



Washington Completes FAFSA Campaign Advisory Board

December 16, 2025



About WSAC

- **Mission**
 - Expand economic opportunity for all by increasing the number of WA residents who complete education and training pathways beyond the high school diploma
- **Functions**
 - Policy support for the Governor and Legislature
 - Innovate with partners on the ground to learn what works
 - Support affordability through financial aid and college savings programs
- **The Council**
 - The agency is supported by a 10-person Council, including 6 Governor's appointees and 4 education sector representatives



Advisory Board Overview

- Convened by the Governor's Office, led by WSAC
- Align statewide FAFSA/WASFA completion efforts
- Prevent duplication and strengthen collaboration
- Support and increase equitable access to financial aid



Meeting Cadence

Date	Day & Time
November 7, 2025 (Kickoff)	Friday 9:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. (hybrid)
December 16, 2025	Tuesday 2 – 4 p.m. (virtual)
January 20, 2026	Tuesday 2 – 4 p.m. (virtual)



Nov 7 – What We Said We'd Do

Board Commitments

- Consider key questions from the kickoff
- Identify tangible examples and opportunities in your communities
- Discuss these questions with your networks ahead of Dec 16 meeting

WSAC Commitments

- Provide training and resources to WEA
 - *In progress – Official kick off in January*
- Explore ways to customize student communications with more specific info on aid eligibility
 - *Preliminary templates in development*
- Design December meeting to focus on action-oriented opportunities
 - *What we'll do today!*



Collaboration & Discussion – Theme, Focus, and Actions

Last Month's Discussion

- Move financial aid & post-high school planning into the school day
- Strengthen college-going culture, esp. in rural communities
- Simplify & clarify “what students get”; support WA grant and FA messaging
- Use trusted messengers and data to personalize outreach

Today's Topics

- Winter/Spring Priorities after January Dip
- High-impact, low-cost outreach & marketing

Today's Goal:

- 1 – 2 winter/spring priorities
- 1 – 2 outreach/marketing approaches
- Clear ways we will move forward



Discussion Questions – Coming Later!

Question 1:

Knowing that financial aid completions often begin to dip in January, what adjustments or priorities for winter/spring would make it easier for students and parents to follow through and complete their applications?

Question 2:

What high-impact, low-cost marketing approaches, using the governor's and students' voices, should we prioritize to reinforce these efforts and clearly show “what students get” from financial aid?



Goals: 2025 – 2026 Academic Year Campaign

Our Goal: Increase financial aid completion across WA 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 completion between FRPL and non-FRPL students
- Reduce disparities in FAFSA completion rates, especially among those from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups





Progress Toward Our 2025-26 Goals

28% Class of 2026 FAFSA & WASFA completion rate
as of December 15 and with 42 out of 53 weeks to go

#1	In less than 3 months and with 24,248 FAFSA and WASFA completions, we are already more than halfway to our goal of 46,000 completions!
#2	Over 40 high schools have already experienced a 6% increase in FAFSA completions among FRPL-eligible students. We're almost a third of the way to our goal of 150 schools.
#3	FAFSA completion among FRPL-eligible students is 5pp below FAFSA completion for non-FRPL students (23% vs. 28%). We are at risk of falling further behind if we do not address this disparity.
#4	When considered by race/ethnicity, the group with the highest FAFSA completion has a rate that is three times the group with the lowest completion rate. Without action, existing disparities in filing by race/ethnicity may worsen.



Strategy Progress & Highlights

Priority Schools

- **What we're seeing:**
 - Increase in FAFSA completions after a school hosts an event
 - 25 priority schools already onboarded
 - Actively onboarding **2** tribal schools to reach **27** schools
- **How we're adjusting:** Hands-on follow-up support based on the specific needs that school staff share with WSAC leads

FAFSA Portal

- **What we're seeing:**
 - **87%** of expected HS graduates attend one of the 469 schools with at least one portal user
 - There are active 485 portal users across all schools
 - **But 230 schools still have no portal user**
- **How we're adjusting:**
 - Targeted outreach and training to remaining **230** schools
 - Using data to build targeted student-level follow-up

OtterBot

- **What we're seeing:**
 - 30,870: Total # of HS senior users statewide
 - 1,792: Total # of HS senior users at the 25 priority schools
 - Approx. 40,000 parents/guardians of College Bound HS seniors
- **How we're adjusting:** Adding in regular dual generation content for parents and students, with clear financial aid steps and messages that are timed to support school-day activities and events

Regional Partnerships (RCG & GEAR UP)

- **What we're seeing:**
 - Across all GEAR UP schools, the overall completion rate is 36% - nearly double what it was last January
 - In Nine Mile Falls, overall completion is already above 50% - compared to 11% last December
- **How we're adjusting:**
 - Work directly with GEAR UP advisors and RCG partners to increase filing rates at schools that are underperforming
 - Uplift and share out effective practices already in use



Increasing Awareness of Financial Aid Opportunities

Since 2023, WSAC has carried out statewide marketing to:

- **Build awareness of Washington College Grant (WA Grant)** and its generous financial eligibility requirements and flexibility among low-income students & families in Washington State.
- **Drive greater financial aid completions** among eligible populations.



WA Grant is one of the most generous financial aid programs in the country.

[Learn more](#)





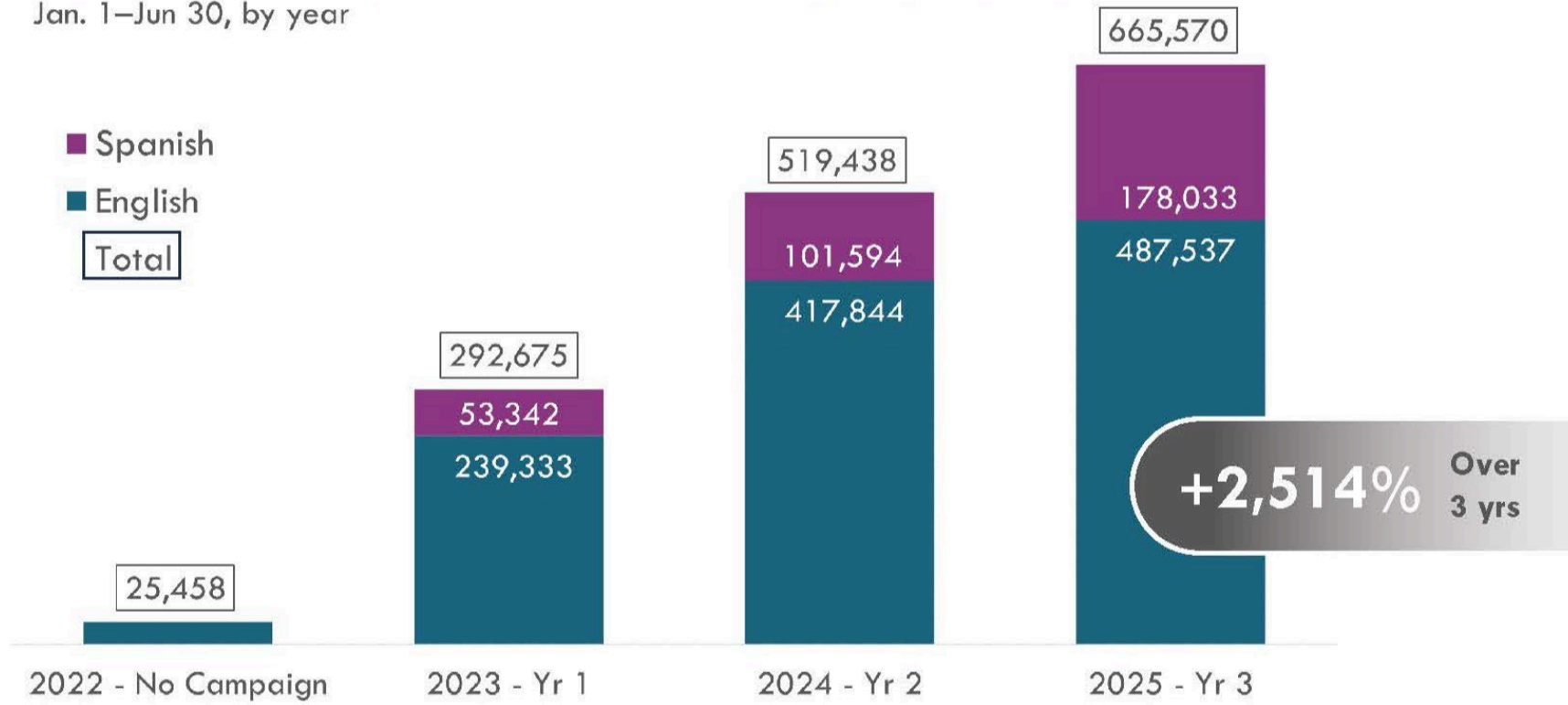
Demonstrating Increased Engagement

+72%

Users clicking from the WSAC site to the FAFSA

Jan-June YOY 2025 vs. 2024

Washington College Grant (WA Grant) Webpage Visitors
Jan. 1–Jun 30, by year





Demonstrating Increased Awareness

A survey of WA parents in the target income group showed

Over 60%

**were familiar with
“WA Grant”**

a term that did not exist prior to WSAC’s marketing efforts

Pre- and post-campaign surveys found:*

+10 percentage point increase in **awareness of WA Grant**

+8 percentage point increase in parents reporting their children were **likely to apply to college or career training** after high school

**Fall 2024 vs. Summer 2025*



Learning & Growing: Underway & Upcoming Work



Regional Marketing

With Gates Foundation, testing local approach

- **Storytelling Videos**

New documentary-style video content

- **Statewide Marketing**

2026 campaign will launch in Jan.

- **WA Grant Learning & Impact Resource**

New research-based online content



Discussion Questions For Today + Action Item Ideation

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*****3-5 action items*****



Asks of Advisory Board Members

- Between now and January 20, 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
- Help us select schools that deserve recognition for building a college-going culture
- Join or host a regional training in your area to support the work to increase filing statewide



Community Voices

- Open floor for guests and partners to share



Moving Forward Together

- Next meeting: January 20, 2026 (2-4 PM) Virtual
- Materials will be shared approximately one to two weeks in advance
- wsac.wa.gov/wa-completes-fafsa-advisory-board
- Please contact Sarah Weiss at sarahwe@wsac.wa.gov