

Overview

Lake Washington Institute of Technology (LWTech) is a two-year workforce college located in Kirkland, WA, just east of Seattle. LWTech is part of the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) in Washington State and serves nearly 8,000 unique students a year. The average age of a student is just over 30 and 63% of students are female. The mission of LWTech is “To prepare students for today’s careers and for tomorrow’s opportunities.”

LWTech is proposing to develop the **Future Tech Stars NSF S-STEM Scholarship Program (Future Tech Stars)**. This program will provide approximately 100 scholarships of \$5,000 to full-time, low-income, non-traditional students in four STEM disciplines. The non-traditional population we will seek to serve is women and minorities. Students will be recruited using a comprehensive and standardized approach. The included programs are: Computer Security & Network Technician (CIP 11.0901), Information Technology Applications Development (CIP 11.0201), Digital Gaming and Media (CIP 10.0304), and Multimedia Design & Production Digital Design (CIP 11.0803).

The objectives of this program are to support low-income, non-traditional students who wish to enter information technology, digital media, or computer networking technology programs. This program will focus on students who might not otherwise be able to attend school because of financial difficulty or who might only be able to attend part-time due to financial constraints. The program will also create and foster cross-disciplinary collaboration opportunities for students to work on real world, problem-based learning projects. These scenarios will help create a future pool of employees who are able to meet the needs of high-tech employers in the Greater Puget Sound Region.

Intellectual Merit: Many students in the included programs are only able to attend part-time. To support full-time students and to encourage the transition to full-time status, scholarship recipients will receive support from the program coordinator and from faculty who will provide dedicated support through writing workshops and advising. The program coordinator will ensure a diverse pool of applicants and coordinate industry-specific events. Through this work, this program will increase the body of knowledge around support services in scholarship programs, especially in programs targeting non-traditional students in technology programs.

Broader Impact: Future Tech Stars will encourage academically-talented students to pursue a full-time education by offsetting the financial burden of college with scholarship support. With more students attending full time, the college anticipates increased student retention, improved completion rates of degrees and certificates, and additional students transferring to a four-year university. These outcomes directly support national policy goals to improve post-high school education attainment and are supported by research described in the Project Description.

With an ever-expanding computer industry in the Greater Puget Sound Region, an employee must be comfortable in all aspects of computer usage and development, from desktop maintenance to web applications development. Through unique program aspects which encourage real-world, problem-based learning scenarios, graduates will serve the future needs of high-tech employers in the Seattle-Kirkland-Bellevue area by providing strong communication skills and the ability to collaborate across disciplines. By graduating students with such skills, this project will lead to personal fulfillment for students, economic development for the region, and improved employment outcomes for students and employers alike.