

## Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2026

### Advisory Board Members Attending Virtually

Collin Banister, Sienna Jarrard, Railey Lamb, Nashua Johnley, Sarah Everitt, Carolina Garza, Lilia Hueso, Bish Paul, Susan Rose, Alyson Rotter, Domanic Vanthom, Becky Wallace

### Governor's Office Attending Virtually

Patricia Loera

### WSAC Staff Attending Virtually

Amy Keltner, Sarah Weiss, Natalie Alvarado, Joel Anderson, KC Deane, Katie Tallman, Sean Moran, Yaslin Torres, Kathie Pham, Rathi Sudhakara, Isaac Rodriguez, Rashel Wise

### Welcome and Overview

**Presenters:** Sarah Weiss, Amy Keltner, Natalie Alvarado

#### Key points:

- Sarah Weiss opened up with a welcome to the Advisory Board meeting and turned it over to Amy Keltner.
- Amy Keltner introduced herself as Senior Director of Policy and Programs and just joined WSAC team about two weeks ago. Amy completes opening remarks and turns it over to Natalie Alvarado.
- Nataile provided a brief overview of the Advisory Board.
- Natalie reviewed meeting objectives and February focus.
  - Objectives:
    - Share progress since last meeting
    - 2026 legislative session updates
    - Refine “Finish your financial aid app week”
    - Confirm next steps
  - February Focus:
    - Financial Aid Data.
    - Strategy Highlight
      - 2A Priority School Microgrants
      - 3B Governor’s Letter and additional communication
      - 50 School/District Outreach Plan
    - Advisory input on successes and challenges.
    - Discuss and plan for “Finish your financial aid app week”.

## 2025 – 2026 Academic Year Goals and Progress

**Presenter:** Natalie Alvarado

**Key points:** Natalie reviewed campaign goals and shared updated data on goals one through four.

### **Campaign Goals:**

Natalie reviewed this year's campaign goals:

- Increase financial aid completion for all WA high school seniors.
- Ensure 46,000 seniors complete the FAFSA or WASFA.
- Raise FRPL-eligible student completions by 6% or more in at least 150 high schools.
- Close the gap in FAFSA completions between FRPL and on-FRPL students.
- Reduce disparities in FAFSA completion rates, especially among those from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups.

### **Goal #1:**

Natalie reviewed progress toward campaign goal #1 using the chart:

- As of February 16: Class of 2026 FAFSA & WASFA completion rate is 40%.
- 33 out of 53 weeks to go until the campaign ends.
- 76% of the way to our goal of 46,000 completions.
- This time last year we were at 26,579 completions.
- This week we are at 34,947 completions.
- Last year's final total was 44,371 completions, we are expected to meet or exceed last year's final total.
- Natalie stated going forward our focus is maintaining at least 1,000 new FAFSAs per week.
- Since January we have averaged 1,161 new FAFSA's per week.

### **Goal #2:**

Natalie reviewed progress toward goal #2 using the chart:

- Started at 30 schools in October/November meeting the 6% FRPL FAFSA completion goal.
- In December 63 schools met the goal.
- January 76 schools met the goal.
- In February so far 106 have met the goal with 44 schools away from meeting the goal.

### **Goal #3:**

Natalie reviewed progress toward goal #3 using the chart:

- January 5, FRPL was 27% compared to 33% non-FRPL.
- February 16, FRPL increased to 34% while non-FRPL is now at 42%, 8 percentage point gap.
- End of last year we ended at 5 percentage point gap, 2023 and 2024 ended at 6 percentage point gap.

- During the Spring campaign last year, we reached out varying student and parent groups via GovDelivery and tied with OtterBot texts:
  - Those who did not submit
  - Those who completed but had errors
  - Those who submitted but not complete
  - Plan to continue this same outreach approach this summer to close the FRPL gap.

**Goal #4:**

Natalie reviewed progress toward goal #4 using the chart:

- A quick note on interpretation: an equity gap score of 1 would mean there's no difference in filing rates across subgroups, that's the ideal.
- Our equity gap score is 259, which means the group with the highest FAFSA completion rate is completing at just over two and a half times the rate of the group with the lowest completion rate.
- Asian students at 52% compared to Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander students at 20%.

## Strategy Progress and Highlights

**Presenter:** Natalie Alvarado

**Key points:** Natalie shared update on strategy progress for 2A- Priority Schools, 3A – Governor's Letter, and 3C Trusted Messenger.

**2A – Priority Schools:**

Natalie reviewed what we're seeing and how we're adjusting for Strategy 2A: Priority Schools.

- *What we're seeing:*
  - 25 microgrants have been awarded; schools actively implementing – some since the fall.
  - Early progress toward 6% increase in FRPL completion, especially at smaller schools with targeted supports.
  - Schools are adapting funds creatively to meet local needs.
- *How we're adjusting:*
  - Targeting midyear check-ins to focus on strategies for addressing FRPL and equity gaps.
  - Exploring additional funding to expand tribal school participation.
  - Increasing in-person support where it can accelerate impact.
- Natalie shared what some priority schools are doing with their microgrant to help support.
  - Eastmont High School – teamed up with Wenatchee Valley College.
  - Deer Park High School – Set targets: 65% FAFSA completion and 100% senior 1:1 consultations.

- Highline High School – Provided language access & 1:1 completion support
- Yelm High School – Ran a multi-session financial aid event (~150 attendees) with follow-up support.

### **3A – Governor’s Letter:**

Natalie reviewed what we’re seeing and how we’re adjusting for Strategy 3A: Governor’s Letter.

- *What we’re seeing:*
  - A governor-branded touch is most effective when it lands at a moment when seniors are making final decisions. There is still a meaningful group of seniors who have yet to file an application and who may assume financial aid is only a 4-year college, its complicated, or they won’t qualify.
- *How we’re adjusting:*
  - Shifting the governor’s letter to May to preserve a stronger “last chance” moment.
  - Sending a postcard in February from the governor and WSAC to the 51K seniors who haven’t filed yet.

### **3C – Trusted Messenger:**

Natalie reviewed what we’re seeing and how we’re adjusting for Strategy 3C: Trusted Messenger.

- *What we’re seeing:*
  - A new report is showing us which schools are trending behind last year’s FAFSA completion pace by specific date ranges and other key metrics.
- *How we’re adjusting:*
  - Instead of leading with another email, we’ll make personal connections with these schools.
  - We will use all WSAC teams and other state and community leaders to make a direct outreach and open doors, then connect schools to the right support and resources.

## **2026 Legislative Session: Update on Relevant Bills**

**Presenter:** Joel Anderson

### **Key points:**

- Joel reviewed 2026 legislative updates for SB 5841 and HB 2132 As of February 17, 2026.

### **SB 5841 (Sen Boehnke):**

- Originally required that every high school student complete a financial aid application as part of their high school and beyond plan.
- Bill has been amended significantly, no longer requires financial aid completion.

- Now, requires financial aid completion data from WSAC to be integrated into OSPI's High School and Beyond Plan.
- Passed by Senate (49-0) on Feb 11 and scheduled for public hearing in House Education Committee on Feb 18.

**HB 2132 (Rep Leavitt)**

- Limits disclosure and retention of personally identifying information related to the WASFA.
- Heard in the House Appropriations Committee on Feb 2, it did not advance.

## Advisory Board Discussion

**Presenter:** Sarah Weiss

**Key points:** Sarah had advisory board members introduce themselves and share what they've tried since the January 20 meeting: what worked, what got in the way, and what they're hearing from colleagues. She reviewed January action items (completed and in progress) and walked through the timeline for the rest of the year, leading up to the April 20 week and the end of the school year. Sarah then outlined the spring push and the "Your Future, Funded – Finish Financial Aid Week" plan, invited discussion on two key questions, and closed with next steps and takeaways for members before the next meeting.

**Advisory Board members:**

- Collin Bannister, WSU – Pullman, WA Student Assoc President
- Geraldine Donovan, Seattle Preparatory School, Sophomore
- Sienna Jarrard, UW-Bothell, WA Student Assoc Member
- Railey Lamb, Kennewick High School, Junior
- Nashua Johnley, Toppenish High School, Senior
- Sarah Everitt, Gonzaga University, Dean of Student Financial Services
- Carol Garza, College Success Foundation, Executive Director- Yakima
- Lilia Hueso, Moses Lake High School, School Counselor
- Damien Pattenau, Renton School District, Superintendent
- Bish Paul, Gates Foundation, Senior Program Officer
- Susan Rose, Quincy High School, Assistant Principal
- Alyson Rotter, Olympic College, Associate Dean-K-12 Partnerships
- Domanic Vanthom, WSU-Vancouver, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
- Becky Wallace, OSPI, Assistant Superintendent, Secondary Education and Pathway Preparation

**Roundtable Discussion (Part1: Follow-up From Last Month)****Highlights**

- One-on-One conversations are high impact, especially for completion and correcting misconceptions, but hard to scale with staffing limits.
- Parent/guardian step is the most consistent friction point. Support needs to shift more intentionally toward family outreach, not just student follow-up.
- Messaging that frames FAFSA as a universal tool (not a low-income form) and ties it to multiple post-secondary paths can reduce the stigma and increase overall completion.
- Need for clearer data guidance so schools can respond quickly and confidently.
- Students who don't appear in portal (super seniors) represent a key gap that complicates support and tracking.
- Student-created content and peer influence (including social media) were highlighted as promising way to reduce stigma and increase relevance.

### **Roundtable Discussion (Part2: Your Future, Funded)**

#### **Highlights**

- Board members discussed the importance of messaging and supporting parents during the financial aid application process.
- The importance of bridging gaps and bringing multiple districts together with higher education institutions was discussed as an important element of this work.
- Board members shared the importance of including translated resources.
- WSAC shared that Your Future, Funded content will be shared the week of March 2, and that announcement email will be shared with Advisory Board members.

#### **Ask of Advisory Board Members**

- Between now and March 17, help drive increases in financial aid completion within your school, organization, and networks.
- Share out WSAC resources.
- Share back successes, challenges, and other learning opportunities.
- Host or join a regional training in your area/online to support the work to increase filing statewide.
- Your Future, Funded — Finish Financial Aid Week planning and support.

#### **Key Takeaways**

- We are 76% toward meeting our goal, yet disparities remain.
- Priority schools, and others, are being creative with their FAFSA/WASFA completion efforts. How can we support them?
- Focus on schools furthest away from their goals for FRPL-eligible students with leadership and partnership support.
- Inaugural Your Future, Funded efforts: It takes a state.
- Key dates: Week of March 2 and April 20.
- Support from Advisory Board members.

## Public Comment

No Public comment.

## Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned following closing thanks from WSAC staff, with appreciation expressed to all advisory board members and partners for their contributions.

## Appendix A

February 17, 2026 – Advisory Board meeting Recording: [TVW Recording](#)

## Appendix B

- 00:18:08 Domanic Vanthom: I am on twice for the moment as my computer sound is failing me
- 00:18:20 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "I am on twice for th" with 👍
- 00:46:10 Sienna Jarrard: I'm unfortunately limited to the chat at the moment but my name is Sienna Jarrard, I'm a senior at UW Bothell from Bellevue WA
- 00:49:25 Becky Wallace - OSPI: Not yet - but thank you Sarah I'm transitioning now and will join audio
- 00:53:25 Shoshaunee Perez: I agree with this! There is a BIG misconception that FAFSA/WAFSA is only used for college, and I am wondering if some shared information about apprenticeships and other pathways that students may be interested in
- 00:53:38 Alyson Rotter: Reacted to "I agree with this! T" with 👍
- 00:53:41 Sean Moran: Reacted to "I agree with this! T" with 👍
- 00:53:42 Rathi Sudhakara: Reacted to "I agree with this! T" with 👍
- 00:53:46 Susan Rose: Reacted to "I agree with this! T" with 👍
- 00:54:25 Yaslin Torres: Me Hi Lilia
- 00:54:31 Sarah Weiss |she, her| WSAC: Reacted to "Me Hi Lilia" with ❤️
- 00:54:35 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "Me Hi Lilia" with 💙
- 00:55:25 Sean Moran: Reacted to "Me Hi Lilia" with 👍

00:56:25 Shoshaunee Perez: The other narrative that I hear as a college & career counselor is "I won't qualify for anything so why complete it?" I try to sway students and say this is the only way you will be able to even get loans or have an SAI to put into a scholarship directory

00:57:08 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "The other narrative " with 👍

00:57:14 Colleen Hall: Reacted to "I agree with this! T" with 👍

00:57:31 Colleen Hall: Reacted to "The other narrative " with 👍

00:58:46 Sean Moran: Reacted to "The other narrative " with 👍

00:59:31 Sarah Weiss |she, her| WSAC: Reacted to "Not yet - but thank " with 👍

01:02:18 Ashley DeLatour: Sorry I have to dash out before the public comment period! I wanted to offer a great tip: multi-day lunchtime completion events are really effective, especially when parents are also invited to attend

01:02:27 Sarah Weiss |she, her| WSAC: Reacted to "Sorry I have to dash" with ❤️

01:02:33 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "Sorry I have to dash" with 💙

01:02:40 Alyson Rotter: Reacted to "Sorry I have to dash" with 👍

01:03:25 Rashel Wise: Reacted to "Sorry I have to dash" with ❤️

01:03:38 Rashel Wise: Reacted to "I agree with this! T" with 👍

01:03:39 Lilia Hueso: Reacted to "Me Hi Lilia" with ❤️

01:06:38 Leanne Davis - EDNW: One challenge I've heard emerging from some of our Limitless partners has to do with challenges in reaching parents Students have completed forms, but parents have not There is interest in strategies that go beyond hosting financial aid / FAFSA completion nights And interest in understanding some strategies that work for connecting with parents without putting all the responsibility on students

01:06:57 Dawn Gering: Reacted to "I agree with this! T" with 👍

01:07:22 Sarah Weiss |she, her| WSAC: Reacted to "One challenge I've h" with ❤️

01:08:40 Yaslin Torres: Reacted to "Sorry I have to dash" with ❤️

01:08:41 Sean Moran: Reacted to "One challenge I've h" with 👍

01:09:43 Alyson Rotter: Krista, our HB 1835 team meets with students at West Sound Tech 😊

- 01:09:52 Rashel Wise: Reacted to "One challenge I've h" with 👍
- 01:09:56 Rashel Wise: Reacted to "Krista, our HB 1835 " with ❤️
- 01:10:13 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "Krista, our HB 1835 " with 💙
- 01:10:19 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "One challenge I've h" with 💙
- 01:10:32 Krista DeHart: Reacted to "Krista, our HB 1835 " with ❤️
- 01:10:56 Krista DeHart: Thanks, Aly That's good to hear!
- 01:11:06 Colleen Hall: Reacted to "Krista, our HB 1835 " with ❤️
- 01:11:59 Sean Moran: Reacted to "Krista, our HB 1835 " with 👍
- 01:12:02 Sean Moran: Reacted to "Thanks, Aly That's" with 👍
- 01:13:40 Sean Moran: Replying to "One challenge I've h"




Hi Leanne, I wonder if you might be interested in some of the GEAR UP WA resources and toolkits for parents/families GEAR UP programs typically works with the student-family model so there is a quite a focus on that

- 01:14:05 Leanne Davis - EDNW: Reacted to "Hi Leanne, I wonder " with 👍
- 01:14:56 Leanne Davis - EDNW: Replying to "One challenge I've h"

Thanks, Sean! We're always happy to share GEAR UP resources with the network I'll definitely revisit the toolkits!

- 01:15:23 Sean Moran: Reacted to "Thanks, Sean! We're " with 👍
- 01:17:22 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Join our Newsletter: Sign up for our free email newsletter to receive advice on College Bound, OtterBot, financial aid, and college and career-planning Thank you!
- 01:20:00 Sean Moran: Replying to "One challenge I've h"

Thanks so much Leanne for bringing this up Please let me know if it would be helpful and I can reach out to a GU WA staff member to see if there is a recommended toolkit/guide

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- 01:20:22 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "Thanks, Sean! We're " with 
- 01:20:24 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "Hi Leanne, I wonder " with 
- 01:20:27 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "Thanks so much Leann" with 
- 01:20:41 Krista DeHart: I have to leave for another meeting, but thank you!
- 01:20:50 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "I have to leave for " with 
- 01:21:03 Sean Moran: Reacted to "I have to leave for " with 
- 01:21:12 Sean Moran: Thank you for joining us Krista!
- 01:29:09 Railey Lamb: I think for me, as a student, I could just let people know it is happening Also, if they are confused, I can share how to help them get through it to make sure they can be a part of it
- 01:29:21 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "I think for me, as a" with 
- 01:29:31 Sean Moran: I am
- 01:29:38 Domanic Vanthom: I have a staff situation I need to step out for BRB
- 01:29:39 Sean Moran: I work a lot with Big Bend :)
- 01:30:04 Sean Moran: Maybe we can ensure all FAFSA Portal users such as Big Bend Navigators are aware of the toolkits
- 01:30:13 Yaslin Torres: Reacted to "Maybe we can ensure " with 
- 01:30:18 Sean Moran: Reacted to "I think for me, as a" with 
- 01:30:25 Alyson Rotter: Reacted to "Maybe we can ensure " with 
- 01:31:38 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "I have a staff situa" with 
- 01:31:43 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "I work a lot with Bi" with 
- 01:34:24 Yaslin Torres: Yes please :)
- 01:34:24 Sean Moran: Yaslin-are you ready to be a radio host? 
- 01:34:30 Sean Moran: Reacted to "Yes please :)" with 
- 01:34:33 Alyson Rotter: Reacted to "Yaslin-are you ready" with 
- 01:34:34 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "Yaslin-are you ready" with 
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- 01:34:34 Rashel Wise: Reacted to "Yes please :)" with 👍
- 01:34:37 Rashel Wise: Reacted to "Yaslin-are you ready" with 😄
- 01:34:37 Carolina Garza (she/her): Reacted to "Yaslin-are you ready" with ❤️
- 01:34:46 Dawn Gering: Reacted to "Yaslin-are you ready" with ❤️
- 01:35:04 Yaslin Torres: Reacted to "Yaslin-are you ready" with 😄
- 01:35:13 Carolina Garza (she/her): Yaslin, Radio KNDA in Granger, too They do a lot of long format interviews
- 01:35:21 Colleen Hall: CBC and the HB1835 have used radio promos a few times for community events It's not as scary as you might think We have done scripted questions and answers in English and Spanish
- 01:35:32 Alyson Rotter: Reacted to "CBC and the HB1835 h" with 👍
- 01:35:44 Rashel Wise: Reacted to "CBC and the HB1835 h" with 👍
- 01:35:53 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "Yaslin, Radio KNDA i" with 👍
- 01:36:00 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Reacted to "CBC and the HB1835 h" with 👍
- 01:36:02 Sean Moran: Reacted to "CBC and the HB1835 h" with 👍
- 01:36:07 Sean Moran: Reacted to "Yaslin, Radio KNDA i" with 👍
- 01:36:34 Sarah Weiss [she, her] WSAC: Reacted to "CBC and the HB1835 h" with ❤️
- 01:36:38 Yaslin Torres: Reacted to "Yaslin, Radio KNDA i" with ❤️
- 01:36:46 Yaslin Torres: Reacted to "CBC and the HB1835 h" with 👍
- 01:38:25 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): great idea, nashua
- 01:38:31 Sean Moran: Reacted to "great idea, nashua" with 👍
- 01:38:32 Rashel Wise: Reacted to "great idea, nashua" with ❤️
- 01:38:35 Nashua Johnley: Reacted to "great idea, nashua" with ❤️
- 01:39:34 Carolina Garza (she/her): Reacted to "great idea, nashua" with ❤️
- 01:49:21 Alyson Rotter: Thank you!
- 01:49:22 Kathie Pham | WSAC (she/her): Thank you everyone!

01:49:23 Sean Moran: Bye all!