

The City of Federal Way University Initiative



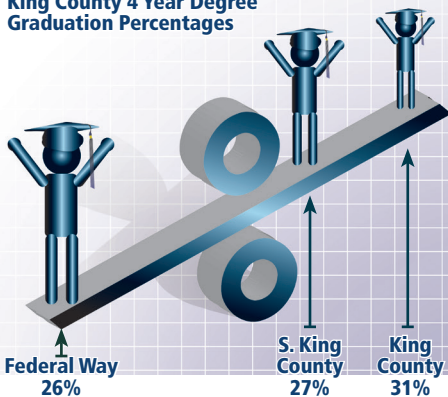
The University Initiative

Federal Way is working to recruit a four-year university for a branch campus in the downtown core to serve the growing higher education needs of the community and South King County.

The Federal Way Branch Campus is key to enhancing individual opportunities for prosperity and economic development and job creation in South King County.

Currently, only 26% of Federal Way residents possess a four-year-degree or higher, just slightly less than the South King County/South Seattle regional average of 27 percent. These percentages are significantly lower than the state and King County averages at 31 percent. More than 50 percent of Seattle's population possesses a four-year-degree.

King County 4 Year Degree Graduation Percentages



South King County residents' low rates of college attainment poses limited economic opportunity and social mobility for the region's residents and their families.

The Washington State Legislature established five branch campuses in 1989 to increase access to higher education and promote regional economic development. Since that time, Washington's need for higher education has grown dramatically. In South King County, demographic shifts documented in "Confronting Suburban Poverty"

have concentrated lower income need for college opportunities into South King County.

Universities change lives for good with high quality, relevant and lifelong education. The Federal Way Branch Campus project would provide greater access to college opportunities for South King County and South Seattle residents. It would also address the demands for educated, skilled workers ready to compete in a global economy.

The Branch Campus Project would also mesh with the City's economic development and downtown revitalization efforts, strengthening the South King County economy. Universities are inherently an important potential institutional base for helping community-based economic development.

The value of recruitment of an institute of higher education can leverage catalytic public investments to redevelop an urban landscape such as the City has made in Town Center. This 21-acre development project in the City's core combines the under-construction Performing Arts and Conference Center, the four-acre Town Square Park, the Federal Way Transit Center (and future light rail link), and more than eight acres of mixed-use, educational and civic use development opportunities.

Universities are the place for knowledge generation – knowledge for the good

of the public; knowledge that can drive and transform the community. Today, communities need universities and higher education more than ever before. Universities serve the people; they advise governments in policymaking decisions; they help develop skills, create knowledge and train leaders. They are at the center of crucial research, through which a community can prosper from innovations as well as attract foreign investments and engage in scholarly and scientific commerce.

There are several trends in education that public leaders must be aware of to keep moving to meet the objectives of helping support a diverse and sustainable economy. These include the following:

- Rapid Increase in the Growth of Information
- Global Marketplace
- Increase Reliance on computers
- New Technologies
- Required new Competencies
- Education must prepare students for jobs that don't yet exist.

The political leadership of Federal Way understands the importance of both the 'bricks and mortar,' impact as well as the value of an educated workforce. The City is committed to realizing a branch campus that will provide vital opportunities for its residents, businesses and enhance the overall health and well-being of the community.

