An Overview of the Wisconsin Technical College System

The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) provides education to individuals in programs with specific occupational orientation below the baccalaureate level, including associate degrees, training of apprentices and adult education below the professional level. Its principal purposes, as defined by state statute, are to provide:

- occupational education and training and retraining programs, including the training of apprentices; and
- customized training and technical assistance to business and industry to foster economic development and the expansion of employment opportunities.

Additional purposes include providing:

- educational opportunities for high school age students;
- college transfer, community services, self-enrichment activities and basic skills education; and
- education and services addressing barriers to participation in technical education created by stereotyping and discrimination.

The WTCS consists of sixteen technical college districts, each responsible for providing educational programs and services through the operation of technical colleges. Fifty-two campuses and numerous outreach centers operated by the technical colleges make up Wisconsin's technical education delivery system responsible for meeting the needs, interests and abilities of students and the needs of the labor market.

In the 2024-25 academic year, over 293,000 students were enrolled in a WTCS District. Students may enroll in over 500 programs leading to employment in areas such as agriculture, business, health sciences, information technology, manufacturing, or public safety and security. Technical colleges offer two-year programs leading to an associate degree, one- and two-year technical diplomas, short-term diplomas, certificates and related instruction for apprentices. The first two years of instruction in liberal arts leading to a baccalaureate degree are also offered at all 16 Wisconsin Technical Colleges. In addition, each technical college district provides basic literacy instruction through Adult Basic Education programs, high school completion or equivalency programs, and instruction in English language learning.

Wisconsin Technical College System Board

The WTCS Board is comprised of thirteen members. Three members serve *ex officio*: the State Superintendent of Public Instruction; the Secretary of the Department of Workforce Development; and the President, or by designation, another member of the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents. The Governor appoints ten members to staggered six-year terms: one employer of labor, one employee who does not have the power to employ or discharge; one engaged in farming as a principal occupation; and six additional members from the public at large. In addition, the Governor appoints one student to a two-year term.
The WTCS Board establishes policy direction for technical college programs across the state. The WTCS Board has statutory authorization to determine the organization, plans, scope and development of technical colleges; to appoint a System President; to approve qualifications of educational personnel and courses of study; and to approve district proposals for facilities

development and land acquisition. In addition, the WTCS Board establishes procedures and criteria for determining course credit, tuition, state aid, uniform accounting for financial programs and other data required of the technical college districts.

District Boards

Districts have distinct demographic, geographic and economic characteristics. Consequently, local educational programming is tailored to meet unique local needs.

District boards have statutory authority to levy property taxes, provide for facilities and equipment, contract for instructional services, and appoint a district president who serves as chief executive officer for the district. The district president is responsible for local administration, including setting academic and grading standards, hiring instructional and other staff, and providing auxiliary services and budget management.

The composition of each district board is defined in s. 38.08, Wis. Stats. Each district, except for Milwaukee, is governed by an appointed board composed of nine members who are district residents and serve three-year staggered terms. District boards consist of two employers, two employees, three additional members, a school district administrator as defined in s. 115.001(8), Wis. Stats., and one elected official who holds a state or local office as defined in s. 5.02, Wis. Stats.

Under s. 38.08, Wis. Stats., the Milwaukee District Board is composed of nine members who are residents of the district, seven of whom are residents of Milwaukee County and consist of the following:

- Five persons representing employers. Three of the members will represent employers with 15 or more employees, two of the members will represent employers with 100 or more employees and at least two of the members represent employers who are manufacturing businesses. A person representing an employer will have at least two years of experience managing an organization with at least 15 employees or at least two years of experience managing the finances or the hiring of personnel of an organization with at least 100 employees;
- One school district administrator as defined in s. 115.001(8), Wis. Stats.;
- One elected official who holds a state or local office as defined in s. 5.02, Wis. Stats.; and
- Two additional members.

WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

2024-25 Statistics[1]

In 2024-25, 293,904 individuals enrolled in Wisconsin's technical colleges, including:[2]

- 181,265 in an applied associate degree, technical diploma, or apprenticeship related instruction programs and courses;
- 98,169 students in vocational-adult courses;
- 36,395 in basic education and remedial courses;
- 5,563 in community services courses; and
- 19,596 in collegiate transfer courses.

In addition, of the individuals enrolled in 2024-25:[3]

- 35,758 were academically disadvantaged;
- 47,660 were economically disadvantaged;
- 14,072 had limited English proficiency; and
- 15,285 students had a disability.

Students of color accounted for 27.5 percent of all enrollees, while female students accounted for approximately 47.2 percent of total enrollments.

The average age of postsecondary students (all credit types) and collegiate transfer students was 31 and 24 years, respectively and 37 years for continuing education students.

In 2024-25, WTCS students enrolled in one of the more than 500 programs offered in agriculture, business, marketing, family and consumer education, service, health, industrial, technical, and general education. An advisory committee provides oversight to each full-time occupational program.

Colleges provide education and economic development services to a broad range of customers, including technical assistance to business and industry, and coordinate curricula with other systems.

Wisconsin's technical colleges employ just over 8,152 full-time and part-time faculty members.

In 2024-25, actual statewide operational expenditures (does not include capital costs, debt service, and auxiliary and public service functions) equaled $1.2 billion. Major sources of districts' operational revenues totaled $1.3 billion in 2024-25 and included: [4]

- Local property taxes $267.2 million
- Tuition and fees $245.6 million
- State aid $601.6 million
- Institutional $107.0 million
- Federal $60.5 million

There are 52 technical college campuses throughout the 16 WTCS districts. Offerings are also made available in many additional, convenient locations throughout the state, such as secondary schools, municipal and private buildings.

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[1] Source: 2024-25 Factbook – Student Data

[2] This is unduplicated enrollment. The total reported for program categories may exceed the unduplicated total because students often enroll in more than one program.

[3] Students may fall into more than one category.

[4] 2024-25 Cost Allocation Report.