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About the Washington Student Achievement Council

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) is a ten-member council supported by a cabinet-level state agency. The Council's mission is to advance educational opportunities and attainment in Washington. In pursuit of that mission, the Council:

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

Our commitment to equity: In support of advancing educational attainment for all Washingtonians, we commit to fostering a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion among our staff and in all areas of our work.

What's New in 2024-25

Bridge Grant

For the academic year 2024-25, students who are receiving the maximum Washington College Grant may be eligible to receive an additional \$500 Bridge Grant. The Bridge Grant is to assist with costs associated with higher education. The Bridge Grant is not available to students who are eligible for the College Bound Scholarship, and the award is limited to the student's need.

Timeframe

Beginning in the 2024-25 academic year, students can now receive College Bound funding for up to six years of enrollment or the equivalent (18 full-time quarters/12 full-time semesters) up to a Bachelor's degree. The extended timeframe also applies to the Washington College Grant (WA Grant) and Passport to Careers. This aligns the eligibility timeframe of state programs with that of the federal Pell Grant. Other program requirements—such as attending an eligible college and maintaining satisfactory academic progress—remain unchanged.

College Bound – GPA Requirement

Beginning in the 2023-24 academic year, there was no high school GPA requirement to receive College Bound at a community college or technical school. Students who enroll directly after high school into a four-year college or university will still need to meet the 2.0 GPA requirement to receive College Bound. Students with a high school GPA below 2.0 who attend a community college or technical school initially and then transfer to a four-year college will be able to receive College Bound. All students must still meet other College Bound Pledge and program requirements to receive funds. Students must still meet admission requirements to the four-year college or university of their choice and enroll before receiving College Bound.

WA Grant Campaign

A Washington College Grant (WA Grant) campaign has been continued to increase awareness of the WA Grant program. This is a multi-faceted campaign to encourage students, apprentices, and families to apply. WA Grant gives more money to more people for more kinds of education and training beyond high school.

Washington Award for Vocational Excellence

The Washington Award for Vocational Excellence (WAVE) was established by the Legislature in 1984 to help emphasize the importance of career and technical education, and the value of real-world, hands-on learning. The award was suspended in 2010 because of budget cutbacks during the Great Recession and restarted by the Legislature in 2022. The award recognizes high-performing career and technical education (CTE) students at the high school and college levels.

Award values are based on the total number of scholarships awarded, as funding is limited, but can cover up to two years of tuition, according to the tuition charged by the institution students will attend. WAVE is administered by the Workforce Board in collaboration with WSAC, which handles the disbursement of funds. Application information is available at the Workforce Board's WAVE landing page: wtb.wa.gov/wave/.

Access and Support Programs

Aim Higher Washington

wsac.wa.gov/aim-higher

The Aim Higher initiative is a coordinated effort to increase equity in educational attainment by helping more students in Washington apply for financial aid. The initiative's programs provide students with early, accessible, pathway-relevant financial aid information and application support. More info can be found at wsac.wa.gov/aim-higher.



Plan Your Future

wsac.wa.gov/actionplan

WSAC developed a student-centered one-stop-shop website to assist juniors and seniors with their postsecondary planning, admissions, financial aid application support, and other critical resources.

Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA)

wsac.wa.gov/wasfa

The Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) is accessible at wsac.wa.gov/wasfa. This application is available to students who are not eligible to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) due to their immigration status, defaulted federal loans, or other issues with federal aid. Students who complete the WASFA will be considered for state financial aid programs only. The WASFA is available in English and Spanish.

GEAR UP

gearup.wa.gov

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is a federally funded program that provides high-poverty school districts with resources to support them in preparing students for postsecondary options. WSAC, Washington State University, and University of Washington lead GEAR UP programs serving over 37,000 students in 70 school districts. The WSAC-led program serves over 5,500 students in 26 school districts. WSAC maintains a website of free resources available to schools, students, and families, including family newsletter templates, college visit resources, a scholarship listing, and more. 12th Year Campaign



12th Year Campaign

wsac.wa.gov/12th-year-campaign

wsac.wa.gov/fafsa-completion

The 12th Year Campaign provides free trainings, materials, and other resources to those working with students on admissions and financial aid applications. The 12th Year Campaign can also support districts and schools with their Financial Aid Advising Day planning. Additionally, the 12th Year Campaign also promotes the Plus 5 Push by encouraging sites using 12th Year Campaign resources and student-level FAFSA data from the secure WSAC portal to increase their financial aid completion by 5 percent.



OtterBot

wsac.wa.gov/otterbot

OtterBot is a free texting service to support Washington high school students and their parents/guardians. It is designed for students who are enrolled in College Bound. Students and their parents/guardians will receive timely text reminders and can ask OtterBot questions about financial aid or college access information 24/7.



Student Loan Education Course

www.studentloaned.wa.gov

The Student Loan Education Course provides a series of learning modules with information on applying for aid, comparing award letters, knowing how much aid a student needs, and repayment topics with four tracks:

- Preparing for school.
- Understanding my loans.
- Loan repayment.
- Supporting my child's education.

College Savings Plans-WA529

529.wa.gov

Washington's two 529 college savings plans are the Guaranteed Education Tuition (GET) Program and the DreamAhead College Investment Plan. They help families save for future college and career training expenses.

GET and DreamAhead accounts grow tax-deferred and remain tax-free when used for qualified education expenses—tuition, fees, room & board, books, supplies, and more. Students can use GET and DreamAhead funds at public or private four-year colleges or universities in the U.S. and even some schools abroad, as well as trade schools and registered apprenticeship programs.

GET

GET is a 529 prepaid tuition plan that offers Washington residents a “peace of mind” way to save for higher education. The State guarantees that savings in a GET account will keep pace with changes in-state public tuition rates. Specifically, 100 GET units purchased today will always equal one year of tuition and state-mandated fees at Washington's highest priced public university, no matter how much it changes in the future. The GET open enrollment period runs November through May each year.



DreamAhead

DreamAhead is a 529 college investment plan open to anyone in the United States. Account owners select savings options and their money is invested in the market. DreamAhead investors can customize their saving portfolios based on their risk tolerance and student age. DreamAhead enrollment is open year-round.



Scholarship Search

theWashBoard

thewashboard.org

TheWashBoard.org is committed to increasing access to scholarships and financial aid for Washington students. Launched in 2010, theWashBoard.org, a free, scholarship matching website for Washington students, is a simple and central scholarship search and application resource. Last year, nearly \$18.3 million in scholarships were offered with a minimum of 3,741 available awards on TheWashBoard.org.



Need-based financial aid programs

College Bound

collegebound.wa.gov

College Bound is an early commitment of state financial aid to cover tuition at public rates, some fees, and a small book allowance at over 65 eligible Washington postsecondary institutions.



This commitment is mostly fulfilled by the Washington College Grant. The application is a two-step process. After being auto-enrolled in 7th, 8th, or in some cases, 9th grade, high school students must fulfill program pledge requirements and meet residency and income requirements. Students must enroll in college within one year of high school graduation.

Passport to Careers Program

wsac.wa.gov/passport-to-careers

wsac.wa.gov/passport/guide

This program offers two pathways for foster youth and unaccompanied homeless youth seeking a postsecondary degree or career training.

The Passport to College program helps students successfully attend a postsecondary institution by providing a college scholarship and comprehensive support.

The Passport to Apprenticeship Opportunities program helps students with career-related training under state-approved apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship programs. Support services and financial aid are provided through ANEW.



Washington College Grant

wsac.wa.gov/wcg

wsac.wa.gov/wcg-apprentices

The Washington College Grant (WA Grant) provides need-based financial aid to Washington students pursuing postsecondary education and access to funding for



registered and approved apprenticeship programs. Students who meet eligibility requirements¹ can use the financial aid at Washington's eligible institutions², including public two- and four-year colleges and universities, and many accredited private/independent colleges, universities, and career schools in the state. In addition, participants may receive WA Grant funding for approved apprenticeship programs available through approved apprenticeship program providers.

In 2022-23, the eligibility thresholds increased and funds are guaranteed to all eligible students and apprenticeship participants, making the WA Grant one of the most generous financial aid programs in the country.

¹ Find income and program requirements at wsac.wa.gov/wcg

² Find a complete list of eligible institutions at wsac.wa.gov/sfa-institutions

State Work Study

wsac.wa.gov/state-work-study

State Work Study is financial aid for low- and middle-income students. Qualifying students get an approved on- or off-campus job to support their education. Work study builds students' skills, increases their earnings, and reduces reliance on student loans. The state contributes to the wages of work study employees, so participating employers benefit from educated and motivated workers at a lower cost. Many employers hire work study students on a permanent basis after graduation.

Merit-based financial aid programs

American Indian Endowed Scholarship

wsac.wa.gov/american-indian-endowed-scholarship

The American Indian Endowed Scholarship program provides educational scholarships on a competitive basis to high-achieving resident students, with demonstrated financial need, who have close social and cultural ties to an American Indian tribe or community within the state. Recipients demonstrate academic merit and a commitment to serve the American Indian communities in Washington.

Workforce programs

Educator Workforce Programs

wsac.wa.gov/teachers

The Washington State Educator Workforce Program provides financial aid to attract and retain teachers to work in subjects or locations of high need known as shortage areas. The program includes options for current teachers, student teachers, paraprofessionals, and non-educators hoping to move into the teaching field. The conditional scholarships require the participant to fulfill teaching service in a Washington K-12 public common school in exchange for the scholarship funds. The grant is awarded to applicants with the most financial need who are student teaching in a Washington K-12 Title I public common school.

National Guard Postsecondary Education Grant

wsac.wa.gov/national-guard

The National Guard Postsecondary Education Grant, commonly known as the National Guard Grant, helps eligible, actively participating members of the Washington National Guard and (starting Fall 2024) eligible dependents with the costs of

higher education through a conditional scholarship. Participants and sponsors commit to serving one year in the Washington National Guard in exchange for each year of grant funding. Combined with state and federal aid, grants can be used for costs of attendance, such as tuition, fees, room, and board, at approved colleges in Washington, as well as a portion of books and materials.