



2021-23 OPERATING BUDGET REQUEST

OCTOBER 9, 2020

As COVID-19 continues to damage our state and widen economic and racial divides, our community and technical colleges are uniquely positioned to build a healthy and inclusive economy—to pull people and businesses through this crisis stronger than they were before. Students of all ages and backgrounds turn to us to learn skills for a changing and competitive job market while businesses count on us to upskill workers for the new economy. Our 2021-23 budget request will help Washingtonians recover and thrive, especially those most affected by the economic downturn.

Our Priority: Protect Investments in Educational Opportunity

We thank the Legislature for passing the historic Workforce Education Investment Act in 2019 to support accessible and outstanding higher education for the people and businesses of Washington. Budget cuts to these investments, or to our base budgets, would harm people who were struggling to make ends meet even before the pandemic. These are our students—young adults, low-wage workers, people without college credentials and people of color who count on our affordable and local colleges to build a better life. Our students would have fewer course offerings and less advising and support to finish their studies, graduate, and enter the workforce and universities. Half our 356,000 students are students of color and 60 percent experience hunger and housing insecurity. This is our system's top priority.

Advance Equitable Economic Recovery (\$46 million)

At a time when most well-paying jobs require education past high school, our colleges are focused on improving completion rates for all students while closing the equity gap for students of color. Investments will:

- Ensure all students are successful in an online environment by integrating virtual simulation technologies into labs and hands-on technical programs. The technology will allow more students to learn remotely and increase access for working adults and student parents. Workforce students will also gain experience working in a simulated environment, a valuable skill in a job market that increasingly relies on automation, artificial intelligence and information technology.
- Address persistent equity gaps by redesigning curricula with an antiracist lens.

Support Workforce Training for Well-Paying Jobs (\$26 million)

As the economy moves into a recession, some jobs may never come back, others will change, and new industries will arise. Investments will help businesses, job-seekers and current employees navigate these transformational changes. Investments will:

- Increase capacity in Washington's Worker Retraining Program by 10 percent, helping more laid-off, unemployed and dislocated workers reskill and start on a career path with higher wage-gains.
- Enhance Washington's Job Skills Training Program, a dollar-for-dollar matching grant program that enables businesses to create customized training programs for new and experienced employees.
- Build colleges' capacity to offer high-demand programs, including nursing, allied health, information technology, computer science, advanced manufacturing and others.