

# Work and Economic Support E-Newsletter

*A Monthly Summary of Developments Impacting Wisconsin's Workers and Employers*

December 3, 2008

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## **Wisconsin Council on Children and Families**

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Feel free to forward this e-newsletter to other interested parties, and encourage them to sign up for this and/or other WCCF e-newsletter lists [here](#). You can contact the author, John Keckhaver, directly at [jkeckhaver@wccf.org](mailto:jkeckhaver@wccf.org) and ext. 305.

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## **1. Wisconsin's \$5 Billion State Budget Deficit**

Wisconsin faces another difficult biennial budget, in fact this time it's the worst in the state's history. The latest estimate pegs the deficit for the next biennium at over \$5 billion. To stay apprised of the state's fiscal situation, visit WCCF's Wisconsin Budget Project website, where Research Director Jon Peacock offers the latest news and information on state budget developments. You can access publications, policy proposals, as well as Jon's recent E-Newsletters related to budget and tax issues [here](#).

## **2. New Report Gives Wisconsin a Failing Grade on College Affordability**

A new report by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education gives Wisconsin an F for college affordability. Among the report's findings:

- \* Since the late 1990's, the share of family income, even after student financial aid, needed to pay for college expenses at public four-year institutions has increased from 20 percent to 30 percent.
- \* Poor and working-class families must devote 44 percent of their income to pay for net college costs at public four-year colleges and universities.
- \* There are significant gaps in college opportunities in the state. Among young adults, for example, 21 percent of blacks enrolled in college, compared with 44 percent of whites.

Click [here](#) for the full report, and [here](#) for recent coverage of the report in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. For the UW System's response, click [here](#).

### **3. Focus on Remedial Education – The Colorado Experience**

In last months' e-newsletter we raised the issue of remedial education, and provided a link to a recent national report which highlighted issues surrounding and costs associated with remedial education.

In the coming months we will provide links to reports describing how educational leaders in other states have tackled the growing need for remedial education and the various challenges involved in providing it. We begin with a report out of Colorado written for the Colorado Community College System which shows how educational leaders can take a comprehensive view of the issues involved, and end up with specific recommendations for moving forward.

[The Colorado Remedial Challenge](#)

### **4. Skills2Compete – An Effort You Should Know About**

You've read in past issues of this newsletter about the rising demand for postsecondary education and workforce training. A current national effort worth noting – which also includes a number of individual state campaigns – is aimed at ensuring that appropriate educational and training opportunities exist to meet these rising demands. *Skills2Compete* describes itself as a “non-partisan campaign to ensure our workforce has the skills needed to meet business demand, foster innovation, and grow broadly shared prosperity.”

At their website, ([www.skills2compete.org](http://www.skills2compete.org)) you can find labor market data, analyses of skill demands in the labor market, state policy models, and learn more about the ongoing state campaigns.

### **5. A Look at the Wisconsin Technical College Budget Proposal for 2009-2011**

Despite the state's difficult fiscal situation, anyone familiar with our changing economy and our growing workforce development needs will tell you that targeted, high-return investments are going to have to be made in order for workers and our employers in the state to prosper. One place to start is the recent 2009-2011 budget proposal from the Wisconsin Technical College System. In it, you will see proposals to expand valuable training and educational programs which have proven effective at increasing workers' wages over time as well as critical financial aid recommendations.

For a look at the proposal, visit the [WTCS budget page](#). And keep up to speed on all the upcoming budget developments impacting WTCS and other state agencies at the WCCF Budget Project page mentioned above.

### **6. The “Adult Student Initiative” – One Effort to Increase Degree Holders in Wisconsin**

Wisconsin trails a number of its neighboring states as well as the nation in the percentage of its residents holding a bachelor's degree or higher. (WI=25.4%, IL=29.4%, MN=31%, Nationally=27.5%)

The impact of this is felt throughout our communities as the earnings gap between those at the bottom of the educational spectrum and those at the top widens. One promising effort to increase degree holders in Wisconsin is being led by the University of Wisconsin Colleges and University Extension. Staff reach out to those who have some college credit but never earned their degree, and try to work with those former students to ensure that they can, indeed, come back and earn a college credential, something which is proving *increasingly* valuable in the labor market.

For a brief description of the innovative effort, click [here](#).

## **7. Recent News**

[State Denies Milwaukee County Jobs Program Contract](#)

Steve Schultze, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

[Career Counseling Comes to Grade Schools](#)

Amy Hetzner, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

[Bankruptcy Filings Keep Rising in Wisconsin, Nationwide](#)

Paul Gores, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

[Consumers Feel the Next Crisis: It's Credit Cards](#)

Eric Dash, The New York Times

[Food Costs Eat More of Family Budgets](#)

Brian Tumulty, Gannett News Service, as appeared in the Green Bay Press Gazette

[Offer the Big 3 Automakers a Helping Hand, with Conditions](#)

Gary Burtless, Senior Fellow, Economic Studies, Brookings Institution

## **8. Other Reading and Resources**

From the Center on Law and Social Policy:

[Recover, Renew, Rebuild: Workforce Policies for a Strong and Fair Economy](#)

[Child Care Assistance in 2006: Insufficient Investments](#)

From the Chicago Fed:

[Strategies for Improving Economic Mobility of Workers](#)

[Wisconsin Moves Forward to Address Foreclosures](#)

[Creating Postsecondary Pathways to Good Jobs for Young High School Dropouts: The Possibilities and the Challenges](#)

Linda Harris and Evelyn Ganzglass (of the Center on Law and Social Policy), written for the Center for American Progress

[Multiple Pathways: 21st Century High Schools that Prepare All Students for College, Career and Civic Participation](#)

Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice

[Unions and Upward Mobility for Women Workers](#)

Center for Economic and Policy Research

## **9. Upcoming Events**

EnVISION: Next Generation Careers

A Presentation Outlining How Business and Community Leaders Can Prevent a Workforce Meltdown

Presenting will be Edward E. Gordon, Ph.D., author of The 2010 Meltdown: Solving the Impending Jobs Crisis.

When: December 11, 2008

11:30 Check-in and box lunch  
12:00 Edward E. Gordon presentation  
1:30 – 3:30 Local perspective and participant input session

Where: Lakeshore Technical College – Cleveland Campus

To register: visit [www.gotoltc.edu](http://www.gotoltc.edu) or call 1.888.gotoltc, ext. 1300. Cost is \$10 per person and includes lunch.

Please send \$10 per registrant to:

Lakeshore Technical College  
Attn: College Relations  
1290 North Avenue  
Cleveland, WI 53015