
Wisconsin Legislative Council

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM



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THE WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

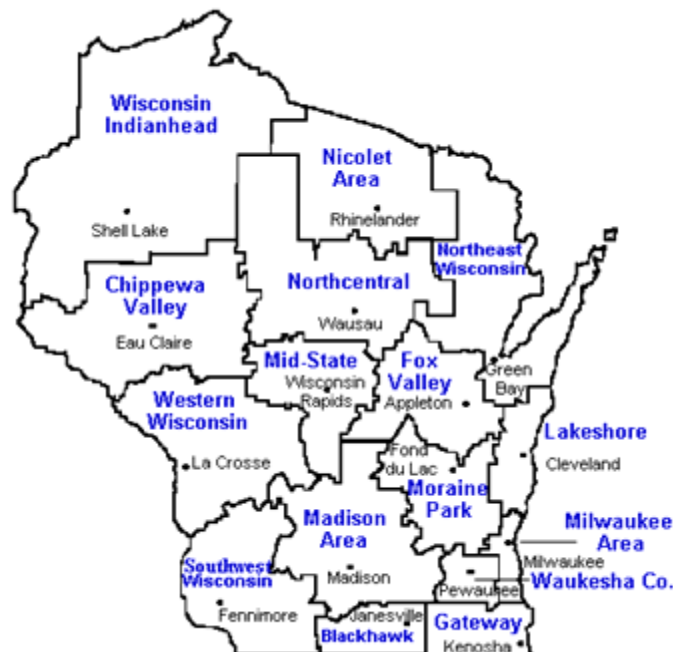
The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) consists of 16 districts that are governed by the WTCS Board as a whole and individually by the respective technical college district board. The 48 campuses of the WTCS offer a variety of associate degrees, diplomas and certificates, as well as programs that provide specialized education or opportunities for liberal arts degrees in conjunction with four-year colleges.

ORGANIZATION

State law establishes the principal purpose of the WTCS as providing occupational education and training and technical assistance to business and industry in order to foster economic development and the expansion of employment opportunities. Additional purposes of the WTCS include providing educational opportunities for high school age students; a collegiate transfer program; and community services and vocational or self-enrichment activities. [s. 38.001, Stats.]

The WTCS consists of 16 technical college districts, which encompass every area of the state, with 48 main and satellite campuses that serve approximately 308,000 students annually.¹

Wisconsin Technical College Districts and Main Campuses²



¹ See Wisconsin Technical College Fact Book 2018-19, Wisconsin Technical College System, November 2019. [<http://wtcsystem.edu/about-us/resources-publications>.]

² Map source: WTCS.

WTCS BOARD

The WTCS Board is the coordinating agency for the WTCS. It consists of 13 members: an employer representative; an employee representative; a farmer representative; the State Superintendent of Public Instruction or a designee; the secretary of the Department of Workforce Development or a designee; the president of the University of Wisconsin (UW) Board of Regents (BOR) or a designee from among the Regents; six public members; and one technical college student. [s. 15.94, Stats.]

The WTCS Board establishes statewide policies and standards for the educational programs and services provided by the 16 technical college districts that cover the state. The WTCS Board supervises district operations through reporting and audit requirements and consultation, coordination, and support services. It sets standards for building new schools and adding to current facilities. The WTCS Board also provides assistance to districts in meeting the needs of target groups, including services for the disadvantaged, the disabled, women, dislocated workers, the incarcerated, and minorities. [s. 38.04, Stats.]

DISTRICT BOARDS

Each technical college district, other than Milwaukee Area Technical College, is headed by a local technical college district board of nine members, which includes two employers and two employees who are representative of the various businesses and industries in the district; a school district administrator; an elected state or local official; and three additional members. The district board members are appointed by district appointment committees, which consist of county board chairs in 13 districts and school board presidents in the other three districts. [ss. 38.08 and 38.10, Stats.]

The makeup of the Milwaukee Area Technical College District Board differs from the other district boards. It consists of:

- Five persons representing employers: three of which represent employers with 15 or more employees; two of which represent employers with 100 or more employees; and at least two who represent employers who are manufacturing businesses. A person representing an employer must have at least two years of experience managing a business entity, nonprofit organization, credit union, or cooperative association with at least 15 employees or at least two years of experience managing the finances or the hiring of personnel of a business entity, nonprofit organization, credit union, or cooperative association with at least 100 employees.
- One elected official.
- One school district administrator.
- Two additional members.

[s. 38.08 (1) (a) 1g., Stats.]

The Milwaukee County executive and the chairpersons of the Milwaukee, Ozaukee, and Washington County boards of supervisors constitute the appointment committee for the Milwaukee Area Technical College Board. [s. 38.10 (1) (d), Stats.]

The district boards are responsible for the direct operation of their respective schools and programs. They are empowered to levy property taxes (within certain statutory limits) and develop an annual budget; provide for facilities and equipment; hire a district director, staff, and teachers; determine programs to be offered (with WTCS Board approval); admit students; and provide financial aid, guidance, and job placement services. [ss. 38.12 to 38.16, Stats.]

PROGRAMS AND DEGREES

Some of the instructional divisions in which courses are offered in the WTCS include agriculture, business, television, graphics, home economics, industrial services, and health, technical, and general education.

Within these divisions, the WTCS offers several types of educational programs and degrees.

An **associate degree** program is a two-year program that combines technical skills education with general education, such as math, communications, and social sciences.

One- and two-year technical diploma programs focus on hands-on learning of occupational skills and can take as little as one or two years to complete, depending on the particular program.

Short-term (less than one year) diploma programs focus on one particular occupation and can take less than a year to complete.

Certificate programs are designed to provide students with streamlined education to enhance their jobs skills.

The **liberal arts** program requires a minimum of 60 credit hours and provides the first two years of a four-year baccalaureate college education. Sixty to 70 of the credits earned may transfer to UW System four-year campuses. The liberal arts program is available at Milwaukee Area Technical College, Madison Area Technical College, Nicolet Area Technical College, Chippewa Valley Technical College, and Western Technical College.

Apprentice-related instruction is a combination of on-the-job training and classroom-related instruction in which workers learn the practical and theoretical aspects of a highly skilled occupation in two to five years. There are hundreds of apprenticeship programs available in construction, service, and industrial occupations.

Advanced technical certificate programs respond to employers' needs for highly skilled employees and are offered as a small block of credits (9-12), with at least six of these credits having advanced content beyond the associate degree.

Adult secondary education consists of high school level instruction (grades 9-12) for adults. Students are typically working toward a high school credential such as the national General Educational Development (GED) test or the Wisconsin High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED). Technical colleges may also offer specific high school level courses to individuals who may need a small number of credits to complete their high school diploma.

Family literacy programs are designed to help parents become better learners while promoting their children's learning at home and achievement at school.

English as a second language programs train people whose native or dominant language is not English to read, write, and communicate in English.

Customized training is offered in partnership with employers. The training is delivered in various formats and can be customized into any of the following:

- A quick-start training session on equipment or methods.
- A focused seminar format.
- An upgrade of employees' basic skills in math, reading, or communications.
- Long-term training to retain a quality workforce.

- Training in high-demand areas, such as technical skills training, computer-assisted applications, workplace assessment, quality processes, or supervisory development.
- Training to resolve specific technical problems, analyze workflow procedures, or evaluate employee performance.

The WTCS also offers part-time programs that are comprised of vocational, adult, and basic skills education and district and community services, which include vocational or hobby courses and activities offered with community groups.

More information regarding programs and degrees offered at WTCS is available at <https://www.wistechcolleges.org/explore-careers>.

ADMISSION AND TUITION

State law provides that, in general, every person who meets certain age requirements and who is a resident of Wisconsin is eligible to attend a technical college. Nonresidents may attend if the district board of attendance approves the enrollment. A district board may give priority in admitting students to residents of the district. [s. 38.22, Stats.]

The 2020-21 tuition costs are the same for each of the 16 technical colleges. For Wisconsin residents, degree, diploma, and certificate programs cost \$138.90 per credit and collegiate transfer programs cost \$187.85 per credit. For nonresidents, degree, diploma, and certificate programs cost \$208.35 per credit and liberal arts transfer programs cost \$281.76 per credit.

Fee remissions are available to certain WTCS students who are veterans, survivors of veterans, and survivors of certain emergency personnel. [s. 38.24 (5), (7), and (8), Stats.]

TRANSFER OF WTCS CREDITS TO UW SYSTEM

Students attending the WTCS Collegiate Transfer program at Madison, Milwaukee, Chippewa Valley, Western Wisconsin, or Nicolet Area Technical College may generally transfer up to 72 credits to any UW System campus. Many of the technical colleges have articulation (transfer) agreements with four-year private colleges and universities in the UW System. These agreements may contain course-to-course equivalencies, while others provide for a total program transfer. There are nearly 1,100 program-to-program transfer agreements between the technical colleges and the UW System four-year universities.

In addition, Wisconsin law requires the BOR and the WTCS Board to enter into and implement an agreement that identifies 72 credits of core general education courses that will be transferable between and within each institution participating in the agreement beginning in the 2022-23 academic year.³ This agreement is called the Universal Credit Transfer Agreement (UCTA). The tribal colleges and members of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities may also participate in the UCTA. The credits must be transferable without loss of credit toward graduation or toward completion of a specific course of study. [s. 36.31 (2m), Stats.] More information about UCTA is available at: <http://www.wisconsin.edu/transfer/universal-transfer/>.

This information memorandum was prepared by Emily Hicks, Staff Attorney, and Dan Schmidt, Deputy Director, on November 10, 2020.

³ Prior to the 2022-23 academic year, Wisconsin law requires the agreement to identify 30 credits of core education courses that are transferrable between and within each institution participating in the agreement.