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## Professor: State's schools must do better job to prep high-tech worke

By [TODD BISHOP](#)

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER REPORTER

Washington's education system isn't generating the type of work force needed to keep up with the high-tech eco fostered by Microsoft's presence in the state.

That's one of the findings to be presented to state business, policy and legislative leaders, including Gov. Christi Gregoire, during a University of Washington conference on education and productivity today.

"The economy has shifted," said conference organizer Theo Eicher, economics professor and founding director UW's Economic Policy Research Center. "We're moving over to an information-technology economy, to a new economy, and if we want to be competitive in about five, 10 years, we've got to shift the education system."

Speakers will include researchers from the University of California, Columbia University, Stanford University and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Each will present the findings of broader research, as applied to the state economy.

One of the researchers, the University of California's Giovanni Peri, will document the geographic clustering that often occurs around industry leaders, such as Microsoft, that spend large sums on research and development. Other companies involved in similar pursuits often emerge in the same region, increasing the demand for skilled workers.

And another set of findings to be presented at the conference suggests that Washington's education system isn't turning out enough skilled workers to keep up with the demand.

Thomas Bailey of Columbia University will cite statistics showing that the state ranks relatively high in the number of doctorates per capita but doesn't fare nearly as well in national rankings of doctorates awarded each year. That is, that the state's high-tech businesses are essentially required to "import" those highly skilled employees from other parts of the country to fill the gap, said the UW's Eicher.

Speakers will include Gregoire and Brad Smith, Microsoft general counsel and senior vice president.

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