

Postsecondary Benefits Promotion Pilot

Recent research points to high levels of basic needs insecurity among postsecondary students, including over 40 percent of Washington students reporting food insecurity. However, only 53 percent of students reporting basic needs insecurity accessed public benefits. Only 41 percent accessed campus resources. Many of those students noted that they believed they were ineligible or didn't know how to access resources.¹ Increased outreach is needed to connect students with benefits and resources.

Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) launched the Postsecondary Benefits Promotion Pilot in Academic Year 2024-2025. The pilot tests strategies for outreach and support to students who are likely eligible for public benefits and other resources.

The goals of the pilot:

1. Test a new approach to identify students who are income-eligible for public benefits but who are not currently receiving them.
2. Test the effectiveness of targeted outreach strategies to connect these students with benefits, resources, and staff support.

The pilot enhances the efforts of Washington colleges and universities to support students' basic needs:

- Fifteen pilot colleges and universities receive a quarterly list of their students who are likely income-eligible but are not currently receiving state benefits. These lists are generated through a data-sharing agreement between WSAC and Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). This is a unique resource for outreach that was not available to institutions before.
- Each institution creates targeted outreach message campaigns to students on their list. Students receive engaging messaging and navigational support for benefits applications. Messages increase students' awareness that they may be eligible for benefits. Students are encouraged to apply at WA Connection. Students are also connected with campus basic needs navigation support.
- WSAC is partnering with Education Northwest to lead a cross-college quarterly practice exchange and to provide technical assistance.

The findings will contribute to an institutional, state, and national understanding of effective practices for connecting students with public benefits and resources.

For more information about the Benefits Promotion Pilot, please contact Ami Magisos, Associate Director of Strategy and Partnerships, Washington Student Achievement Council Amim@wsac.wa.gov.

¹ <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025.BasicNeedsReport.pdf>