Unlocking Access to Postsecondary Enrollment: FAFSA/WASFA as a Key Strategy During the COVID-19 Crisis

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Who We Are

We advance educational opportunities and attainment in Washington. In pursuit of our mission, the Washington Student Achievement Council:

- Leads statewide strategic planning to improve educational coordination and transitions
- Supports Washingtonians through the administration of financial aid, a college savings plan, and support services
- Advocates for the economic, social, and civic benefits of postsecondary education

Source: Washington Student Achievement Council
The Council

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CEO & President  
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CEO, Pioneer Human Services  
Western Washington University  
Trustee

Michael Meotti  
Executive Director  
Washington Student Achievement Council

Source: Washington Student Achievement Council
Unlocking Access to Postsecondary Enrollment

How is FAFSA/WASFA the key to helping students enroll in postsecondary education?

A. Understanding the opportunity & the challenge
1. The opportunity of the Washington College Grant
2. WA’s challenge with improving FAFSA/WASFA completion rates
3. FAFSA/WASFA & the connection to increased postsecondary enrollment
4. COVID 19 impact on postsecondary enrollment & FAFSA/WASFA completion

B. Reaction Panel Discussion
Moderated by Jean-Claude Brizard from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

C. Aim Higher Washington
Find out more about how you can be involved in supporting FAFSA/WASFA completion, including through:
1. Events and resources
2. Digital tools
3. Training opportunities
The Opportunity: Washington College Grant
Washington State has made a groundbreaking commitment to financial aid for low- and middle-income people of all ages with the new **Washington College Grant (WCG)**.

The new **Washington College Grant** gives more money to more students for more kinds of education after high school.

- **Welding**
- **English**
- **18-month apprenticeship**
- **Nursing?**
- **Computer Science?**
- **4-year college degree?**

Whatever the goal, Washington College Grant can help.
Opportunity: The Washington College Grant (WCG)

The Legislature renamed and expanded the state’s largest financial aid program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning for AY 2020-21</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Guaranteed funding for eligible participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expanded eligibility to more low- and middle-income families, with partial grants up to 100% of Median Family Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supports people in registered apprenticeships</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
WCG Income Eligibility

Award amounts vary based on income, family size, and program attended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Size</th>
<th>Full Award</th>
<th>Partial Award</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family of 1</td>
<td>$27,500 or less</td>
<td>Up to $50,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family of 4</td>
<td>$53,000 or less</td>
<td>Up to $97,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Washington’s Challenge
The Problem in Washington State

Students are leaving money on the table

Completing the FAFSA/WASFA is required to receive state financial aid state like the WCG
  • But year after year, roughly half of WA seniors are not completing financial aid applications

In 2017, WA left over $50 million in federal student financial aid (Pell Grant) on the table
  • We can trace these unused resources back to low rates of students applying for financial aid

College-going culture is weak among high school students in Washington
  • Just 60% of Washington's class of 2018 enrolled in a postsecondary program within one year of high school graduation

Sources: WSAC issue brief, Increasing financial aid applications pays off in student success; Education Resource Data and Research, High School Graduate Outcomes Dashboard, https://erdc.wa.gov/data-dashboards/high-school-graduate-outcomes
WA’s weak college-going culture is also evident across racial groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nat. Hawaiian or Pac. Islander</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am. Indian or AK Native</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latinx</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2+ Races</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Af. Am.</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Education Resource and Data Center, High School Graduate Outcomes Dashboard, [https://erdc.wa.gov/data-dashboards/high-school-graduate-outcomes](https://erdc.wa.gov/data-dashboards/high-school-graduate-outcomes)
FAFSA/WASFA: Unlocking Enrollment

**FAFSA completion is correlated with positive postsecondary outcomes**

**FAFSA completers have higher rates of postsecondary enrollment**

- Over 90% of students who filed FAFSA during their senior year enrolled in college immediately following high school graduation, compared to 50% of seniors who did not complete the FAFSA (HSLS:2009)

- Among students from the lowest socioeconomic quintile, those who completed the FAFSA had a 127% higher likelihood of college enrollment immediately following high school graduation compared to their peers who did not complete the FAFSA (HSLS:2009)

**FAFSA completers are more likely to persist in college**

- Students who completed FAFSA were 72% more likely to persist in college than those who did not complete FAFSA (Novak & McKinney, 2011)

Source: National College Attainment Network
What We Know About FAFSA/WASFA Completion Rates

Year after year, FAFSA completion rates are stagnant & WASFA completion remains inconsistent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application Cycle</th>
<th>WASFA Applicants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>2,507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>3,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>4,713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>4,615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-19</td>
<td>4,951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019-20</td>
<td>5,405</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: FAFSA completion data calculated by National College Attainment Network
https://formyourfuture.org/fafsa-tracker/
Some students of color are applying for financial aid at higher rates than their White peers, but racial disparities remain in both completion & error rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>FAFSA completion rate</th>
<th>FAFSA error rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Am. Indian or AK Native</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>2.6% of White students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nat. Hawaiian or Pac. Islander</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>2.8% of 2+ Race students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latinx</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>3.0% of Asian students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>4.1% of Statewide students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>5.5% of Am. Indian or AK Native students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>5.9% of Black or Af. Am. students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Af. Am.</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
<td>8.4% of Hispanic or Latinx students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
<td>9.6% of Nat. Hawaiian or Pac. Islander students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: WSAC analysis on August 3rd, 2020 of public high school Class of 2020 FAFSA completion rates by race and ethnicity, 2020-2021 FAFSA Cycle
COVID-19 Impact
How COVID-19 is Impacting PS Enrollment

**WA Spring 2020 enrollment data: Students of color have been disproportionately impacted**

- 2-year institutions saw a substantial drop in 2020 (down 19.4% compared to spring 2019), while 4-year enrollment remained steady (down 1.1%)
- At both 2-year & 4-year institutions, the largest enrollment declines were experienced by students of color

**Nationally:**

- Black and Latinx students were 6 times more likely to take leaves of absence this spring compared to last year, rates that were much higher than the trend for students overall

**Class of 2020**

- This spring, 41% of students of color said they would not go to college in the fall, or it was "too soon to say," compared to 24% of their white classmates.

Sources: Education Research and Data Center, State Board of Community and Technical Colleges. WSAC Report: Lessons on Recovery
How COVID-19 is Impacting FAFSA Completion

FAFSA Renewals Decreased for the 2020-21 Cycle

-1.9

All WA Students

-4.9

Pell Eligible WA Students

Source: FAFSA completion data calculated by National College Attainment Network [https://formyourfuture.org/fafsa-tracker/](https://formyourfuture.org/fafsa-tracker/)
Jean-Claude Brizard
Senior Advisor & Deputy Director in U.S. Programs at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Reaction Panel Discussion

Anna Brosius  
Financial Aid Outreach Specialist  
Green River College

Michael R. Hull  
Principal  
Pateros High School

Katherine Curles  
Career Specialist  
Walla Walla Public Schools

Sativah Jones  
Member of the WA Student Achievement Council  
Director of College & Career Readiness  
Highline Public Schools

Daniela Murguia  
Education Advocate  
North West Education Access

Linda Vargas-Villanueva  
Student & Undocumented Initiatives Ambassador  
Washington State University
The Opportunity: Aim Higher Washington

The combination of the Washington College Grant and the investment to increase financial aid applications provides a unique opportunity to engage statewide. Find out more about how you can be involved at: https://wsac.wa.gov/aim-higher

Initiative focused on increasing equity in postsecondary attainment by supporting a statewide college going culture through accessible, pathway relevant support of FAFSA/WASFA completion

- 12th Year Campaign: Free events & resources
- Partnerships: Education, community & government leaders
- Digital Tools: OtterBot & College to Career Compass
- Train the Trainer: Training & volunteer opportunities
Resources

• The **12th Year Campaign** helps Washington seniors apply for college and complete the FAFSA or WASFA. The campaign provides a host of resources, including financial aid information and training, statewide **virtual financial aid completion events**, and free print and digital materials for students, families, educators, and advocates.

• The **WSAC Portal** provides educators with student-level completion data for increased outreach and engagement, with a new, in-depth **FAFSA Completion Dashboard**.

• **Otterbot** is a free texting service created to support high school seniors who have signed up for the College Bound Scholarship. Students can access Otterbot via text message 24 hours a day, seven days a week by texting "Hi Otter" to 360-928-7281.
Resources

• WSAC’s **College and Career Compass** is an interactive tool that provides students of all ages the opportunity to explore and connect with campuses that offer educational or job training programs that match their goals and interest.

• The **Financial Aid Toolkit** provides resources supporting the financial aid application process with specific guidance on how different audiences can use the tools.

• The **Plan Your Future** web page serves as a one-stop-shop for all things related to the postsecondary transition for the class of 2021.
Thank You!

Call to Action

What can you do to join with AHW in supporting students on their pathway to postsecondary education?

Share with us in the chat or email ameliam@wsac.wa.gov

Stay tuned for future Pave the Way events

Join the Pave the Way listserv at wsac.wa.gov/pavetheway