



PORT JOBS

CAREER PATHWAY RETENTION STUDY

1. BACKGROUND

Port Jobs is engaged in many different efforts to promote the career access and advancement of young adult job seekers and workers who utilize the career access and advancement services we offer through our Airport Jobs Employment Center and Airport University Programs at Seattle Tacoma International Airport (SEA).

We started our Airport University program in 2004 because we knew that turnover was high in many SEA Airport companies and opportunities for further training were in noticeably short supply. We believed that SEA employers would benefit from access to a more skilled workforce and suspected that this workforce would be more resilient and more likely to stay in jobs at SEA Airport if workers discovered they could access free, affordable, skill building opportunities in areas that would help them get higher paying, next step jobs. We also expected that our office location at SEA Airport would help us to stay connected with young adults and stay in contact with young people during and after their participation in training to provide customized supports designed to promote their ongoing access to, and persistence in training and jobs.

South Seattle College is our primary partner for the aviation career pathway programs in Aviation Maintenance Technology (AMT). Young adults in this course participate in an introductory class at airport University. The course provides students with foundational industry knowledge, math refresher skills, career exploration, site visits and financial aid application assistance. Students who complete the introductory classes at SEA Airport bridge into the 1.5 to 2-year training program in AMT at South Seattle College. Port Jobs provides \$1000 scholarships to all completers who continue their training. Highline College is our main partner in Logistics, Business Technology, and Hospitality/Tourism courses.

This report presents preliminary information about the experiences of young adults who participate in the Aviation Maintenance Technician and Logistics Career Pathways we offer through our SEA based Airport University Program. Through this project we follow up on a quarterly basis with SEA workers and jobseekers to find out whether they are progressing along their career pathway. We have recently completed five quarters of follow up interviews with young adults and will stay in contact with those who engage in aviation career pathways through 2026.

The interview pool changes over time to include students who enroll in our annual Introduction to AMT classes at SEA Airport or logistics related courses we offer throughout the year, and to exit those who no longer are working at SEA Airport, or may have moved or pursued other types of non-aviation training. All young adults who participate in the quarterly interviews, which average 45 minutes in duration, are given gift cards to honor their time and expertise. Participation in interviews is voluntary. The results of interviews are used to inform real time interventions and to identify the policies or practices which block or support the career progression efforts of young adults.

In addition to the career pathways programs for young adults Port Jobs also provides services to youth as part of our Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Out-of-School Youth Consortium. This project places a high priority on staying connected to young participants and in a recent report noted that 93% of the 39 young adults who responded to interviews about their employment status were still working. The majority (31) were still employed at SEA Airport and eight young adults were working outside of the airport.

All the young people receive invitations to hiring events and job fairs and have access to a weekly hotlist of job openings, job search assistance, and career navigation support.

2. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Interview Pool

In the Career Pathway Retention Study, as of March April 2024, we have conducted 68 interviews with twenty-nine career pathway participants. Eighteen participants were in the AMT program, and eleven were in the logistics program. Eighteen were male, and eleven were female. Most participants in the AMT class were male, and all logistics participants in the interview pool were female. The participants were ethnically and culturally diverse: BIPOC individuals comprised 76% of the group and over one third spoke a language other than English at home. Key respondents ranged in age from 20 to 31. Six of the 29 young adults had children that they were supporting, ranging in age from two months to 8 years of age. There was a total of eleven children.



Demographic Data (combined for AMT and Logistics)

Number of Young Adult Quarterly Interviews

Number of Interviews	Number/Percent	Total Interviews
One Interview	9 (31%)	9
Two interviews	11 (38%)	22
Three Interviews	3 (10%)	9
Four Interviews	2 (7%)	8
Five Interviews	4 (14%)	20
Total Number of Interviews	29 (100%)	68

Gender of Young Adults by Career Pathway

Pathway	Male	Female	Total
Logistics	0	8	8 (27%)
Aviation Maintenance Technician	18	3	21 (73%)
Total	18	11	29 (100%)

Ethnicity of AMT and Logistics Students

Student Ethnicity	Number/Percent
Asian	10 (35%)
White	7 (24%)
African American/Black	5 (17%)
Native Hawaiian	3 (10%)
African	2 (7%)
Spanish	2 (7%)
Total	29 (100%)

Home Language of AMT and Logistics Students

Student Home Language	Number/Percent
English	19 (66%)
Somali	2 (7%)
Tagalog	2 (7%)
Amharic	1 (4%)
Burmese	1 (4%)
Cambodian	1 (4%)
Samoaan	1 (4%)
Swahili	1 (4%)
Tigrinya	1 (4%)
Total	29 (100%)

Employment Status of Young Adults Enrolled in AMT and Logistics Pathways

Employment Status	Number of Young Adults
Still employed at SEA	19
Still employed in non-SEA Training Related Job - AMT	5
Still employed in non-training related job	1
Unemployed, looking for work	1
Employment status unknown for two were transferred to Amazon, and one who transferred to an AMT program at a neighboring college.	3
Total	29

Wage Status of Young Adults who had pre/post wage data (n=20)

Wage Status pre/post wage	Number of Young Adults
Increased Wage	19
Stayed the Same	
Decreased the Wage	1
Total	20

AMT (N=21) and Logistics (N=8) School Status, Scholarship Access, and Financial Aid Status

Student Status	Number of Participants
Still Enrolled in AMT or Logistics classes	11
Graduated from AMT	5
Earned AA Degree as part of the AMT program	3
Considering later enrolling in AMT	3
Pursued other training, using core math, English and communication skills developed during the 10-week Introduction to AMT class	4 (2 in Amazon-operated apprenticeships, 1 in Army Reserves, 1 pursuing an AA in Health Care Management)
Dropped out of AMT due to problems with depression, attendance, and course work difficulty with chemistry - receiving help from Airport University staff to help with job search and other issues	1
Decided not to pursue AMT as she had 3 young children (4-month-old, 7-and 8-year old) and did not feel that she could combine family, school and work demands	1
Currently still enrolled in Logistics courses (3 of the 8 Logistics students are not currently enrolled in college but depending on their work schedules may enroll at some point soon. All except one were still working at SEA, and one of these students was working at an out of state airport)	5
2 young adults reported receiving \$13,000 Horizon Development AMT company scholarships, and one young adult received a \$10,000 sign up bonus in the National Guard	3
Students who received Airport University or workforce funding scholarship assistance	21

Age Range Upon Entry into Pathway

Age Range Upon Entry	Number/Percent
20-23	5 (17%)
24-27	12 (41%)
28-29	12 (41%)
Total	29 (100%)

Many career pathway participants attributed increases in their wages to the skills and confidence they built because of participating in college credit-bearing classes at Airport University. The classes helped them build essential math, communication, technology, and leadership competencies. Some participants have taken multiple classes. Participation in classes has helped young adults to accelerate their progress towards earning certificates, credentials, and degrees, because the classes are free and accessible. The SEA Airport-based offering of courses made it easier for them to coordinate their work schedules with different course offerings.

Airport University Classes

Airport University Classes	Number of Participants
Introduction to AMT	20
Leadership and Supervision	5
Global Excellence Customer Service	5
International Business	4
Importing and Exporting	2
MS Excel	2
Introduction to Computers/Windows	2
Written and Verbal Communication	2
Business Math	1
Introduction to Logistics	1
Introduction to Supervision	1
Customer Service Operations	1
Introduction to Computer	1
Keyboarding	1
MS Word	1
MS Powerpoint	1

Initial Review of Year One Retention Study Data for Young Adults

Even at this early juncture in the three-year study the impact of career pathway partnerships is positive, as the majority of young adults are staying employed and earning higher wages. The average hourly pre wage per hour was \$18.79 and the average post wage was \$25.45. Many have entered training related jobs, and some have already earned certificates and degrees.

Young adults have identified employer practices which help them to persist in school. These include paid time off to attend school; flexible scheduling; allowing workers to use trade boards, so that they can trade hours if they want to go to a class with another worker who may want to work overtime; permission to break up shifts to attend trainings; less frequent bidding schedules (as work hours need to align with the course offering times); and sharing of information about employer scholarships, tuition reimbursement opportunities and apprenticeships.

The aviation industry is seeing firsthand the benefits of investing in front line workers and ongoing progression of people in their workforce as we are sharing the positive company practices that young adults describe, and hope that these will become more commonplace as a result. We are also sharing what we learn about the need to improve company onboarding and career advising practices. In addition, we are reporting how the career pathway efforts are increasingly contributing to the diversity of the pipeline of skilled workers to the SEA Airport and regional aviation workforce. Similarly, our college partners are seeing the impact on higher learning leading to increased enrollments of diverse students who are pursuing and earning certificates and degrees.

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