



2026 Legislative Session Recap

April 10, 2026



Zoom Instructions

- This webinar is being recorded and will be distributed afterward.
- **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!



Panelists



Simone Boe
Lobbyist
WA Education Association



Bill Lyne
President
United Faculty of WA



Vanessa Ponce
Executive Director
WA Student Association



Agenda

- **Introductions: WSAC and panelists** (5 min.)
- **Overview and panel discussion: 2026 legislative session**
 - Enacted and failed legislation: WSAC and higher education (20 min.)
 - 2026 supplemental operating budget (20 min.)
 - Other higher education issues (10 min.)
- **Closing and survey** (5 min.)



<https://bit.ly/WSAC2026SessionRecap>



About the Council

Our Mission:

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

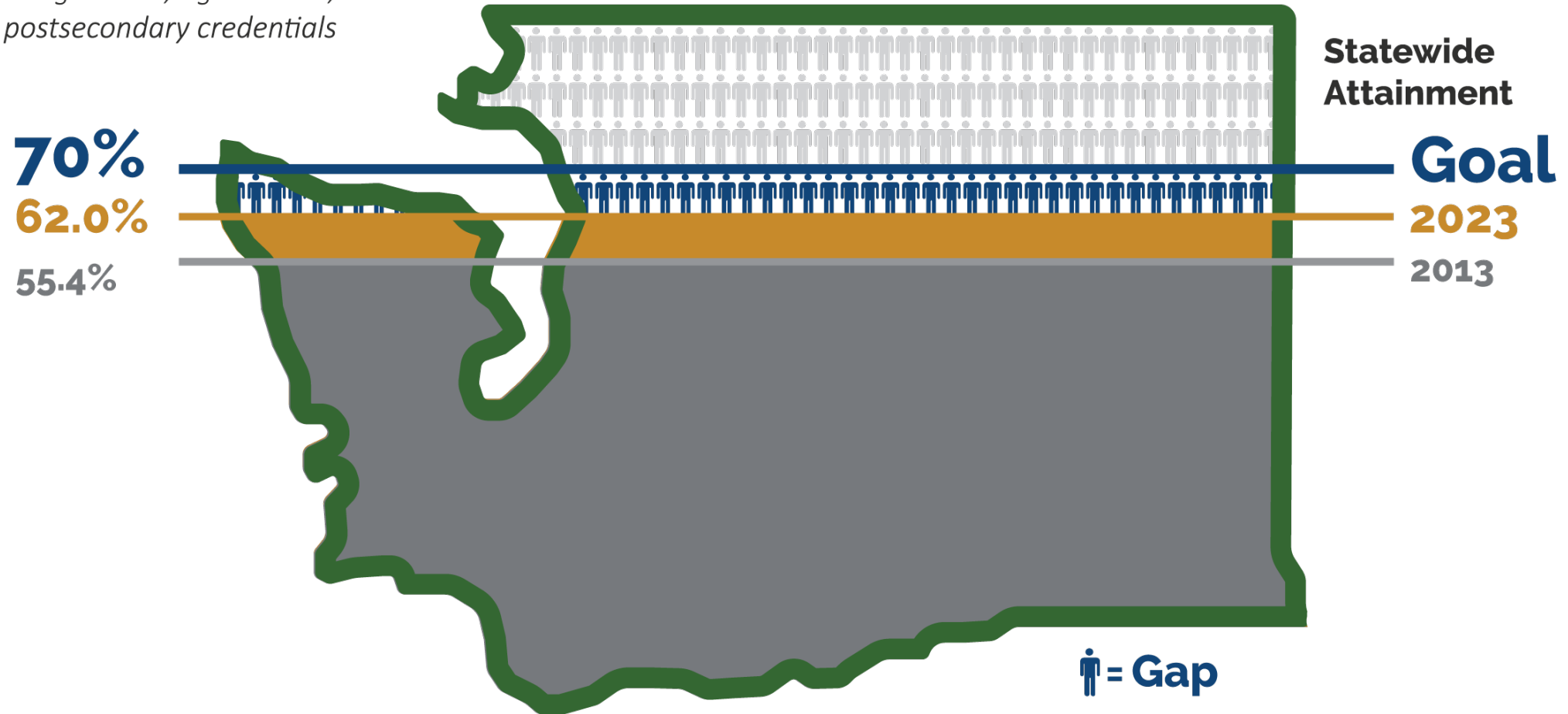
- Leads statewide strategic planning to improve educational coordination and transitions.
- Supports Washingtonians through the administration of financial aid, a college savings plan, and support services.
- Advocates for the economic, social, and civic benefits of postsecondary education.





Washington's Postsecondary Attainment Goal

Washingtonians, ages 25–44,
with postsecondary credentials





Stakeholder Engagement and Policy Development Cycle



Apr. (2026)	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan. (2027)	Feb.	Mar.
WSAC webinar			WSAC stakeholder sessions	Council approves policy & budget requests	Policy & budget requests sent to GOV	WSAC webinar		GOV budget released	Session begins WSAC webinar		

Ongoing stakeholder engagement via policy cluster work groups



2026 Legislative Session & Supplemental Operating Budget: WSAC

Bill Number (if applicable)	Topic	Request	Gov. Ferguson	Enacted
-	Regional Partnerships	\$1.25 million (FY27, one-time)	-	-
-	WA529 Invest	\$525,000 (FY26, one-time)	-	-
<u>HB 2586</u> & <u>SB 5963</u>	WA Grant & Passport to Careers	\$60,000 (annual, ongoing)*	Approved (\$0)	Passed (SB 5963, \$0)
<u>HB 2474</u>	Student Consumer Protections	-	Approved (\$0)	Did not pass
<u>HB 2311</u> & <u>SB 5931</u>	WEIA Oversight Board	-	Approved (\$0)	Did not pass

**WSAC will absorb cost within existing resources*



2026 Enacted Legislation: Higher Education

Enrollment	Affordability	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial aid completion data (SB 5841)Summer Running Start cuts (SB 6260)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>WA Grant for Passport to Careers students</i> (SB 5963)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">WWU student employee collective bargaining (HB 1570)Behavioral health in building trades apprenticeships (HB 2492)Heritage apple orchards (HB 2525)

WSAC request



2026 Failed Legislation: Higher Education

Enrollment	Affordability	Basic Needs	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WA Guaranteed Admissions Program (SB 5978)• Digital transcripts (SB 6052)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WA Grant MFI levels (HB 2098)• Graduate student loans (HB 2148)• Public interest law grants (HB 2162)• Tuition waivers for veterans' children (HB 2324)• Early learning scholarship (HB 2438)• WA Grant for short-term credentials (HB 2458)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students experiencing homelessness (HB 1316)• Medication abortion access (SB 5826)• Parenting student data (SB 6227)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WASFA data privacy (HB 2132)• Student consumer protections (HB 2474)• Tuition fund split (HB 2617)• Low-enrollment programs (SB 5909)• WEIAOB admin. changes (SB 5931)• P20W strategic planning (SB 6089)

WSAC request



2026 Failed Legislation: Higher Education (cont.)

Enrollment	Affordability	Basic Needs	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none">N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">WA Grant for out-of-state IHE branch campuses (HB 2671)ICW WA Grant/CBS awards (SB 5828)Tuition waivers for veteran survivors (SB 5954)Financial aid fraud (SB 6082)For-profit IHE WA Grant/CBS awards (SB 6209)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Workforce Education Investment Account (WEIA) non-supplant language (SB 6276)



2026 Supplemental Operating Budget: Higher Education (New Cuts)

Enrollment	Affordability	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$7.0 million—Summer Running Start enrollment cap reduction (SBCTC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$1.67 million—WA Student Loan Program (WSAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$2.45 million—Centers of Excellence (SBCTC)• \$1.93 million—Institute for NW Energy Futures (WSU)• \$263,000—Thriving Communities Initiative (UW)• IHE admin. reductions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$2.2 million—SBCTC• \$1.25 million—UW• \$750,000—WSU• \$175,000—CWU, EWU, TESC, WWU• Agency admin. reductions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$521,000—WSAC• \$58,000—WTB• \$44,000—ESD



2026 Supplemental Operating Budget: Higher Education (New Appropriations)

Enrollment	Affordability	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$6.2 million—College in the High School fees (UW, CWU, EWU, WWU, SBCTC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$140.3 million—WA Grant caseload forecast (WSAC)• \$6.0 million—CBS caseload forecast (WSAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$15 million—Center for Behavioral Health & Learning (UW)• \$10.4 million—collective bargaining agreements (CWU, EWU, WWU, SBCTC)• \$3.7 million—college affordability program (all IHEs)• \$2.7 million—restoration of operating costs (TESC)• \$250,000—Center for Biotech Innovation & Training (UW)• \$116,000—behavioral health degree programs (CWU)• \$63,000—heritage apple orchards (WSU)



2026 Supplemental Operating Budget: Higher Education (Other Provisions—New Appropriations)

- **\$200,000**—requirement to contract with a third-party vendor for a higher education and workforce development landscape analysis (ESD).
- **\$137,000**—requirement to study state programs that have increased postsecondary enrollment within one year of high school graduation over the past 15 years; report due Dec. 1, 2027 (WSIPP, via TESC).

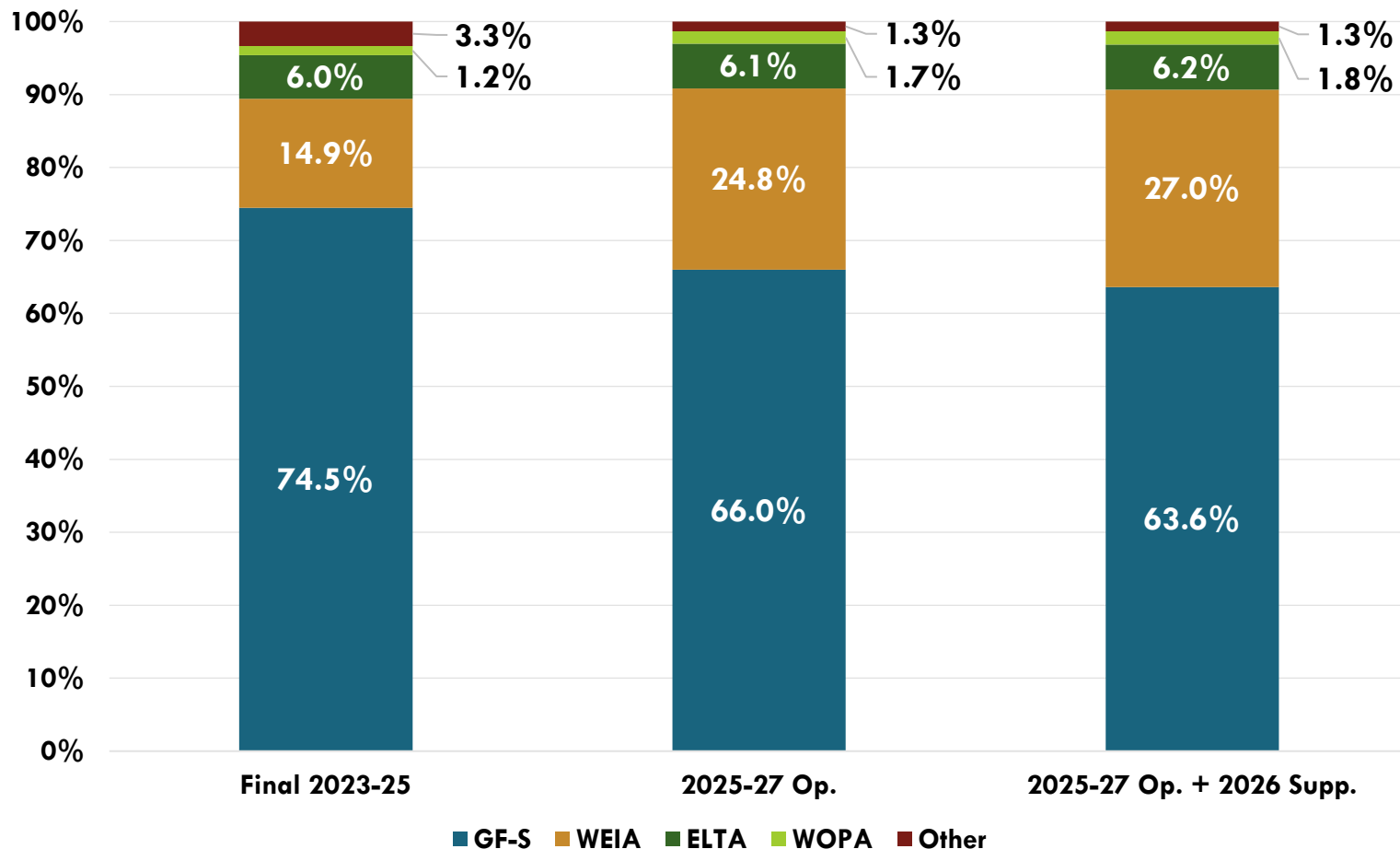


2026 Supplemental Operating Budget: Higher Education (Other Provisions—No New Appropriations)

- One-time (FY27) fund swap of **\$239.9 million** between capital projects/building accounts and General Fund-State (public four-year IHEs & SBCTC).
- Reinstating language for ongoing appropriations from WEIA (SBCTC):
 - Nurse educator salaries (**\$40.8 million**).
 - High-demand program faculty salaries (**\$40 million**).
 - Guided Pathways (**\$3 million, GF-S; \$75.8 million**).
- Requirement to provide recommendations for reducing redundancies and expenses that don't correlate to student success; report due Dec. 1, 2026 (SBCTC).
- Requirement to collaborate with high-tech trade associations on recommendations for expanding industry-aligned, high-demand degree programs as part of 2026 legislative report (WEIAOB, via WSAC).
- Permission to give Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness grants to multiple campuses per IHE (WSAC).



2026 Supplemental Operating Budget: Higher Education Appropriations, by Account



- While no additional higher education funding was supplanted with appropriations from WEIA in the 2026 supplemental operating budget, **the percentage of total appropriations from WEIA still increased.**
- Learn more here:

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



2026 Legislative Session: Higher Education Legislative Caucus

- Higher education committee chairs (Rep. Dave Paul and Sen. T’wina Nobles) led the development of a [Higher Education Legislative Caucus](#) in 2026, recruiting **more than 10 legislators** to join and prioritizing:
 - **Protecting and restoring financial aid** for college and workforce training.
 - **Preventing further reductions** to higher education programs and student support services.
 - **Preserving dedicated WEIA funding** for its intended higher education and workforce development purposes.
- **40 legislators** signed a [letter of support](#) for higher education as part of 2026 supplemental operating budget negotiations.



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?**

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