



*The Washington Integrated Sector Employment (WISE) Consortium is a coalition of Washington-state colleges and Centers of Excellence dedicated to innovative, career-focused technical education with a distinct emphasis on assisting veterans and unemployed or under-employed workers. With \$10 million worth of Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) funding awarded by the United States Department of Labor Education and Training Administration, the WISE Team has enhanced and expanded the clean energy, construction, and advanced manufacturing programs of eight WISE-associated consortium colleges, catapulting their training and education programs into the 21st century.*

### **From Proposal to Implementation**

As the WISE project's lead grant writer, Brandon Rogers, Vice President and Executive Dean at Bates Technical College, expressed his surprise at the ease of which the WISE grant's initial proposal became a reality. Previous experience with TAACCCT grants and similar grant programs helped Rogers and the WISE team mitigate the common problems associated with transforming a proposal into practice.

Rogers was confident the consortium's collaborative model, one with the Washington Centers of Excellence at the helm, contributed to the WISE grant's approval and subsequent success. He explained that its' unique, multi-sector approach; numerous letters of commitment and first-source hiring agreements; greater industry engagement; and balanced distribution of resources factored heavily in the Department of Labor's approval of the WISE grant. The Centers of Excellence are well positioned to lead large federal grants. Rogers stated, "By mission, [the Centers of Excellence] are meant to serve the entire system of 34 colleges and...the 10 Center directors...do a fantastic job being good ambassadors for the entire system."

### **Training and Education Tools**

Mike Brandstetter, DOL Grant Manager for Bates Technical College, explained that WISE funding allowed Bates to buy equipment, hire staff, and furnish modern classrooms. Bates invested \$50,000 of WISE money—plus \$12,000 from its own budget—to purchase simulation equipment for their hydraulics program. The previous curriculum fell short of modern standards due to inadequate, out-dated equipment, particularly those specialized tools related to trucks and heavy equipment. With WISE assistance, Bates' instructors built mock-ups around suspensions, transmissions, and engines, facilitating hands-on learning within a contemporary, competitive curriculum.

Bates Technical College, bolstered by WISE, partnered with Daimler AG to adopt cutting-edge courses from their expansive online curriculum. These courses were not simply offered as a substitute, but

instead became an option for students who, for whatever reason, were unable to participate in traditional classroom environments. Daimler's accessible online content paved an alternative way for students to remain on-track. Brandstetter remarked that the diesel mechanics program was also able to purchase a number of hand tools, many of which were augmented by donations from the industry.

Money was allocated to expanding and updating both the diesel and electrical construction program's classroom spaces, replacing barebones whiteboards with interactive television screens and other technology upgrades. Bates introduced two entirely new courses, both of which integrated top-of-the-line technology specific to modern electrical construction sites, both residential and commercial. Similarly, faculty developed five new courses for the diesel program. Overall, WISE dollars created thirty new credits of coursework; 10 percent of the electrical construction program and 20 percent of the diesel technology program.

New faculty members, funded through WISE, brought fresh perspective and energetic initiative to their respective programs.

### **Outstanding Collaboration**

Electrical students at Bates Technical College enjoy a unique opportunity: the Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) applies time spent in college towards the hours required for an electrician's license. Brandstetter believes students choose Bates because of the 4,000 creditable hours; "it's actually a bigger draw than the degree."

Even with the expansive changes facilitated by WISE, Bates Technical College was able to maintain the strict criteria "that made the program excellent in the eyes of L&I," particularly, in part, to their partnership with Habitat for Humanity. Habitat for Humanity allowed Bates' students to use Habitat Houses as learning laboratories, enabling aspiring electricians to gain practical knowledge through hands-on application. Brandstetter explained that, when WISE began, the collaborative partnership between Bates Technical College and Habitat for Humanity was in its infancy. Now healthy and robust, the partnership continues to expand alongside the capacity of the greater educational program.

### **Successful Navigation**

Rogers and Brandstetter both emphasized the value of WISE-funded navigators. The navigators played a key role in providing guidance on career pathways and Bates' programs, tailoring their methods to meet the individual needs of their students. From resume writing to accessible transportation, the navigators connected learners with the necessary resources to personalize technical education. Rogers boasts that "intensive, focused advising, counseling, navigation—whatever you want to call it—can really pay off. The numbers in our program really demonstrate that we had some extraordinary outcomes."

Honoring the commitments outlined in the original grant proposal, Bates Technical College hired IBEST instructors, "supplemental academic instructors that would be imbedded with the program instructors to teach math contextually." Brandstetter clarified that "while they were not WISE-funded, they were an element in the WISE program that the college committed to doing if we were to get the grant." These specialized faculty helped boost student scores on the IBEW Apprenticeship Application from an approximate 20% pass rate to over 70%.

Rogers concluded by saying, "I think we've been very good partners, very responsive partners, and I think that's going to benefit this institution, whatever the next opportunity comes."

*This article is the first in a series recording the advances, best practices, and program development made possible through the WISE Grant.*