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President's proposal boosts workforce training WDC applauds investment in community colleges

SEATTLE—The workers, businesses and economy of Seattle-King County would benefit enormously from new investments in the community-college system proposed in an announcement today by President Obama.

The President's proposal of \$12 billion over the next 10 years for the American Graduation Initiative—announced this afternoon during his visit to Michigan—boosts an education and workforce system that is a critical link for thousands of King County residents to family-sustaining wages.

“Our local community colleges are leading the nation in innovation and partnership,” said Marléna Sessions, CEO of the [Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County](#). “We strongly support this federal investment and its linkages to workforce development, businesses, and labor.”

The proposal, which calls for an additional 5 million community-college graduates by 2020, targets workforce skills as well as academic learning and specifically seeks to increase completion rates, not just access and affordability. If approved by Congress, funding would likely be flowing in FY2010.

It includes \$9 billion for two new funds, a “Challenge Fund” and an “Access and Completion Fund” that address improved instruction and stronger connections between local workforce investment boards like the WDC, the K-12 system and four-year colleges. It also includes \$2.5 billion to improve college facilities (leveraging a \$10 billion loan fund), and \$50 million to expand online-learning options.

The Workforce Development Council partners closely with community and technical colleges in King County on many levels:

- Sector-based initiatives for youth and adults in fields such as health care;
- Through Workforce Investment Act (Dept. of Labor) funding overseen by the WDC and provided to jobseekers through [WorkSource employment centers](#), hundreds of individuals attend community-college training programs for job skills;
- The WDC also directly funds community-college classes through [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act \(stimulus\) funding](#).

The President's proposal—the most significant investment in the community-college system since the 1950s— would support these and other innovative, creative and, most importantly, effective ways to educate the workforce. (For more details, see the [White House media briefing](#).)

“This administration definitely gets it: Now more than ever, training is key to both our individual success and our nation's economic success,” said Ms. Sessions. “We are ready to meet this challenge with our college partners.”

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The Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (www.seakingwdc.org) is a nonprofit workforce “think tank” and grant-making organization that oversees employment-related programs for youth, the adult workforce and employers in King County, with the goal of a strong economy and self-sufficiency for every resident.