

2013



Washington Scholars Program

A Washington Opportunity Pathway

Policies & Guidelines

Recognizing . . .

the academic achievement,
leadership ability, and community
service of 147 high school seniors,
three from each legislative district,
and 49 alternate recipients.



**Washington Student
Achievement Council**



Washington Scholars Program

Washington Student Achievement Council
917 Lakeridge Way SW
P.O. Box 43430
Olympia, WA 98504-3430

Phone: 360-753-7843
Fax: 360-704-6243
www.wsac.wa.gov/PayingForCollege

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The Washington Student Achievement Council administers the Washington Scholars Program, a Washington Opportunity Pathway, in cooperation with the Association of Washington School Principals. Foundations, corporations, organizations and individuals interested in providing scholarships for Washington Scholars are invited to contact the Washington Student Achievement Council.

Washington Scholars Program,
A Washington Opportunity Pathway
Washington Student Achievement Council
917 Lakeridge Way, PO Box 43430
Olympia, Washington 98504-3430
360.753.7843 or 360.753.7850

Association of Washington School
Principals (AWSP)
1021 Eighth Avenue SE
Olympia, Washington 98501-1500
360.357.7951 or 1.800.562.6100

Washington Scholars Program, a Washington Opportunity Pathway Policies and Guidelines

What is the program's purpose?

High schools in Washington graduate a significant number of students each year who distinguish themselves through outstanding academic achievement. The Washington Scholars program establishes a consistent and uniform method to:

- Recognize and honor the outstanding accomplishments of graduating high school seniors.
- Encourage and facilitate privately-funded scholarship awards by non-state organizations.
- Stimulate recruitment of outstanding students to Washington public and independent colleges and universities.
- Allow educational leaders, the Legislature, and the governor to reaffirm the importance of educational excellence to the future of the state.

What do Washington Scholars receive?

The Washington Scholars recognition award represents the highest academic honor conferred by the State of Washington. The Washington Scholars finalists and alternates receive:

- An honorary recognition award certificate signed by the Governor, Secretary of State, and the chair of the Washington Student Achievement Council.
- A congratulatory letter from the governor.
- Statewide recognition through:
 - Announcement of award recipients to admissions and scholarship officers at in-state public and private colleges and universities, members of the Legislature, and the governor.
 - Publication of the “Washington Scholars Directory.”
 - A statewide media press release.
 - Declaration of “Washington Scholars Month” by gubernatorial proclamation in the spring of high school graduation.

NOTE: State-funded monetary awards for Washington Scholars chosen for 2013 and 2014 currently are suspended due to state budget cuts. Washington Scholars selected from these graduating classes will receive honorary recognition awards, but will not be offered the monetary scholarship unless specifically authorized in the upcoming 2013-15 state biennial budget. Washington Scholar designation is a valuable asset in securing other educational scholarships, and some colleges and universities may offer other financial or special incentives to attract the Scholar.

Who may be nominated?

The Washington Scholars program is open to Washington residents graduating from high schools in the state. To be eligible for nomination, the student must be a qualifying “resident student,” as defined in state higher education residency statutes and Washington Administrative Code (WAC) (see “Eligibility Criteria for Resident Tuition Status” and “State Laws and Rules” on the Council web site at <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/ProgramAdministration/Residency>).

The Legislature established the Washington Scholars program to recognize academic excellence and outstanding accomplishment. Nomination criteria include:

- Cumulative grade point average (based on six semesters or nine trimesters and a maximum 4.00 unweighted grade scale)
- Highest combined SAT Math (qualitative) and Critical Reading scores from a single test sitting, or ACT Composite score. The SAT and ACT writing section scores are not applicable. If reporting both SAT and ACT scores, the highest converted score is used.
- Leadership activities
- Community service activities
- Honors and awards
- Miscellaneous school and other activities

The Washington Scholars program does not require minimum grade point average (GPA) or test scores, which might inhibit full participation by all high schools. However, nominations are limited to the top 1 percent of a school’s senior class using program selection criteria. The academic scores of all nominees will be high. The final selection process requires a careful review of the other information provided in the application.

The Council will pre-calculate the candidate’s academic score based on submitted documentation, using the following formula:

$$((\text{GPA} \times 800) + (\text{SAT CR} + \text{SAT M})) \text{ divided by } 64$$

The maximum calculated academic score will not exceed 75 points.

ACT Composite scores are converted to the equivalent combined SAT CR/SAT M score using the conversion chart that is available from either the College Board and ACT websites.

How many students may be nominated?

Each principal of an accredited public or private Washington high school is encouraged to nominate 1 percent of the graduating senior class based on the October 1 enrollment count of the previous year. The following table can be used to determine the number of students a school may nominate:

Senior class enrollment (October 1)	Total Nominations (1 percent)
149 and below	1
150 to 249	2
250 to 349	3
350 to 449	4
(Calculations continue on the same basis)	

The Council will seek additional student nominations in a specific legislative district if fewer than four nominations are received for that legislative district.

How do I nominate student(s) for the award?

The procedure to nominate candidates to the Washington Student Achievement Council has changed significantly this year. For the first time, **schools will nominate their candidates on-line**, using the Council's secure web site. Nominated **candidates also will complete and submit** Washington Scholars **applications on-line**, in a different area of the same secure web site.

The nomination procedure involves two major steps:

- (1) The school's identification of suitable candidates within the graduating senior class
 - a. Submission of candidate nomination information to the Council
 - b. Notice to the candidate to complete the application
- (2) Submission of the candidate application to the Council

Important things to keep in mind:

- (1) We recommend that high schools **submit candidate nominations** to the Council via the secure nomination web site **before January 11, 2013**, well in advance of the final **application deadline of January 22**.
- (2) Student candidates will receive emailed instructions how to access the application **after** the school submits the on-line nomination.
- (3) Early nomination gives the **candidate** sufficient time to develop and submit a quality application to the Council by the **final January 22, 2013 application deadline**.
- (4) **Late applications will not be considered.**

Instructions for on-line nominations of Washington Scholars candidate(s):

Detailed nomination instructions are included, below. Please read these instructions carefully before beginning the nomination procedure. Although the nomination screens of the web site are structured to be fairly self-explanatory and intuitive, these instructions provide step-by-step detail that will allow the user to prepare for upcoming information requirements and navigate the site more easily. Principals may want to delegate the data entry of student nomination information to an appropriate staff member.

1. Look for the letter announcing readiness to receive Washington Scholars nominations, distributed to in-state high school principals in late November or early December.
2. Identify suitable candidates from among the graduating senior class using the criteria described in the previous sections of this document. We recommend that you secure the candidate's agreement before submitting the nomination to the Council. **Do not nominate students who have not agreed to complete an application.**
 - As a useful tool to prescreen appropriate candidates prior to nomination to the Council, schools may download a PDF version of the on-line application from the nomination summary screen of the Council's secure web site.
3. Refer to the Council's announcement letter for instructions to **locate the secure web site**. Use the **activation code** identified for your school to gain initial entry to the nomination site. Make note of the secure web address.
4. Create a logon ID (email address) and password at the prompt screen. (Each staff member authorized to enter information in the Council's secure web site should create a separate logon and password. We recommend limiting the number of staff authorized web access.)
 - Keep the logon and password confidential for later reference when exiting and re-entering the secure web site. Long periods of inactivity may cause the web site to shut down automatically.
5. Edit the "**Verify school information**" screen to add missing, or to correct out-of-date, information. The screen will pre-fill with any information currently on file with the Council, including:
 - Physical street address of the school
 - Mailing address of the school, if different
 - School phone number
 - School fax number
 - 12th grade enrollment count
 - Please note: The 12th grade enrollment will be used to calculate the number of nominations the school may submit for Washington Scholars consideration.
 - Principal's name and contact information

- Name(s) of other individual(s) who work with the Washington Scholars program at your school, and contact information (example: counselor, or registrar)

When finished editing, click the “this information is correct” button to save the data and open the nomination summary screen.

6. Note that Box 1 of the nomination summary screen shows the remaining number of nominations authorized for your school, based on one percent of the enrollment number verified on the School Information screen, minus the number of student(s) already nominated, if any.

As nominations are added, Box 2 at the bottom of the nomination summary screen will show nominated student name(s), student email address(es), and where the student is in the application process.

7. Prepare and have available the following information for each candidate to be nominated before moving to the student nomination screen:

- Student’s full name
- Student’s social security number (SSN), or 9-digit Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) alien ID number (if a qualifying non-citizen state resident).
 - This must match the SSN or INS identifier the student will use to apply for other student financial assistance via the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Student’s email address
 - A candidate without an email address or who is without internet access will be given the opportunity to complete a hard copy paper application.
- An electronic copy (scan or PDF) of the student’s 9th – 11th grade cumulative high school transcript
 - The GPA entered **must** be based on a maximum 4.0 scale, unweighted.
- An electronic copy (scan or PDF) of the student’s first quarter senior year grade report (or equivalent fall term mid-semester progress report).
- Electronic copies (scan or PDF) of the student’s SAT and/or ACT Composite test score report(s)
- Rank in class (optional)

You are encouraged to read the section “**Helpful hints,**” below, related to the use of colored paper stock, colored toner, highlighter ink, and documentation of test scores. These tips also apply to the creation of digitally scanned documents and PDF’s for attachment to the electronic application.

8. Click either of the “add nomination” buttons to open the “Nominate a Candidate” screen (Screen 3).
9. Complete the nomination screen for the first candidate and attach required electronic documentation where requested.
 - If the candidate does not have email or internet access, click the check box for instructions to provide these candidates with a hard copy paper application.
 - Note that the cumulative GPA must be calculated on a 4.0 maximum, unweighted scale, for the 9th through 11th grade time frame.
 - Note that the senior year first quarter grade, or fall semester mid-term progress, report must be a document separate from the 9th through 11th grade transcript. Senior year grades are not computed in the academic score. The committee may assign points in the “Overall Excellence” category for this coursework.
 - Report the highest single test date SAT-Critical Reading and SAT-Math scores. Do not “mix and match” scores from different test dates. Do not include the SAT-Writing test score.
 - Report the highest ACT Composite score if the student also has taken this exam. Do not include the ACT-Writing test score.
 - Please note: Clicking the “Submit Nomination” button does three things:
 - Generates an **email to the candidate** with instructions to locate and complete the on-line application. Once submitted, the nomination is reversible only by Washington Student Achievement Council staff.
 - Creates the **electronic signature**, certifying that the principal has authorized the nomination and that the information is true and correct.
 - Returns the user to the nomination summary screen. If the school has remaining capacity to nominate, add the next candidate by clicking the “add nomination” button.
10. The user can leave the secure web site by clicking “Logout” at any screen and later re-enter the site using the logon ID and password. The password may be reset by contacting Council staff during normal business hours.

Nominated candidates must complete and submit the application by the deadline to the Washington Student Achievement Council to be considered for the award. The applicant program summary, with detailed instructions for completing the on-line application, is accessible on the Washington Scholars page of the “Paying for College” menu on the Council’s web site at www.wsac.wa.gov.

Supplemental nomination information regarding candidates submitting hard copy paper applications:

- Schools are expected use the Council’s on-line secure nomination web site to nominate candidates who will submit hard copy paper applications.
- It is preferred that the required documentation (student 9th – 11th grade transcript, senior year grade/progress report, and test scores) be attached to the nomination record as digitally scanned or electronic PDFs rather than submitted to the Council as hard copy paper documents accompanying the paper application.
- Hard copy paper applications must have “wet” signatures by the principal, or authorized representative designated by the principal to sign on his or her behalf, as well as “wet” signatures of the candidate and, if the student is under age 18, the parent or guardian.

Helpful hints for preparation of nomination/application materials, hard copy or electronic:

- Ensure that the blank application form is printed with **black ink toner on white paper stock**. Color paper stock or toner is not acceptable. It renders the application difficult to read by the selection committee and illegible for further processing by the Council, which uses digital scanning to store the document.
- If the blank application form is printed in duplex, **ensure that the confidential information pages are printed separate** from the other sections of the application. Otherwise, Council staff must re-photocopy the application materials to detach these pages before processing for the committee to score the application. The confidential information pages include the “Optional” section and the page containing the required signatures.
- **Avoid photocopies of documents originally printed on colored paper stock**, if possible. Photocopies of colored paper stock may “black out” important information, especially in shaded areas, making it illegible and difficult to read. The page becomes illegible for processing by the Council through digital scanning.
- **Do not use a highlighter pen to make information “stand out.”** Highlighter may “black out” important information in the highlighted areas when digitally scanned, making it illegible and difficult to read when reproduced for the committee. Shaded areas become illegible for digital scan processing by Council.
- **Attach documentation of the highest scores for any one test date for each exam type.** If the student has tested in both the SAT and ACT, attach documentation of the highest scores for both types of test. The Council will give the student the benefit of the highest converted result when calculating the academic score. Do not submit SAT or ACT Writing test scores. The Writing test score is not used to calculate the academic score.

- **Do not “mix and match” the math (quantitative) and critical reading scores from different SAT test dates.** Report the highest math and critical reading scores resulting from any ONE test date when recording SAT results.
- For the ACT exam, **report the ACT Composite score.**
- Remind the candidate to use black or dark blue ink pen when completing a hard copy paper application. Pencil is not acceptable.
- Ensure that the hard copy paper application is **written legibly.** The candidate is likely to score fewer category points if committee members cannot read the entries.
- **Avoid 3-hole punching the hard copy paper application materials.** Punched holes may delete critical words from the page.
- **Avoid placing the hard copy pages in a folder or report cover.** Folders and report covers are discarded prior to committee review.
- **Avoid attaching other materials that are not specifically requested,** as these will be detached and discarded before committee review. Examples of discard materials include, but are not limited to: resumes, photos, recommendation letters, news articles, copies of award certificates, and so on.
- **Use only one staple to connect the entire packet.** More staples are not better. The packet is taken apart and the pages reordered to a uniform standard for digital scanning and for the committee to review. Removing multiple staples tends to tear pages and increases processing time.
- **Photocopy and retain a copy** of the completed, signed application for your file before mailing to the Council.
- To be considered complete, the application packet must include:
 - The fully signed and completed application form
 - A copy of the high school grade transcript (9th through 11th grade)
 - A photocopy of the senior year first quarter grade report, or fall mid-semester progress report
 - A print-out or photocopy of the student’s SAT/ACT test score document(s)

The electronic application must be submitted, and hard copy paper applications (include attachments if the attachments initially were not submitted electronically), must be postmarked, by **January 22, 2013.** Please note that **Express Mail, Federal Express, United Parcel Service, or USPS certified mail with a return receipt** is recommended to **ensure delivery tracking** to the Council. The Council is not responsible for applications that do not arrive or that arrive late. **Late or incomplete application packages will not be considered.**

Mail the complete packet to:

Washington Scholars Program
Washington Student Achievement Council
917 Lakeridge Way, Olympia, WA 98502 (use street address for UPS or FedEx delivery)
P.O. Box 43430, Olympia, WA 98504-3430 (use PO Box for U.S. Postal Service delivery)

If you have questions, contact Council staff at:

Phone: 360.753.7843 or 360.753.7850
Fax: 360.704.6243 or 360.753.7808 (original hard copy mailing **must** follow the fax)
E-mail: wascholars@wsac.wa.gov

How are Washington Scholars selected?

A selection committee reviews and scores all nominations. The committee is comprised of approximately 36 representatives from public and private high schools and colleges, state agencies, and education associations.

The Washington Scholars and alternates are selected from a candidate pool of approximately 700 applications representing students residing in all 49 legislative districts of the state. Applications are grouped according to legislative district, and candidates within each legislative district are evaluated as a distinct unit. That is, candidates residing in a legislative district compete against other candidates residing in the same legislative district.

Only the application form, the 9th – 11th grade transcript, the senior year first quarter grade (or fall semester mid-term progress) report, and documentation of SAT/ACT test scores are used in the review process. Other materials are discarded prior to review (examples of discards include photos, resumes, recommendation letters, award certificates, newspaper articles, folders and report covers).

Maximum points possible in each element:

Academic (test scores and GPA)	75 pts. max.
Leadership	10 pts. max.
Community service	5 pts. max.
Honors and awards	5 pts. max.
Overall excellence	<u>5 pts. max.</u>
Maximum score	100 pts.

Candidates are rank-ordered by final score, and those with the highest final scores in each legislative district are identified as Washington Scholars. Historically, three Washington Scholars and one Washington Scholars-alternate are named in each state legislative district.

Nominating principals and individual applicants each are notified of the final outcome.

How is the Washington Scholars program publicized?

In late fall every year, the Washington Student Achievement Council distributes notice to principals of in-state public and private high schools with a 12th grade graduating class that nominations are open for the Washington Scholars award. Nomination instructions, program policies and guidelines, and candidate application materials are made available at that time.

A statewide media press release announces the new award recipients and alternates in the spring. The Council mails individual notices to inform applicants, the in-state public and independent colleges and universities, legislators, the governor, and participating high schools of final results. The Council also posts the names of current year recipients to its agency website in a “Directory of Washington Scholars and Washington Scholars-Alternates.” A “Washington Scholars Month” is designated by gubernatorial proclamation.

The Council assumes no responsibility for local recognition. School administrators are encouraged to coordinate local recognition efforts for their Washington Scholars.

Does the personal information provided remain confidential?

The purpose of the program is to bring state and local recognition to the achievements of these students and encourage privately funded scholarships in support of Washington Scholars. To ensure that students are not exploited, the program expressly prohibits the sharing of information for commercial or non-scholarship purposes.

How has the Washington Scholars program changed over the years?

The 1981 Legislature originally created the Washington Scholars as a recognition-only program. The first Scholars were named in 1982.

Subsequent program changes over time as a result of legislation:

- **Benefit at in-state public colleges and universities.**
 - In 1984 the Legislature authorized a two year tuition waiver benefit for new and pre-existing Washington Scholars who attended an in-state public college or university.
 - The benefit was expanded to 12 academic quarters (or eight semesters) in 1987.
 - In 1995, the public institution tuition waiver changed to a state grant for new Scholars.
 - Maximum grant values are capped at full-time, resident undergraduate public college tuition, but may be prorated.
 - The state grant is contingent upon funding and authorization by the Legislature.

- **Benefit at in-state private colleges and universities.** In 1988, the Legislature authorized the state grant benefit for Washington Scholars attending in-state private four-year colleges and universities. These grants are contingent upon:
 - A match of institutional gift aid funds by the institution; and
 - Authorization and funding by the Legislature.

- **Award Activation and Enrollment Requirements.**
 - Originally, the statute permitted Washington Scholars three years after high school graduation to activate their awards.
 - With the addition of Alternates in 2000, Scholars were required to activate the benefit immediately after high school graduation and remain continuously enrolled for one academic year.
 - Those who did not activate the award in a timely manner, or who did not qualify for deferment, forfeit the benefit to the Alternate in the same legislative district.

- **Minimum GPA and Probationary Status.**
 - Originally, Washington Scholars needed to maintain a cumulative 3.50 GPA to receive benefits after the first year.
 - This requirement was reduced to a 3.30 cumulative GPA in 1987.
 - Probationary status was added in 1987 to allow second-year Scholars to receive the benefit while working to increase the GPA.

- **Identification of legislative district.** Until 1994, the Scholar’s legislative district was designated according to the high school location. Beginning in 1995, the legislative district has been identified using the Scholar’s residence address.

- **Number Awarded and Award Values.** Changes to the number of new Scholars awarded and/or reductions to the state grant value have been enacted during lean economic budget periods.
 - Due to state budget cuts, no monetary benefits were authorized for Scholars from the graduating classes of 2011 and 2012.
 - Legislative reductions to the number of Scholars named to the award, per legislative district, occurred in 2006 (two per district) and 2010 (one per district).
 - Grant values for pre-existing Scholars have been prorated to 90% of public tuition from 2009-10 through present, but also were prorated for brief periods in the early 1990’s and 2000’s.

- **Current configuration.**
 - Three Scholars and an Alternate continue to be recognized for their accomplishments each year in each of the state’s 49 legislative districts.
 - Monetary benefits are suspended for new recipients until such time as funding is reauthorized in the state biennial budget.