

Unlocking Access to Postsecondary Enrollment: FAFSA/WASFA as a Key Strategy During the COVID-19 Crisis

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Who We Are



We advance educational opportunities and attainment in Washington. In pursuit of our mission, the **Washington Student Achievement Council:**

- Leads statewide strategic planning to improve educational coordination and transitions
- Supports Washingtonians through the administration of financial aid, a college savings plan, and support services
- Advocates for the economic, social, and civic benefits of postsecondary education



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Unlocking Access to Postsecondary Enrollment

How is FAFSA/WASFA the key to helping students enroll in postsecondary education?

A. Understanding the opportunity & the challenge

1. The opportunity of the Washington College Grant
2. WA's challenge with improving FAFSA/WASFA completion rates
3. FAFSA/WASFA & the connection to increased postsecondary enrollment
4. COVID 19 impact on postsecondary enrollment & FAFSA/WASFA completion

B. Reaction Panel Discussion

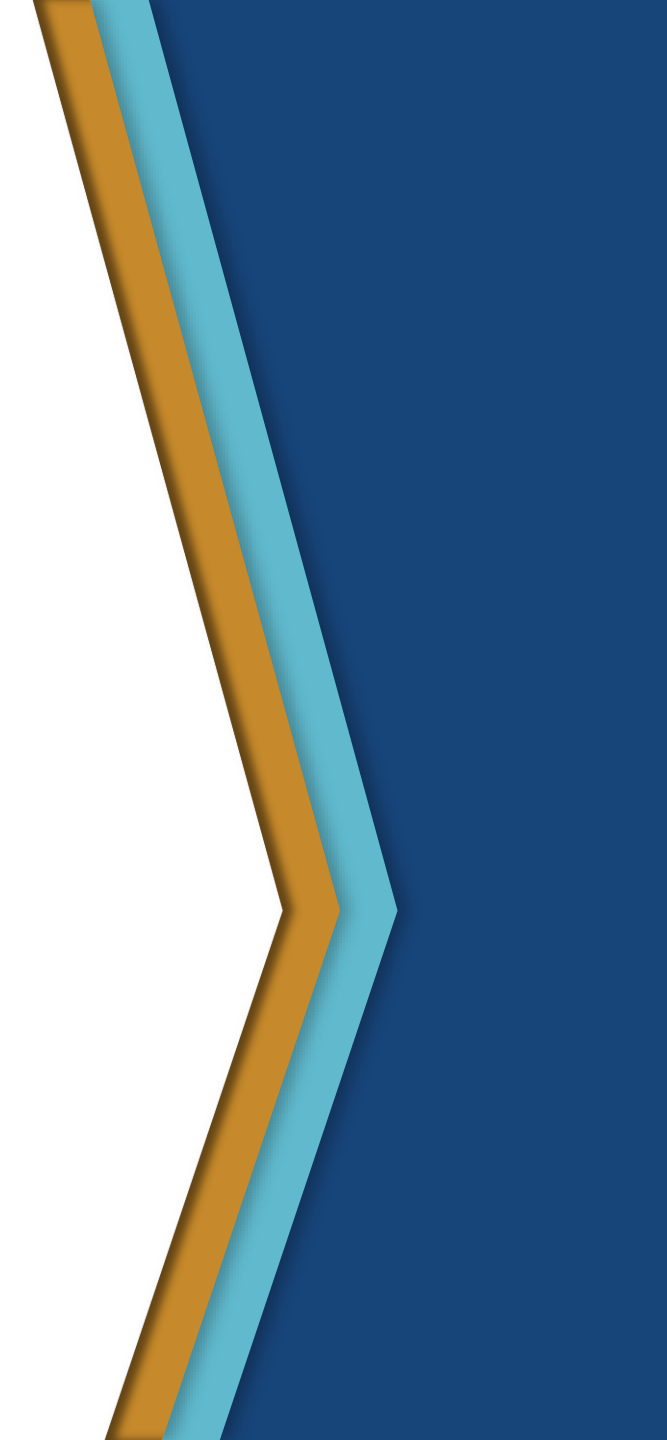
Moderated by Jean-Claude Brizard from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

C. Aim Higher Washington

Find out more about how you can be involved in supporting FAFSA/WASFA completion, including through:

1. Events and resources
2. Digital tools
3. Training opportunities

The Opportunity: Washington College Grant





Opportunity: The Washington College Grant (WCG)

Washington State has made a groundbreaking commitment to financial aid for low- and middle-income people of all ages with the new **Washington College Grant (WCG)**.

The new **Washington College Grant** gives **more money** to **more students** for **more kinds** of education after high school.

Welding
or
Nursing?

English
or
Computer Science?

18-month apprenticeship
or
4-year college degree?

Whatever the goal, Washington College Grant can help.



Opportunity: The Washington College Grant (WCG)

The Legislature renamed and expanded the state's largest financial aid program.



Beginning for AY 2020-21

- Guaranteed funding for eligible participants
- Expanded eligibility to more low- and middle-income families, with partial grants up to 100% of Median Family Income
- Supports people in registered apprenticeships



WCG Income Eligibility

Award amounts vary based on income, family size, and program attended.

Family Size	Full Award	Partial Award
 Eligible Student Family of 1	Income \$27,500 or less	Income Up to \$50,500
 Eligible Student Family of 4	Income \$53,000 or less	Income Up to \$97,000

Washington's Challenge





The Problem in Washington State

Students are leaving money on the table

Completing the FAFSA/WASFA is required to receive state financial aid state like the WCG

- But year after year, roughly half of WA seniors are not completing financial aid applications

In 2017, WA left over \$50 million in federal student financial aid (Pell Grant) on the table

- We can trace these unused resources back to low rates of students applying for financial aid

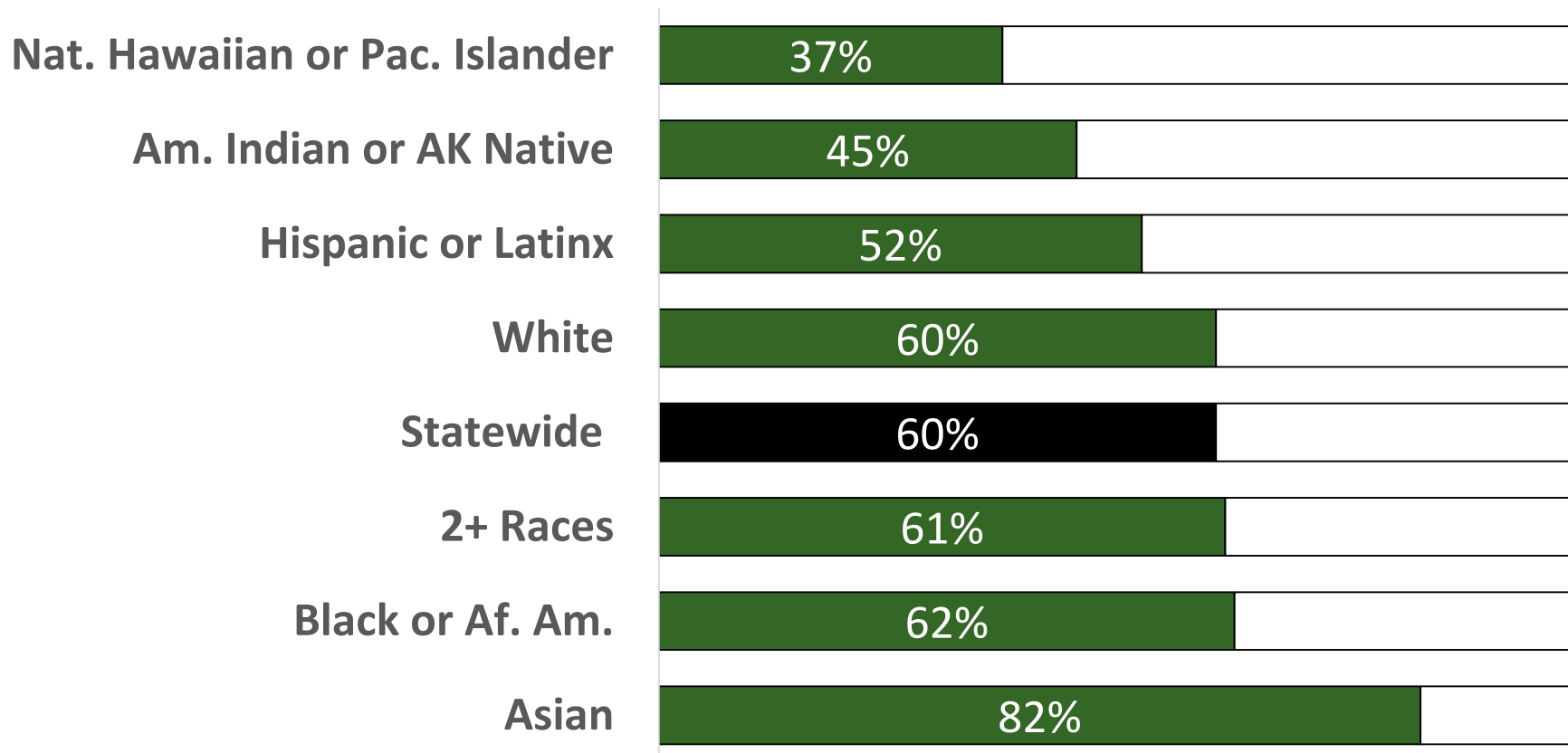
College-going culture is weak among high school students in Washington

- Just 60% of Washington's class of 2018 enrolled in a postsecondary program within one year of high school graduation



Racial Disparities in Postsecondary Enrollment

WA's weak college-going culture is also evident across racial groups





FAFSA/WASFA: Unlocking Enrollment

FAFSA completion is correlated with positive postsecondary outcomes

FAFSA completers have higher rates of postsecondary enrollment

- Over 90% of students who filed FAFSA during their senior year enrolled in college immediately following high school graduation, compared to 50% of seniors who did not complete the FAFSA (HSLs:2009)
- Among students from the lowest socioeconomic quintile, those who completed the FAFSA had a 127% higher likelihood of college enrollment immediately following high school graduation compared to their peers who did not complete the FAFSA (HSLs:2009)

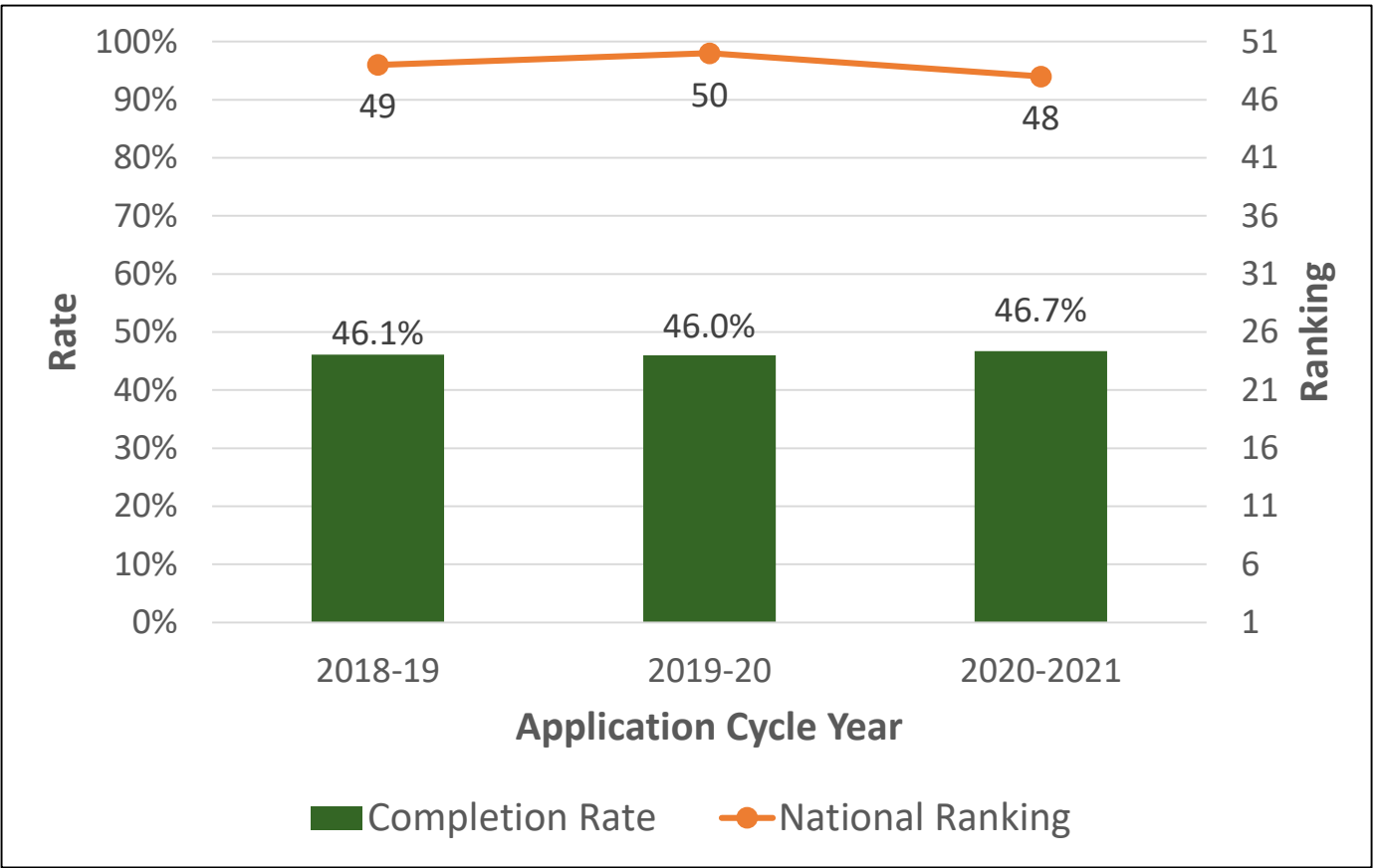
FAFSA completers are more likely to persist in college

- Students who completed FAFSA were 72% more likely to persist in college than those who did not complete FAFSA (Novak & McKinney, 2011)



What We Know About FAFSA/WASFA Completion Rates

Year after year, FAFSA completion rates are stagnant & WASFA completion remains inconsistent



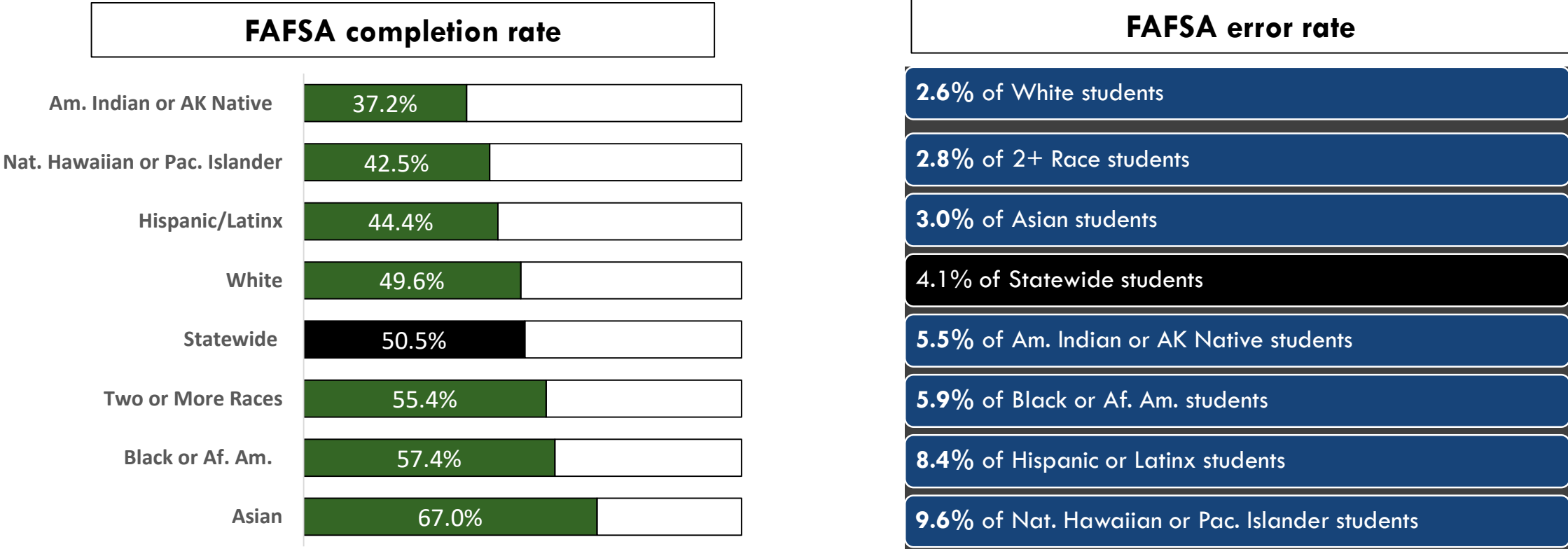
Application Cycle	WASFA Applicants
2014-15	2, 507
2015-16	3, 686
2016-17	4, 713
2017-18	4, 615
2018-19	4, 951
2019-20	5, 405

Source: FAFSA completion data calculated by National College Attainment Network <https://formyourfuture.org/fafsa-tracker/>



Racial Disparities in FAFSA Completion & Error Rates

Some students of color are applying for financial aid at higher rates than their White peers, but racial disparities remain in both completion & error rates



Source: WSAC analysis on August 3rd, 2020 of public high school Class of 2020 FAFSA completion rates by race and ethnicity, 2020-2021 FAFSA Cycle

COVID-19 Impact





How COVID-19 is Impacting PS Enrollment

WA Spring 2020 enrollment data: Students of color have been disproportionately impacted

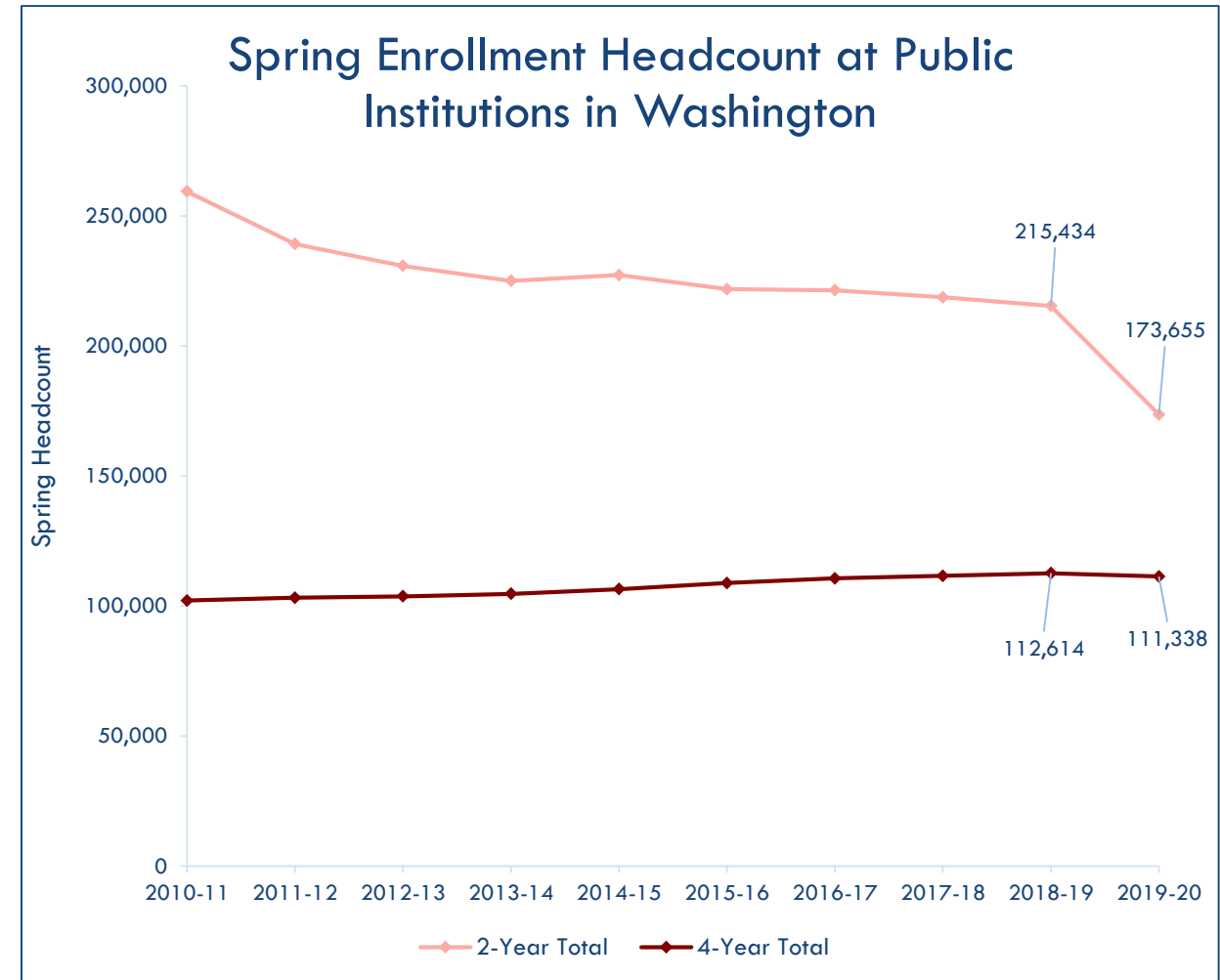
- 2-year institutions saw a substantial drop in 2020 (down 19.4% compared to spring 2019), while 4-year enrollment remained steady (down 1.1%)
- At both 2-year & 4-year institutions, the largest enrollment declines were experienced by students of color

Nationally:

- Black and Latinx students were 6 times more likely to take leaves of absence this spring compared to last year, rates that were much higher than the trend for students overall

Class of 2020

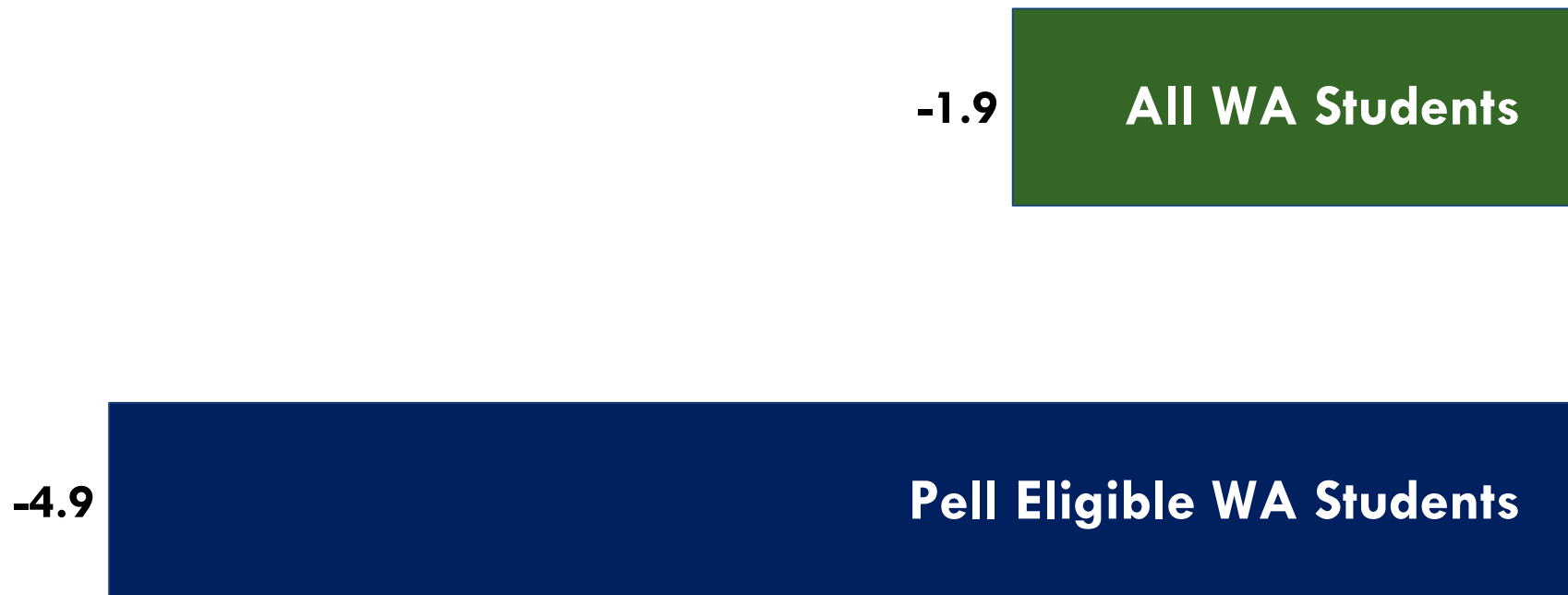
- This spring, 41% of students of color said they would not go to college in the fall, or it was "too soon to say," compared to 24% of their white classmates.





How COVID-19 is Impacting FAFSA Completion

FAFSA Renewals Decreased for the 2020-21 Cycle





Reaction Panel Discussion: Moderator

Jean-Claude Brizard

*Senior Advisor &
Deputy Director in U.S.
Programs at the Bill
and Melinda Gates
Foundation*

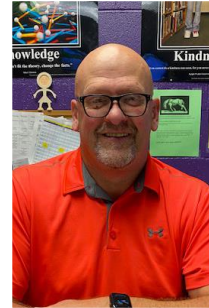




Reaction Panel Discussion



Anna Brosius
Financial Aid Outreach Specialist
Green River College



Michael R. Hull
Principal
Pateros High School



Katherine Curles
Career Specialist
Walla Walla Public Schools



Sativah Jones
Member of the WA Student Achievement
Council
Director of College & Career Readiness
Highline Public Schools



Daniela Murguia
Education Advocate
North West Education Access



Linda Vargas-Villanueva
Student & Undocumented Initiatives
Ambassador
Washington State University



The Opportunity: Aim Higher Washington

The combination of the Washington College Grant and the investment to increase financial aid applications provides a unique opportunity to engage statewide. Find out more about how you can be involved at: <https://wsac.wa.gov/aim-higher>



Initiative focused on increasing equity in postsecondary attainment by supporting a statewide college going culture through accessible, pathway relevant support of FAFSA/WASFA completion

- 12th Year Campaign: Free events & resources
- Partnerships: Education, community & government leaders
- Digital Tools: OtterBot & College to Career Compass
- Train the Trainer: Training & volunteer opportunities



Resources

- The 12th Year Campaign helps Washington seniors apply for college and complete the FAFSA or WASFA. The campaign provides a host of resources, including financial aid information and training, statewide virtual financial aid completion events, and free print and digital materials for students, families, educators, and advocates.
- The WSAC Portal provides educators with student-level completion data for increased outreach and engagement, with a new, in-depth FAFSA Completion Dashboard.
- Otterbot is a free texting service created to support high school seniors who have signed up for the College Bound Scholarship. Students can access Otterbot via text message 24 hours a day, seven days a week by texting "Hi Otter" to 360-928-7281.



Resources

- WSAC's College and Career Compass is an interactive tool that provides students of all ages the opportunity to explore and connect with campuses that offer educational or job training programs that match their goals and interest.
- The Financial Aid Toolkit provides resources supporting the financial aid application process with specific guidance on how different audiences can use the tools.
- The Plan Your Future web page serves as a one-stop-shop for all things related to the postsecondary transition for the class of 2021.



Thank You!

Call to Action

What can you do to join with AHW in supporting students on their pathway to postsecondary education?

Share with us in the chat or email ameliam@wsac.wa.gov

Stay tuned for future Pave the Way events

Join the Pave the Way listserv at wsac.wa.gov/pavetheway