and is targeted at the following populations: first-generation college-goers, at-risk and out-of-school youth, unemployed and underemployed adults, adults with limited English language proficiency, and others who lack the skills necessary for college success. The winning colleges will each receive a \$30,000 award and national recognition. The application deadline is

August 31, and more details are available from Jennie Morgan, 212.578.5527,
jmorgan3@metlife.com.