



# COUNCIL CONVERSATIONS

WASHINGTON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2018 EDITION

## Important Financial Aid Reminders

- [FAFSA](#) and [WASFA](#) financial aid applications for 2018-19 are 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.

## Gold Star Schools Help Students Get Money for College

Governor Inslee has recognized schools and districts across the state for their success in signing students up for the [College Bound Scholarship](#), which provides financial aid to students from low-income families. The *Gold Star Awards* went to 270 schools and 115 school districts that exceeded the statewide average sign-up rate of 71 percent.

College Bound helps students succeed. For example, 75 percent of College Bound students graduated from high school in 2017, compared to 63 percent of their low-income peers who did not sign up for the scholarship.

Eligible students must sign up by June 30 of their 8th grade year to receive this early commitment of state funding. In combination with other state aid, the scholarship covers tuition at public college rates. To receive the scholarship, students must enroll in an eligible college within one year of high school graduation.

Find the [list of Gold Star schools and districts](#), along with district sign-up rates, on the Washington Student Achievement Council website.

## Washington State's DreamAhead College Investment Plan Coming Soon

Over the last year, the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) has been working to create the new [DreamAhead College Investment Plan](#), a complement to the [Guaranteed Education Tuition \(GET\)](#) program.

DreamAhead will offer Washington families more ways to save for future college expenses. Investment choices will include options that automatically adjust as a student ages, as well as options that allow savers to customize portfolios. 529 college savings plans like DreamAhead differ from 529 prepaid tuition programs like GET in that the value of an account is not based on changes in tuition but on the performance of financial markets.

On February 15, WSAC signed a contract with global investments company BNY Mellon to provide account management, customer service, and investment management for DreamAhead. This puts WSAC on track to begin offering DreamAhead to Washington families by June 2018.

More information is available at [dreamahead.wa.gov](http://dreamahead.wa.gov).

## Registration Open for Statewide Spring Counselor Workshops

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Washington College Access Network are teaming up for the second year of statewide [Spring Counselor Workshops](#). These workshops are for school counselors, career counselors, college admissions staff, nonprofit organization staff, and district-level college/career staff.

### Workshop Objectives and Outcomes:

- **Learn** about upcoming policy and system changes in the school counseling program model around evidence-based school counseling and personalized planning. Share and strategize with regional staff who have effectively used statewide resources for postsecondary pathways.
- **Engage** with regional colleagues and learn how schools and communities work together across complicated systems to improve student success and strengthen the college-going culture in schools.
- **Grow** with us as we delve into the world of financial aid and understand ways that students can finance their postsecondary education, including types of financial aid, troubleshooting special circumstances, and how to read award letters.

Dates and locations are below. [Learn more and register now](#) on WSAC's website.

2/28: WSU Vancouver (Vancouver)	3/19: DigiPen Institute of Tech. (Redmond)
3/1: ESD 189 (Anacortes)	3/20: Whitworth University (Spokane)
3/6: Saint Martin's University (Lacey)	3/22: WSU-Tri Cities (Richland)
3/14: Peninsula College (Port Angeles)	3/28: Wenatchee Valley College (Wenatchee)
3/15: UW Tacoma (Tacoma)	3/29: Central Wash. University (Ellensburg)

## Washington Leads the Nation in Working Together for Student-Focused Policies

*By Violet A. Boyer, President and CEO, Independent Colleges of Washington, and Member of the Washington Student Achievement Council*

In Washington State, the higher education community has long been focused on working together to achieve results.

Since the 1960s, Washington's [financial aid programs](#) have empowered students to find the path that is right for them. This has resulted in one of the most successful financial aid systems in the country, as it serves students in every sector, at every age, and in every type of program—from technical programs to liberal arts programs, and everything in between.

Over forty years ago, the academic leaders at colleges came together to create the [Direct Transfer Agreement](#), to make it easier for students to transfer from the community colleges to baccalaureate colleges. Over this long time, colleges have worked together to refine the plan; solve problems, both systemic and individual; and think more deeply about students' transfer experiences on campus.

Sector leaders routinely come together to address issues impacting students and colleges, and to share policy implications and strategies for implementation. This collaborative work engenders a more robust experience for students in every sector and enables policy consistency across the state. This cross-sector work regularly involves leaders from across campuses, including financial aid, student life, technology, and schools of education, nursing, and engineering, among others.

Because Washington is ahead of the curve on working together, we can serve students well, be more innovative, and enhance quality across the board.

## WSAC Releases 2017 Roadmap Progress Report, Dashboard of Statewide Attainment Data

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) has released its [2017 Roadmap Update](#), reviewing progress toward meeting the statewide attainment goals established in 2013. The 2017 report found that 90 percent of Washington adults, ages 25-44, have a high school diploma or equivalent, and 52 percent have a postsecondary credential.

WSAC offers an [online data dashboard](#) to accompany the report. The interactive dashboard provides detailed data on the state's efforts to increase educational attainment. Metrics include high school progress, postsecondary enrollments and completions, affordability and funding, and equity and opportunity gaps.