



# COUNCIL CONVERSATIONS

WASHINGTON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2014 EDITION

## LETTER FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR

By Maud Daudon, Chair, Washington Student Achievement Council

The Washington Student Achievement Council's ten-year Roadmap provides strategies to increase higher education access, affordability, and attainment. The plan represents the collective efforts of our members, all of whom are equally committed to identifying policies that will benefit our students.

Two powerful targets drive the ten-year Roadmap. By 2023:

- All Washingtonians ages 25-44 will complete either a high school degree or certificate
  - Current attainment level: 89 percent
- At least 70 percent of Washingtonians ages 25-44 will attain postsecondary education
  - Current attainment level: just under 50 percent

In developing the Roadmap, we were struck by the direct correlation between family income and the attainment levels of students. Educational attainment can powerfully break the vicious cycle of being born into poverty and staying there, and two Washington State programs have demonstrated great success in doing just this:

- The College Bound Scholarship program ensures that students who otherwise would not be able to afford college receive support to realize their dreams of postsecondary education. Students must make a pledge in 8th grade to head to college after high school, stay out of legal trouble, and maintain 2.0 GPA.
- The State Need Grant program supports students whose families otherwise could not afford college, augmenting federal programs for the lowest income families.

Both of these respected and successful programs are currently underfunded, leaving students unserved in the State Need Grant. The College Bound Scholarship and State Need Grant programs are necessary to ensure access for all students, and we will continue to advocate for increased funding in the 2014 supplemental budget with the goal of fully funding both programs within five years.

Many Roadmap recommendations do NOT require funding, including the following:

- Make better use of the senior year of high school, resulting in reduced postsecondary remediation.
- Reach out to over 450,000 adults in the state living below poverty who have started, but not completed, some form of postsecondary education.
- Increase support systems for counseling and providing information to students in high school such as online tools, counseling support, and mentoring.

As President and CEO of the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, I am keenly aware of the 25,000 jobs open right now in our region that are going unfilled because of insufficient qualified candidates. Let's teach and train Washington students to be successful applicants to those 25,000 jobs. It is within our reach to build a cycle of economic success and opportunity and to make Washington's education system the envy of the nation.

### **LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

By Gene Sharratt, Ph.D.

For our first Council Conversations newsletter of 2014, I would like to start with an acknowledgement of some of our most recent successes. 2013 was an eventful year for the Washington Student Achievement Council. The production of the ten-year Roadmap, development of ReadySetGrad.org, and our continued outreach and engagement in support of College Bound and College Goal Washington are all a reflection of staff's commitment to the mission of the Council.

During the 2014 Legislative Session, we have supported policies that will increase the educational attainment of Washington students. We will continue to work in partnership with the Governor's office, House and Senate leadership, and all Washington citizens to meet our goals for increased attainment.

### **COUNCIL TO HOST DIVERSITY CONFERENCE IN APRIL**

Student Achievement Council staff are working with stakeholders to finalize an agenda for the first annual Educational Attainment for All diversity conference, to be held at the Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences in Yakima on April 16.

The conference will be a forum to examine approaches to improving postsecondary access and success for underrepresented student groups across sectors and grade levels. Participants will share effective practices and look for opportunities for statewide collaboration in the promotion of strong, sustainable programs and practices that ultimately improve outcomes for students of color.

The conference is designed for people working to promote educational diversity, including the following:

- P-20 educators, counselors, and administrative leaders.
- Representatives from tribal and government agencies, offices, commissions, and committees.
- Staff or members of nonprofit organizations, federations, and coalitions that promote educational attainment for underrepresented groups.

The Educational Attainment for All diversity conference is the first step in establishing an ongoing P-20 network dedicated to improving educational opportunities for historically underserved groups.

For more information or to register for the event, visit: <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/ed-for-all>

## **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

With less than two weeks remaining of the 60-day legislative session, most legislation directly aligned with the [Council's 2014 legislative priorities](#) is still moving through the process.

We are very pleased to report that the bill putting the attainment goals in statute ([HB 2626](#)) was widely supported on the House Floor and has been swiftly moving through the Senate Committees. The Council and its partner education organizations are hopeful that the bill will be brought up for a vote on the Senate Floor and sent to the Governor's desk to be signed in to law over the coming weeks.

Many of the bills with direct alignment to Roadmap priorities are also continuing to move through the legislative process, including legislation expanding access to dual-credit and dual-enrollment programs, providing for academic credit for military experience, and providing for a 24-credit graduation requirement. Other bills endorsed by the Council include the "Real Hope Act" ([SB 6523](#)), which was signed into law by Governor Inslee last week, and [SB 5318](#), legislation currently in House Appropriations that would ensure veterans and active-duty military members are eligible for in-state tuition.

Finally, Council staff are closely tracking the House and Senate budget proposals, which both currently include the necessary funding for the College Bound Scholarship through the 2014-15 academic year.

## **REAL HOPE OFFERS STATE NEED GRANT TO UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS**

[SB 6523](#), otherwise known as the Real Hope Act, passed the Legislature and was signed by Governor Inslee on Wednesday, February 26.

This legislation amends the State Need Grant (SNG) statute to permit students who are eligible for in-state tuition and who are non-citizens to be eligible to apply for SNG. The bill also provides an additional \$5 million to the State Need Grant program. As there is not a state-level priority for this newly eligible population, these funds will be incorporated into the larger program.

In order for these students to have an equitable opportunity to be considered for State Need Grant in the 2014-15 academic year, it is critical that they get accurate information as quickly as possible. We have created a page on the Ready, Set, Grad website ([www.readysetgrad.org/hope](http://www.readysetgrad.org/hope)) to provide some initial eligibility information for students. Because students will not file a FAFSA, the Council will provide a web-based application that will compute their Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The application should be available by April 1.

We will be holding webinars related to the application process for staff from admissions, outreach, financial aid, K-12, and college access partners in the coming weeks.

For more information, visit [www.readysetgrad.org/hope](http://www.readysetgrad.org/hope).

## **NEW SURVEY REVEALS IMPACTS OF FINANCIAL AID CUTS**

In fall 2013, staff at the Washington Student Achievement Council conducted a survey of State Need Grant (SNG) eligible students who received SNG during the 2011-12 academic year but were unserved during 2012-13. Over 300 students responded to the survey.

Respondents provided two critical insights into the importance of Washington's largest need-based financial aid program:

1. The loss of SNG has negatively impacted the academic progress and the overall quality of life of low-income individuals who have a strong desire to complete their postsecondary education.
2. Some students are so committed to their postsecondary education that they will do whatever it takes to stay enrolled—even if doing so means going without food, gas, warm clothes, or textbooks.

Students responding to the survey generally made more than one type of the following adjustment to their educational plans and lifestyle in order to make up for the lack of SNG in 2012-13:

- 51 percent borrowed more from student loan programs.
- 42 percent changed their living situation through various means, including eating less, adding roommates, living in their cars, going without textbooks, and driving less.
- 32 percent borrowed money from friends or family members.
- 26 percent worked more hours at their current job, leaving less time to focus on their education or get sufficient sleep. The percentage of students working 31 to 40 hours per week increased from 16 percent in 2011-12 to 26 percent in 2012-13.

While the findings are informative, the real impact is best described by one student:

"The reduction...created a lot of stress in my life. I am attending school in a small college town, and employment is lacking. I had to borrow money from student loans, and I was stressed about food, shelter, clothing...I had to borrow money a few times from friends just to eat. A few times during the school year, I almost left school. The lack of money was almost too much, and was feeling overwhelmed. I did stick with my education, but it would be nice not to have that much stress. Having food, shelter, clothing, is also a part of the student academic success."

The full report, including data tables and verbatim comments from all respondents, will be available soon.

#### **PASSPORT TO COLLEGE PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP**

For many students, entering postsecondary education for the first time can be intimidating. For foster care alumni without supportive family or access to resources, entering and succeeding in postsecondary programs can be next to impossible.

The Passport to College Promise Scholarship program was created in 2007 to help students from foster care attend and succeed in college. Passport is a comprehensive program providing support to students from high school through higher education completion. The Passport program contains three key initiatives:

- Provide former foster youth with financial assistance beyond other state, federal, private, and institutional financial aid for which they are eligible.
- Provide incentive funding to postsecondary institutions that designate campus support staff and take other steps to recruit and retain former foster youth.
- Establish additional student intervention and retention services to foster youth through the College Success Foundation.

since the program began, Passport has served 832 students. In 2012-13, 396 students received support. This represents the highest number of students served in program history, a seven percent increase over the prior year.

In addition to the scholarship, students may receive direct support services on college campuses. The Council offers incentive grants to postsecondary institutions for the recruitment and retention of Passport student. Although campus' support varies, examples of services include:

- Providing Passport students with private tutoring and one-on-one meetings with support staff and advisors to monitor student progress.
- Access to a lending library where they can borrow textbooks, laptops, calculators, and electronic tablets.
- Providing for basic needs such as housing, groceries, transportation, and medical expenses.

Students receive training on budgeting and managing personal finances as well as assistance with admissions and testing fees. Several campuses have also implemented career planning workshops and have provided students with work-appropriate attire for job interviews and employment.

For more information on Passport, visit [www.wsac.wa.gov/passport-foster-youth](http://www.wsac.wa.gov/passport-foster-youth).

## **ESTABLISHING STATEWIDE INDICATORS OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM HEALTH**

By Sarah Lane, State Board of Education

Last session, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 5491, instituting statewide indicators of educational health. The State Board of Education worked with the Student Achievement Council, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, and the

“As a student and alumni of [foster] care, going into college was scary because I wasn't sure how I was going to pay for it. Unlike other students who may be able to rely on their families for extra support I didn't have that option. Having Passport funds available to me has been extremely helpful.”

--Passport student

“The personal support and mentorship the program's staff has offered played a key role in my doing well in college. Within my first year attending school I hit a lot of bumps in the road. I even considered dropping out of college on more than one occasion. If it weren't for my school's Passport Program Coordinator and Program Manager's guidance I may have done just that. I find comfort in knowing that I have this support now, and it will continue even after I transfer to a four year school.”

--Passport student

Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee to establish a process for identifying realistic but challenging system-wide performance goals and measurements for each of the indicators.

After engaging a broadly representative workgroup of stakeholders and practitioners, the Board submitted an initial [report](#) to the Legislature outlining the status of each indicator, establishing baseline values and initial targets, and recommending revisions (including focusing on attainment, rather than engagement, when measuring progress in postsecondary education and training).

Of course the ultimate goal is for all students to successfully meet every standard. These targets lay out stepping stones to help us achieve that goal. The Board also expressed a desire to revisit target-setting once the revised targets have been approved by the Legislature and Common Core State Standards have been implemented.

**SBE Recommended Indicators of Statewide Educational System Health**

	Indicator	Current Status	Draft 2020 Target
<b>Kindergarten Readiness</b>	Demonstrating the characteristics of entering kindergartners in all six areas of WaKIDS	41%	69%
<b>3rd Grade Literacy</b>	Meeting the standard on the third grade Reading MSP	73%	87%
<b>8th Grade High School Readiness</b>	Meeting the standard on the eighth grade MSP	44%	72%
<b>High School Graduation</b>	4-year graduation rate	77%	89%
<b>Quality of High School Diploma</b>	Bypassing remedial college courses	85%	93%
<b>Postsecondary Attainment</b>	Postsecondary earned credential, certificate or apprenticeship	50%	70%*

\*Draft 2023 Target

As you can see, the Postsecondary Attainment target aligns with the Roadmap goal of at least 70 percent of Washington adults having a postsecondary credential by 2023.

As a system, it is imperative that we have agreed-to measures of success to ensure that we are driving toward a common goal. The Board believes that these recommended indicators set us on path to improve our work as a state in this area.