K–12, postsecondary institutions and attain postsecondary credentials. the comprehensive support that they and unemployed adults are given time when first-time college students COVID recovery continues to be a pandemic take us backwards. college student guidance (Guided Grant (state financial aid), community expansion of the Washington College higher education access including the order and significant new investment in early learning for low-income families, have seen increases in state investment families. In the last several years, we have committed to collective action and change to support students and their educational journeys and remain engaged in this work. This is our best chance at building a truly inclusive and equitable recovery.

MEETING OUR STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS WHERE THEY ARE

When surveyed, 96% of local high schoolers from South King County indicated that they wanted to continue their education after high school. According to the most recent data from the Road Map Project, only 30% of students from this same region earn a college degree or career credential by their mid-twenties. This stark difference between students’ goals and achievements reflects the underlying reality that our school systems are not providing the support that students need to succeed.

Data from the Post-School Outcome Survey showed that only 28.19% of students with disabilities engaged in some form of post-secondary education after leaving high school in the 2020-21 school year, while 22.64% of students with disabilities were not engaged in any type of employment, education, or training programs following high school. Among students with disabilities leaving high school, disparities across racial and ethnic groups persist. The percentages of Black, Indigenous, and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students with disabilities engaged in higher education at far lower rates than their peers with disabilities of other races in the 2020-21 graduating class (CTTS, Post-School Outcome Survey, 2023).

Students — especially students of color, first generation, students with disabilities, and other students facing barriers — need individualized, high-touch support throughout high school to make a smooth transition to postsecondary and ensure that support continues throughout postsecondary to ensure students are able to attain postsecondary credentials. The current counselor to student ratio of our students is, on average, 482:1 — almost double the recommended standard. Data shows that students of color, first generation and special education students rely more heavily on school staff when it comes to conversations about college options and support making the transition from high school they attend and the postsecondary school they choose complete the process. Recent data from NCAN shows that just 61% of high school seniors complete the application by the time they graduate, leaving $24 billion in federal aid unclaimed. During this process, almost half of all low-income applicants are flagged by the federal government for verification.

FINANCIAL AID BY THE NUMBERS

Completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is one of the best indicators of whether a high school senior will attend college. According to the National College Access Network (NCAN), seniors who complete the FAFSA are 84% more likely to immediately enroll in postsecondary education. Yet bureaucratic verification procedures vastly reduce the number of students who access financial aid. Almost half of all low-income applicants are asked to submit additional documents to verify the accuracy of their demographic and financial information, further complicating a confusing process; as a result, only 56% of Pell-eligible students selected for verification complete the process. They should receive high quality support making the transition from K–12 to postsecondary in a way that is more seamless, and experiencing fewer barriers, regardless of the high school they attend and the postsecondary school they choose complete the process. Recent data from NCAN shows that just 61% of high school seniors complete the application by the time they graduate, leaving $24 billion in federal aid unclaimed. During this process, almost half of all low-income applicants are flagged by the federal government for verification.

To fully utilize the resources available from NCAN shows that just 61% of high school seniors complete the application by the time they graduate, leaving $24 billion in federal aid unclaimed. During this process, almost half of all low-income applicants are flagged by the federal government for verification.

Once at college, students should:
- Take a college transition and success course within the first term to support a smooth transition
- Be connected with reliable advising and support in navigating academic and life barriers
- Receive financial support that is targeted to address barriers and is available to highest need students

PLANNING FOR POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL COMPLETION

Supporting postsecondary success does not end with access – it ends with the successful completion of postsecondary credentials by students and young people. While improved rates of college acceptances can be an exciting achievement, we must ensure that these acceptances lead to higher numbers of postsecondary credential holders as well.

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2023 FEDERAL POLICY FOCUS

POLICY, ADVOCACY AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

FEDERAL POLICY FOCUS

INTRODUCTION

Federal investment in education will help the state of Washington maintain recent hard-won gains for students and families. In the last several years, we have seen increases in state investment in early learning for low-income families, significant increased investment in K–12 pursuant to the State Supreme Court order and significant new investment in higher education access including the expansion of the Washington College Grant (state financial aid), community college student guidance (Guided Pathways) and improved 2 and 4 year institutional support. We cannot let the pandemic take us backwards. COVID recovery continues to be a time when first-time college students and unemployed adults are given the comprehensive support that they need to build marketable skills and attain postsecondary credentials. K–12, postsecondary institutions and community organizations across King and Pierce have invested time and committed to collective action and change to support students and their educational journeys and remain engaged in this work. This is our best chance at building a truly inclusive and equitable recovery.