

SEARCH PROFILE:

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**COMMUNITY AND
TECHNICAL COLLEGES**

Washington State Board

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THE OPPORTUNITY

Washington's State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) seeks a collaborative and strategic leader skilled at building relationships with college administrators, legislators, business leaders, tribal governments, labor unions, and agency staff to serve as its next Executive Director (Director). This large, diverse, and autonomous network of [34 colleges](#) (CTCs) located throughout the state collectively serves about 290,000 students annually.

The Director position, established by state statute, reports to a nine-member, governor-appointed State Board to provide leadership and general direction to Washington's community and technical college system. The Director's position is a fulcrum point of influence and accountability, balancing a dynamically shifting set of sometimes competing interests and perspectives. The Director oversees a state agency's daily management and leadership with approximately 255 employees. To be effective, the Executive Director must move with agility, grace, and humility, constantly focusing on the community and technical college's overarching mission of student success and social justice while effectively supervising staff work.

As the chief executive of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Director will work externally with college presidents and chancellors of the Washington Association of Community and Technical Colleges (WACTC) and its appointed councils and commissions, the system's locally-appointed trustees through the Association for College Trustees (ACT), labor union leaders, the state's governor and legislators, and the leaders from business, industry, trade associations, and tribal agencies to fulfill the broad system's fundamental mission of equitable student access and success.

Internally, the Director will be a transparent and empowering leader with the relational skill to work productively with the direct reports who manage the agency's [five divisions](#). The next Director will spend time learning the unique culture of the SBCTC and its relationship to the system, engaging the considerable knowledge and wisdom of its diverse community, and listening deeply to develop options and actions that align the SBCTC's strategic efforts and the system's mission.

The Director will be curious to learn about all the constituency needs to ensure policy decisions and resource allocations are prioritized through collaboration with the SBCTC Board and WACTC.

The Director must be approachable, not only as a leader but also as a colleague eager to join a statewide community with a servant-leader's heart, seeking to add value wherever possible. Kindness, inclusion, appreciation of the diversity of the colleges, and good humor are prized. The Director will reflect a spirit of teamwork, honest information-sharing, and transparency in making data-informed decisions.

The State Board has a tradition of substantive and innovative work fueled by a highly motivated and skilled staff. The Director is responsible for the daily operation of the SBCTC, including hiring and oversight of staff, budgeting, policies, and procedures. The agency employs approximately 255 staff who work in one of five divisions.

The next Director will further a long tradition of transformational executive leadership since the SBCTC's founding in 1967. Collaborating with colleges, whose districts are governed by boards of trustees appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state Senate, the Director plays a major role in meeting Washington state's evolving needs.

THE OPPORTUNITY (CONT.)

The State Board is the fiscal agent for the system, receiving legislative allocations that are then distributed to the colleges. As an advisor to the Board, the Director initiates and drafts policy and prepares the biennial budget request for the Board's review and approval, which has been informed by the system presidents, chancellors, and legislators. Accomplishing these tasks requires effectively working with the governor and Legislature, and college and system leaders as well as State Board staff, to forecast long-term system needs, facilitate long-term planning and strategies, provide adaptive leadership during periods of uncertainty, and organize the community and technical colleges around a common budget policy and capital agenda.

In addition to the college presidents and chancellors, the Director works closely with the Superintendent of Public Instruction, who oversees the K-12 education system, ACT, system labor unions, other state agencies, external funding partners, and leaders in business, industry, and labor.

The next Director will be a transparent and approachable colleague who will engage with genuine interest, curiosity, and support. With foresight based in data, emerging national trends, and common sense, the Director will identify opportunities, ensure that statutory requirements are met, and serve as an instigator and facilitator for programs, funding sources, and activities that support student success. The Director will collaboratively manage complex issues and challenges with optimism, grit, and commitment to the comprehensive mission of the community or technical college in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

An ideal candidate for this pivotal role in Washington state will lead with visible passion and energy fueled by a bedrock belief in the power of community colleges to transform lives, families, and communities. Other essential qualities include:

- Listening first, inquiring before advocating, and demonstrating humility with internal and external communities to understand their diverse perspectives, experiences, and needs before acting.
- Recognizing and fostering the deep culture of connectedness and impact found at every intersection of effort and interest.
- Fostering student success and racial equity with enthusiasm and pride.
- Collaborating with the CTCs to develop culturally sensitive and socially intelligent structures, policies, approaches, and programs that promote accessibility and inclusion.
- Systems-thinking that embraces the complexity of advocating for the CTCs to the governor and legislature with strategies that promote student success, racial equity, economic development, social mobility, and community vibrancy.

Bringing expertise in dynamic change management that collegially facilitates discussions and decisions about the future of the CTCs in Washington state.

Create relationships with legislators, business, industry, and trade association leaders, foundations, and other external entities eager to add value to the system and its colleges.





LEADERSHIP AGENDA

Lead adaptively to respond to increasingly dynamic environments

The current landscape of higher education can be described as tectonic plates of social change, economic uncertainty, and shifting value propositions. Older mountains are being leveled while new ones are elevated, creating uncertain footing everywhere. Last year's solutions frequently don't solve today's problems. The Director must respond to shifts in the local, state, and national environments to answer emerging needs and conditions that facilitate meaningful pathways to careers or further education. The Director will demonstrate a dynamic leadership approach that understands the principles of equitable change management, is unafraid to take risks, and understands occasional failure as integral to learning and meaningful transformation.

Engage processes and results with systemic collaboration and advocacy

The Director must be a systems thinker who skillfully navigates the complexity of an independently accredited and governed 34-college system. With data-informed arguments for equitable funding as the system reconceptualizes its approaches to meet budget cuts that may total over \$57 million in this and subsequent biennia, the Director will advocate vigorously for gubernatorial and legislative relief while being mindful of statewide needs and maintaining a collaborative relationship with state public four-year institutions of higher learning.

Act strategically to further the system's values

As a visible state leader, the Director will embody the State Board's values with a strong voice, visible actions, and cultural competence. As an individual with a demonstrated commitment to these values, the Director will engage in respectful, courageous conversation and analysis, leading to actions that further the goals of the 2020-2030 Strategic Plan.

Communicate clearly and often internally and externally

Faced with dynamic change created by a new federal administration, the Director will work to clarify policy, procedures, and decisions in broad and inclusive structures of communication that facilitate information and policy direction that is transparent and responsive to feedback.

Lead the administration and management of the SBCTC's critical service areas

The Director oversees five agency areas: Educational Services, Business Operations, Information Technology, Executive, and Strategic Initiatives Divisions. Focusing on

continuous improvement and accountability while drawing on the considerable knowledge and talent of the staff, the Director will supervise operations responsive to feedback from constituents to shape actions and decisions shaped solely by the institutional mission. With deep respect and positive regard, the Director will recognize, value, and engage every employee in realizing the daily fulfillment of the CTC's mission.

Embrace focused innovation with wise investments

The CTCs are rightly proud of their innovative culture that welcomes new ideas, approaches, and projects. The Director will work to create non-earmarked funding to support the development of innovations that create economies of scale for maximum impact on the colleges' mission fulfillment. Keen to develop new revenue streams, the next Director will lead a thoughtful program of support for pursuing grants, contracts, contracted education, partnerships, and fundraising that strengthen the CTC's sustainability and mission fulfillment.

Be an enthusiastic and visible college advocate and astute community partner for economic development

As a leading voice for community and technical college education, the Director will develop relationships with community and business networks, trade associations, labor unions, economic development agencies, other state agencies, and legislative and gubernatorial contacts to create opportunities to build the workforce, develop programs, and attract, retain, and expand businesses that fuel and diversify the Washington economy. The Director will passionately communicate the economic and social value of the community and technical college mission to the broad community.

Maintain and deepen existing partnerships to create comprehensive pathways for success

The Director will discover a robust network of community, business, industry, and university partners committed to the CTC's success. The Director will provide sustained appreciative and supportive collaboration with these entities, working closely with other leaders to offer quality, value, and relevance to all partners. The Director will build bridges with all constituent groups through unquestioned integrity and respect for others.

Lead the administration and management of critical statutory requirements

The Director will operationalize the system's statutory requirements and oversee compliance with the laws and regulations affecting community college operations and funding, accreditation, and administrative processes.



A FEDERATION OF COLLEGES

Washington's community and technical college system is often self-described as a "federation of colleges" with centralized funding and decentralized governance at the college district level.

Centralized funding: The 29 community colleges and five technical colleges submit a single operating and capital budget request to the Legislature. As a result, the State Board, colleges, and constituents work together to advocate for system resources successfully. When the legislature approves its operating and capital budgets, the state funds are appropriated to the State Board, which then allocates funds to the 30 college districts.

The system has an annual operating budget of \$1.2 billion and a 2023-25 biennial capital budget of \$480 million. On average, state funds account for about 54% of college revenue. The remaining 46% comes from tuition, grants, contracts, fees, and enterprises such as bookstores, parking, and food services.

Decentralized governance at the college district level: District college presidents and chancellors are appointed by local, governor-appointed five-member boards of trustees. Working with their presidents and chancellors, local boards set budgets, determine programs and services, negotiate union contracts, hire faculty, and award tenure. This decentralized approach ensures colleges remain locally relevant and responsive.

The state's community and technical colleges have three primary missions:

- To provide workforce training through professional, technical, and apprenticeship programs;
- To provide the first two years of instruction for those who transfer to baccalaureate institutions; and
- To provide pre-college coursework and literacy instruction for adults, including English language classes.

Nimble, responsive, and innovative, the colleges nurture hope and opportunity for students of all ages and backgrounds. The colleges keep tuition affordable and offer programs and services that meet the needs of people at every level of skill and literacy.

Strengthening Washington's workforce economy, the colleges provide employers with skilled and confident workers, managers, and leaders with 1,687 workforce degree programs, 3,444 industry-relevant certificates, and 161 Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) degrees.

The demographic and economic needs of the local community determine the mix of programs and services in each college district. Colleges forge partnerships with local and regional

business and labor leaders to offer job-relevant programs.

The 34 colleges serve students for whom a college credential makes the most difference in the trajectories of their lives.

- 24% care for dependents
- 45% receive need-based financial aid in eligible programs
- 53% are students of color
- 53% enroll part-time
- The median age of college system students is 26.

Colleges employ more than 19,000 faculty, classified staff, and administrators. Faculty unions bargain locally at the college district level. Classified staff unions bargain through the governor's budget office — the Office of Financial Management — at all but two college districts. At those two districts, Yakima and Highline, classified staff unions bargain locally at the college level.

POINTS OF PRIDE

- The single budget appropriation made to the SBCTC for distribution to the colleges creates a seamless system with alignment for students
- Capital funding requests for 34 colleges are made through a ranked and prioritized list vetted through a rigorous scoring process by system representatives and adhered to so the legislature receives a single request through coordinated legislative advocacy. The system speaks with one voice to the legislature
- College trustees are appointed to five-year terms by the governor, who is elected to a four-year term to focus the system on local stewardship rather than statewide politics
- As other states turn away from racial equity efforts, the SBCTC's Vision Statement leads with it
- Investments for system-wide equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts have been enacted by the legislature and written into state statutes
- The only state other than Florida where every college offers baccalaureate programs in applied technical areas, nursing, and computer science. Washington's community colleges offer more allied health baccalaureate programs than other states
- Integrated Basic Skills Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) created a national model *for transitioning pre-college students into college programs of study*
- Interagency agreement with the Department of Corrections provides pathways out of prison to work and constructive citizenship
- Historic investment by the legislature in Guided Pathways
- 30,000 Washington high school students earn credits and complete degrees through the state's Running Start program

HISTORY OF THE SYSTEM

Community colleges in Washington began as “junior colleges,” often established by local school districts. Their primary focus was to provide the first two years of a baccalaureate education.

Everett opened the first junior college in 1915 but closed in 1923 because of low enrollment (later reopening in 1941). [Centralia College](#) opened in 1925 and is the oldest continuously operating community college. It was followed by Skagit Valley College in 1926, Yakima Valley College in 1928, and Grays Harbor College in 1930. The most recent college, Cascadia, was established in 2000.

In 1961, the Community College Act created a more formalized system for these institutions, emphasizing local governance under state-level coordination. In 1967, the SBCTC was created to align and manage the statewide effort to “offer an open door to every citizen, regardless of his or her academic background or experience, at a cost normally within his or her economic means.” The 1967 act replaced local school district oversight with independent boards for each college while maintaining state-level coordination through the SBCTC.

The system expanded significantly in the 1970s and 1980s, adding new campuses to meet the demands of a growing population, as well as new programs for career and technical training, workforce education, and adult basic

education. In the 1990s, colleges began offering online courses and developing infrastructure for distance learning. The 2000s emphasized equity, student success, and workforce alignment. Initiatives like Running Start allowed high school students to earn college credit, and pathways for adult learners were expanded. In the 2010s, the Guided Pathways initiative was launched to streamline educational experiences and improve graduation rates.

The SBCTC also prioritized technical education in high-demand industries like healthcare, IT, and manufacturing. The colleges sponsor over 200 apprenticeship programs in high-demand employment areas of building and construction, public utilities, allied health, information technology, and manufacturing. Apprentices work full-time in their field and attend class part-time, often earning credits toward an associate’s degree. After completing the program, apprentices earn a journey-worker level certificate of completion from the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries Apprenticeship and Training Council. This certificate is one of the oldest and most highly portable industry credentials used today.

Today, the SBCTC continues to adapt to the changing needs of students and the economy, emphasizing sustainability, inclusivity, and technology. It plays a pivotal role in shaping education policy and maintaining the system’s accountability to students, employers, and the state.

2020-2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

The SBCTC’s [strategic plan](#) is designed to improve completion rates for all students and to accelerate completion rates for students of color. The SBCTC board views this as both a moral and practical imperative. People who earn a college credential earn higher incomes, participate more fully in their communities, and contribute to a thriving economy. The strategic plan centers on the Vision Statement:

“Leading with racial equity, our colleges maximize student potential and transform lives within a culture of belonging

that advances racial, social, and economic justice in service to our diverse communities.”

The strategic plan revolves around three goals:

- Achieve educational equity for students historically underrepresented in higher education.
- Improve completion rates for all students across all types of programs.
- Increase enrollment and retention among populations who can benefit the most from college access.



VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

Vision: Leading with racial equity, our colleges maximize student potential and transform lives within a culture of belonging that advances racial, social, and economic justice in service to our diverse communities.

Mission: We challenge, empower, and embolden ourselves and our colleges to deliver equitable higher education through antiracist policies that ensure economic vitality across Washington.

Values: Racial Equity and Social Justice; Accountability; Community and Culture Building; Service; Humor; Collaboration; Innovation



WASHINGTON STATE AND THE CITY OF OLYMPIA

From high desert, channeled scabland, and shrub-steppe landscapes east of the Cascades Mountains, through canyon and chaparral, to snow-capped mountains, temperate rain forests, rugged coastlines, and the islands of Puget Sound and the Salish Sea, Washington state is a land of exquisite contrasts and remarkable natural beauty.

Washington has over 3,000 miles of coastline. The Cascade Range, famous for such mountains as Mt. Rainier, Mt. St. Helens, and Mt. Adams, runs through the middle of the state. The Olympic Mountains west of Seattle are similarly stunning, with lush rainforests like the Hoh Rain Forest. Alpine meadows, glacial valleys, and evergreen forests with towering Sitka spruces, Douglas firs, and Western red cedars surround snow-capped mountains in both ranges.

In stark contrast to the wet west side, Eastern Washington is a land of sagebrush-covered plateaus, rolling brown hills, and basalt cliffs. Eastern Washington also contains some of the state's most dramatic rivers, including the Columbia River, which carves deep gorges through the landscape.

The state's diverse ecosystems make it a haven for wildlife. From the coastal seals, otters, and orcas of the ocean to the elk, bear, and wolves of the forests and mountains, Washington is teeming with animal life. Birdwatchers flock to places like the Skagit Valley to witness the migration of snow geese, while the state's many national parks and wilderness areas are home to a range of species found nowhere else.

The SBCTC is in the state capital, Olympia, home to the state legislature, the governor, and numerous state agencies, including the nation's first Office of Equity for ensuring equitable access to opportunities and resources for all Washingtonians. While known primarily as a political center, Olympia has a vibrant art community with numerous galleries, theaters, and creative spaces. The [Washington Center for the Performing Arts](#) is a major venue for music, dance, and theater performances. The city hosts the [Olympia Film Society](#), which screens independent films, and the city has a deep connection to the music world, especially within the indie and punk scenes. Olympia's downtown area's beautifully preserved buildings speak to the city's roots in the 19th century. Olympia is also known for its embrace of sustainable, farm-to-table dining. The city has a reputation for excellent seafood, especially oysters harvested from nearby Puget Sound, and the [Olympia Farmers Market](#) is open year-round.

Olympia has long been progressive and inclusive. It is known for its welcoming stance toward the LGBTQ+ community. The city advocates for social justice and sustainability, promoting green energy, zero-waste initiatives, and policies prioritizing equity and inclusion for all residents. Olympia is home to [The Evergreen State College](#), a unique liberal arts school emphasizing interdisciplinary studies. The college has a strong connection to the city, contributing to a youthful and intellectually curious atmosphere. Olympia also has a strong public education system focused on community involvement and progressive education practices.



MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

The Board seeks an executive director with commitment and an exceptional ability to execute a strategic plan. The successful candidate must have a bachelor's degree and at least five years of senior-level executive leadership

experience that includes managing the daily operations of a large organization such as a community or technical college, other post-secondary institutions, and/or business, industry, government, or nonprofit organizations.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

Success in the Executive Director role will require a unique combination of political acumen, strategic leadership, and deep commitment to higher education. The ideal candidate will have a passion for student success and the ability to advocate effectively for the state's community and technical colleges. With a focus on inclusion, innovation, and collaboration, the Executive Director will ensure that the SBCTC continues to serve as a dynamic force in shaping Washington's educational landscape.

The Executive Director must be able to manage and lead a large, complex organization that includes approximately 255 employees whose daily actions affect multiple stakeholders, both within the SBCTC and in the broader community and technical college system. Preferred knowledge, skills, and abilities include:

- Strong skills in building coalitions and consensus among diverse stakeholders, including college presidents, state legislators, government agencies, faculty unions, and student organizations. The ability to navigate and resolve complex issues among these varied groups is critical to the role.
- Demonstrated expertise in leading a dynamic, complex college system with an understanding of the challenges and opportunities of a federated college system that balances state and local decision making. A leader capable of building an agile organization that adapts rapidly to political, cultural, demographic, or economic shifts or other changes compelling the college system to pivot quickly.
- Experience managing large budgets, securing funding, and making resource allocation decisions aligned with strategic goals. The Executive Director should be comfortable working with state appropriations, federal funding, and private-sector partnerships to sustain and grow the community and technical college system.
- Ability to build consensus among the colleges regarding curricula and programs in response to industry needs
- A strong understanding of the federal education policy landscape and experience advocating for policy changes that promote educational equity, student success, and the workforce needs of the state are desired. The Executive Director should be adept at working with policymakers, state agencies, and community groups to influence policy and secure support for the SBCTC's initiatives.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES (CONT.)

- Familiarity with legislative process that includes understanding how to work with state lawmakers to advance key initiatives and secure funding for the community and technical college system. A background in testifying before legislative committees or working directly with elected officials is highly desirable.
- An entrepreneurial and results-driven orientation dedicated to advancing the system's work to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion at a systemic level.
- Ability to lead in a culturally competent manner, understanding the diverse needs of students, faculty, and staff within a system that serves a broad range of ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic communities across Washington state.
- Understanding of labor unions and collective bargaining and ability to build productive relationships with union leaders.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills. The Executive Director must be able to communicate complex ideas to various audiences, including board members, government officials, faculty, students, and the general public.
- A trusted, calm, and respected presence that unites people for a shared purpose despite competing demands, interests, and personalities both within and outside of the community and technical college system.
- Strong public speaking abilities and the comfort to represent the SBCTC at public events, conferences, and media appearances. The Executive Director should be confident and able to articulate the need to support hard-to-serve and underfunded students persuasively.
- The ability to think strategically about the future of community and technical colleges in Washington state, identifying emerging trends in education, technology, and workforce needs. This includes adapting to changing labor market conditions, technological advances, and students' evolving needs.
- Proficiency in using data and research to inform decision-making and assess the effectiveness of initiatives. Experience with performance-based funding models and student success metrics for ensuring continuous improvement within the system.
- The ability to lead with integrity, transparency, and accountability. Given the public nature of the position, the Executive Director must uphold high ethical standards in all aspects of decision-making and leadership.
- A demonstrated history of valuing collaboration and effective team-building, combined with the ability to foster strong relationships across institutions, within the SBCTC staff, and with external stakeholders. Bottom of Form Inspirational and practical management skills will sustain an office culture steeped in agency values around racial equity and social justice, accountability, community and culture building, service, humor, collaboration, and innovation.

COMPENSATION AND START DATE

The annual salary is \$305,000 and includes a generous leave package. Benefits include health, dental, vision, life insurance, long-term disability, retirement, and two optional deferred compensation programs.

The anticipated start date is **July 1, 2025**.





APPLICATION AND NOMINATING PROCEDURE

Complete applications include a cover letter describing relevant experience, a demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and interest in the position. A resume and three references with contact information are also required. Confidential screening of applications and nominations will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. However, materials should be submitted before noon EST on **March 31, 2025**, to ensure best consideration. Please submit applications electronically to SBCTCExecDirector@academicsearch.org.

Nominators and prospective candidates may arrange a confidential conversation about this opportunity with senior consultants, Shirley Robinson Pippins, Ed.D., at shirley.pippins@academicsearch.org or Rich Cummins, Ph.D., at rich.cummins@academicsearch.org.

Committed to diversity, the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges is an equal opportunity and affirmative action employer.

ABOUT ACADEMIC SEARCH

Academic Search is assisting the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges in this work. For more than four decades, Academic Search has offered executive search services to higher education institutions, associations, and related organizations. Academic Search was founded by higher education leaders on the principle that we provide the most value to partner institutions by combining best practices with our deep knowledge and experience. Our mission today is to enhance institutional capacity by providing outstanding executive recruitment services, executive coaching, and transition support, in partnership with our parent organization, the American Academic Leadership Institute.

