



# Protecting Education Consumers



The Washington Student Achievement Council ensures that degree-granting institutions meet required operating standards, such as fiscal stability, fair business practices, academic program quality, and faculty qualifications. The agency also investigates institutions that may be operating without authorization or giving out false degrees.

## PROGRAM PURPOSE

The agency safeguards consumers by:

- Ensuring authorized schools meet specific standards related to academic quality and financial ability, as outlined in the Degree-Granting Institutions Act.
- Receiving and processing student complaints.
- Ensuring educational institutions and training facilities approved for Veterans' Affairs (VA) Education and Training Benefits continue to meet state and federal requirements.
- Conducting visits to institutions and training facilities to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations.
- Investigating institutions that may be operating illegally in the state.
- Approving Washington educational institutions for participation in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). The agreement:
  - Establishes comparable national standards for interstate offerings of postsecondary distance education courses and programs.
  - Allows Washington residents to choose from a diverse array of qualifying distance-education programs.
  - Ensures Washington State residents taking online courses from out of state SARA institutions have consumer protections in place.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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## BENEFITS TO STUDENTS

WSAC's regulatory oversight includes an evaluation of comprehensive standards at each authorized institution. As a result, Washington students have the opportunity to choose from schools that offer high quality educational experiences. In addition, WSAC's authority to investigate certain schools provides students with an opportunity to remedy problems in situations where the school is not able to address concerns.



## BENEFITS TO THE STATE

To attract and retain an educated workforce and the variety of associated benefits, Washington must provide an array of high quality education and training opportunities. WSAC's role in consumer protection ensures that Washington students and families can pursue their educational aspirations through diverse educational programs. Graduates of those programs can then pursue careers in Washington, contributing to the state's vitality and economic prosperity.

### A CLOSER LOOK - WSAC ACTIONS

#### WSAC Degree Authorization and Investigations:

- Authorizes all degree-granting institutions that wish to operate in Washington.
- Reviews institutional applications for initial authorization and ongoing renewal on a biennial basis.
- Note: Washington-based public institutions and some long-standing private institutions are exempt from Degree Authorization oversight.

#### Student Complaints:

- Investigates student complaints against specific schools. After completing their school's formal complaint process, students whose issues remain unresolved may submit a complaint through WSAC'S online form.
- Provides students with additional resources in cases where WSAC cannot provide resolution.

#### Approval of Veteran's Programs

- Collaborates with state and national partners to expand education and training opportunities for veterans and other eligible persons.
- Ensures institutions and training facilities (apprenticeships and on-the-job programs) meet state and federal quality standards.
- Assists the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse in the administration of VA Education Programs.
- Ensures that institutions and training facilities remain in compliance with state and federal statutes.
- Participates in periodic training of school officials and provide outreach to veterans to encourage participation in VA education programs.

