



2026 Legislative Session Preview

January 9, 2026



Zoom Instructions

- **This webinar is being recorded.** Materials will be shared with attendees in the coming weeks.
- **We won't be using the "Raise Hand" option.**
- **Please use the "Q&A" option to ask questions during the webinar.**
 - You may submit questions anonymously.
 - You may view all submitted questions and "upvote" them, if interested.
- **Please use the "Chat" option to introduce yourself to other attendees!**



Agenda

- **WSAC background information** (5 min.)
- **2026 legislative session preview** (30 min.)
 - State budget outlook
 - Gov. Ferguson's 2026 supplemental operating budget
 - WSAC
 - *Other higher education*
 - Higher education legislation
- **Panel discussion / Q&A** (20 min.)
 - Vanessa Ponce, WA Student Association
 - Bill Lyne, United Faculty of WA
- **Closing and Survey** (5 min.)



<https://bit.ly/WSAC2026SessionPreview>



About the Council

Our Mission:

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.





The Council



Jeff Vincent, Chair
Retired CEO & President
Laird Norton Company



Chris Reykdal
Superintendent
Office of Superintendent of
Public Instruction



Vacant
Graduate Student
Member



Jeff Charbonneau, Vice Chair
Principal
Zillah School District



Evangelina Shreeve
Chief Diversity Officer &
Director, STEM Education
Pacific NW Nat'l Laboratory



Monyu Yu
Undergraduate Student
Member



Nate Humphrey
Executive Director
State Board for Community &
Technical Colleges



Dr. Terri Standish-Kuon
CEO & President
Independent Colleges of
Washington



Ruben Flores
Executive Director
Council of Presidents

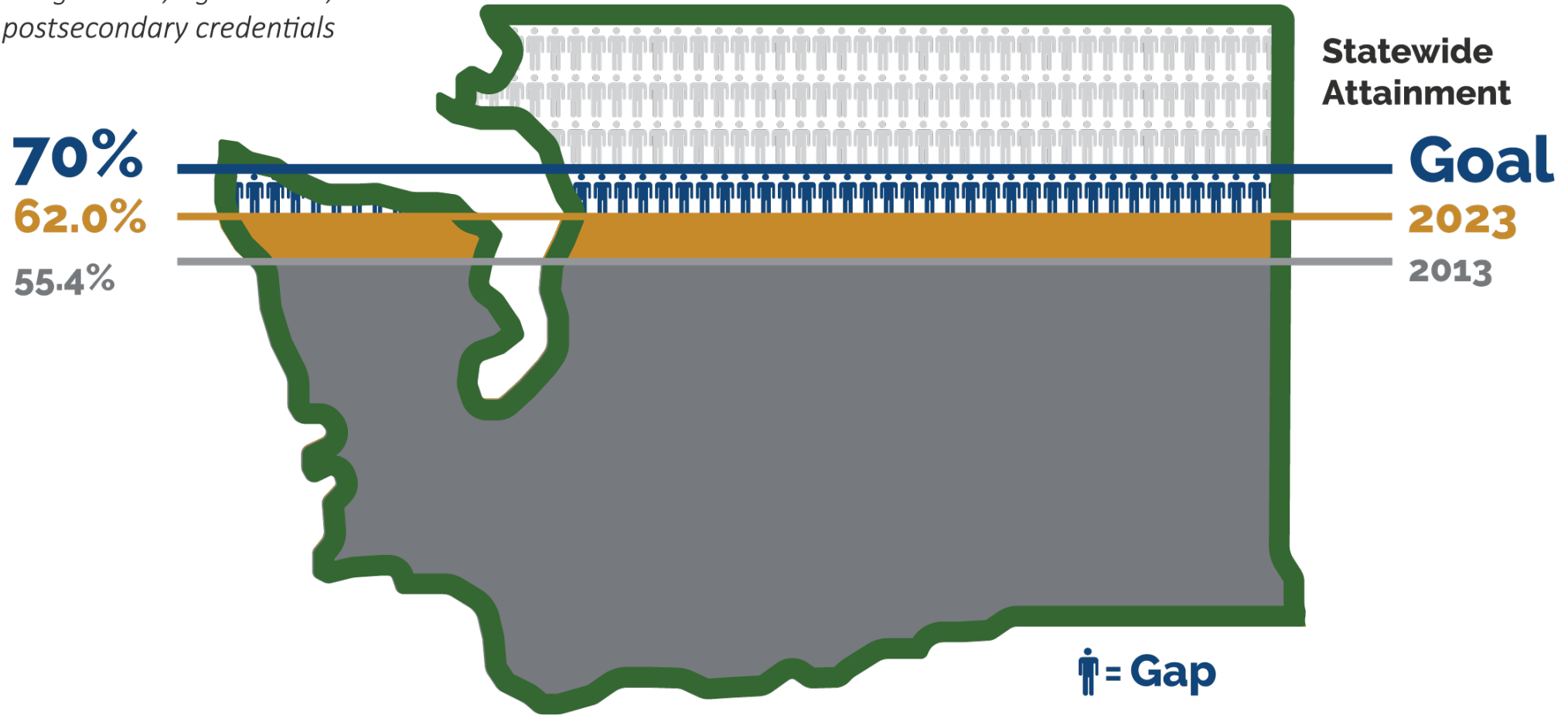


Vacant
Citizen Member



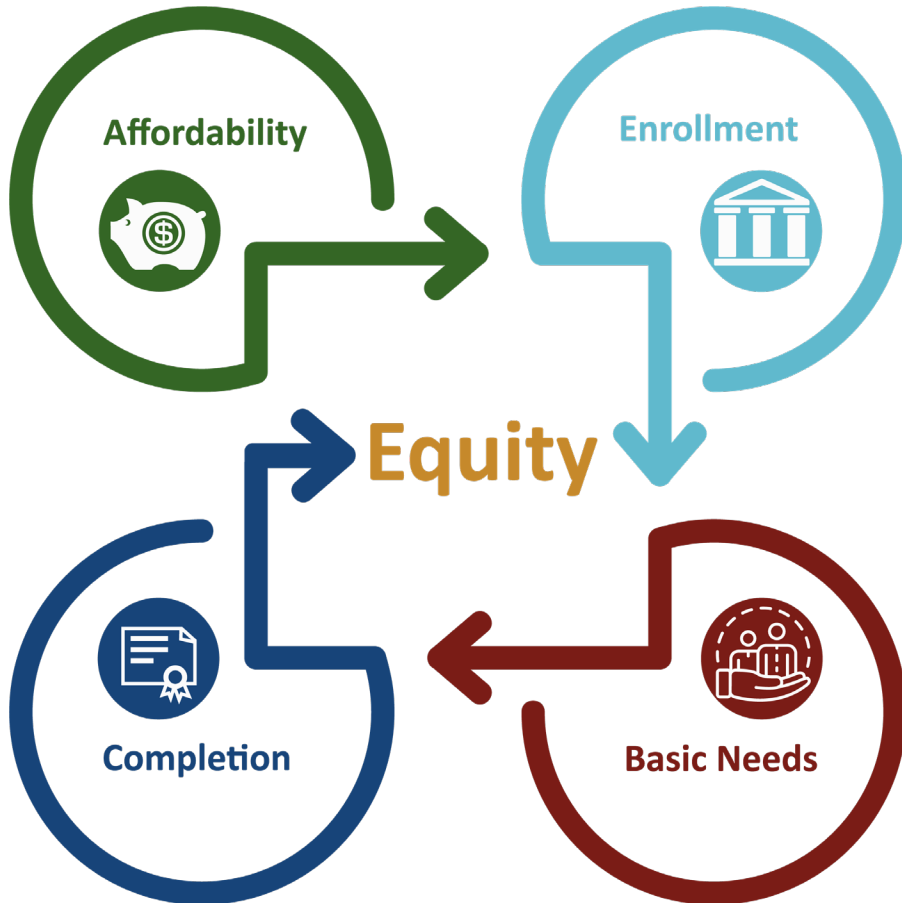
Statewide Attainment Goal Progress

*Washingtonians, ages 25–44,
with postsecondary credentials*





WSAC's Strategic Framework—Centered Around Equity



If we build an **affordable** and **supportive** educational environment, more Washingtonians will **enroll** in programs and **complete** credentials.



2026 Stakeholder Engagement and Policy Development

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Session begins WSAC webinar		Session ends	WSAC webinar			WSAC stakeholder sessions	Council approves policy and budget requests	Budget and legislative requests sent to Governor	WSAC webinar		Governor's budget released

Ongoing stakeholder engagement via policy cluster work groups



2026 Supplemental Operating Budget Outlook

- New budget deficits of **\$1.5 billion** for 2025-27 and **\$4.3 billion** for 2027-29
- **Numerous reasons for the deficit:**
 - Decreased projected revenues
 - Increased costs to maintain existing programs
 - Impact of federal legislation (H.R. 1, “One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBB)”)

Takeaway: There is little to no additional funding available in the 2026 supplemental operating budget for discretionary spending.



Gov. Ferguson's 2026 Supplemental Operating Budget: WSAC

Bill Number (if applicable)	Topic	Request	Gov. Ferguson
-	Regional Partnerships	\$1.25 million (FY27, one-time)	-
-	WA529 Invest	\$525,000 (FY26, one-time)	-
TBD & SB 5963	WA Grant & Passport to Careers	\$60,000 (annual, ongoing)*	Approved (\$0)
TBD	Student Consumer Protections	-	Approved (\$0)
HB 2311 & SB 5931	WEIA Oversight Board	-	Approved (\$0)

*WSAC intends to absorb cost within existing resources



Gov. Ferguson's 2026 Supplemental Operating Budget: Higher Education

- Limited new investments in higher education:
 - **\$51.2 million** for increasing WA Grant caseload forecasts (legally mandated)
 - **\$15 million** for UW's Center for Behavioral Health and Learning
 - **\$425,000** for CWU's graduate mental health counseling and undergraduate behavioral health degree programs



Gov. Ferguson's 2026 Supplemental Operating Budget: Higher Education (cont.)

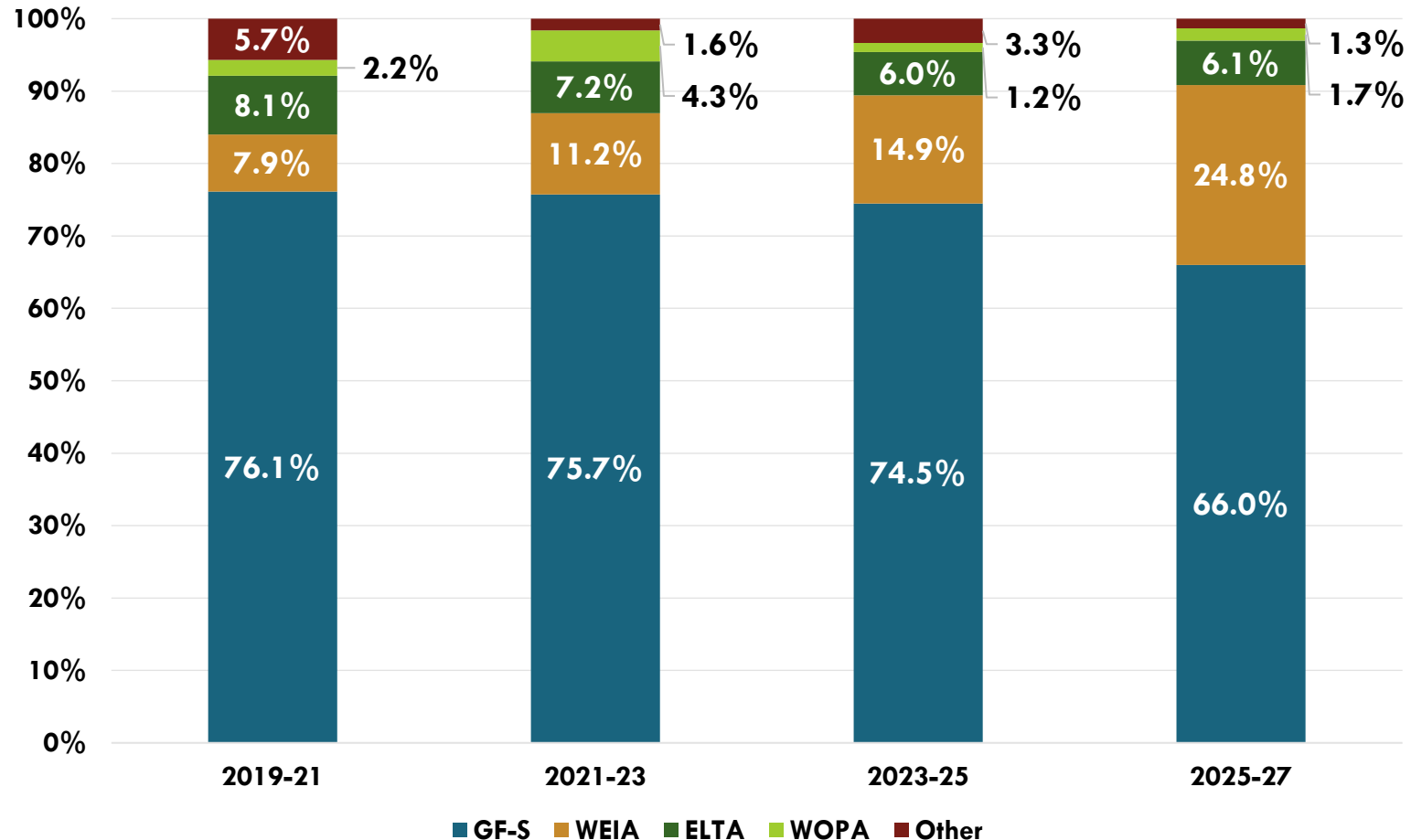
- New cuts* were proposed across higher education and other education (WTB):

Agency	Percentage Cut	Amount Cut
WSAC	5%	\$1.7 million
WTB		\$193,000
UW	3%	\$15.8 million
WSU		\$10.2 million
EWU	1.5%	\$1.4 million
CWU		\$1.4 million
TESC		\$668,000
WWU		\$1.9 million
SBCTC		\$18.5 million

*FTE reductions were not required with cuts



Gov. Ferguson's 2026 Supplemental Operating Budget: Higher Education (cont.)



- **\$50 million** in existing 2025-27 appropriations for SBCTC were shifted to from GF-S to WEIA—part of a trend to **supplant (replace) other higher education funding** with funding from WEIA
- Learn more here:

<https://wsac.wa.gov/WEIAOB>



2026 Higher Education Legislation

Enrollment	Affordability	Basic Needs	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WA Guaranteed Admissions Program• Universal (mandatory) FAFSA/WASFA completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WA Grant MFI levels• WA Grant and CBS award amounts at private, four-year not-for-profit IHEs• WA Grant awards for apprenticeships• WA Grant for short-term credentials• Public interest law grants• Revolving graduate student loan fund• Veteran tuition waiver	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Postsecondary access to medication abortion• IHE branch campuses in Supporting Student Experiencing Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WASFA data privacy



Panel Discussion: 2026 Legislative Session



Vanessa Ponce
Executive Director
WA Student Association



Bill Lyne
President
United Faculty of WA



Contact Us—External Affairs

- **What does External Affairs do?**

- Review and contribute to relevant higher education legislation in collaboration with the Governor, Legislature, and other state agencies.
- Produce materials and events summarizing ongoing budget and legislative work.
- Cultivate relationships with other federal, state, and local stakeholders to support policy development.

- **Questions, feedback, or other comments?**

- Joel Anderson, Associate Director of Legislative & External Affairs, JoelA@wsac.wa.gov, (360) 515-3002



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