EDUCATION

AT ISSUE
The economic well-being and future of every community depends on a well-educated workforce. Due to the economic crisis from which the State of Washington continues to emerge, we need to keep education on the forefront for state funding. Increasing higher education funding to ensure we maintain and improve economic development opportunities and provide access to affordable higher education for our citizens.

TCLC POSITION
Washington State University Tri-Cities (WSU-TC) is the only public four-year institution serving the south-central region of the state. Adequate budget support is necessary to maintain affordable access to higher education, including continued stabilizing of tuition rates. TCLC advocates for support of enrollment growth at the urban branch campuses as quickly as funding allows, emphasizing freshman and transfer admissions, and increasing enrollments in graduate programs. WSU-TC plans to expand enrollments and undergraduate and graduate offerings in high-demand program areas in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines and signature programs in STEM education, viticulture and enology, and bio-products and bio-fuels science and engineering. TCLC also advocates for appropriate funding to recruit and retain quality faculty in support of WSU-TC and its mission as a Tier 1 research land-grant institution. TCLC supports the WSU & WSU-TC’s request for:

- $400,000 in the 2015-2017 capital budget for pre-design of an Academic Building to be located on the WSU-TC campus;
- Legislation authorizing WSU to establish a Washington State University School of Medicine;
- $2.5 million in the 2015-17 operating budget to develop curriculum and individual courses for a WSU School of Medicine, establish formal partnerships with community hospitals as part of its community based model, and support all other activities associated with gaining accreditation.

By 2019, two-thirds of job openings in Washington will require at least one year of college education, many in “middle-skill” positions supported by community and technical colleges. Sixty percent of students enrolled in state higher education are in community colleges, and four out of ten baccalaureate graduates start at a community college. TCLC supports Columbia Basin College (CBC) and the Community and Technical Colleges (CTC) system by advocating for:

- additional funded enrollments in STEM and Basic Education for Adults that will build the skilled workforce our state needs to compete internationally;
- full funding for the CTC capital projects so CBC can construct its planned Social Sciences and World Languages Center;
- more dollars for the Student Achievement Initiative, the CTC system's performance-based funding model;
- funding for innovative programs with proven models of “intrusive” advising that keep students on track to graduation; and
- COLA adjustments for all staff, which have not been funded since 2008, as well as faculty increment funding to keep salaries competitive at a time when many colleges are losing key program faculty to the higher-wage private sector. Above all, we ask for maximum local flexibility to manage budgets to benefit Benton and Franklin County residents.

2015 Legislative Session