

Program Summary: Seattle Colleges

The Seattle Colleges Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 grant program has focused on infrastructure developments, curricular enhancements, and support services that help recruit, retain, and move low-income, low-skill individuals into middle-skill training and jobs. Enhancements have been made to the intake and onramp processes, to our program offerings (particularly in health care and manufacturing), and to the job preparation and job seeking tools and strategies available to students.

One of the project's most effective intake tools is the Start Next Quarter website. Through the tool, students take a short survey of (mostly) yes or no questions to determine eligibility for workforce funding. They are then invited to attend an on-campus workshop to learn more about the colleges' training programs, apply for funding, and enroll. In addition to the expansion of the Start Next Quarter tool to 19 colleges throughout Washington state, current efforts are underway to embed a funding application directly into the site, allowing students to apply for funding immediately upon learning they are eligible.

The Foundational Health Care Bridge Curriculum is an example of a cross-district curricular enhancement that will serve students well beyond the life of the grant. The course was developed by a cross-district group to meet the needs of students interested in health care, but lacking the health care basic skills and career pathway knowledge to be successful in their chosen programs. This course provides a foundation for students to become acquainted with health care vocabulary, discover potential career pathways, and gain initial exposure to the rigors of a health care training program. Course co-developer and faculty member Sylvia Chai has expressed that she "cannot be more enthusiastic about teaching the class." Sylvia mentions the confidence students gain in the foundations class as critical to their success going forward:

Students who enter I-BEST programs after taking the Healthcare Bridge class start with a little more confidence. I try to simulate the reading volume and expectations that they would experience in a healthcare class. We go through pages and pages of reading and mock tests for phlebotomy, nursing assistants, and pharmacy technicians. Usually, I-BEST students get blindsided by their first quiz in an allied healthcare class because the language style is so unknown to them. But they are better prepared when they've spent the whole summer learning common medical vocabulary and phrasing.

In addition to intake and program enhancements, the Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 Project has allowed us to build tools and supports for students exiting our programs. In January, the Career Hub tool was rolled out to students at all three colleges, alumni, and Seattle Colleges partner employers. Career Hub is a job seeking and recruitment tool that allows students to connect directly with employers to find jobs and internships, learn about career fairs, schedule informational interviews, and more. The tool currently has over 5,000 students on the site, approximately 4,800 employers, and, at any given moment, over 300 active job postings with local industry employers.