

## **Policy Recommendations to the Council Supplemental Budget FY22**

### **Framework for considering policy recommendations**

1. The policy is reflective of the [equity statement](#) and will help remove systemic barriers to help students of color and low-income students.
2. The policy is aligned with Council strategic action plan.
3. The policy is grounded in evidence or data that show effectiveness of policy.
4. Students, and regional or local communities and partners see value in the work and are supportive.
5. It is feasible to pass the policy given the political/budgetary context.

### **Emerging themes, evidence, and data to frame policy issues and recommendations**

Washington state has made postsecondary education substantially more affordable through the Washington College Grant and the automatic sign up of the College Bound Scholarship

- Washington has made access to higher education even more affordable for undocumented students by expanding residency to those who have earned a high school diploma, GED, or diploma equivalent before their first term at the college determining residency, or maintain a primary residence in Washington for at least 12 consecutive months immediately before their first term at the college determining residency.

Students are experiencing profound disruptions in learning

- Students in K12 have experienced substantial disruption in learning that is reflected in the data on student grades; around 14% of public high school students in Washington received at least one failing grade. The pandemic has exacerbated already existing inequities; approximately a quarter of American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and Hispanic students received at least one failing grade—rates that are substantially higher than some of their peers.<sup>1</sup>

FAFSA completion rates are down, and for low-income students and students of color, completion rates are disproportionately lower

- Just 39 percent of high school seniors in the state completed a FAFSA by the end of March 2021—five percentage points lower than the statewide FAFSA completion rate in March of 2020.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-03-30-COVID-Learning-Disruption-Report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-03-30-COVID-Learning-Disruption-Report.pdf>

Postsecondary enrollment has been stagnant and is now worse, due to COVID-19

- WA Fall 2020 postsecondary enrollment dropped 13% compared to the previous year.<sup>3</sup>
- WA direct postsecondary enrollment rate for K12 has remained at 60% for the past 10 years.<sup>4</sup>
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic students have lower immediate postsecondary enrollment rates (as low as 37%) than White and other peers.<sup>5</sup>

Despite various programs efforts, WA K12 students continue to face systemic barriers to access college

- Research shows that simplifying administrative processes or providing hands-on assistance to help students and families complete administrative tasks such as FAFSA can boost college enrollment<sup>6</sup>.

Dual Credit (CiHS and RS) can increase postsecondary enrollment for BIPOC and low-income students yet BIPOC and low-income students are not being benefitting at an equitable rate

- Students and families are expected to bear a financial burden to access CiHS and RS program, thus further exacerbating income inequality.
- For low-income students, 53% of those that participated in Dual credit directly enrolled in postsecondary, yet for low-income students that did not participate, only 29% enrolled in postsecondary.<sup>7</sup>
- Except for Asian & Multiracial students, all students of color are participating in RS & CiHS at disproportionately low rates. For example, Hispanic/Latino students made up 20% of the class of 2017, but only 17% of CiHS and 14% of RS participants from the class of 2017.<sup>8</sup>

Postsecondary students' basic needs are not being met, and are exacerbated due to COVID-19

- The pandemic has exacerbated already existing inequities for BIPOC communities---of CTC students, 55% American Indian or Alaskan Native students, 54% of Black students, and 47% Hispanic or Latinx students said they struggled to put food on the table, compared to 39% of white students.<sup>9</sup>
- Similar disparities existed in the area of housing insecurity for CTC students. Sixty-five percent of American Indian or Alaskan Native students, 63% of Black students, and 57% of Hispanic or Latinx students said they struggled with housing, compared to 51% of white students.<sup>10</sup>
- WA policies for childcare, food, and work study have restrictions that either prevent postsecondary students from access, or limit the access through work requirements.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-08-04-Postsecondary-Enrollment-Trends.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-03-30-COVID-Learning-Disruption-Report.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-01-19-Closing-Gaps-Postsecondary-Transitions.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Bettinger, E. P., Long, B. T., Oreopoulos, P., & Sanbonmatsu, L. (2012). The Role of Application Assistance and Information in College Decisions: Results from the H&R Block FAFSA Experiment. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 127(3), 1205–1242. JSTOR.

<sup>7</sup> Understanding the Value of Dual Credit for Students, shared with Council on July 23, 2020

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.sbctc.edu/blogs/news-releases/2020/college-students-hungry-homeless.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

The high unemployment rates due to the pandemic presents an opportunity for many individuals to pursue a postsecondary pathway to earn a credential and improve their future potential earnings

- In May 2020, the unemployment rate in Washington for those with only a high school diploma (18.3%) was almost twice the rate of those with a bachelor's degree (9.3%).<sup>11</sup>
- Many jobs expected to be recovered after the pandemic will require at least some postsecondary education beyond high school and those with higher educational attainment are more likely to be employed in high-paying jobs.<sup>12</sup>

## Policy Proposals

How can Washington help more K12 students directly enroll in postsecondary education and help more adults without a postsecondary education earn a credential?

*Establish the Career and College Promise Community Challenge Fund to increase college going pathways for BIPOC and lower income students by investing in local communities*

1. The Council would award grants to fund partnerships between districts/schools, higher education, and local community organizations to increase college and career readiness pathways starting as early as middle school (College Promise/Collective Action model).
2. The state would use federal and state funds to create a dedicated fund of \$250M to provide challenge grants to existing and new community-based career and college promise collaborations. The challenge grants would match local support (both cash and in kind) at a 4-to-1 rate. Unspent balances in the fund will not lapse for ten years.
  - a. Grant applicants would need to address the following issues in a high-level multi-year work plan that shows how different components may roll out over phases:
  - b. Focus on serving lower income students using the College Bound Scholarship program as a starting point
  - c. Identify and close racial disparities in student access and success
  - d. Create an advisory or governing committee that includes students, parents and leaders of community organizations that serve lower income families and families of color
  - e. Fully incorporate all career and college pathways in their programs, including Career Launch, apprenticeships, CTE certificate programs and others
  - f. Develop a system for High School and Beyond Plans that engages students and families in an ongoing manner from 7<sup>th</sup> grade forward, including a student-facing app to empower students to engage with their vision and plans 24/7 with parents, peers, mentors and others
  - g. Engage students starting in middle school in career and college planning grounded in Career Connect WA's model of "Explore, Prepare and Launch"
  - h. Create partnerships between high schools and colleges to develop student-friendly pathways starting in 11<sup>th</sup> grade that eliminate unnecessary process barriers for admission and financial aid, including direct admission, award of financial aid based on family participation in other public programs, and other models

<sup>11</sup> <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020.09.07%20Value%20of%20Higher%20Education.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

- i. Demonstrate commitment and plan to address students' basic needs for mental health care, transportation, food, housing, etc.
- j. Consider dual-generation strategies to support postsecondary pathways for parents of students who do not have a postsecondary credential
- k. Create partnerships across high schools and colleges to provide new models of dual enrollment courses that better prepare students to succeed in whatever pathway they follow after high school. Potentially including:
  - i. A course on career and college planning for all 9<sup>th</sup> grade students that meets HS graduation requirements and earns college credit
  - ii. Work-based learning opportunities, including models developed by Career Connect WA, to prepare students in environments defined by economic sector and not tracked by traditional notions of "career vs. college pathways"
  - iii. A strategy to eliminate disparities by race, ethnicity, or income in participation across the range of dual credit options

*Create a Statewide Career and College Advising Fellowship that would fund college students to be peer and near peer mentors on college and career planning*

1. The state would dedicate \$1 million into the state work study to waive the employer match to use work study to deploy 300 college students a year to communities to increase equity and help more K12 students pursue and apply to financial aid and college.
2. Funding would be allocated to campuses in a competitive process so that each recipient receives enough funding to make meaningful increases in capacity to serve high need K-12 schools and expand partnerships to support college-going work.
3. Fellows would:
  - a. Improve college readiness and college going identities of low-income and BIPOC high school students
  - b. Work closely with existing groups like College Success Foundation and WSAC to help students with FAFSA/WASFA, applying to colleges, navigating dual credit courses and accessing other college-going activities/resources
  - c. Be representative of students furthest from attainment goal, including students from low-income backgrounds, first generation, and identifying as BIPOC
  - d. Representative of the geographic diversity of Washington and would be assigned to their local region and communities to work with K12, CBO's, and other community partners, in areas of the state with high need
  - e. Receive training on financial aid, leadership development and would get college credit for their work

*Invest in regional initiatives to offer a student-facing app that integrates high school student data to support career and college planning*

1. Based on an initiative managed by Dallas (TX) Promise, several regions in the state want to explore similar student-facing planning and technology tools in Washington.
2. This approach gives students the ability to work with transcript-sourced data and share with parents, mentors, and others on a 24/7 basis to help navigate options after high school for college and career development.
3. The app may support the integration of dual enrollment courses and create a sharable portfolio of information to streamline the college application and enrollment process.

4. The state would make a one-time investment of \$1 million to develop technology systems in 3-5 regional partnerships over the next two years.

*Extend OtterBot texting to communicate to College Bound Scholarship students and parents, from 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade*

1. Currently the AI texting service is only available to 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders (reaching roughly 36,000 students) and is not being used to communicate directly with parents.
2. This proposal would increase funding to enable WSAC to communicate to students starting in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and continue all the way through graduation, reaching an additional 36,000 students (72,000 total students).
3. This proposal would also include texting to more than 130,000 parents of College Bound students from 9<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
4. The request is for \$700,000.

*Fully fund College in the High School so that all low-income students can access college credit for free*

1. Funds would cover dual credit tuition costs for all low-income students; students cannot be charged for books or other related costs (K12 districts would pay for books and any other costs).
2. The state funding could also cover alternative types of dual credit programs, like P-TECH, that support career connected learning and lead towards a postsecondary credential.
3. *This is a recommended policy position for the Council, not a budget request.*

What should Washington do to ensure postsecondary students have access to basic needs, including housing, food, childcare, and mental healthcare?

*Expand existing pilot to support more students experiencing homelessness*

1. WSAC currently manages funding to support homeless students but existing funds do not support all public 4-year institutions.
2. The request is for \$400,000 so all Public Baccalaureate institutions can provide supports to students experiencing homelessness to increase persistence and completion of a degree.
3. Increased funding will ensure students experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness at all public 4-year institutions will have access to case management.
4. Funding will be used to provide comprehensive services to students, incentivize local partnerships and ensure students have stable housing.
5. Pilot sites evaluate intervention impacts on students' persistence and attainment, complete an equity analysis of students served and services provided, which guides a formative evaluation and course corrections during the pilot.

*Washington should have a recurring student survey to determine the statewide prevalence of postsecondary students' unmet needs - for food, housing, childcare, mental healthcare, digital access- and the state should make the necessary investments to implement this work.*

1. The survey questions would be developed by institutions, researchers, students, community leaders and others, and it would be carried out on an annual or biennial basis.
2. Unmet needs data would be disaggregated by race and ethnicity, income, gender, ELL status, and student status to reveal populations with disparate access to inform policy.

3. A statewide and regional analysis of needs should serve as a foundation for regional partnership development and future state investments.
4. In addition to the annual assessment, a robust state-level landscape analysis and regional opportunity study should be developed on postsecondary access to housing, childcare and mental/behavioral health care.
5. *This is a recommended policy position for the Council, not a budget request.*