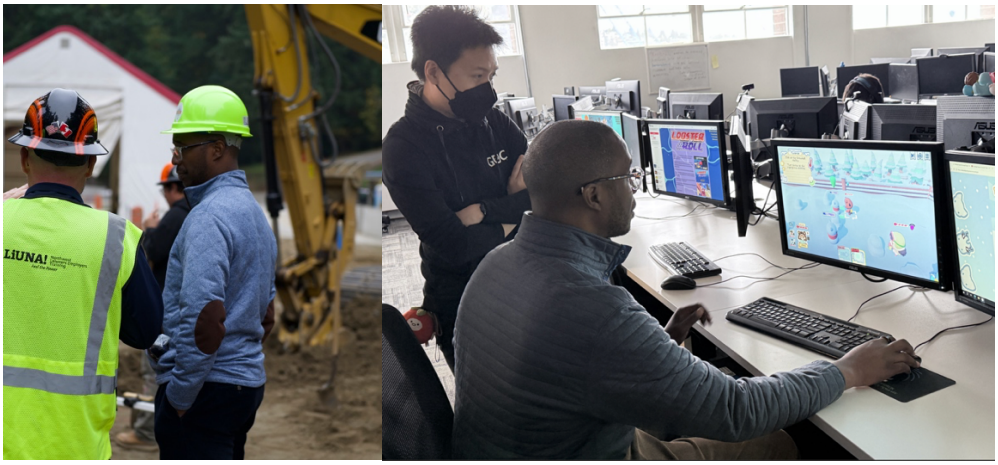
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COE President and CEO Dr. Kirk A. Nooks Visits Washington Institutions, Exploring Innovation in Digital Media and Skilled Trades Training



ATLANTA, GA — [October 20, 2026] — Council on Occupational Education (COE) President and CEO Dr. Kirk A. Nooks continued his Presidential Leadership in Motion Tour with visits to two Washington institutions, the Academy of Interactive Entertainment (AIE) in Seattle on October 14 and the Northwest Laborers-Employers Training Trust Fund (NWLETT) in Kingston on October 15, 2026. From student-developed video games to construction apprenticeship training, the visits highlighted two distinct educational pathways and the specialized instruction supporting career preparation across industries.

At the Academy of Interactive Entertainment's Seattle campus, Dr. Nooks joined institutional representatives for a tour showcasing the intersection of creativity, technology, and technical education.

The visit featured student projects, including a video game developed by AIE students, offering a glimpse into the design, programming, and production skills cultivated through the institution's programs.

Conversations with AIE staff explored how the institution integrates creative development with industry-focused instruction to prepare students for opportunities in game development, film production, and digital media. The experience demonstrated how emerging technologies and evolving industry demands continue to influence educational approaches and career pathways.

AIE representatives expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to welcome Dr. Nooks and showcase the work taking place on campus.

"We appreciated the opportunity to share the creativity, technical skills, and passion AIE students bring to game development and film," shared AIE representatives.

On October 15, Dr. Nooks traveled to Kingston, Washington, where Training Director Brandon Jordan and COE Liaison Becky Shields welcomed him to the Northwest Laborers-Employers Training Trust Fund. His visit included a tour of the institution's administrative offices, student services areas, classrooms, and specialized training facilities.

While touring the campus, Dr. Nooks observed students participating in a Pipe Gravity class, where classroom instruction is reinforced through practical exercises designed to build technical competency. The training provided insight into how NWLETT prepares apprentices for the responsibilities of the construction industry, with an emphasis on precision, safety, and job readiness.

Dr. Nooks also met with institutional staff to discuss educational quality, accreditation expectations, and the value of maintaining rigorous training standards. The conversations reinforced the connection between institutional accountability and the confidence that apprentices and industry partners place in accredited training programs.

Reflecting on those discussions, NWLETT representatives shared a key message from Dr. Nooks' visit.

"He emphasized the importance of our members understanding that the training they receive meets consistently high standards of educational quality, maintained through ongoing evaluation and oversight by the COE," shared NWLETT representatives.

Although the institutions serve different industries, both visits demonstrated how focused instruction and access to specialized resources contribute to meaningful career preparation. Whether developing interactive digital experiences or mastering construction techniques, students and apprentices are building competencies that respond to the expectations of their respective fields.

"These visits offered two very different, yet equally compelling, examples of career and technical education in action," said Dr. Nooks. "At AIE, I witnessed how creativity and technical proficiency come together as students develop skills for the digital entertainment industry. At Northwest Laborers, I observed the disciplined, hands-on training that prepares individuals for essential work in the skilled trades. What stood out at both institutions was the intentional connection between instruction, practical application, and industry expectations. These are the experiences that deepen our understanding of the institutions we serve and the important work taking place within their programs."

The two Washington visits highlighted the diverse programs and professional fields represented across COE's membership. As the Presidential Leadership in Motion Tour progresses, the perspectives shared by institutional leaders, instructors, and students continue to inform conversations about educational quality, institutional needs, and the changing landscape of career and technical education.

For more information about the Council on Occupational Education, visit www.council.org.

About the Council on Occupational Education:

The Council on Occupational Education is a leading accreditor for over 500 postsecondary occupational education institutions in over 40 states. With a commitment to quality and continuous improvement, COE works to assure quality and integrity in career and technical education. For more information about the Council on Occupational Education and its mission, please visit www.council.org

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