

Council Meeting Minutes

August 20, 2024

Virtual Meeting

Members Attending (alphabetical by last name): Charbonneau, Jeff; Flores, Ruben; Francis, Paul; Pal, Tathagata; Standish-Kuon, Terri; Vincent, Jeff

Staff Attending (alphabetical by last name): Anderson, Joel; Bentley, Joel; Cypriano-McAfee, Dawn; Deane, KC; Hall, Crystal; Hudson, Heather; Idohl-Corwin, Carla; Irimata, Lyle; Lodwick, Hannah; Magisos, Ami; Matull Worst, Gabriele; Meotti, Michael; Olive, Inez; Oliver, Daniel; Richardson, Brian; Rodriguez, Pablo; Sudhakara, Rathi; Tallman, Katie; Weiss, Sarah; Williams, Theresa; Winstead, Christina

Meeting called to order at 9:00 AM

Consent of the Agenda

Motion made to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Motion seconded.

Motion carried.

Approval of the Minutes

Motion made to approve the May Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion seconded.

Motion carried.

Welcome from Jeff Vincent, chair of the Washington Student Achievement Council.

- Jeff Vincent, chair of the Washington Student Achievement Council, thanks everyone for joining the virtual meeting and introduces Council Members.

Executive Director Update

Presenter: Michael Meotti

- Beginning of August, Michael attended the SHEEO Conference. The trip began with a meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), the predominant network for state legislatures around the country. They have a large national gathering every summer, and Michael was invited to speak to a small, invitation only group of senior legislatures interested in college promise programs.
- Micheal spent 5-6 hours with about 20 people and presented on the overall architecture of the Washington State financial aid program and how the Regional Challenge Grant fit into the college promise model. Many college promise programs around the country do activities comparable to the regional challenge grant or activities that we do out of our College Access Initiatives team, led by Sarah Weiss.
- The small group included Washington state representatives Mari Leavitt and Steve Bergquist.
- He discussed FAFSA filing and the current outreach programs goals.
- In looking at previous years, most of the attention is with high school seniors; however, most of the filings are filed by adults who are looking to pursue post-secondary education.

- The FAFSA data in comparison to last year, shows the numbers filed have exceeded the numbers from 2023. First time filers are slightly behind, if not matching the numbers from last year.
 - Colleges will be providing their enrollment numbers in the next few weeks.
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Questions and Comments for Michael Meotti:

Paul Francis

- Paul thanked Becky Thompson, and everyone on the Student Financial Assistance team at WSAC, and everyone at K-12 for pulling through the FAFSA crisis.
- He stated we need to stay in communication and to hold the Department of Education accountable, so this does not become an ongoing issue every year.

Terri Standish-Kuon

- Most campuses are starting around Labor Day. The enrollments and FAFSA have been challenging. Looking at the Department of Education's announcement that the FAFSA would not be fully tested and available until the December 1 could potentially be a multi-year situation.
- They will be able to get a sense of enrollment numbers around October.

Ruben Flores

- Concur with the team that there has been an extraordinary effort with all the partners combined has made a huge difference.

Jeff Charbonneau

- Hopeful for less of a summer melt because of all the outreach that has been going on through the various partnerships.

Jeff Vincent

- WSAC Executive Director review process getting launched in September, and an executive session will be held in November.
- The annual check in with Council Members will be in November, after the October Council Retreat.

2025 Legislative and Budget Proposals

Presenters: Heather Hudson, KC Deane, Inez Olive, Ami Magisos

Materials: [Budget Proposals](#)

First Proposal: *Make the 65% Median Family Income (MFI) and Bridge Grants permanent features of the WA Grant.*

- Requested amount is subject to caseload forecast.
- Currently MFI level is at 65% in budget form, but without a bill, the MFI will revert to 55%. This would affect more than 7,000 students, reducing their financial aid around 40%.
- Because current awards are packaged for the following year, higher education institutions are at risk of having to repackage awards at the last minute if the MFI were to change.

- The proposal also guarantees the Bridge Grant (\$500 dollar stipends) to all students who are below the MFI level, but not enrolled in the College Bound Scholarship. This grant is set to expire in the 24-25 academic year.
- More than 50,000 students have received this award, and the state has approved it through the 2024-2025 biennium.

Questions/Comments:

Q: In the strategic action plan, the number of students affected seemed a little higher than cited. Can you just confirm that you said 6,000 or 7,000 students would be affected?

A: The estimate is more than 7,000 students

Second Proposal: *Fully fund the Passport Program and guarantee the WA Grant for former foster and unaccompanied homeless youth.*

- Proposal cost: 9.6 million
- Passport program serves former foster and unaccompanied homeless youth.
- It covers across all the sectors and supports apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship programs, as well as provide support services of up to 5,000 above and beyond what a student may get from the Washington college grant and Pell grant.
- The number of students in the program has grown significantly, with more than 1,400 students getting the award.
- Staff who administer the grant report challenges regarding unstable and inadequate funding, and state appropriations have not kept up with the program demand, so student's awards have been cut in half.
- This proposal endures that adequate, predictable, and guaranteed funding for students. It would allow WSAC to award a student 5,000 dollars and reach an additional 500 students and make passport and entitlement program.
- Passport eligible students would qualify for the maximum Washington College Grant award.

Questions/Comments:

C: The passport program is hugely valuable to the state of Washington. Washington has an incredible number of foster students and youth who need homes. Priority should be full funding in its current existence.

Third Proposal: *Bolster capacity for current and future Regional Challenge Grant partnerships.*

- Proposal cost: \$4 million
- Began in 2022 and has since committed more than 11 million dollars in funding to place base partnerships to increase post-secondary enrollment and attainment and close equity gaps.
- There are 13 partnerships throughout the state, this commitment is ongoing and long-term.
- This proposal allows a response to the increase demand and allow us to scale the effective strategies we are seeing and support any additional partnerships in the region that are not currently involved.

Questions/Comments:

C: I support this one, but legislators are going to ask what we are seeing in terms of outcome. We need to be prepared to show data.

C: We need to keep working and identifying the data. We are working with our partnerships and external affairs. We have 4 partnerships who will be completing their outcomes for the previous academic year. By January 2025, we will have the first report of data.

Fourth Proposal: *Continue text-based outreach via OtterBot for financial aid pathway navigation.*

- Proposal cost: \$1.5 million.
- WSAC has been providing this service to College Bound students and parents to provide text messages about financial aid of postsecondary pathways, through OtterBot.
- Right now, 30,000 College Bound high school students and 95,000 parents and guardians are being reached through OtterBot.
- All high school students in Washington can sign up to ask the chatbot questions and receive proactive reminders and tips.
- This proposal enables WSAC to continue the existing work and reach all College Bound high school students (100,000 plus) and parents/guardians without the available contact information. It also allows WSAC to invest in some improvements, like regionalized messages so students that want to reach out to local community partners/ institutions can.

Questions/Comments:

C: I want to comment on the OtterBot, because I was a part of the team that worked on the last legislation to have some budget to keep OtterBot running. Two features that stand out is that it is available in different languages, and if the AI answer is not available, it can direct you to the correct person to help.

C: Different languages are featured on the Chatbot.

Fifth Proposal: *Foster partnerships between employers and institutions to award academic credit for prior learning (ACPL)*

- Proposal cost: 750,000
- Increasing the number of credits awarded towards credentials for both perspective and returning adult learners, especially for those who are already in the workforce but lack the academic credentials.
- Academic credit for prior learning or ACPL is important because many students go straight into the workforce and do not immediately pursue higher education.
- ACPL is a way to recognize the valuable skills and knowledge these adults have so they are not starting from nothing when they decide to pursue higher education.
- In the 2022/2023 education year, over 47,000 credits were awarded to more than 2300 college students across the state.
- The proposed funding is to establish and support existing partnerships between employers and higher education institutions to address issues like financial burden on students, test new tools

to make the credit awarding process smoother or develop strategies to raise awareness about ACPL.

Questions/Comments:

Q: Has anyone talked to the Association of WA Business or the Roundtable? Has there been any engagement or businesses here?

A: We have had some engagement through the ACPL workgroup from businesses, we've heard from employers primarily in healthcare. We've also engaged the SEIU training fund as well and heard from some biomanufacturing employers. We've had engagement, just not directly with the roundtable.

Q: The background document talks about helping 2,300 students, but I want to be sure the funding won't be going to hiring more state employees. I want to make sure the funding is to serve students. Could you break down what this money would go for?

A: We're hoping to reduce the financial burden on students, because a lot of the students have to pay for the evaluations to be done. The ACPL workgroup is also meeting twice a year to look at best practices across the nation. Some students were unaware of the ACPL, so this is also a communication strategy.

Sixth Proposal: *Include Tribal College and support affordable housing planning within Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness (SSEH) program.*

- Proposal Cost: \$700,000
- To include the Washington accredited Tribal College and fund affordable housing planning in the supporting students experiencing homelessness program.
- Because of the statewide advocacy this program is now permanently available, but it does not include Washington's accredited tribal college.
- There is a disproportionately high prevalence of Tribal and Indigenous students experiencing housing insecurity. This proposal will address the issue.
- The existing grant is very limited and does not allow institutions to address the persistent lack of affordable housing for students.
- This proposal would add Washington's accredited tribal institution, Northwest Indian College, as a participating institution in the students experiencing homelessness grant program.
- It would also add funding through a provision to enable up to four local or regional partnerships together with their postsecondary institutions to design local solutions to provide affordable housing for postsecondary students in their local region.

Seventh Proposal: *Evaluate low-cost meal plan pilot and assess student access to affordable childcare.*

- Proposal cost: \$500,000
- Research package to evaluate interventions and to better understand landscape opportunities in food insecurity for students and childcare.
- Food security-in 2023 a pilot program started to address postsecondary student food insecurity. The pilot program provides grants for preventative strategies such as free or reduced-cost food for low-income students.
- Four community and technical colleges and two public four-year universities launched programs last year and are headed into their second year of the three-year pilot.

- The proposal would allow an evaluation of the pilot strategies to determine the impact postsecondary student's access to food and their overall success path to earning a credential.
- We need to understand the impact of these strategies to inform both Washington and the nation because this is a unique pilot among states.
- This research proposal would include funding to conduct a study to postsecondary students access to affordable childcare.

Questions/Comments:

C: It is important to show the literature with some data. These pilot programs are a good way to show data and how the state needs it. This is very important for basic needs support for students and may increase enrollment in the future.

C: There have been comments from the community asking why bigger initiatives are not being looked at. I think that staff have been very thoughtful in calculating these budgets because it has been a very tough budget year.

Q: Have you talked to anyone at the Association of Washington Business regarding childcare because they led a statewide task force a couple of years ago.

A: We haven't talked directly to AWB, but can do that, we have been in connection with the first start for kids act coalitions. We know that post-secondary students face barriers that they would not face if they were not students.

Motion to approve seven proposals.

Motion Seconded.

Motion Carried.

Council Retreat

Presenter: Sara Levin

- Time has been set aside on October 17, 2024, to hold a Council Retreat.
- Sara Levin has been working with Abbey Roth, Hannah Lodwick, and KC Deane regarding the Regional College Grant .
- This is a great opportunity to get together in October to celebrate the accomplishments from this year.
- Sara Levin founded Ardea Strategies almost 2 years ago and works as a consultant with non-profit and public sectors who are trying to work together.
- An agenda has been designed that examines the current state of successes in pursuit of the 70 percent goal. We will also talk about roles as individuals and council of the best ways you can bring your strengths to WSAC's work.
- I hope that we will end the day with some prioritized actions for the coming year.

Public Comment

No public comments were made.

Close

Appendix A:

[TVW meeting recording 08-20-2024](#)

Appendix B:

Meeting chat record from Zoom

00:24:13 Crystal Hall: Good morning, everyone. Please use the chat to introduce yourself.

00:24:17 KC Deane: Good morning! KC Deane (she/her), WSAC's Research team.

00:24:21 Crystal Hall: Crystal Hall (she/her), Council Staff

00:24:41 Rathi Sudhakara (she/her) | WSAC: Hello! Rathi Sudhakara (she/her), Strategy & Partnerships team

00:24:58 Ami Magisos: Ami Magisos (she/her) WSAC Strategy & Partnerships Team

00:24:58 Abbey Roth: Good morning, Abbey Roth (she/her) WSAC's Strategy & Partnerships team

00:25:03 Gabriele Matull Worst: Good morning, Gabriele Matull Worst (she/her) WSAC Student Financial Assistance Team

00:25:17 Sara Levin (Ardea Strategies): Good morning! I'm Sara Levin (she/her) with Ardea Strategies. Looking forward to the discussion today.

00:25:22 Katie Tallman | WSAC (she, her): Good morning! Katie Tallman (she/her), WSAC Communications

00:25:33 Hannah Lodwick: Morning! Hannah Lodwick (she/her) Associate Director, Strategy & Partnerships (Regional Challenge Grant)

00:25:37 Inez Olive (she/her) | WSAC: Good Morning! Inez with WSAC Adult Pathways

00:25:38 Pablo Rodriguez: Good morning! Pablo Rodriguez (he/him) WSAC's College Access Initiatives.

00:25:52 Sarah Weiss: Good morning, all! Sarah Weiss (she/her), College Access Initiatives at WSAC.

00:25:57 Daniel Oliver: Daniel Oliver (he/him), WSAC Research

00:26:12 Therese Williams (pronounced "Terez") | She/Her: Good morning, Therese Williams (she/her)
WSAC CCW (Career Connect Washington)

00:26:19 Christina Winstead (she/her) WSAC: Good morning, Christina Winstead (she/her) College Access Initiatives - WSAC

00:26:24 Joel Anderson (he/him) | WSAC: Joel Anderson, he/him, Assistant Director of External Affairs, WSAC

00:26:30 Lyle Irimata: Lyle Irimata (he/him) WSAC Adult Pathways team

00:26:53 Dawn Cypriano-McAferly: Good morning! Dawn Cypriano-McAferly (she/her), serving as Assistant Director of the Passport to Careers Program, and part of the SFA team.

00:27:08 Joel Bentley: Joel Bentley (he/him), WSAC Communications

00:27:16 Terri Standish-Kuon: Technical update to minutes: Heritage University's origin story: "founding mothers, Drs. Violet Lumley Rau, Martha Yallup and Kathleen Ross." <https://heritage.edu/our-community/possibilities/>

00:27:24 Brian Richardson: Good morning. Brian Richardson, WSAC Chief Financial Officer

00:28:55 Carla Idohl-Corwin: Good morning! Carla Idohl-Corwin (she/her), WSAC Student Financial Assistance

00:29:57 Crystal Hall: Good morning! For those just joining, please be sure to introduce yourself using the chat feature.

00:30:02 Terri Standish-Kuon: Reacted to "Good morning! For th..." with 👍

00:30:38 Jeneen Breshears for Rep. Cyndy Jacobsen: Good morning. I'm Jeneen Breshears, Legislative Assistant to Representative Cyndy Jacobsen. She is currently welcoming her 16th grandchild so couldn't be here today. 😊

00:30:57 Crystal Hall: Reacted to "Good morning. I'm J..." with 🎉

00:31:02 Jeff Charbonneau: Reacted to "Good morning. I'm J..." with 🎉

00:31:06 Rathi Sudhakara (she/her) | WSAC: Reacted to "Good morning. I'm J..." with ✨

00:31:56 Crystal Hall: For meeting materials, you can locate them here:
<https://wsac.wa.gov/2024-meetings#august-20>

00:32:09 Ruben Flores: Reacted to "Good morning. I'm J..." with 🍷

00:32:09 Therese Williams (pronounced "Terez") | She/Her: Reacted to "For meeting material..." with 👍

00:32:22 Terri Standish-Kuon: Reacted to "Good morning. I'm J..." with 🎉

00:32:43 Therese Williams (pronounced "Terez") | She/Her: Reacted to "Good morning. I'm J..." with 🎉

00:32:55 Abbey Roth: Reacted to "Good morning. I'm J..." with 🎉

00:33:16 Joel Anderson (he/him) | WSAC: Reacted to "Good morning. I'm J..." with 🎉

00:33:52 Wendy Holden: Wendy Holden-Office of Equity-Disability Access

00:35:04 Terri Standish-Kuon: Across Independent Colleges of Washington (ICW) campuses, most use a semester calendar, and the first day of classes for many campuses is the Tuesday after Labor Day. Two member campuses use the quarter system.

00:35:27 Sean Behl: Good morning! Sean Behl (he/him), VP of CTC Student Affairs at the Washington Student Association, and Director of Legislative Affairs at ASUW Seattle.

00:41:55 Joyce Hammer: Good Morning! Joyce Hammer, Deputy Executive Director- Education at the WA State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

00:56:03 Joel Anderson (he/him) | WSAC: To Terri's question - the population impacted by a reversion in WA Grant MFI levels (from 65% to 55%) would be at least 7,000 students no longer receiving the maximum award - pending future caseload forecasts.

01:06:24 Michael Meotti: With Ruben's help, I have figured out where the "hand up" option is.....click on the React heart icon at the bottom of the screen.

01:07:12 Heather Hudson: Reacted to "To Terri's question ..." with 👍

01:08:12 Paul Francis: Reacted to "With Ruben's help, I..." with 👍

01:09:56 Michael Meotti: I asked the partnership team for "promising signs" from our initial cohorts of partners so I could share at the NCSL conference. We do have a number of those.

01:13:30 Sarah Weiss: There are about 100 languages that students/families can access OtterBot messages in.

01:13:40 Nancy Canales-Montiel: This is also a great tool for FAFSA navigators, when helping families get through these forms, this is a life-saver when questions we may not know pop up. Saves hours on hold with the federal gov :))

01:13:40 Gabriele Matull Worst: Reacted to "There are about 100 ..." with 👍

01:13:46 Rathi Sudhakara (she/her) | WSAC: Reacted to "This is also a great..." with ❤️

01:13:47 Kathie Pham, WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "There are about 100 ..." with 👍

01:13:48 Heather Hudson: Reacted to "There are about 100 ..." with 👍

01:13:49 Tathagata Pal: Reacted to "There are about 100 ..." with ❤️

- 01:13:54 Therese Williams (pronounced "Terez") | She/Her: Reacted to "This is also a great..." with ❤️
- 01:13:56 Ruben Flores: Reacted to "There are about 100 ..." with 👍
- 01:13:56 Heather Hudson: Reacted to "This is also a great..." with 👍
- 01:14:02 Chantel Fields: Reacted to "This is also a great..." with 👍
- 01:14:03 Terri Standish-Kuon: Reacted to "There are about 100 ..." with 👍
- 01:14:03 KC Deane: Reacted to "There are about 100 ..." with ❤️
- 01:14:04 Tathagata Pal: Reacted to "This is also a great..." with ❤️
- 01:14:18 Michael Meotti: Otterbot is based on a platform that uses AI (natural language processing) to answer questions. As the LLM's (ChatGPT for example) have come along in the last year, our contractor is experimenting with using those
- 01:23:22 Joel Anderson (he/him) | WSAC: Reacted to "There are about 100 ..." with ❤️
- 01:23:30 Joel Anderson (he/him) | WSAC: Reacted to "This is also a great..." with ❤️
- 01:24:41 Terri Standish-Kuon: With continued proposed cuts to Federal Work Study and the Supplemental Opportunity Educational Grant program at the federal level (FY25), student aid at the state level is even more essential.
- 01:25:15 Terri Standish-Kuon: Tax-free educational assistance benefits under a section 127 educational assistance program include payments for tuition, fees and similar expenses, books, supplies and equipment. The payments may be for either undergraduate- or graduate-level courses. The payments do not have to be for work-related courses. Frequently asked questions about educational assistance programs | Internal Revenue Service ([irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov))
- 01:25:21 Inez Olive (she/her) | WSAC: Reacted to "With continued propo..." with 👍
- 01:26:54 Inez Olive (she/her) | WSAC: Reacted to "Tax-free educational..." with 👍
- 01:34:23 Paul Francis: <https://www.awb.org/awb-presents-child-care-study-to-legislative-leaders/>
- 01:35:28 Ami Magisos: Reacted to "<https://www.awb.org/...>" with 👍
- 01:35:38 Inez Olive (she/her) | WSAC: Reacted to "<https://www.awb.org/...>" with 👍
- 01:36:53 Terri Standish-Kuon: Reacted to "<https://www.awb.org/...>" with 👍
- 01:57:26 Rathi Sudhakara (she/her) | WSAC: Reacted to "<https://www.awb.org/...>" with 👍