



# COUNCIL CONVERSATIONS

WASHINGTON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2017 EDITION

## Important Financial Aid Reminders

- [FAFSA](#) and [WASFA](#) financial aid applications for 2018-19 are now open!
- 7th and 8th graders from low-income families may be eligible for the [College Bound Scholarship](#). Students can [sign up online](#) or talk to their school counselor for more information.

## GET Prepaid Tuition Program Reopens to New Enrollments

The state's GET 529 prepaid tuition program is now open for a new enrollment period, providing Washington families an opportunity to start saving for future college costs. The program had previously been suspended in response to legislation that lowered the cost of tuition at the state's public colleges, prompting changes to GET's pricing and payout models.

Details, charts, planning tools, and answers to common questions can be found at [get.wa.gov](#). The 2017-18 enrollment period runs through May 31, 2018.

## Students With DACA Status Still Eligible for State Higher Education Benefits

**Undocumented students who meet one of two residency standards can get in-state tuition and may be eligible for state financial aid in Washington.**

After the federal government rescinded DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) in September, WSAC informed residency and financial aid officers that students with unexpired DACA status will still be eligible for state higher education benefits. This includes resident tuition, State Need Grant, the College Bound Scholarship, and the State Work Study program—assuming all other program requirements are also met.

Students who are unable to apply for or renew their DACA status may still qualify for resident tuition or the State Need Grant using the 1079 standard. Under this law, students are generally required to have graduated from a Washington high school after living in Washington for at least three years.

More information is available at [readysetgrad.org/wasfa](#). Affected students should contact their college with any questions.

## College Bound Scholarship Made Medical School Possible: “I Thought Education Was Unobtainable Because I Was Poor.”

*By David Choi, First-Year Student, Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine*

I grew up in Washougal, Washington, as the middle child of three brothers. My family was (and still is) very close, and although we had financial difficulties, we always found a sense of security and joy in each other. We never owned much, and we had to be creative to meet our needs. At one point we lived in an apartment so small that my younger brother lived out of the living room, from a suitcase. We never had full healthcare coverage. The only way we kids could eat during high school was through the government’s free and reduced price lunch program.

It wasn’t all bad, though—some of my favorite childhood memories are of simple, inexpensive pastimes like taking walks around town, going to garage sales, or making trips to the airport to watch the planes fly. It was the good company that made the memories, not the money, and I wouldn’t trade those memories for anything.

Although our family always found joy in the simple things, financial reality hit hard whenever there was something we really needed. The cycle is vicious: money is needed for rent, a car is needed for a job, a job requires education and training, education costs money. It is almost impossible for someone to escape the debt and its accumulated interest. And people like my parents, struggling to support a family, see even more risk in quitting work to pursue higher education.

Education, to me, was more than just learning—it represented physical and mental wellness for my family and others in my community needing help. On the advice of a particularly fantastic teacher I had in seventh grade, I applied to the [College Bound Scholarship](#) program. As a child, I didn’t really understand the gravity of this action; I thought education was unobtainable because I was poor. By the time I was in high school, I was more focused on the immediate financial situation of my family than the pursuit of education. I had already made up my mind to work as soon as I could to help support the family.

I changed my mind and decided to pursue college after my older brother passed away. His passing changed me, and I found myself needing to help others in difficult situations with no way out. My passion for community and service drove me into leadership, but after working on some local projects, I quickly realized that I needed further education if I wanted to have a more significant impact. I applied to [Washington State University Vancouver](#), and I was accepted.

It was only because of the College Bound Scholarship and the Washington State Need Grant that I was able to pursue postsecondary education. The financial support changed my life. I thrived in college. I found a new passion for advocacy and for physical and mental well-being, and I grew interested in medicine, all while doing my best to support my family.

Now I am a first-year student in the inaugural class of [Washington State University’s Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine](#). My cohort is fantastic and the faculty is world class. It is both humbling and inspiring to serve closely with so many outstanding, diverse individuals. We work to introduce innovative and effective solutions to high-need areas throughout the state.

Washington is truly an amazing place, and I cannot wait to pay forward the kindness shown to me by the local and state communities through support systems like the College Bound Scholarship. I hope that support continues to grow for the College Bound program, because someday another young person might just be able to find a purpose in life through this scholarship. I look forward to working both as a physician and as an advocate for the community. More specifically, I look forward to the days when I can officially practice medicine in Washington State.

## All Washingtonians Are “College Material”

*By Jan Yoshiwara, Executive Director, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and Member of the Washington Student Achievement Council*

It’s a well-known fact: for Washington’s economy to stay competitive, more people need to earn a college credential. However, there are simply not enough recent high school graduates to meet the needs of the workforce. To fill the void, higher education institutions must cast a wider net and reach out to nontraditional and underserved students—adults, first-generation students, and students of color.

Enrolling more of these students is not enough; we also need to move them through to completion. That’s why our community and technical colleges are working to build diversity among students and faculty, to close equity and achievement gaps, and to move students through college in less time and with fewer credits. The centerpiece is an approach called [Guided Pathways](#).

The concept behind Guided Pathways is to simplify choices so students are less likely to drift. Courses are grouped to form clear paths through college and into careers, whether students enter those careers directly or transfer to a university for more study in their chosen fields. This is particularly valuable for students who are the first in their families to go to college; they see a broader horizon as they are exposed to the world of opportunities within careers and at various education levels. Students get intensive, targeted advising along the way.

Six colleges are implementing Guided Pathways, and six more will come online in 2018. They will share their expertise across our 34-college system.

We are also proud to be partnering with WSAC on an initiative to reengage adults who have some college credit but never completed a college degree or certificate.

Twelve years ago, Patrick Callan, then-president of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, issued a challenge still relevant today: “Washington is not going to have problems attracting more qualified employees from the rest of the country. The question is, [does Washington] want its own people to participate in this economy?”

Our answer is a resounding “yes.” By serving more underrepresented students and adults, and moving them to completion, we can meet state education goals aimed at lifting lives and our economy.