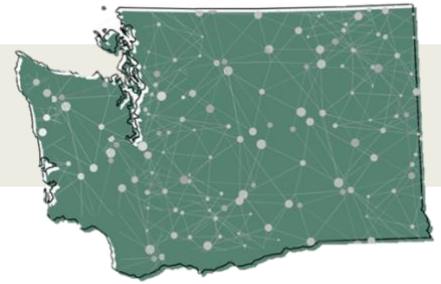


# The Faculty Association of Community & Technical Colleges

## The Solution: Community & Technical Colleges

February 6, 2026



The purpose of FACTC is to reflect the perspective of faculty on issues that affect our ability to provide and students' ability to receive instruction. In our November 2025 meeting, we asked our representatives to collect stories about the importance of community and technical colleges. The information that follows exemplifies what we know about the important issues facing Washingtonians – affordability, housing, public safety, and education.



### Many Pathways, One Mission

*Cascadia College, Faculty*

“Community colleges have many important roles for our students. For some, it will be the path to a four-year degree, and for others it will provide them with the workforce skills to become employed. For some students, it allows them to financially access college, especially through Running Start...it gives them **a path to a college education.**”

*Whatcom College, Instructor*

“Community colleges...serve many purposes and touch many types of students. But for me, it was a bridge between the old me and the new me; between the resignation of having failed and the promise of being able to start again; between the lost dream of being a high school teacher and the found goal of teaching college.”

### Affordability

*WWCC, Former Student*

“WWCC made it possible for me to watch my mom graduate as a registered nurse in 1996. Soon after I was able to experience a life where **she no longer had to choose between putting food on the table or ensuring our rent was paid.**”

### Housing

*Clark College, Professor*

“My commitment extends beyond the classroom. I've supported students managing opioid detox, chronic illness, and housing insecurity.”

### Public Safety

*WWCC, Workforce Instructor*

“As I write this to you, I am now a carpenter turned college professor providing the same kind of opportunities that WWCC offered my mom and me over the last three decades. Walla Walla **Community College kept me from going hungry, dropping out of school, and very likely ending up in the same place that I am now teaching.**”

### Education

*WWCC, Former Students*

“I was apathetic about school and ready to drop out until I had the chance to join the Running Start program at the College. I went on to earn my high school diploma on time in 2009.”

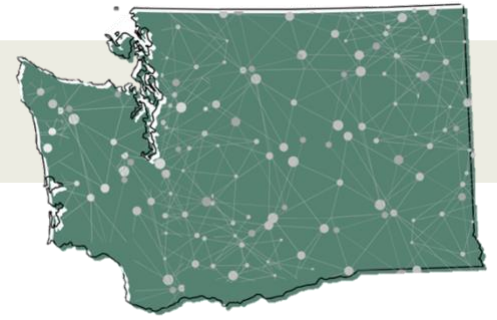
“I excelled at WWCC because of the smaller class sizes and actual individual help from professors. I truly feel **I would have struggled at a large college or university.**”

### One Mission, Our Solution

“Community colleges play a vital role in building a skilled workforce efficiently and effectively, providing a faster **return on educational investment without sacrificing quality.** These institutions often attract motivated individuals who are focused on learning practical skills to improve their lives, support their families, and strengthen their communities.”

For a more detailed explanation, including research, about our contributions, read the pages that follow.

# The Faculty Association of Community & Technical Colleges



## 2026 The Case for Continued Support

February 6, 2026

### The Solution: Community & Technical Colleges

The Washington State Legislators and Washingtonians agree on one major premise: general affordability, education, housing, and public safety are key issues. Faculty at community and technical colleges (CTCs) in Washington are on the frontline of these issues because our students are often in their crosshairs. We witness their triumph and defeat in the face of these issues. Therefore, in our November 2025 meeting, we asked our representatives to collect stories about the importance of CTCs. The information that follows is an account of what we know about affordability, education, housing, and public safety based on our experiences and on evidence that supports those experiences.

#### Many Pathways, One Mission

We offer countless education pathways across the collective CTC system because our shared mission is to create opportunities in basic education, workforce training, and university preparation. In the words of a faculty member from Cascadia College:

“Community colleges have many important roles for our students. For some, it will be the path to a four-year degree, and for others it will provide them with the workforce skills to become employed. For some students, it allows them to financially access college, especially through Running Start...it gives them a path to a college education.”

Similarly, an instructor from Whatcom Community College shared:

“Community colleges...serve many purposes and touch many types of students. But for me, it was a bridge between the old me and the new me; between the resignation of having failed and the promise of being able to start again; between the lost dream of being a high school teacher and the found goal of teaching college.”

Without CTCs, people with lower socioeconomic status, especially those in rural communities, would lose access to education, which disproportionately affects students of color and students with children who need *personalized support*, such as childcare, food banks, and subsidized housing.<sup>1</sup> We understand that achieving our mission requires a personalized approach to our students' needs and that personalized approach is central to our belief that we are a part of the solution to the issues facing our communities.

#### Affordability

CTCs cannot directly affect the affordability of basic goods, but the education we provide can increase purchasing power of our students and stabilize rural prices by contributing to the maintenance of population in rural areas. For example students who completed their education at our colleges made approximately three to four more dollars per hour than those who did not complete.<sup>2</sup>

The impact of higher wages and access to employment, in general, is notable in rural communities where geography is an additional boundary to their access to education. The ability to earn a degree without relocating cannot be overstated. In fact, the counties with the highest unemployment rates as of December 2025 have significantly less access to CTCs than those with the lowest rates.<sup>3</sup> A workforce instructor for Walla Walla Community College (WWCC) at Coyote Ridge Corrections Center (CRCC) wrote:

“With five children at home in a single income household, WWCC made it possible for me to watch my mom graduate as a registered nurse in 1996. Soon after I was able to experience a life where she no longer had to choose between putting food on the table or ensuring our rent was paid.”

Graduates report that their experiences at CTCs are what kept them in their rural communities post-graduation.<sup>4</sup> Thus CTCs also play an important role in preventing population decline that often contributes to higher costs of basic goods, such as food, in rural areas.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [ACLU \(2020\) - \\$78 Billion Community College Funding Shortfall](#)

<sup>2</sup> [SBCTC \(2024\) - After College Outcomes Dashboard](#)

<sup>3</sup> [WAESD \(2026\) - Map of county-level unemployment rates - Washington vs SBCTC \(2026\) - Map of community colleges](#)

<sup>4</sup> [SBCTC \(2024\) - Washington's Community College Baccalaureate Degrees: Growth and Outcomes](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Zimmerman \(2020\) - The Enduring Price of Place: Revisiting the Rural Cost of Living](#)



## Housing

CTCs were integral to the implementation of the Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness (SSEH) Program and provided housing assistance to over 10,000 students between 2020 to 2024<sup>6</sup>. Other forms of indirect assistance (e.g. childcare services, free and reduced meal programs, and job search training) help them earn more income and find ways to reduce costs in their budgets which decreases their risk of being unhoused.<sup>7</sup> The stress associated with housing and affordability require a support system, and faculty and staff at CTCs often assume those duties. For example, a professor from Clark College wrote:

“My commitment extends beyond the classroom. I've supported students managing opioid detox, chronic illness, and housing insecurity.”

The support provided by CTCs are notable in rural settings where many students overcome personal and academic challenges, such as homelessness, unique to their locality where community resources are scarce. They often attribute their success to the relationships they formed through faculty and staff and their local communities.<sup>4</sup>

## Public Safety

Considering that unemployment and homelessness contribute to crime,<sup>8</sup> CTCs improve public safety by preparing students for employment, especially our incarcerated students in corrections education. In 2025 alone, corrections served over 4,500 students who earned over 1,800 education credentials from high school completion to associates degrees.<sup>9</sup> With that education, corrections students are anywhere from 30% to 48% less likely to return to prison.<sup>10</sup> The role of community college's in maintaining public safety was made clear by the instructor from WWCC at CRCC when he wrote:

“As I write this to you, I am now a carpenter turned college professor providing the same kind of opportunities that WWCC offered my mom and me over the last three decades. Walla Walla Community College kept me from going hungry, dropping out of school, and very likely ending up in the same place that I am now teaching.”

In addition to our work inside prisons, our schools also have criminal justice pathways whose students enter careers focused on public safety, like one of our letter writers who is a Lieutenant for the Idaho State Police. He has helped solve many cases, including the 2022 quadruple homicide at Idaho State University.

## Education

Faculty and staff at CTCs understand the unique needs of their population because they are rooted in their communities. This is particularly true for rural communities in which students report that their school's learning modalities, financial support, and other intentional features of the CTC format helped them overcome personal and academic challenges.<sup>4</sup> One student writer explained:

“I was apathetic about school and ready to drop out until I had the chance to join the Running Start program at the College. I went on to earn my high school diploma on time in 2009.”

The attention to students' needs is invaluable to the CTC approach. Another former student wrote:

“I excelled at WWCC because of the smaller class sizes and actual individual help from professors. I truly feel I would have struggled at a large college or university.”

Our *community-rooted teaching approach* is why our students continue their education. In 2021-2022, 43% of students who graduated at public universities were transfers and 24% graduated with a transfer degree,<sup>11</sup> which demonstrates how we contribute to the success of all higher education institutions in the state by *providing access to bachelor programs outside of the CTC system*.

## **One Mission, Our Solution**

FACTC does not advocate for specific policies. Our purpose is to reflect the perspective of faculty on instructional issues, and the issues facing our state that not only affect our ability to provide instruction but also affect students' ability to receive it. A student from WWCC put it simply:

“Community colleges play a vital role in building a skilled workforce efficiently and effectively, providing a faster return on educational investment without sacrificing quality. These institutions often attract motivated individuals who are focused on learning practical skills to improve their lives, support their families, and strengthen their communities.”

<sup>6</sup> SBCTC (2026) - Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness (SSEH) Program

<sup>7</sup> SBCTC (2026) - Student Support Programs

<sup>8</sup> Prison Policy Institute (2022) - Beyond the count: A deep dive into state prison populations

<sup>9</sup> SBCTC (2025) - Corrections Education Annual Reports

<sup>10</sup> Journal of Experimental Criminology (2018) - A meta-analysis of correctional education programs in the United States

<sup>11</sup> WSAC (2025) - 2025 Washington Transfer Efficiency Update

