



Washington Award for Vocational Excellence scholarship winners announced

The Workforce Board announced 145 winners of the Washington Award for Vocational Excellence (WAVE) scholarship earlier this summer. You can see a complete list of this year's winners, including their area of study and legislative district, on the agency's [WAVE page](#).

A record number of Washington students applied this year, since the CTE-focused scholarship relaunched in 2022. This year was also the first that the Workforce Board put in place a new, user-friendly online scholarship management portal to help applicants more readily provide answers to multiple essay questions, in addition to letters of reference and a required education certification form.

"The WAVE scholarship is an outstanding investment in career and technical education, which helps students access living-wage jobs and creates a stronger workforce for Washington employers," noted Workforce Board Executive Director Eleni Papadakis. The Workforce Board manages the WAVE scholarship.

This year's scholarship recipients will receive up to \$3,900 per year, for two years, or up to \$7,800. Awards vary depending on tuition at the college attended by scholarship recipients, and other factors. Altogether, some \$1.1 million in scholarship money was awarded.

Recipients include top career and technical education students—including graduating 2025 high school seniors and community and technical college students. Volunteers from business, labor, and education communities selected winners.

NOTE: WAVE is funded by the state budget. Future WAVE scholarships have been temporarily suspended due to state budget challenges. The Workforce Board will provide updates when available.

Questions? Contact Andrew Lenderman, Communications Manager Andrew.Lenderman@wtb.wa.gov



New and improved Career Bridge set to launch in mid-August

A new and improved www.CareerBridge.wa.gov is set to launch in mid-August, helping more Washington middle and high school students connect with education and career paths that lead to living-wage jobs within in-demand fields. The Workforce Board manages the state's public-facing education and career portal and has

grown the site since its launch in 2009 into a key tool for education and career planning. The site has recorded as many as 6 million annual page views in recent years and that usage is expected to soar once the new site is unveiled in the coming weeks. The new site will be mobile- and tablet-friendly, provide two new career quizzes (including a super-short 6-question version), deliver a more dynamic and engaging user experience, and allow users to more easily save their career and education searches into a digital portfolio. For those of you attending this year's summer conference in Spokane, be sure to drop by the Workforce Board's booth for a sneak peek at the new site. We will have a laptop for you to see the test site in operation. Marina Parr, the Workforce Board's Director of Workforce System Advancement (and long-time promoter of this free, public-facing tool) will be providing a presentation that showcases the new site on Tuesday, Aug. 5 at 3 p.m., at the summer conference. The presentation title is Career Bridge: New & improved, and ready for you!

Key federal policy developments impacting career and technical education

There has been significant recent activity at the federal level with direct implications for Career and Technical Education (CTE). Workforce Board staff are actively monitoring several initiatives and executive actions that may influence CTE programs, funding priorities, and instructional focus across the state. Below is a brief overview of selected federal efforts relevant to CTE educators, administrators, and policymakers.

Notice of Interpretation

In early July, the U.S. Department of Education announced new guidance explaining how it plans to enforce an older law called the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). This law was originally passed in 1996 and set strict limits on who can get certain public benefits, particularly restricting access for undocumented immigrants. Around the same time, other federal agencies — for example, the Department of Labor — also issued similar updates about how they will apply this law.

It appears that the main purpose of these new updates is to get rid of some exceptions or loopholes that previously allowed certain public benefit programs to help undocumented immigrants. By tightening how the law is applied, the government is aiming to prevent undocumented immigrants from receiving benefits through more programs than before.

This notice is a follow-up to a February 2025 executive order from the President titled "Ending Taxpayer Subsidization of Open Borders." It restates the existing rules about who can receive public benefits and introduces an important new rule: many college and job training programs — including those funded under Perkins V — will now be treated as public benefits.

As a result, undocumented students could lose access to these programs. The notice also extends this restriction to dual enrollment and concurrent enrollment programs, which allow high school students to take college courses.

Importantly, this change was made without giving the public an opportunity to comment on it.

Reconciliation Bill and Workforce Pell

On July 1, the Senate passed the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" by a 51-50 vote, with Vice President Vance breaking the tie. After House approval, President Trump signed it into law by July 4, meeting the GOP deadline.

The bill makes major changes to domestic policy and federal taxes, including updates to education and workforce programs. It creates the Workforce Pell Grant Program, expanding financial aid to students in certain short-term CTE and job training programs.

The Department of Education is expected to start rulemaking soon, aiming to launch the program by July 1, 2026.

Department of Education and Department of Labor Interagency Agreement

On May 21, the Department of Education signed an Interagency Agreement (IAA) with the Department of Labor. The next day, a judge in the District of Massachusetts issued a preliminary injunction in the case *McMahon v. New York*, which temporarily blocked the Education Department from implementing the agreement.

However, on July 14, the Supreme Court granted an emergency request to stay (lift) that injunction. This decision allows the Education Department to move forward with the IAA and carry out a planned reduction in force, aimed at running its programs more efficiently.

Under the new arrangement, the Department of Labor will help manage:

- Adult education and family literacy programs funded by Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- Career and technical education programs funded by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.

These programs will still have oversight and leadership from the Department of Education but will now be jointly administered with Labor Department staff.

More detailed guidance for states will be shared soon. In the meantime, states and grantees with urgent questions should continue reaching out to their usual contacts at ETA (Employment and Training Administration) or OCTAE (Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education).

Executive Orders

[Preparing Americans for High-paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future](#) - This order directs federal agencies to expand access to skills training, apprenticeships, and technical education for in-demand trades. It emphasizes partnerships with industry and community colleges to align training programs with workforce needs and economic growth goals.

[Advancing Artificial Intelligence Education for American Youth](#)

This order promotes AI education in K-12 schools through new curriculum development, teacher training, and access to AI learning tools. It aims to build a future-ready workforce by ensuring equitable exposure to AI concepts and careers among young Americans.