



Wisconsin Technical College System Board
2009-11 Strategic Directions
Progress Report
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Wisconsin Technical College System Board 2009-11 Strategic Directions

1. Promote pathways to address Wisconsin's need for a qualified workforce.
2. Support academic success for all students.
3. Promote effectiveness and efficiency measures that help maintain affordability.
4. Foster systemwide and regional collaboration.

Progress Summary

Promote Pathways to address Wisconsin's need for a qualified workforce.

- *WTCS continues to provide a demand-driven program mix.*
- *WTCS colleges again proved rapid and flexible in serving dislocated workers.*
- *81% of graduates stay in Wisconsin; more than 90% meet or exceed expectations.*
- *Customized instruction for incumbent workers, critical in Wisconsin's economic transition, has grown more than 15% over the past 10 years.*
- *Actively developing career pathways to address skill shortages and increase access.*

Support academic success for all students.

- *Leading in academic performance based on federal performance expectations.*
- *WTCS met or exceeded federal goals related to student placement, retention, and transfer; technical and academic skill attainment; attainment of academic credentials; and participation in and completion of nontraditional programs.*
- *Student of color enrollments in WTCS (14.8%) exceed minority representation in the State's general population (11.7%).*
- *Improvements are needed to close the achievement gap.*

Promote effectiveness and efficiency measures that help maintain affordability.

- *Colleges continue to identify and share a number of best practices for achieving considerable cost savings and other efficiencies.*
- *WTCS is actively seeking to increase colleges' ability to develop sustainable building projects.*

Foster systemwide and regional collaboration.

- *Collaboration of WTCS and its partners in competitive grant programs under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) may result in significant new workforce, energy, and broadband resources for technical colleges and Wisconsin.*
- *The WTC System Office routinely and actively engages the technical colleges and other partners with current techniques for sharing best practices and other information, such as webinars and conference calls.*

Strategic Direction 1

Promote pathways to address Wisconsin's need for a qualified workforce.

Delivering a Demand-Driven Program Mix

The WTCS Board continues to approve demand-driven, cutting-edge career and technical education and training programs developed by Wisconsin's technical colleges in collaboration with Wisconsin's businesses and industry, labor, and other partners. In just the past few years, the colleges have developed state-of-the-art programs in emerging industries like nanoscience, biotechnology, manufacturing robotics, and renewable energy. At the same time, the colleges continue to deliver graduates that meet ongoing demand in core programs that produce construction, information technology, public safety, and health care professionals, among many others.



To accomplish this and operate with the highest degree of efficiency, the WTCS Board discontinues about the same number of programs as it approves each year.

Serving Dislocated Workers

The colleges implemented a number of strategies to rapidly deliver dislocated worker outreach and support services, and to expand enrollment options, including:

In 2008-09, WTCS colleges rapidly responded to the needs of dislocated workers, providing critical services and expanding enrollment options.

- adding course sections;
- offering flexible course delivery, including evenings and weekend offerings;
- working with faculty to relax enrollment limits and deadlines;
- creating dedicated Web pages with information specific to dislocated workers;
- waiving application and other fees;
- establishing computer literacy workshops;
- expanding tutoring options and other academic and student supports;
- offering "cohort" basic skills courses, so that dislocated workers can transition together;
- offering special assistance to streamline the admissions process and completion of financial aid applications;

- creating support groups and other approaches to simplify the enrollment process and offer added support in the transition to school;
- designing “FAQ” (Frequently Asked Questions) resources to assist dislocated workers and the agencies and staff with whom they interact;
- adding temporary faculty and other staff to meet demand, including reducing or eliminating wait-lists; and
- leasing additional space and equipment to expand capacity.

Meeting the Needs of Employers

The WTCS Employer Follow-up Survey—which has been measuring employer satisfaction with the skills and abilities of WTCS graduates every four years since 1980—consistently shows that WTCS graduates meet or exceed employer expectations when compared to other new employees, in both occupational abilities and other core skills. For example, 2006 survey results showed that among WTCS graduates:

- over 90% met or exceeded expectations for:
 - entry-level workers’ occupational knowledge;
 - ability to apply occupational knowledge in their job;
 - reading and writing skills; and
 - ability to complete work according to appropriate quality standards.
- over 80% met or exceeded expectations for:
 - problem solving;
 - organizational skills, such as prioritizing, planning and goal setting; and
 - on-the-job math skills.



The 2010 employer satisfaction survey will include enhancements identified by the System Office to streamline reporting for employers, while gathering additional information.

Producing Successful Graduates

Successful technical college graduates result in a qualified workforce, which contributes directly to Wisconsin’s economic vitality.

About 81% of 2008 WTCS graduates were working in Wisconsin; 77% in a job related to their training.

The WTCS Graduate Follow-up Report is based on an annual survey conducted since 1985 and shows the WTCS commitment to linking education outcomes with desirable employment. More than 16,000 2008 WTCS graduates completed the most recent survey, of which:

- 97% were satisfied or very satisfied with their WTCS training.
- 91% of those in the labor force were employed.
- 81% of employed graduates are working in Wisconsin.
- 77% of employed graduates were working in a job related to their WTCS training.
- The median salary for all 2008 WTCS graduates was \$32,000, ranging from a median of \$29,208 for short-term technical diploma graduates to \$36,192 for associate degree graduates.
- The median salary for graduates in 36 programs was between \$40,000 and \$50,000, while the median for graduates in 6 programs—Automated Packaging Systems Technician, Information Systems Security Specialist, Technical Studies-Journey Worker, Dental Hygienist, Diagnostic Medical Sonography and Cardiovascular Technology—was \$50,000 or more.

Technical college graduates' success is sustained even during difficult economic times. Between 2003 and 2008, the growth in earnings by WTCS graduates averaged 8.2 percent annually, nearly twice the rate of inflation.

Training Incumbent Workers

Many believe incumbent worker training will be a critical component in addressing skills shortages and supporting Wisconsin's transition to a 21st century economy. WTCS colleges continue to serve an increasing number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students through customized instruction contracts, under which the colleges design instruction for specific employers or industries and often deliver the training on-site.

The number of students served under such contracts increased from 2,548 FTEs in 2006-07 to 2,621 FTEs in 2007-08 (2.9%), and has increased 15.6% over the past 10 years. At the same time, contract revenues increased to \$23.5 million in 2007-08, growth of 9.4% over the previous year and 35.0% over the past 10 years.



Given this increased activity and the high value that employers and workers place on incumbent worker training, WTCS developed a survey instrument to gauge the economic and other impacts of the training. While the instrument is still being refined, early results indicate that most respondents believe WTCS contract training meets or exceeds their expectations, allowing them to improve productivity, achieve cost savings, retain or create jobs, or increase sales.

Creating Career Pathways

WTCS, the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), and other partners successfully competed for nearly \$1.5 million in grants from the Joyce Foundation under the Shifting Gears initiative. With these funds, the Regional Industry Skills Education (“RISE”) partners have provided grants to local partnerships for curriculum development and employer engagement—the critical first steps in developing career pathways that address skills shortages and offer low-income adults clear and reliable courses of action to progress in their careers.



The career pathway is a new way of organizing a postsecondary program as a sequence of modules that lead learners in steps toward a degree or technical diploma. Each step increases skills and improves the learner’s career and earning opportunities. Industry sectors most appropriate for pathway development are those that are willing to identify sets of work competencies required to advance in the workplace.

Within a career pathway, bridge instructional programming helps adults with basic skills or English Language Learning needs take the first step onto career pathway learning and work. Bridge programs explicitly link adult basic education (ABE) and ELL instruction with preparation for postsecondary education and occupational skill attainment.

The Wisconsin Technical College System Office and DWD are now implementing policy or procedural changes intended to provide incentives and remove barriers to career pathway development in critical sectors across the state with the goal of having students enrolled in at least two pilot career pathways by Fall 2009.

Strategic Direction 2

Support academic success for all students.

Leading in Academic Performance

The Wisconsin Technical College System receives approximately \$25 million annually under the federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. To be eligible for this funding, the System worked with the U.S. Department of Education to establish seven rigorous performance measures and standards that demonstrate progress in fostering student academic success. Expected performance levels for WTCS, newly revised with 2007-08 as the base year as a result of Perkins program reauthorization in 2006, are shown below.

Indicator	Expected Performance Levels		
	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Technical Skill Attainment	80.11%	80.36%	80.61%
Academic Skill Attainment	76.12%	76.37%	76.62%
Degree Attainment	44.40%	44.65%	44.90%
Retention/Transfer	24.78%	25.03%	25.28%
Placement	90.00%	90.00%	90.00%
Nontraditional Participation	11.58%	11.64%	11.70%
Nontraditional Completion	9.13%	9.38%	9.63%

Results for 2007-2008 showed that overall, the WTCS:

- exceeded the agreed-upon performance goals related to student retention/transfer and student placement;
- met performance expectations related to goals for student technical skill attainment, academic skill attainment, attainment of academic credentials, and both participation in and completion of nontraditional programs.

While results for individual WTCS colleges showed room for improvement, such improvement can be difficult to obtain for states with above average performance expectations, such as Wisconsin. In 2007-08, 13 colleges required improvement plans in one or two measurement areas, but only 3 colleges required performance improvement plans in more than two areas.

Under the federal requirements, colleges that do not meet expected performance levels must take steps to improve performance or face funding reductions. The System Office provides technical assistance to colleges that do not meeting expected performance levels in any year.

Minority Participation and Success

WTCS minority enrollment is increasing, overall and within each individual category, and students of color represent an increasing percentage of the total WTCS enrollment. For example, while students of color accounted for 9.4% of WTCS enrollments in 1997-98, that proportion had grown to 14.8% by 2007-08 (higher representation than the 11.7% in the general population of Wisconsin).



In addition to growing enrollment, some key indicators demonstrate WTCS success in serving students of color. For example, the number of minority program graduates almost doubled from 1996-1997 to 2005-06. During this same period, white program graduates increased 38.2%. In addition, the proportion of students of color among all public high school students enrolling at a technical college within one year of their high school graduation increased from 8.4% to 12.0% between 1999-2000 and 2005-06.

Finally, in fall 2007, 13% of WTCS transfers to UW System were students of color, compared to 10% from all institutions combined.

Despite some successes, WTCS students of color continue to lag behind their white peers in several critical areas: the percentage of full-time minority program students who pass at least 80% of their classes is consistently lower than the percentage of full-time white program students.

In addition, three-year graduation rates for first-time, full-time students of color who enrolled in associate degree programs and technical diploma programs are lower than the graduation rates for first-time, full-time white students.

It should also be noted that students of color were overrepresented in Adult Basic Education instruction in 2007-08 (44.7% of ABE enrollees vs. 14.8% of overall enrollments), and 72.2% of white ABE students who established a goal of enrolling in WTCS post-secondary courses did so the same or following year compared to 59.5% of minority students.



With the goal of closing performance gaps and increasing access, the WTCS requested an additional \$1.2 million GPR for the WTCS Minority Student Participation and Retention Grant program and a 10% increase in the Minority Undergraduate Retention Grant in the 2009-11

biennial budget. Unfortunately, the state's difficult fiscal condition prevented inclusion of these requests in the biennial budget. However, the Governor did provide, and the Assembly recently approved, a 1.5% increase in the Minority Undergraduate Retention Grant. This is the first increase in this program in a decade. The requests were made in recognition of increased enrollment and differing local needs based on the specific minority populations being served and in support of colleges' activities and services that increase minority student success, including recruitment, retention and transition services.

STEM Participation

WTCS has been collaborating with education and industry partners to increase participation in courses and programs in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).



The Career Clusters framework—established under the National Career Technical Education Foundation—is a widely used tool that promotes seamless transition from education to careers. Within this framework exists 16 separate Career Clusters, including one that is specifically designated for STEM. As currently defined, only 6 of the other 15 Career Clusters are considered STEM-related.

Combined, WTCS colleges offer about 3,000 degree and diploma programs, of which approximately one-third are either in the STEM Career Cluster or one of the six STEM-related Career Clusters:

- Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources;
- Architecture and Construction;
- Health Sciences;
- Information Technology;
- Manufacturing; and
- Transportation, Distribution and Logistics.

As a proportion of all WTCS postsecondary enrollments, enrollments in WTCS programs within the STEM Career Cluster make up only about 3% of total enrollments, whether measuring by headcount or full-time equivalent. However, when enrollments in STEM-related Career Clusters are included, the proportion of total enrollments increases to about 30%.

Next steps include refining the identification of STEM courses and programs within the WTCS, collaborating to expand existing efforts to promote participation in these courses and programs, and increasing the STEM participation of women and people of color. The STEM Equity project is off to a promising start, with WTCS joining a number of partners on a statewide PK-16 and industry team that is leading an effort to identify and remove barriers to STEM participation, including funding a pilot project at Lakeshore Technical College.

Strategic Direction 3

Promote effectiveness and efficiency measures that help maintain affordability.

The WTCS Board remains committed to state and local activities and innovations that improve operations and support student learning. Improving effectiveness and efficiency helps maintain affordability by reducing costs that are shared by the State, students, and local property tax payers.

Best Practices

As part of the last two biennial budget processes, the System Office and technical colleges have identified cost-saving measures and best practices for effective and efficient operations. This information has been widely distributed and positively received by the colleges and System stakeholders. This information, which is available on the System Web-site, will be updated biennially.

Sustainable Facilities

The WTCS Board's new Sustainable Facilities policy is intended to ensure that WTCS colleges follow sound facility management practices, conserve resources and reduce detrimental effects on the environment through their compliance with WTCS Energy Consumption Guidelines and through ensuring that any new construction or any major renovation is designed and constructed to meet or exceed the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design (LEED) silver certification standard if the construction or renovation affects a floor area of at least 5,000 gross square feet.



To secure new resources for sustainable facilities, the State Board requested an increase to Districts' statutory authority to carry out capital building and remodeling projects up to \$1.5 million without requiring public referendum. As of June 15, the requested increase was included in the state budget bill being considered by the Wisconsin Legislature.

Financial Aid

In addition to state and federal financial aid, WTCS students receive both need-based and non-need based institutional and privately-funded grants, scholarships and loans. Need-based grants, scholarships and loan are provided based on demonstration of student financial need.

Non-need-based grants, scholarships and loans might base eligibility on, for example, enrollment in specific programs or address a specific target population. In 2007-08, more than 4,000 WTCS students received approximately \$2.5 million from these programs.



In addition, in 2008-09, System Office and District staff helped design and implement a significant new student financial aid program. The Fund for Wisconsin Scholars, supported by \$175 million endowment from John and Tashia Morgridge, will help thousands of WTCS students better afford college in the years to come. In addition, as part of the RISE initiative, System Office staff are working with District financial aid officers and federal Department of Education officials to provide financial aid resources to students in recognized career pathways.

Strategic Direction 4

Foster systemwide and regional collaboration.

Economic Stimulus

System participation in Wisconsin's implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has strengthened partnerships between technical colleges and local Workforce Investment Boards. At the state level, WTCS and DWD have worked to facilitate improved processes to serve Wisconsin's dislocated workers. As a contributing member of the Wisconsin Office of Recovery and Reinvestment, the WTCS built new relationships with the Governor's office, the Public Service Commission, the UW System, the Office of Energy Independence, and the Departments of Workforce Development, Administration, Natural Resources, Commerce, Health, and Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.



The collaboration of these partners in ARRA competitive grant programs may result in significant new workforce, energy, and broadband resources for technical colleges and Wisconsin.

Engagement and Partnerships

The WTC System Board and System Office are committed to working within the System and with other partners to improve the quality, availability, and cost-effectiveness of WTCS education and training programs.

The WTC System Office and individual colleges participate in a variety of cross-agency projects with the goals of:

- improving college transfer opportunities (transfer equity study);
- enhancing college access and affordability (Know How 2 Go and Making Opportunity Affordable); and
- developing career clusters and pathways (RISE).

Each of these projects involves external funding, which also demonstrates how collaboration can result in new resources that expand Wisconsin higher education opportunities. Partner agencies involved in these projects include the Wisconsin Departments of Workforce Development and Public Instruction, the UW System, the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, and the Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation.

Outreach Efforts

System Office webinar training that combines on-line availability of training materials and voice communication. Using new training tools such as webinars encourages sharing of best practices while eliminating travel costs thus saving both colleges and the System Office resources. During the past year, the WTC System Office hosted more than a dozen webinars in which all 16 technical colleges, other key partner agencies, and hundreds of attendees participated, which covered topics such as:

- credit for prior learning policies and procedures;
- Technical Skill Attainment under the federal Perkins Act;
- use of the Worldwide Instructional Design System (WIDS);
- WIDS' Curriculum Bank features for use in Apprenticeship programs;
- Manufacturing Skills Standards Certification (MSSC);
- the STEM Equity Pipeline pilot project;
- the "TechConnect" project;
- sustainability as a core ability;
- best practices in maintaining student records; and
- a national perspective on recent development in Career and Technical Education

Best Practices

In addition to webinars and the routine sessions facilitated by WTCS education directors within each educational program area, during which program information and expectations are relayed, the WTC System Office recently undertook two surveys to document and distribute colleges' best practices in serving dislocated workers and achieving cost savings. The results of each survey were distributed to the WTCS Board, college presidents, key legislators, and System Office and college staff.