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**“WAFC PROGRAM GENERATES \$12M GRANT FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES”**

The U.S. Department of Labor announced last week that four WAFC community college partners are amongst the almost 300 schools nationwide to receive grants as part of a federal initiative to promote skills development and employment opportunities in certain industries. The WAFC Retail Management Certificate Program was the focus of the consortium’s winning submission.

The consortium lead by Tyler Junior College in Tyler, Texas includes Cerritos College in Norwalk, California; Clackamas Community College in Oregon City, Oregon; and the University of Alaska in Anchorage, Alaska.

The schools will use the funds to build capacity, create greater awareness, invest in staff, increase educational resources and provide access to free, digital learning materials.

With the leadership of the Western Association of Food Chains, the Retail Management Certificate Program was created by college and food industry professionals to meet the developmental needs of the retail food industry. The 30 unit, 10 course curriculum is linked directly to the core competencies required for managerial success. The classes are currently available at 135 community colleges, over 25 satellite locations and online. Since its launch in the year 2000, thousands of employees have taken classes with over 600 graduates to date.

“It is extremely gratifying that the U.S. Department of Labor has recognized the value of the proven model that the WAFC has successfully executed over the past twelve years with the support of community colleges, retailers, wholesalers and suppliers in the west” said WAFC Chairman and President Oscar Gonzalez of Southern California based Northgate Gonzalez Markets.

Credits earned through the program are transferable to more advanced educational programs such as an associate’s or bachelor’s degree and this grant provides the opportunity to create additional educational pathways for food industry workers.

“This grant will greatly enhance execution of our mission of advancing the food industry through education and leadership. Today all of us have over 12 million reasons to celebrate!” said Gonzalez.

Established in 1921, the Western Association of Food Chains is a non-profit organization comprised of retailers and wholesalers in the 14 Western States representing over 7,500 supermarkets and over 255 billion dollars in annual sales. The WAFC’s primary mission is education, which is made possible with scholarship donations of industry suppliers and individuals as well as staging an annual convention each spring. For more information, visit: [www.wafc.com](http://www.wafc.com).

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