

**ORDER NO. 2024-07**  
**AN ORDER OF THE PORT OF SEATTLE COMMISSION**

...shredding the paper ceiling at the Port of Seattle by eliminating unnecessary post-secondary degree requirements for Port jobs.

**ADOPTED**  
**MAY 14, 2024**

**TEXT OF THE ORDER**

The Port Commission hereby orders the Executive Director, or a delegate, to remove all requirements for a post-secondary (college or university) degree for all jobs at the Port unless that degree is required by law for an employee to perform the essential functions of that position.

Should a hiring manager have a non-legal but significant rationale for narrowing their potential hiring pool for a given position by requiring a certain degree, they may petition the Executive Director and/or the Senior Director of Human Resources for the ability to do so.

The actions above shall be incorporated into the Port's HR-8 Talent Acquisition Policy.

**STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE ORDER**

It is the intent of the Commission to reduce the number of positions in Port employment that unnecessarily require a post-secondary degree in order to qualify for the job. The Commission recognizes that certain positions have a need for technical, scientific, or professional training that make a specialized course of study necessary, and for other positions, the requirement of a two-year, four-year, or other post-secondary degree is added to job requirements to serve as an indicator of general skills or knowledge, such as skills in writing, analysis, or presentations, which are readily acquired in today's society through other means.

This Order aligns the Port with the state of Washington's Substitute House Bill 2216 regarding degree requirements for state government employees. As of 2024, at least 16 states across the US have eliminated degree requirements for most state positions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "States Consider Elimination of Degree Requirements." *National Conference of State Legislatures* 4 Jan. 2024, [www.ncsl.org/education/states-consider-elimination-of-degree-requirements#:~:text=Governors%20in%20at%20least%2010,requirements%20for%20most%20state%20positions.](http://www.ncsl.org/education/states-consider-elimination-of-degree-requirements#:~:text=Governors%20in%20at%20least%2010,requirements%20for%20most%20state%20positions.)

Harvard Business School has found that “degree inflation—the rising demand for a four-year college degree for jobs that previously did not require one—is a substantive and widespread phenomenon that is making the U.S. labor market more inefficient...this phenomenon hampers companies from finding the talent they need to grow and prosper and hinders Americans from accessing jobs that provide the basis for a decent standard of living.”<sup>2</sup>

By taking this action, the Commission also intends to lower unnecessary barriers to Port employment for communities of color. In 2021, Pew Research Center found that, while 42 percent of White Americans 25 and older had earned a four-year degree, 28 percent of Black and 21 percent of Latino Americans had done the same.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Fuller, J., Raman, M., et al. (October 2017). *Dismissed By Degrees*. Published by Accenture, Grads of Life, Harvard Business School.

<sup>3</sup> Schaeffer, Katherine. “10 Facts About Today’s College Graduates.” *Pew Research Center*, 12 April, 2022 <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/04/12/10-facts-about-todays-college-graduates/>