



February 19, 2024

Linda Crerar, Director  
Center of Excellence for Homeland Security  
& Emergency Management  
Pierce College  
9401 Farwest Drive S.W.  
Lakewood, WA 98498

Dear Linda and COE Staff,

On January 16, 2024, a team from the system and State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) conducted a site visit review of the Center of Excellence for Homeland Security & Emergency Management. Attached is the review team's final report for the Center's FY24 site visit review.

We appreciate your excellent leadership and the way you represent Washington's Community and Technical Colleges in the homeland security and emergency management sector.

Sincerely,

Marie Bruin  
Director of Workforce Education

# CENTER OF EXCELLENCE SITE VISIT REPORT

Center of Excellence for Homeland Security & Emergency Management  
Site Visit held on January 16, 2024 (remote, via Zoom)

## Background

Centers of Excellence were created and funded by the State Board in 2003 to better link the community and technical college system to the industries that drive the economy. Each center is hosted by a college, staffed with a director, and overseen by an advisory board consisting of industry representatives and other stakeholders. Typical activities include providing industry contacts for curricula and program development, skills gap analysis, professional development, conducting summits and workshops on emerging industry topics.

In 2021-2022, the Centers of Excellence collaborated with the WACTC (college presidents' association) to develop a process for sharing work plans, measures, and successes towards achieving system goals and priorities. In 2022, WACTC congratulated Centers on making meaningful contributions to the college system and shifted quarterly COE reporting to the Workforce Development Committee of the Instruction Commission (vice presidents of instruction). In doing so, the Centers of Excellence are demonstrating their commitments to equitably serving all colleges, making statewide impacts, and making more visible their numerous collaborative activities supporting industry-specific workforce education and training in Washington. Efforts by each Center to communicate their work as it aligns to system goals, and their knowledgeable responses to a variety of industry and college needs, demonstrate the outstanding contributions the Centers are making to the community and technical college system.

## Purpose of Site Visit Review

The Centers participate in a site visit process led by SBCTC staff. Each Center is visited once in a three-year cycle, or sooner if there have been recent changes in the Center's leadership. The purpose and structure of these visits are detailed here.

The Center of Excellence site visit process is designed around four core purposes.

1. Learn how the Center is currently working to understand and improve the relationship between their industry sector and the community and technical colleges. Specifically, how is the Center:
  - growing engagement and alignment between the sector and college programming;
  - defining actionable skills gaps and being a key broker in closing those gaps where appropriate in the CTC system context; and
  - ensuring their relevance to all 34 CTCs through meaningful products and services (i.e. employer engagement services, acting as a convener for curriculum or program development activities, providing faculty professional learning, etc.)
2. Engage broad CTC system perspectives in review of the current and planned work of the Center and encourage the continued growth and development of the Center through technical assistance and recommendations.
3. Surface outstanding practices to both help promote the Center and to encourage adoption of similar practices by other Centers.

4. Use review team membership as an opportunity to grow knowledge and understanding of the Centers throughout the system, especially with college administrators who have limited knowledge of Centers (i.e., may not have a Center on their campus or may be new to their role).

The site review is intended to be a series of conversations which get to these purposes.

## FY24 Site Visit Review

On January 16, 2024, a team from the system and State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) conducted a review of the Center of Excellence for Homeland Security & Emergency Management. This letter transmits the review team's final report for the Center's FY24 site visit review.

### Site Visit Review Team

- For SBCTC, Marie Bruin, Director of Workforce Education;
- For SBCTC, Carolyn McKinnon, Policy Associate;
- For SBCTC, Danny Marshall, Program Administrator;
- For WEC Executive, Chris Sullivan; Executive Director, Workforce Education, Seattle Central College;
- For IC, Steven Thomas, Interim Vice President for Instruction, Whatcom Community College; and
- For WEC At Large, Priyanka Pant, Dean of Instruction, Lake Washington Institute of Technology.

### Commendations

Recognition of a Strong Relationship with the Host College and Advisory Board: The long-standing relationship between host college administration and the COE is remarkable. The host college administration has a good awareness of the center, its board, and the five core expectations of the annual work plan: (1) economic development, (2) industry sector strategy, (3) education, innovation, and efficiency, (4) workforce supply and demand, and (5) equity and access. The organization and management of the COE Advisory Board— an active and engaged group – is a strength of the HSEM COE.

Notable Efforts towards Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: The review team acknowledges the Center's increased focus on diversity and inclusion, for instance with its Women in Leadership Profiles. These profiles help future leaders "see themselves" in the industry. The review team also commended the Center's fruitful efforts to expand Advisory Board representation beyond the government sector.

Resiliency and Adaptability amidst Constrained Resources: The emergency management field is diverse in its application to many industries. The review committee acknowledges the considerable demands and expectations to serve the system with available resources. The Center does well in identifying college courses that apply to the core principles and key areas of understanding for anyone entering the field. Additionally, it is noted that the Center never stops trying to reassess, adapt, and improve in ways that meet the needs of the sector.

### Recommendations

Aligning Strengths with System Needs: The COE has a large and engaged industry advisory committee. The COE is encouraged to leverage the committee's broad experience by bridging their knowledge into clear, succinct information for the colleges and their instructional program directors.

Deepening Connections to Collaboratively Address Gaps: Staff demonstrate excitement and abundant ideas about reducing skills gaps. In addition to hosting popular convenings, we encourage the COE to more deeply connect with local colleges and instructional programs to offer specific, measurable, and attainable services and projects for the college system. The COE is further encouraged to increase their presence, visibility, and relationships on local college campuses across the state to help colleges more meaningfully track industry skill demands and respond accordingly.

Optimizing Communication Efforts and Linkages: The Center sends a lot of materials out to contacts, hosts events, and maintains lists of programs. However, materials may not be reaching the right audiences due to college staff turnover and the vastness of the sector the Center serves. Renewing relationships and visibility with local colleges and secondary CTE program faculty will help the Center ensure that its materials are reaching the right college audiences.

Identifying DEI-focused Opportunities: We acknowledge the efforts the COE is making toward diversity, equity, and inclusion. We encourage working with your advisory board to identify additional high-impact opportunities to make intentional progress toward greater inclusivity.

New Programs for Colleges? – We Invite Your Thoughts! This is a more general point of feedback. There is an opportunity for colleges to tap the knowledge and networks of the Centers of Excellence when proposing new instructional programs. How might we encourage colleges to ask a COE for input when they conduct an environmental scan before proposing a new program? The review committee invites the HSEM COE's input about how that might happen more systematically.