

## Context

Despite having one of the most generous state financial aid programs in the country, Washington's high school students enroll in postsecondary education at rates below the national average. Each year, 40% of Washington high school students do not enroll in postsecondary education within a year after high school graduation, with enrollment rates as low as 20% for Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Native students.

WSAC's Strategic Framework identifies postsecondary pathways as a framework to understand why some Washington residents continue their education and training beyond high school and others do not. This brief includes links to relevant research and builds on prior Council discussions to explore opportunities for Washington to act and increase postsecondary enrollment.

## Strategic Plan and Council Priorities for 2022

- i. The 2021 Strategic Plan (p.8-9) includes a summary of what the postsecondary enrollment [existing landscape](#) in WA looks like.
- ii. [2022 Council priorities](#) (p.2) details the Council priorities within enrollment for the year

## Research on Postsecondary Enrollment

- i. Explore the Impact of COVID-19 on Postsecondary Enrollment in Washington
  - [Fall 2020 Enrollment Report](#) | [Research Brief August 2021](#)
- ii. Improve postsecondary access: Career and College Pathways Innovation Challenge Program
  - [Evidence to Practice Brief](#)
- iii. Closing Equity Gaps: Access and Completion
  - [Research Spotlight](#)
- iv. Explore the students' postsecondary aspirations and what works
  - [Let us Succeed: Student College and Career Aspirations](#)

## Measuring Success

- v. [The Washington State Encyclopedia of Higher Education Data](#) outcomes for attainment, affordability, enrollment (p.54) and completion outcomes, disaggregated by income, race, ethnicity, and gender.
- vi. Potential key indicators for enrollment include:
  - a. **Total enrollment** (2019-2020 provisional data from IPEDS 12-Month Enrollment survey):
    - i. Headcount (undergraduate + graduate): 485,467
    - ii. FTE (undergraduate + graduate): 315,319<sup>1</sup>
  - b. **Direct enrollment rate** (2019 data from [ERDC's dashboard](#)):
    - i. Proportion of high school students who graduated in 2019 and within one year enrolled in postsecondary education: 60%
    - ii. 4-Year: 35% and 2-Year: 25%
  - c. **Adult enrollment rate**: Not yet available

---

<sup>1</sup> Headcount measures the number of individual students enrolled, and FTE (full time enrollment) measures the number of full course-loads

**Exploring State Policy: Postsecondary Pathways**

1. What should a pathway to college and career look like?
2. How could pathways reduce the challenges facing BIPOC and other students furthest from the attainment goal?
3. Who influences and shapes those experiences for students (teachers, family, etc.)?
4. When does the pathway start and end?
5. Should the pathways have a developmental sequence and mileposts for progress that might include the following?
  - a. An understanding of the value of postsecondary education in the immediate and near future
  - b. The confidence and belief in their ability to pursue a postsecondary education
  - c. The ability to afford postsecondary education
  - d. An understanding of the career pathways, potential earnings, and related fields of study
  - e. Flexible to support evolving goals even in each focus
6. Are pathways place-based or do they look the same throughout the state?
7. How do we measure progress along the pathways? A framework for measurement that would include disaggregation by race/ethnicity and region:
  - a. **Key indicator** measures the key cluster outcomes that contribute to attainment: Total enrollment, direct enrollment from HS, etc.
  - b. **Intermediate measure** measures progress along a pathway to outcomes: High school graduates, FAFSA/WASFA completions, dual credit, etc.
8. What are the specific activities and milestones needed that will ensure a student is prepared for the pathway?
  - a. Academic readiness
    - i. Key gatekeeper skills: math, etc.
    - ii. Accelerated pathways: dual enrollment
  - b. Exploring options for postsecondary education that include apprenticeship and other career connected programs
  - c. Applying for financial aid and applying to colleges