



# SFA PARTNER

Quarterly Update

January 2017

## From the Director

Hello SFA Partners,

Every new year is an exciting time both at institutions and at agencies like WSAC! Students are working hard on their current academic year plans, and also looking forward to their next stages in life after this year is completed. For some that will mean entering or continuing jobs, for others transferring colleges or beginning graduate school. Many others will be continuing their educational plans at your institution. Hopefully, those continuing postsecondary education are well on their way to completing 2017-18 FAFSAs or WASFAs!

For those of you at institutions, you are in the unique position of supporting and helping students wherever they are on their journey, and for that we at WSAC are appreciative and wish to thank you very much.

Each new year also brings legislators, policymakers, lobbyists, and advocates together in Olympia to help shape state government programs and funding—often for years to come. I hope you will carefully review WSAC's strategic action plan for the legislative session, which is included in this issue of the **SFA Partner**.

Informing students and their families of 2017-18 state funding for which they may be eligible is something on the minds of everyone working in financial aid. We will continue to do our best to provide guidance, support and training to you, our partners, to assist you in this endeavor.

Hoping that 2017 will be a great year for both you and your students!

*Becky Thompson*  
*Director of Student Financial Assistance*

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## Important Dates to Remember

- ✓ 2017 Legislature convened January 9, 2017, for a 105-day “long” session
- ✓ Winter Interim Reports for SNG and CBS due February 3, 2017
- ✓ Passport to College webinar: Connecting to Community Partners, March 9, 2017
- ✓ Passport Student Support Conference (“Enhancing Support, Increasing Success”), Yakima Convention Center, May 11-12, 2017 – **Registration coming soon!**

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## 2017 Legislative Session

The following information is the Council’s Strategic Action Plan for the 2017-19 Legislative Session, which outlines strategies and investments to meet Washington's educational attainment goals:

- All adults in Washington, ages 25-44, will have a high school diploma or equivalent.
- At least 70 percent of Washington adults, ages 25-44, will have a postsecondary credential.

### WSAC Legislative Recommendations:

Washington must invest in an array of programs targeting every level of the education system.

#### Make higher education more affordable

- Expand state financial aid programs, including fully funding the State Need Grant program.
- Provide ample funding for higher education.
- Maintain full funding for the College Bound Scholarship.
- Maintain a stable and predictable tuition policy.

## **Improve college and career readiness**

- Increase dual-credit opportunities.
- Invest in guidance, and proven high school completion efforts.

## **Increase college completion**

- Fund successful student support programs.
- Provide opportunity gap innovation grants.
- Create a plan to recruit and retain adult students.

## **Ensure graduates can meet workforce demands**

- Expand investments in fields with anticipated workforce shortages.
- Expand work-based learning through State Work Study.

For additional information, go to <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/strategic-action-plan>

## **Governor's Budget Proposal on the State's Educational Attainment Goals.**

**The following excerpt is from Governor Inslee's 12/14/16 full press release on his budget.**

Education composes more than half of state spending in Inslee's budget. The governor rolled out his funding plan yesterday to fully fund K-12 education, and his budget released today shows further investment throughout the education continuum, with expansion of early learning to serve an additional 2,700 children, up from about 11,700.

The governor's budget would freeze tuition at all two- and four-year colleges and provide \$55 million to the institutions to offset what would have been a 2.2 percent tuition increase. Inslee also boosts financial aid by \$146 million which will give an additional 14,000 students access to State Need Grants.

These investments will help make progress toward the state's educational attainment goals that by 2023 all Washington adults will have a high school diploma and at least 70 percent of adults will have some form of postsecondary credential.

For more information about WSAC's legislative work, go to: <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/legislative-work>

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## **Unit Record Report (URR) Data from 2015-16**

We thank all of the institutional URR administrators for their work in submitting their 2015-16 reports last fall. Recently, we contacted URR administrators with information on how to obtain a series of institutional 2015-16 profile reports. Each report provides an array of information on need-based recipients who received aid at your institution, along with sector and all institution comparisons.

We are also including 2015-16 information here:

- 197,431 student records were reported by 66 institutions.
  - These included need-based aid recipients as well as those receiving non-need based federal loan assistance.
  - These students received 2.8 billion dollars in aid from all sources.
  - The average aid received by students was \$13,979.
- 68,577 students received State Need Grant.
  - Total funds received were \$304,841,897.
  - Average awards were \$4,445 per recipient.
- 14,605 students received College Bound Scholarships.
  - Total funds received were \$19,622,781.
  - Average awards were \$1,344 per recipient.
- 4,341 students received State Work Study.
  - Total funds received were \$12,380,020.
  - Average earnings were \$2,852 per recipient.
- 392 students received Passport to College Scholarships.
  - Total funds received were \$1,361,306.
  - Average awards were \$3,473 per recipient.

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## Fewer SNG Students Unserved in 2015-16

The 2015-16 year saw a further decline in the number of unserved SNG students. What follows are comparisons for the last three years:

- 2015-16     24,384 unserved
- 2014-15     29,240 unserved
- 2013-14     33,370 unserved

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## Reporting SNG Unserved Students

The reporting of eligible SNG unserved students affects an institution's SNG allocation each year, as part of a "fair share" SNG funding model. Therefore, it is critical that institutions have processes in place to correctly report these students. Equally important is that the processes update student records in CSAW when there are changes. For example, if a student was originally reported as a full-time student for fall, winter and spring terms, the student's record must be updated if the student did not enroll for all terms and also if the student's enrollment status was not full time.

At the conclusion of the 2015-16 year, WSAC found that 27 institutions over-reported the number of unserved students on their Final Interim SNG reports. Although a number of the errors were small amounts of over-reporting, the amounts over-reported were large enough at six institutions that they were not eligible to receive supplemental SNG funds this year. For the other 21 institutions, they received smaller supplemental SNG awards than they would have received if all unserved students had been accurately reported.

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## Supplemental SNG Allocations for 2016-17

Approximately \$2 million dollars in supplemental SNG funds were awarded to 60 institutions in December 2016. Award amounts were determined based upon the WSAC fair share SNG funding model. Should additional SNG funds be available later this year, our plans are to distribute them through the fair share model as well.

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## Upcoming SNG and CBS Training Webinar for New Financial Aid Administrators – Stay tuned!

WSAC staff are working on a SNG and CBS training webinar, targeted for financial aid administrators with two or fewer years of financial aid experience. FAA contacts will be notified when the webinar is available. If you have particular items you would like us to include, or other ideas for future additional training webinars, please contact Steve Thorndill, Associate Director for Training & Compliance.

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## SNG and CBS Guidance for 2017-18 Awarding (repeat from Oct. 2016)

*The following guidance was emailed to FAAs by Carissa Glassburn on 9/30/16:*

### Median Family Income Chart for 2017-2018

The MFI Chart for 2017-2018 State Need Grant (SNG) and College Bound Scholarship (CBS) awarding can be accessed by clicking [here](#). Please note the 70 percent MFI column is for SNG awarding only, as the maximum MFI for CBS awarding is 65 percent.

### Release of 2017-18 SNG and CBS Award Chart

We don't expect that the 2017-18 award chart will be released until the 2017 Legislative Session is complete (estimate late in the spring of 2017). Tuition at public colleges and universities for the 2017-18 year also may be determined then. For preliminary 2017-18 state aid awarding, WSAC recommends:

- Using the current 2016-17 award chart to provide estimated 2017-18 SNG and CBS award amounts until the official 2017-18 award chart is available. The 2016-17 chart can be found on page 29 of the 2016-17 SNG & CBS Program Manual.

- Including the Washington State Aid Conditions of Award statement with all award letters. The full conditions statement can be found on page 73 of the program manual. The following excerpt appears as condition #4.

*The offer of this financial assistance is subject to, and conditioned upon, the availability of funds. Washington Student Achievement Council, and the institution through which the grant or scholarship is awarded, reserve the right to withdraw, reduce, or modify the awards due to funding limitations or due to changes in circumstances which affect your eligibility for the program(s).*

## **Be Sure to Include Estimated CBS Awards on Award Letters if “OK to Award = Yes”**

When a CBS application record first matches with a FAFSA or WASFA, the student’s record will appear in the “Cruncher.”

If OSPI has not reported that student as graduated, the “HS Req. Met” status will show as either:

- Unknown – no GPA available in OSPI record
- Unlikely – the reported GPA was less than 2.0
- Likely – the reported GPA was 2.0 or higher

## **Those with “Likely” status will also show as “OK to Award = Yes”**

- Be sure to award all eligible CBS students in this category with both estimated SNG and CBS awards.

## **SNG Allocations for 2017-2018**

Many factors will impact individual school allocations. These may include enrollment changes, award amounts, state appropriations, and program policies such the requirement to award SNG to 100 percent of your eligible CBS students. WSAC expects to provide colleges with preliminary 2017-2018 SNG allocations that will include 90 percent of the total state funds available for SNG at the end of 2017 Legislative Session. In August 2017, after all college final interim reports for the 2016-2017 year have been reviewed and reconciled, final SNG allocations will be sent to colleges.

Colleges also will have to project their enrollment levels of eligible CBS students for the 2017-18 year and hold back sufficient SNG funds to fully coordinate their awards.

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## **Additional CBS Awarding Guidance**

**Issue 1 - Students must enroll in college no later than the fall term one academic year** following high school graduation to be eligible for CBS consideration.

For complete information on this topic, review the “Enrollment Deadline” section of the 2016-17 SNG & CBS Program Manual (page 15). Once enrollment has been verified, the Cruncher will show a “Yes” in the “Enrollment Deadline Met” field. If a student was not verified as “yes” prior to that final fall term, the Cruncher record will show as “N/A.” Colleges should not award “N/A” students CBS



for future terms (e.g., a 2015 high school graduate applies to your college for financial aid for the winter quarter 2017) unless the college has verification that the student was actually enrolled in college somewhere by that final fall term. In that case, the college should: (1) update the student's Cruncher record to "Yes" and indicate the reason for the update (e.g., we have a transcript showing the student was enrolled fall term 2016 at OSU); and (2) be sure to keep a copy of the transcript in the student's financial aid record at your school.

Once the final fall term has past, the Cruncher record will change to "Enrollment Deadline Met = No" for any students whose record was not updated to "Yes" by the end of the fall term. Once the record shows as "No" the student is not eligible for CBS payments. If though a college finds out later that a student did enroll in college during the eligibility window, the college may update the Cruncher record to "Yes" and provide and maintain documentation as described previously.

## **Issue 2 - Providing eligible students with CBS award amount on your award letters.**

For CBS students with projected high school graduation years of 2017, the Cruncher "OK to Award" status may have shown "Yes" as early as October 2016, if the student was an early 2017-18 FAFSA or WASFA filer.

Once the CBS Cruncher shows a student's status as "OK to Award = Yes" colleges should include a CBS award amount on the student's award letter if the student meets income and other program requirements. If the "OK to Pay" status shows as "No" however, be sure to identify the award as an estimated amount.

For more detailed information about CBS Awarding and the CBS Cruncher, please review Chapter 1 of the 2016-17 SNG & CBS Program Manual.

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## **SNG/CBS Repayment Reminders**

Please refer state aid repayments to WSAC before notifying students of the debt. This will eliminate students contacting WSAC regarding repayments before we are unaware of the situation.

WSAC has discovered that some colleges have referred repayments late, which can cause ineligible students to be awarded in the time between the repayment occurring and WSAC being notified. Institutions that fail to report repayments by August 31 of each year, must return the amount of the repayment directly to WSAC. Late entries will only be allowed for eligibility issues based on new information that results in repayments, such as discovering a student does not have a diploma. These situations should be reported to WSAC immediately.

Lastly, adjustments to awards during the current year, due to repayment or otherwise, should be made by adjusting the award amounts in CSAW. Funds should not be sent to WSAC during the current year for adjustments to current year awards. After the close of the academic year, however, funds from students for state aid repayments should not be accepted by the college.

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## State Work Study Updates

### Minimum Wage:

State Work Study (SWS) program rules require that all SWS student employees are paid comparably to the wage a non-student would earn in the same position.<sup>1</sup>

[Initiative 1433](#)'s recent passage directs new, higher state minimum wages for all employees working in Washington beginning on January 1, 2017, and increasing incrementally as follows:

- \$11.00 per hour as of January 1, 2017
- \$11.50 per hour as of January 1, 2018
- \$12.00 per hour as of January 1, 2019
- \$13.50 per hour as of January 1, 2020
- Each January 1st thereafter, as adjusted by the rate of inflation

Please note that localities with higher minimum rates than the state minimum ([Seattle](#), [Tacoma](#), and the [City of SeaTac](#) currently) as of January 1, 2017, must ensure compliance with the higher, local minimum wage as follows:

- \$13.00 per hour for Seattle-based employers with fewer than 500 employees
- \$15.00 per hour for Seattle-based employers with 500 or more employees
- \$11.15 per hour for Tacoma-based employers
- \$15.35 per hour for SeaTac-based employers

In order to assist participating employers that SWS reimburses directly, SWS staff will update private college job descriptions to reflect the required minimum wage effective January 1, 2017.

Employers with job descriptions at public colleges that include pay rates below 2017 required minimums have been directed to work directly with your institution to ensure compliance prior to January 1, 2017.

<sup>[1]</sup> RCW 28B.12.040; RCW 28B.12.060(5)(b); WAC 250-40-030(6)(c); WAC 250-40-050(2); WAC 250-40-070(3)(a)

### Governor Inslee's Proposed 2017-19 Biennial Budget:

The Governor's proposed biennial budget would maintain current funding levels for SWS, or approximately \$7.8 million per year.

There were no other SWS-specific proposals in the Governor's proposed 2017-19 budget.

### 2015-16 Final Expenditure and Service Levels:

Nearly 4,400 students earned roughly \$12.4 million in gross SWS wages in 2015-16, including nearly \$4.9 million in employer matching contributions. Sixty-nine percent of SWS earners were at or below 50 percent Median Family Income (MFI) and 81 percent were at or below 70 percent MFI.



In addition, SWS student employees earned an average of \$2,850; 88 percent were enrolled full-time; and 92 percent were undergraduates.

Thank you, as always, for your work on behalf of SWS and the students it serves.

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## Student Debt of Four-Year College Washington Graduates

The Institute for College Access and Success issued their 11th Annual Report on October 2016, “Student Debt and the Class of 2015.” Washington is listed a “Low-Debt State” with an average borrowing rate of \$24,600 for 2015 college graduates, compared to an average borrowing of all U.S. graduates of \$30,100. In addition, 57 percent of Washington graduates had debt, compared to a 68 percent national average.

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## SFA Partner Survey Results

WSAC thanks the 84 individuals who submitted surveys last October. There was a very good representation of positions in financial aid offices, and of the postsecondary sectors. We were also pleased to receive feedback from many “very seasoned” financial aid professionals, as well as those in entry and mid-career positions. Respondents generally have been pleased with the **SFA Partner** and find it helpful. The following seven topics are those in which more than 50 percent of respondents reported they found these topics to have been of value to them.

- |  |            |
|--|------------|
| a. SNG and CBS awarding information      | 75 percent |
| b. SNG and CBS coordination requirements | 60 percent |
| c. Passport to College updates           | 52 percent |
| d. WASFA information                     | 68 percent |
| e. DREAMer and DACA information          | 64 percent |
| f. Portal or CSAW information            | 51 percent |
| g. Important Dates to Remember           | 56 percent |

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## Providing Feedback to SFA

The **SFA Partner** was designed with you, our SFA friends and colleagues, in mind! We want to respond to your needs and improve future issues of the **SFA Partner**. We are committed to continuous improvement that is achievable through your input. Tell us what topic areas you would like covered, and where we may provide additional guidance to better assist you in your work. Send your feedback, comments, and suggestions to [finaid@wsac.wa.gov](mailto:finaid@wsac.wa.gov) and let us know what you think!

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## SFA Staff Updates

- **Gray Sterling**, who worked with the SNG and CBS programs, moved from SFA in August to join WSAC's Academic Affairs division as a Policy Associate. Congrats, Gray, on your promotion!
- We're excited to welcome **Kelly Olson**, who begins January 17, as SFA's newest family member, filling the SNG/CBS Program Coordinator vacancy! She comes to WSAC with an incredible customer service background working with underserved populations.
- **Nicole "Coco" Witty** was promoted from Program Coordinator in the Workforce Programs into the Program Manager position vacated by Mary Knutson. Please give Coco a warm welcome in her new role!
- **Katie Sandridge** joined the SFA team to fill the Program Coordinator position vacated by Coco. Katie is one of WSAC's own, transitioning to SFA from the agency's front office. Welcome Katie!
- Join us in welcoming **Ciara High**, who started at WSAC on November 1, as the new Program Associate of the Health programs. Ciara works with Carla Idohl-Corwin and assumes responsibilities for policy development, site visits for the growing Health programs, and stakeholder relations.
- We also welcome **J. Lee Schultz** as WSAC's new Assistant Director for Teacher Shortage. J. Lee began November 7, and came to WSAC from the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), where she administered the Alternative Routes and ReTooling Scholarship programs. She will implement two new teacher-related programs.
- **Marlena Rae Robbins** recently took on new responsibilities as the division's Program Associate for Financial Aid Budget and Finance. While Marlena remains with us in SFA, her duties no longer directly include the State Work Study program.
- We're pleased to announce that **Jaelyn Molloy** was promoted into the Program Manager position for State Work Study. Our hearty congratulations to both Marlena and Jaelyn in their new roles!

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## WSAC Connections

Looking for our program contacts? Check out WSAC's FAA Resources page at <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/FAA-resources>. Here you will find recently updated contact links for the Student Financial Assistance and the College Access and Support staff members tucked into the purple "Resources" box at the right-hand screen edge. To open, click the appropriate sub-bullet shown under "Contact lists by program."

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