

**2020 Legislative Seminar Position Paper**

Wisconsin Student Government (WSG) is composed of student representatives for over 300,000 students enrolled in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). Our mission is to advocate for expanded access to affordable education for the students we serve.

This is a mission that we deliver on. The WTCS is the largest higher education system in Wisconsin. **94%** of our graduates are employed within six months of graduation and **84%** of those who are not continue their education. Our graduates not only find employment, but they find it in our state. **94%** of students remain within Wisconsin and **62%** stay within their district *(WTCS Outcomes).* Supporting WTCS students is not only an investment in education, but an investment in the entire economy of Wisconsin, when skilled workers are needed the most.

The student representatives of WSG advocate in support for all WTCS students the following:

**WSG Positions**

1. WSG requests and supports open educational resources (OER) funding to allow for the adoption and creation of these resources across the WTCS in all 16 technical colleges.
2. WSG supports expanding the WTCS to University of Wisconsin System transfer credit opportunities provided by Act 46 (2019) by increasing the transfer credit allowance from 72 to 100 credits without the limitation of solely general education credits. Additionally, we request an increase of a minimum of two additional articulation agreements per year for program-to-program transfer.
3. WSG requests an increase of the WTCS Wisconsin Grant appropriation to improve the $23 million needs gap by including a $2 million budget increase for the first year and a $2 million budget increase for the second year of the next fiscal biennium (2022-23).

Sources

Wisconsin Technical College System. WTCS Highlights Outcomes for 2017 Graduates. WTCS Highlights Outcomes for 2017 Graduates, 2018.

**Position #1- Open Educational Resources**

The number one issue facing today’s students is the cost of education. The cost of higher education has been increasing for decades and the cost of academic textbooks stands out. Within the last decade, the cost of textbooks rose **1077**%. That is more than 3 times the rate of inflation during this same period and higher than any other educational cost.

Open Educational Resources, or OER, is an attractive alternative to help offset high textbook prices. OER operates on the basis of providing equal access to free, high-quality educational resources that are relevant and customizable. A perfect example of this is the recent Open RN Project (funded by the Department of Education) that aims to create OER nursing textbooks and virtual reality scenarios. These nursing textbooks will be free and openly accessible to nursing students and faculty everywhere. Instructors will also be able to remix the textbook content to customize it to their own needs. Programs like this not only save students and schools money, but they also promote a greater sharing of knowledge among students and faculty.

Increasing the use of OER in the classroom is an increase for student equity. Students have access to their course resources on day one of class, without having to wait for financial aid awards, bookstore shipments, or title changes. This is a huge win for students in a state that ranks 49th nationally in educational equity. In addition, research has demonstrated that the use of OER can increase student success by allowing them to take more classes at one time and graduate sooner.

WSG supports the creation of a grant to designate $200,000 per fiscal year toward the creation of open resources. This would pay for up to 16 potential open textbooks (a minimum of one per technical college) to be created and maintained. 28 states currently have policy or legislation pertaining to OER.

**Sources**

Open Education Resources for Nursing. *CVTC*, [www.cvtc.edu/open-rn](http://www.cvtc.edu/open-rn).

CPI Inflation Calculator. *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl?cost1=1&year1=199712&year2=201412.

Risk Assessment. <https://irhe.gse.upenn.edu/sites/default/files/College-Opportunity-Risk-Assessment-2018-WISCONSIN.pdf>

Popken, Ben. “College Textbook Prices Have Risen 1,041 Percent Since 1977.” *NBCNews.com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 6 Aug. 2015, [www.nbcnews.com/feature/freshman-year/college-textbook-prices-have-risen-812-percent-1978-n399926](http://www.nbcnews.com/feature/freshman-year/college-textbook-prices-have-risen-812-percent-1978-n399926).

State Policy. <https://sparcopen.org/our-work/state-policy-tracking/>

**Position #2 – Transfer of Credits**

In 2017-18, 25% (3,785) of new transfer students to the University of Wisconsin System (UWS) were from the Wisconsin Technical College system (WTCS). Nationally, students who have the ability to transfer a majority of their community college credits have been 2.5 times more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree than students who can only transfer less than half.

The inability to transfer core program credits often results in the requirement for students to retake classes to earn a bachelor’s degree, increasing their costs and time to completion. Currently, each university in the UWS decides the number and specific credits that will transfer. This creates a burden for WTCS students that are interested in transferring to a 4-year, state university.

We thank members of the legislature and the Governor for 2019’s Act 46, which was an incredible improvement to the previous transfer agreement.

Sources

Wisconsin Technical College System. Graduate Outcomes: Job Placement and Employment Data for 2018 Graduates, http://www.wtcsystem.edu/about-us/wtcs-overview

University of Wisconsin System, Informational Memorandum, Undergraduate Transfer Students; 2016-17. <https://www.wisconsin.edu/transfer/transfer-student-reports/>

**Position #3 – Affordability**

Unmet financial need is one of the top barriers impacting the success of WTCS students. State investments in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) Wisconsin Grants (WG) help students earn credentials that benefit Wisconsin employers who need the highly skilled workers the System produces. However, many Wisconsin residents who enroll each year may not have access to a technical college education because of a significant and persistent gap in state funding.

Increasing WG would provide more potential students with funding to enroll in the WTCS. The state of Wisconsin would also benefit as 94% of students who attend a college in the WTCS remain in Wisconsin, becoming an essential part of the workforce and tax base.

WSG is in favor increasing the WTCS Wisconsin Grant appropriation to improve the 23-million-dollar gap by including a 2-million-dollar budget for the first year and a 2-million-dollar budget for the second year of the next fiscal biennium (2022-2023).This will help to eliminate the annual waiting list of potential WTCS students that are determined eligible for a Wisconsin Grant but who do not receive one due to a lack of state funding.

Sources

Higher Education Aids Board, Board Report #17-19, Wisconsin State Student Financial Aid for Data for 2015-16 (WISSIS), Exhibit CC. <http://www.heab.state.wi.us/docs/board/1819/rep1904.pdf>