

PROSPERITY PARTNERSHIP'S HIGHER EDUCATION WORKING GROUP PROPOSAL



Prosperity
PARTNERSHIP

Quality education for all residents is essential in sustaining the Puget Sound region's prosperity. With a well-educated populace, companies are able to find qualified employees locally and residents are prepared to compete for good jobs. The region needs well-educated workers to replace retiring baby boomers and to meet the demands of the new economy.

Knowledge of science and technology, ability to think critically and to adapt as the marketplace changes, and familiarity with different cultures and languages will be increasingly important. It is vital not only for established industries such as IT or aerospace, it is also important to make this region competitive in industries currently in their infancy, such as clean technology and bioinformatics. That is why we must take action to ensure a vibrant, well-educated and adaptable workforce with an entrepreneurial spirit.

What Is the Challenge?

According to the National Science Foundation and the US Department of Commerce, Washington ranks 36th out of the 50 states in per capita production of bachelor's degrees.

However, Washington ranks among the top ten states in scientists and computer specialists employed per capita and leads the nation in engineers employed per capita.

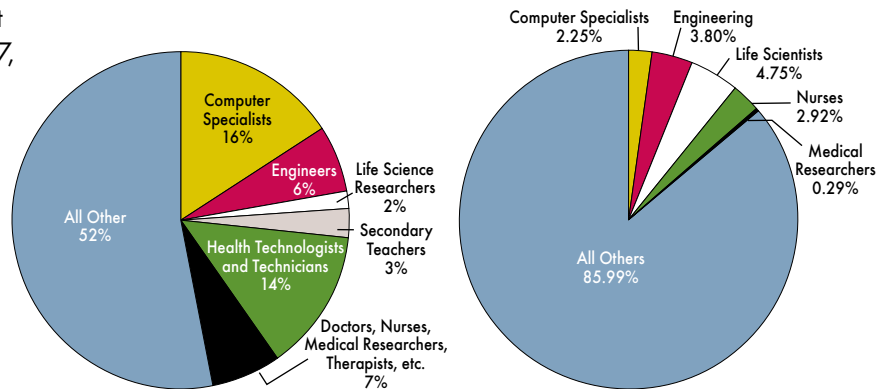
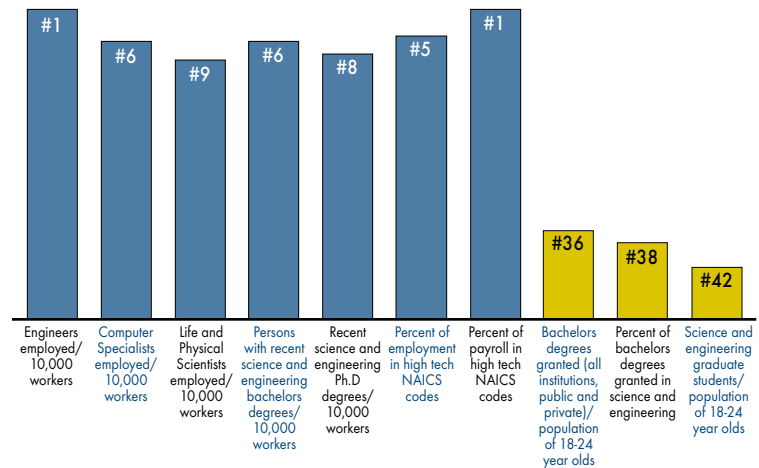
Because of this, we must import people with bachelor's degrees to fill the jobs created by our growing economy. This leaves our economic future partly in the hands of decision makers in other states and regions across the country and around the world. Importing workers also means that Washington students are not being prepared to seize the opportunities our economy is creating.

According to Washington's Employment Security Department, beginning in 2007, for job openings that require a bachelor's degree, 47% are in the fields Prosperity Partnership has identified as high demand and high impact.

However, only 14% of the students receiving a bachelor's degree in Washington each year get their degree in one of these fields.

Washington Leads the Nation in Using Bachelor's Degrees, But Is 36th in the Nation in the Production of Bachelor's Degrees

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce



Washington Job Openings Requiring Bachelor's Degree, 2007-2012

Source: Employment Security Department

Current Degree Production in Washington's 4-Year System

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board

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What Can We Do?

The Prosperity Partnership requests that the Legislature **fill existing capacity** in high demand, high impact fields for the 2007-2009 biennium. Approximate cost = \$90 million for the biennium.

The first step to solving this challenge is to fill current capacity in high demand, high impact fields in our colleges and universities in 2007.

Challenges exist in filling the pipeline and in finding space for increased college enrollments. The Prosperity Partnership proposes beginning efforts to develop interest in these fields among high school and middle school students, and prepare them to study them in college, in 2007.

Our Proposal

1. Fund current capacity in high demand, high impact bachelor's and associate's fields in 2007 – approximately \$90 million biennially.
2. Study capital needs beyond current capacity, for reporting to Legislature in 2008 session and action in supplemental budget (included in \$90 million figure).
3. Develop and implement a marketing pilot project to inform students, parents, and educators of opportunities in high demand fields and the relevance of math and science to these fields and motivate students to take these classes (included in \$90 million figure).
4. Provide more financial aid to encourage students to pursue degrees in high demand, high impact fields (included in \$90 million figure)
5. Fund FTEs at actual cost of institutions – approximately \$15,000 per year for high demand degrees (included in \$90 million figure).
6. Adopt accountability standards and outcomes-based management of higher education – i.e. pay for degrees and enter into agreements with the institutions to produce them, don't just pay for a year of instruction.
7. Commit to/codify sustainable level of general fund budget for higher education investment – general fund funding of higher education has slipped over time.

A Broad Coalition

The Prosperity Partnership is a coalition of over 200 organizations, which has developed and is implementing a shared economic strategy for the four-county central Puget Sound region. The coalition has partnered with other regions around the state and includes as many interests as possible to find effective, consensus-based higher education solutions. This is the best opportunity Washington has had in many years to achieve truly meaningful increases in the number of bachelor degrees awarded in the state.

GOAL

In 2005, 28,625 degrees were conferred in Washington. We must increase bachelor's degree production in Washington by:

- 8,000 degrees by 2010 (36,625 degrees produced annually)
- 2,000 additional degrees by 2020 (38,625 degrees produced annually)

With an emphasis on the following high demand, high impact bachelor's degrees:

- Computer Specialists (mostly computer scientists)
- Engineers
- Life Scientists (biochemists, biophysicists, etc.)
- Medical Researchers
- Nurses
- Secondary Teachers

High Demand Associate's Degrees

Increase associate's in applied science degree production in two key high demand fields:

- Diagnosing & Treating Practitioners (nursing, radiation and respiratory therapy)
- Health Technologists & Technicians