



COUNCIL CONVERSATIONS

WASHINGTON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

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INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION ARE VITAL TO IMPROVING OUTCOMES

By Gene Sharratt, Ph.D.

Sufficient and sustained state funding, from early education to postsecondary education, is a vital investment for Washington State. Both the Senate and House budgets reflect this understanding. The challenge of course is how to get there, and legislators will need a special session to chart the way forward. There are difficult budget and policy decisions in front of us, but moving forward to an answer is integral to Washington's future prosperity.

Affordability and access are at the root of many higher education policy considerations. The primary driver of increased tuition prices over the last several decades has been the state-to-student cost shift borne of state disinvestment in postsecondary education. For several decades, per-student state support for public higher education has eroded, a trend accelerated by the economic downturn of the past decade and slow economic recovery.

The Washington Student Achievement Council is a strong advocate for increased state investments in postsecondary education and the advancement of policies that align the "birth to lifelong learning continuum" of state practices in support of greater access, improved affordability, and increased attainment for all students.

Sufficient and sustained funding is certainly integral to the Washington Student Achievement Council's mission, to advance educational opportunities and attainment for our students.

Educational attainment (degrees, certificates, credentials) is direct output of our commitment to improving access to Washington's postsecondary opportunities. During the 2015 session, we have continued to advocate for policies that will strengthen student transitions from high school to postsecondary training and education.

This is important work, and we remain committed to improving educational outcomes for Washington.

CREATING A COMMON VISION

By Ray Lawton, Washington Student Achievement Council Member

The Washington Student Achievement Council. We are appointed to provide the public, parents of students, students, the Legislature, and the Governor with information and suggestions about how to better match an educated population with the needs of the state going into the future. The Council, established in 2012, is different than any previous commission, committee, or study. Four of the nine Council members represent sectors of the educational community: K-12 education, community and technical colleges, public four-year colleges and universities, and private four-year colleges and universities.

When the Governor's office and the Legislature hear the same message from the Council and the sectors individually concerning particular parts of the educational process, making a decision about what to do is easier. This legislative session, for the first time, the Legislature and the Governor were hearing the same message from the Council and the four sectors. The results are not yet complete, but the feedback we are getting is very positive. Why? I believe it is because the Legislature and Governor are seeing less cross-sector strife and are getting a common vision toward the larger goal of educating our residents.

What does this mean for the future? The four sectors need to look beyond themselves and become a coordinated body focused on improving the outcomes for all students. This means educating the public, the students, the parents of students how much an adequate education can mean to the well-being of an educated person, the state, and the community in which the person lives. It means the four sectors have an opportunity, an obligation, to lead collective change about attitudes and results in this state concerning education outcomes.

GET: HELPING KIDS ACHIEVE BRIGHT FUTURES!

GET, Washington's 529 prepaid college tuition program, recently entered into a partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Washington State. The [GET Bright Futures program](#) is designed to empower young students to develop and set personal, academic, and career goals by identifying champions in their lives that can help them pursue and achieve their dreams. The GET Bright Futures program rolled out earlier this month at Boys & Girls Clubs across the Puget Sound region. This summer, the GET team (with mascot Hootie in tow) will be visiting Clubs in other communities across the state.

In other news, GET is also partnering with ParentMap and the Seattle Mariners to hold GET College Savings Night at the May 29 Mariners game at Safeco Field. This event will promote the importance of college savings and celebrate National 529 College Savings Day. As part of this promotion, GET and ParentMap are giving away tickets to the game, an on-field experience, Mariners memorabilia, and various other prizes through social media and at community events. GET staff will also be hosting a booth at the game, providing college savings information and promotional items for game attendees. Fans who don't win tickets, but still want to attend this game, can [purchase tickets](#) at a discounted rate.

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT: MAKE SURE YOUR VOICE IS HEARD

By Eleni Papadakis, Workforce Board Executive Director

With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Washington's workforce system is in the midst of a major transformation. This "next generation" workforce system is in the planning stage right now and promises to help more Washingtonians connect with career and education pathways that lead to high-skill, high-wage jobs.

The Workforce Board seeks broad participation in the planning process. That's where you come in. Whether you're a policymaker, an education or workforce professional, or a representative of employers or workers, you are welcome to participate. In this way, all parts of Washington's population have a voice. Certainly, all of us have a stake.

When Governor Jay Inslee tapped the Workforce Board to lead this planning process, he praised the Board's ability to represent both business and labor. The Governor also stressed the need to help more people find and keep jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency, with a particular focus on disadvantaged populations.

WIOA is the first federal reform of the workforce system in 15 years. It creates an umbrella where 13 different federal funding streams can work together to rebuild the nation's talent pipeline. Some of the key provisions of the new law include: a focus on career and education pathway development, so people can work toward higher skill levels and higher pay; incumbent worker training to help employers skill up their existing workforce; and a new emphasis on services for out-of-school youth.

But the WIOA planning process only works if everyone sits at the table to ensure better outcomes for jobseekers and employers. As Governor Inslee says, "We can do better together." Key sections of this act take effect this July, so your participation is needed now.

To get involved and find out more about WIOA, go to www.wtb.wa.gov/WIOA.asp. See you at the planning table!

SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENTS SAVE STUDENTS TIME AND MONEY

WSAC continues to support implementation of the Smarter Balanced assessment system, which measures achievement of new state learning standards for K-12 students. The assessment scores are used by colleges and universities to exempt students from remedial coursework, saving students both time and money as they transition into the world of postsecondary education. In addition, Smarter Balanced scores provide a way to measure student progress on Common Core subjects throughout the year, allowing for adjustments and interventions as necessary to help ensure student success.

Letters explaining the importance of the Smarter Balanced high school assessment, co-signed by WSAC and OSPI, were sent in April to every 11th grader in the state, as well as to principals and superintendents. More information on the use of these assessments and college readiness is available on our [website](#).

STRENGTHENING STUDENT TRANSITIONS WITH 12TH YEAR CAMPAIGN, WASFA, AND FAFSA COMPLETION PORTAL

The Student Achievement Council is excited to continue to lead the statewide 12th Year Campaign, a combination of two national programs: College Goal Washington and the College Application Campaign. These programs, along with initiatives such as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Completion Portal and the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA), play a critical role in achieving the state's goal that, by 2023, 70 percent of adult Washingtonians ages 25 to 44 earn a postsecondary credential.

American College Application Campaign

The American College Application campaign is designed to increase the number of students in postsecondary education. Its purpose is to assist high school seniors as they navigate the college admissions process and ensure each participating student submits at least one admissions application. Washington's 2014 campaign was successful in reaching first-generation and low-income students, with 56 percent of participating students indicating they would be first-generation college students and 44 percent being eligible for free and reduced price lunch. The 2015 campaign will be held again this fall in high schools across the state.

College Goal Washington

College Goal Washington helps students and families reduce the barriers faced when paying for college. In early 2015, over 4,400 students and family members were served at 81 events statewide. More than 1,000 volunteers from high schools, colleges, and partner nonprofit organizations assisted participants during the campaign.

WSAC hopes to increase the reach of both campaigns for the 2015-16 school year. Interested schools can now sign up for more information or [register to participate](#).

FAFSA/WASFA

Financial aid is often crucial to enrolling and persisting in higher education, and completing a FAFSA or WASFA is a prerequisite for receiving federal or state aid. WSAC launched the WASFA in 2014, expanding eligibility criteria for the State Need Grant to low-income, non-citizen students who meet the program's income and residency requirements. As of March 2015, over 2,200 students submitted a WASFA for the 2015-16 academic year.

To better track student success in completing the FAFSA, the Student Achievement Council now offers FAFSA-completion data via the FAFSA Completion Portal. The portal provides student-specific completion data, empowering counselors to assist their students in successful FAFSA submission. Districts interested in gaining access to the portal should contact [Sarah Weiss](#), Assistant Director for College Access and Support at WSAC.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

On April 24, the 2015 Legislative Session adjourned *Sine Die*. During the regular session, the House and Senate demonstrated a deep commitment to supporting higher education. Special session commenced on April 29, with the most pressing directive being to finalize a budget.

WSAC Legislative Priorities Supported

Higher education affordability is clearly a key priority for both the House and Senate, as evidenced in their respective budget proposals to keep tuition flat (House) or to reduce tuition (Senate). Each chamber also proposed different ways to mitigate the impacts of reduced tuition on higher education institutions. This aligns with the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) recommendation to improve the affordability of higher education and maintain funding to institutions.

Both House and Senate budgets also supported:

- Funding to maintain the [College Bound Scholarship](#) program.
- Funding to expand financial aid: The House provided additional funds to support eligible unserved students in the [State Need Grant](#), and both House and Senate provided financial aid for the [Opportunity Scholarship](#) program.
- Targeted support of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs.
- Increased compensation for faculty.

Dual-Credit Bill Passes

The Council identified the expansion of dual-credit opportunities as a priority for the 2015 Legislative Session. Legislators demonstrated commitment to this issue through the passage of [E2SHB 1546](#), which will expand opportunities for students to participate in College in the High School and Running Start programs.

Veterans Residency Legislation

Companion bills [E2SHB 1825](#) and [SSB 5355](#) did not pass during the regular session, but both bills have moved during the special session. This proposal is necessary to ensure veterans can continue to use their GI Bill benefits at public institutions of higher education in Washington following passage of the federal Choice Act in 2014.

[Additional details](#) and a [side-by-side comparison](#) of WSAC priorities to the House, Senate, and Governor's budget proposals are available on the agency's website.

STUDENT PROFILE: STEVIE KNAPP

Age: 20

Hometown: Tacoma, Washington

Every year, thousands of students attend Washington colleges and universities with the help of state financial aid dollars. We didn't have to go far to find one of them: Stevie Knapp is a junior at the Evergreen State College and employed by the College Bound Scholarship program as a State Work Study student.

What financial aid programs have you participated in? How has financial aid helped you in your educational pursuits?

Throughout the years my family and I have overcome homelessness and poverty. I am the first to go to college. Financial aid has been significant for me and my family. I have participated in [College Bound](#), [Upward Bound](#), [Trio](#), and [State Work Study](#). Financial aid allowed me to go to college. Because of financial aid, specifically College Bound, I have been able to set goals and have a way to achieve them. And State Work Study has provided a flexible and warm work environment where I work hard but can still focus on school.

What are your plans for the future, and how has your education shaped your plans?

My education is integral to my plans for the future. I plan to get a master's degree and possibly a Ph.D. in marine ecology or marine biology.

This spring I am going to be studying abroad through the Wildlands Studies program in Australia for six weeks, learning field ecology. This trip will allow me to view everything that I have been learning in the classroom up close and personal. I'm excited for what the future has in store for me and cannot wait to go on this trip of a lifetime.

Did you have any favorite teachers who influenced your educational pathway or pursuits?

My favorite teacher wasn't really a teacher but rather the Career Center representative, Mr. Harris. He helped me with college applications and encouraged me to set goals. He gave me advice and was someone I felt like I could talk to. Mr. Harris played a large part in my getting into college.