

Council Meeting Minutes

January 27, 2026

WSAC Office

Members Attending (alphabetical by last name):

Jeff Charbonneau, Ruben Flores, Nate Humphrey, Miles Parker, Chris Reykdal, Terri Standish-Kuon, Jeff Vincent, and Monica “Monyu” Yu

Staff Attending (alphabetical by last name): Natalie Alvarado, Joel Anderson, David Davis, Crystal Hall, Lyle Irimata, Debbie Jackson, Isaac Kwakye, Ami Magisos, Michael Meotti, Lucas Minor, Grace Xu Nelson, Inez Olive, Armen Papyan, Rathi Sudhakara, Sarah Weiss, Nicole Witty

Staff Attending Virtually (alphabetical by last name): Joel Bentley, Perla Bolanos, Yezenia Bracamontes, Rita Chang, Abby Chien, Carlie Curlee, Dawn Cypriano-McAferly, KC Deane, Jill Huynh, Anton Jackson, Marlena Rae Jenkins, Shannon Ladymon, Hannah Lodwick, Gabriel Matull Worst, Shannon Peterson, Kathie Pham, Amy Roach, Isaac Rodriguez, Abbey Roth, Stacia Schienbein, Katie Tallman, Shannon Venezia, Stacey Warick

Meeting called to order at 9:00 a.m.

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 August Council Meeting Minutes.

Motion seconded.

Motion carried.

Executive Director Update

Presenter: Michael Meotti, Isaac Kwakye

- The Governor, through executive order in September 2025, charged the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) to convene a group and develop a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Campaign. As we move forward, we ask ourselves the question: how do we build the power of a network to leverage relationships?
- We know that financial aid makes a difference in the pathway to education beyond high school.

- For this campaign, WSAC is using a business-like approach with defined goals to achieve our target. Everything is being tracked and measured to learn what is or is not working, and using the data to manage the work.
- There are three key strategies: strengthen system alignment, expand high-impact supports, and improve foundational activities.
- The goal is to increase financial aid completion across Washington high school seniors, with four sub-goals. These goals are being tracked and are up to date as of January 2026
- We are also able to use the data to track performance from the school district level down to individual schools.
- There is a public-facing dashboard that can see what is happening with completion rates across the state.
- The ask is to reach out to your networks to ask how WSAC can help them achieve these goals. The idea is to collaborate to push the work forward.
- A short video was played featuring Kory S. This is just one of the videos created to share awareness about the Washington College Grant.

Questions and Comments:

- Is there any hypothesis as to why certain areas are underperforming, and what is the plan? No current hypothesis, but as the data continues to grow, we can start to understand what is happening in schools.
- Where did the 46,000 FAFSA/WASFA completions number come from? The team looked at historical data and found a number that was actionable and achievable. We have not achieved 46,000 before.
- Comment on the gap between low-income and higher-income family completion. We do not want to get bogged down in the percentages; it can set one up for only a certain type of success. As global dynamics change, we still want to maintain the end numbers despite underlying challenges.
- The 76 schools that achieved a 6% increase in completion over last year, how many of those schools are returning to the previous year's completion rates? In the final report, pointing out the differences in achieving this goal will be helpful. Once the campaign is over, this is one of the aspects the team will be looking at, but for now the focus is on increasing completion.
- While FAFSA completion is important, does the study also examine how many completers enroll in college? FAFSA is a good predictor of whether someone might enroll, but it doesn't reflect the reality. The broader work as an agency is looking into this question. This is something the research team is looking into.
- Question about the marketing strategy with the videos. WSAC has an entire marketing strategy and is partnered with an organization that is assisting in the campaign.

Chair Report**Presenter: Jeff Vincent**

- One of the primary goals moving forward, as we try to bring people together with fewer resources, will be to keep the momentum going. This means looking not only at FAFSA but also at collaboration opportunities and other topics that will be discussed in the meeting.
 - Another focus is to fill all positions on the Council.
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Affordability Model

Presenters: Armen Papyan

Materials: [Affordability Model](#)

- Restatement of the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) guideline on affordability policy development.
- Reviewed the affordability model that was shared at the November Council Meeting. Key goals include an improved understanding of financial need by income levels, and the loans households are incurring.
- Recapped the cuts made to higher education in 2025 to different programs.

Questions and Comments:

- How do you plan on obtaining data, since in the past we have made assumptions and those assumptions are not always correct. And how are we going to analyze that data? There is data available within the agency.
- How long will this project last? The hope is to have an update at the next meeting, but this is ultimately a long-term goal with a tentative update by the end of the year.
- Clarify that the request of the motion is to create a subgroup for this specific topic. This is correct.
- The subgroup is a great idea, mentioning affordability is a sliding line. Also mentioned that newer generations define affordability differently than past ones.
- Is demographic group data available when it comes to WA529 plans? Demographic data is voluntary, though we do tend to know it is more from upper-middle-income families.
- A project like this is unique to Washington and possibly a way to draw on philanthropic support. There is interest within networks in supporting this type of work.

Motion made to create a subgroup to explore affordability.

Motion seconded.

Motion carried.

Minimum Admission Standards and College Readiness

Presenters: Rathi Sudhakara

Materials: [Minimum Attainment Standards and College Readiness](#)

- Provided context and information on Minimum Admission Standards and policy, including the Washington statute, what the policy contains, and a focus on College Academic Distribution Requirements (CADRs).
- Reviewed the current context to help ground the discussion: high school graduation requirements and the Washington Guaranteed Admissions Program.
- The policy looks at two metrics: Course taking and GPA at both the state and national levels.
- Shared a narrative of a hypothetical high school student navigating high school graduation and college opportunities.

Questions and Comments:

- This is not just a high school-level conversation, but a conversation that extends back to middle school, where students first hear about programs like College Bound.
- Clarifying the number of credits required to graduate from high school, and what credits are considered CADRs. This is a timely discussion considering the other conversations already taking place.
- High School and Beyond Plan discussion, including topics such as planning tools, the evolution of postsecondary education, the difference between minimum admissions, guaranteed admissions, and admissions messaging.
- Institutional perspective from Dr. John Carmichael, The Evergreen State College President, Dr. Patrick Pease, Central Washington University Provost, and Dr. Brad Johnson, Western Washington University Provost.
- Are students self-selecting? Working on a future-ready culture, making sure students understand their options, and that the culture is being adopted.
- Some questions for reflection: What are the bigger predictors of success? And a desire to understand the historical context of minimum admissions and guaranteed admissions.
- From a Kindergarten through 12th grade perspective, there is a worry about the students in the upper-middle-income who do not qualify for aid and do not want to go into debt. The discussion included points that students are not necessarily underprepared, the ability for students to pay for college, communication, and college completion.
- Many of the not-for-profit independent campuses do have their own direct, automatic, guaranteed admissions programs within their regions. Also discussed digital transcribing.
- Question from online (Appendix B, 02:11:38) regarding completion rate, college-ready students, and the changes in general education classes. This is an ongoing conversation happening on campuses about how they are meeting students where they are.
- Something to consider when working on this project is the anxieties students are facing and the impact that has.

Motion made to convene stakeholders across sectors to make recommendations on minimum admissions policy and college readiness.

Motion seconded.

Motion carried.

Basic Needs: Working Together to Scale Impact

Presenters: Ami Magisos

Materials: [Basic Needs](#)

- Provided framing for the topic, including background on basic needs as a state strategy, current understanding, and the challenges.
- The current challenge is: How can Washington inspire sustained action to move the needle on student access to benefits and resources over time, including scaling and effectiveness?
- An update on current progress in building basic needs supports.
- The opportunity is using the recent learning to develop three key actions.
- Shared a vision of what the work would look like and the timeline for the work to be completed.

Questions and Comments:

- WSAC has done a lot of work in this area already, which has set the groundwork to do more. This work is becoming more meaningful with the current economic situation.
- Urged to look beyond individual campuses, but also into the community, so resources are not just constrained to a campus environment.
- Navigators in school have a lot to contribute to the conversation and are an important resource for feedback.
- What is the hopeful outcome? Engaging higher-level leadership, business leadership, and cross-sector participation. Working together to develop and revise the basic needs section of the SAP and determine metrics that make sense in the work.
- Education reform movements have used a “rallying cry” of high school graduation rates. In Washington, the FAFSA filing rate has become the rallying cry and has engaged many people in the state. This can be used to tie this issue to education and life success.
- Look into a deeper dive into the data on funding and basic needs issues

Motion made to develop a cross-sector leadership group addressing students’ basic needs.

Motion seconded.

Motion carried.

Legislative Update

Presenters: Joel Anderson

Materials: [Legislative Update](#)

- Provided context for the state's current budget environment.
- Reviewed WSAC requests as part of the 2026 Supplemental Operating Budget, as well as a deeper dive into limited funding investments and cuts in higher education.
- Summarized the seven bills related to higher education legislation.

Questions and Comments:

- Differentiation between affordability and basic needs. By splitting the two, are we reducing our understanding? Combining the two topics might reduce the focus on areas such as housing, and there are challenges that are specific to basic needs.
 - Grateful for Joel's work on the WEIA account, including his leadership and guidance.
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Public Comment:

- No public comment
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Motion Made to Adjourn Meeting.

Motion Seconded.

Motion Carried.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Appendix A

[January 27, 2026 TVW Meeting Recording](#)

Appendix B

Meeting chat record from Zoom

00:32:34 Miles Parker: it is a little hard to hear folks in person. is there a mic folks can speak into?

00:33:03 M. Melissa Hosten: yes, it would help for folks to speak more directly into their mics. I am having to read captions

00:33:14 Miles Parker: Replying to "yes, it would help f..." same.

00:35:02 M. Melissa Hosten: yes better

- 00:36:05 Executive Office: Welcome, everyone! Please use the chat to introduce yourself.
- 00:36:33 Executive Office: Crystal Hall, WSAC Director of Operations & Administration
- 00:36:41 Joel Bentley: Materials for today's meeting, including the agenda, can be found here: <https://wsac.wa.gov/council-meetings>
- 00:36:52 KC Deane: Reacted to "Materials for today'..." with 👍
- 00:37:08 KC Deane: KC Deane, WSAC Research
- 00:37:13 Abby Chien she/her | WSAC: Good Morning, Abby Chien, WSAC with the Strategy & Partnerships team
- 00:37:36 Joel Bentley: Good morning, Joel Bentley, WSAC Communications.
- 00:38:08 Katie Tallman (she/her) | WSAC: Good morning! Katie Tallman, WSAC Communications
- 00:38:08 Carlie Curlee | WSAC: Morning! Carlie Curlee (she/her), WSAC Student Financial Assistance team.
- 00:38:10 Dawn Cypriano-McAferly: Good morning, Dawn Cypriano-McAferly, Passport to Careers, WSAC.
- 00:38:14 Miles Parker: Miles Parker, Graduate student council member
- 00:38:40 M. Melissa Hosten: Good morning, Melissa Hosten, Only7Seconds
- 00:38:45 WSOS: Amandalyn Rubio, Washington State Opportunity Scholarship
- 00:39:08 Becky Wallace: Becky Wallace, OSPI
- 00:39:19 Shannon Venezia: Shannon Venezia, WSAC Director of Student Financial Assistance
- 00:39:21 Stacia Schienbein: Morning, Stacia Schienbein, Passport to Careers, WSAC
- 00:39:29 Hannah Lodwick: Hannah Lodwick, Associate Director Strategy and Partnerships at WSAC
- 00:49:39 KC Deane: Previous final counts of FAFSA completions are available on the SAP dashboard, in the Affordability section of the Data Downloads and Sources panel (scroll to the bottom of this page): <https://wsac.wa.gov/sap-dashboard>
- 01:39:22 M. Melissa Hosten: Do the optional checkboxes for AA brief or WA GAP have a popup when hovering on it that provides a simple high level summary?
- 01:40:30 Ruben Flores: <https://wacollegeguarantee.org/>
- 01:41:41 M. Melissa Hosten: Replying to <https://wacollegegua...> yes, but is this summary available on the site with college admissions, and at the "checkbox" level mentioned?
- 02:00:34 Abby Chien she/her | WSAC: We can't hear!
- 02:00:42 Abby Chien she/her | WSAC: (it's very quiet)

- 02:00:50 M. Melissa Hosten: we cannot hear this speaker
- 02:04:51 Dawn Cypriano-McAferly: Reacted to "We can't hear!" with 👍
- 02:11:38 M. Melissa Hosten: I wonder if the college completion rate issue is not a balance between college ready students and a student-ready college? Are college gen ed classes increasing in class size, are they showing a greater reliance on virtual learning or virtual tools? Do the freshman and sophomore college students consider the college "student ready"?
- 02:12:03 Mariah Stearns: Reacted to "I wonder if the coll..." with 👍
- 02:20:58 M. Melissa Hosten: Thank you for addressing my question
- 02:30:53 Joel Bentley: The meeting will resume at 11:10am.
- 02:48:40 M. Melissa Hosten: lost sound?
- 02:48:43 Hannah Lodwick: Reacted to "lost sound?" with 👍
- 02:48:47 Miles Parker: Reacted to "lost sound?" with 👍
- 02:48:48 M. Melissa Hosten: got it back
- 02:48:55 Miles Parker: me too
- 02:58:04 M. Melissa Hosten: Can this speaker speak up pls
- 03:00:06 Terri Standish-Kuon: Examples of the efforts to support nutrition and shelter among college students at ICW member campuses: <https://icwashington.org/page/basic-needs>
- 03:32:46 Miles Parker: thank you!