

Financial Aid 101



WASHINGTON STUDENT
ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL

12th Year Campaign





About the Washington Student Achievement Council



We advance educational opportunities and attainment in Washington.



What Will I Learn Today?

What is Financial Aid

Types of Financial Aid

When You Should Apply for Financial Aid

How to Apply for Financial Aid

Scholarships

Help and Resources



What is Financial Aid?

Financial aid is money to help pay for college or career school. Grants, work-study, loans, and scholarships help make education after high school affordable.



Financial Aid Is An Umbrella



Grants

- Income-based, federal, state and institutional.

Scholarships

- Merit and income-based, from public, private, and nonprofit sources.

Loans

- Income-based, federal and private.

Work Study

- Income-based, federal, state and institutional.



Grants

A grant is gift aid that often based on financial need and does not need to be repaid (unless, for example, you withdraw from school and owe a refund).

Washington College Grant

Pell Grant



Washington College Grant (WA Grant)



Washington State has made a groundbreaking commitment to financial aid for low- and middle-income people of all ages with the **Washington College Grant** (WA Grant). This grant gives eligible people more money for more types of education like certificate programs, job training, apprenticeships, or college.



Washington College Grant Provides a Unique Opportunity

With the Washington College Grant (WCG), more families are eligible for financial aid than ever before.

Family Size	Full Award	Partial Award
 Eligible Student Family of 1	Income \$43,500 or less	Income Up to \$72,500
 Eligible Student Family of 4	\$83,500 or less	Up to \$139,500

Award amounts vary based on income, family size, and the school or program attended.





Scholarships

Scholarships are gifts that don't have to be repaid and are designed to help students pay for college. They can be a one-time gift or renewable. One of the largest scholarships in WA is the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship.

You can start your scholarship search by going to thewashboard.org

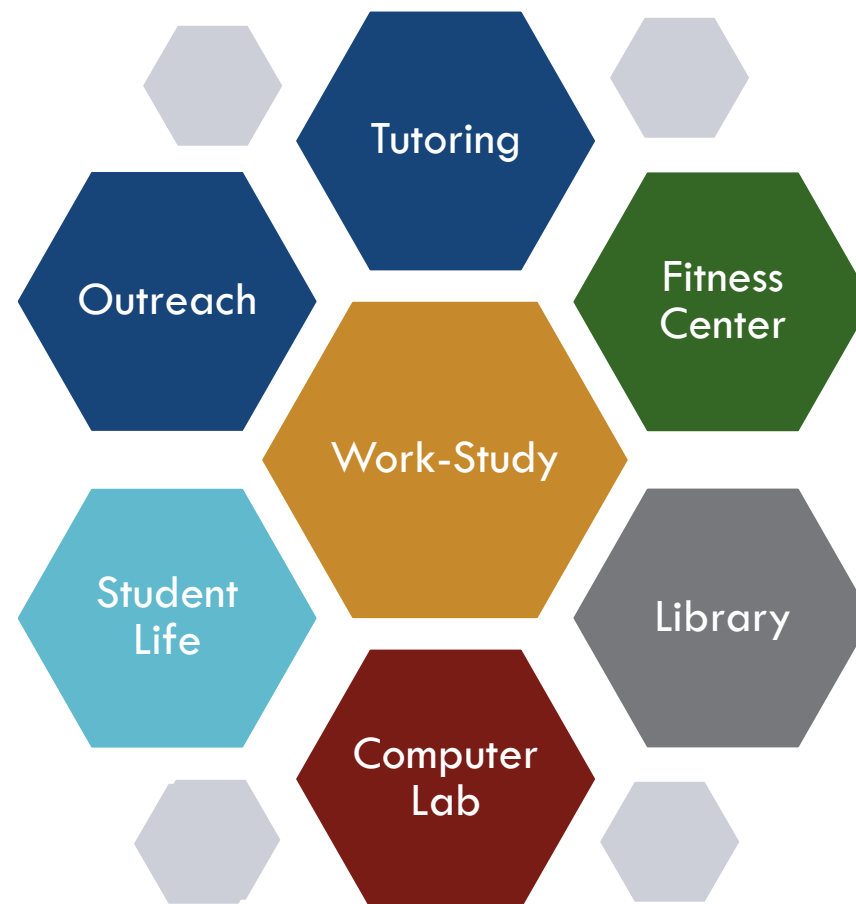


WASHINGTON STATE
OPPORTUNITY
SCHOLARSHIP



Work-Study

Work-Study provides part-time jobs for students with financial need, allowing them to earn money to help pay education expenses. These jobs are typically on campus.





Loans

A student loan is money you borrow for your education, and pay back over time. Unlike grants or work-study you do have to pay back your loans. You do not have to accept all the loans offered to you.

Unsubsidized Student Loans

- Interest begins accruing as soon as the loan is disbursed, including while you are enrolled in school.

Subsidized Student Loans

- Interest is paid by while you're enrolled at least half time in college.



27-28 Federal Student Aid Loan Changes

Parent Plus Loans

New Borrowing Limits

Annual cap: \$20,000 per dependent student per year.

Lifetime cap: \$65,000 total per dependent student.

Legacy Provision

If a student has received a Parent PLUS Loan disbursement before July 1, 2026 while enrolled in a qualifying program, the parent borrower may continue borrowing Parent PLUS Loans under previous loan limits for three academic years or until the student completes their program, whichever is sooner.

Loan Repayment Options

All Parent PLUS loans taken out on or after July 1, 2026 are only eligible for the Standard Repayment Plan. New loans are not eligible for RAP.



Sources of Financial Aid

Federal

Typically can be used at most schools in most states.

State

Typically for residents to attend most colleges in the state.

College

Offered by a specific school to attend that school.

Organizations

Offered by non-profits, business, churches, etc.



Federal Financial Aid Programs

Pell Grant

Federal Work-Study

Unsubsidized/Subsidized Student Loans

Parent Loans

Complete the Free Application for
Federal Student Aid
(FAFSA) to be considered for Federal
Student Aid





Examples of Washington State Financial Aid

Washington College Grant

College Bound

State Work-Study

Passport to Careers

Opportunity Grant

Complete the Washington Application for
State Financial Aid
(WASFA) or FAFSA to be considered for
Washington State Financial Aid



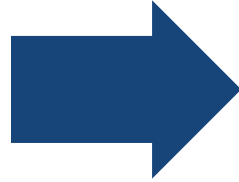
Anyone uncomfortable with submitting a
federal FAFSA form can use the WASFA to
apply only for state aid only.



College Bound Commitment Eligibility and Auto-Enrollment: A Two-Step Process

Step One

- Auto-enrollment for eligible public-school students.
- Eligible for FRPL in 7th, 8th, or newly eligible in 9th grade.
- Foster Youth are auto-enrolled through HS graduation.



Step Two

- Fulfill the College Bound Program Requirements.
- Meet income and residency requirements.
- Be accepted to and attend an eligible college within one year of graduation.
- College Bound award usage is limited to six years following initial enrollment/receipt.



College Bound Program



Combines with other state financial aid to cover the average cost of tuition (at public rates), some fees, and a small book allowance = **commitment**.



Can be used at about 60 two and four-year public and private colleges and universities.



collegebound@wsac.wa.gov



Takeaway: Passport to Careers -

Supporting Former Foster Youth and Unaccompanied Homeless Youth



Passport to College Promise Scholarship

- Comprehensive supports from high school to higher education

Passport to Apprenticeship Opportunities

- Career-related training under state approved pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs



State Financial Aid Calculator

This tool calculates potential awards from the Washington College Grant and Pell Grant programs.

There may be more aid available to you from other state and federal programs, private scholarships, or directly from the college you attend.

The only way to know for sure how much financial aid you can receive is to complete a FAFSA or WASFA financial aid application

 Financial Aid Calculator

[Show language options](#)

Financial Aid Calculator

The calculator is currently providing financial aid estimates for the **2025-2026 academic year**.

Many undergraduate students can cover some or all their college or training costs with the **Washington College Grant (WA Grant)** and/or **Federal Pell Grant (Pell Grant)**. This calculator also estimates how much WA Grant you can receive toward a [non-college-based apprenticeship program](#).

WSAC does not collect any data you enter.

Estimate your award →

This tool calculates potential awards from the WA Grant and Pell Grant programs. There may be more aid available to you from other state and federal programs, from [private scholarships](#), or directly from the college you attend.

The only way to know for sure how much financial aid you can receive for college is to [complete a FAFSA or WASFA financial aid application](#). For more information, contact the college financial aid office or apprenticeship program you plan to attend.

Maintained by the [Washington Student Achievement Council](#).

<https://studentaid.gov/aid-estimator/>



Important Information for the Class of 2027

2027-28 FAFSA and
WASFA will open
October 1, 2026

Class of 2027 will
complete the 2027-
28 FAFSA or WASFA
using 2025 income
information



Apply Every Year



Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Federal Student Aid
An OFFICE of the U.S. DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

FAFSA[®] Form ▼

Grants and Loans ▼

Loan Repayment ▼

Loan Discharge ▼



Log In | Create Account

Get Money To Help Pay for School

Use the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA[®]) form to apply for financial aid for college, career school, or graduate school.

Start New Form

Edit Existing Forms

Accept an Invitation



2027–28 FAFSA[®] Form Now Available!

The 2027–28 FAFSA form is now available for all students and contributors.



Two Ways to Apply for the FAFSA

A screenshot of the FAFSA website. At the top, it says "An official website of the United States government." and "Help Center Submit a Complaint English | Español". Below this is the "FederalStudentAid" logo and navigation links: "UNDERSTAND AID", "APPLY FOR AID", "COMPLETE AID PROCESS", and "MANAGE LOANS". The main content area has a dark background with the text "Complete the FAFSA® Form" in large white letters. To the right, it says "New to the FAFSA® Process? Completing the FAFSA form is free. Fill it out now." with a "Start Here" button. Below this, it says "Use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form to apply for federal and state student grants, work-study, and loans." and "Returning User?" with a right arrow.

Website

An image of the FAFSA Form cover. It has a green header with "FAFSA® Form" in large white letters. To the right, it says "July 1, 2027 – June 30, 2028". Below the header, it says "Free Application for Federal Student Aid" and "FederalStudentAid An OFFICE of the U.S. DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION". The main body is white with the text "Use this form to apply free for federal and state student grants, work-study, and loans. Or apply free online at fafsa.gov." Below this is a green section titled "Apply by the Deadlines" with the text "For federal aid, submit your application as early as possible, but no earlier than October 1, 2026. We must receive your application no later than June 30, 2028. Your college must have your correct, complete information by your last day of enrollment in the 2027–28 school year."

Paper
FAFSA



FAFSA Website Language Options

FAFSA®: Apply for Aid

FAFSA®: Apply for Aid

Use the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) form to apply for financial aid for college or grad school.

NEW TO THE FAFSA® PROCESS?

Completing the FAFSA form is free. Fill it out now.

RETURNING USER?

Correct info • Add a school
View your *Student Aid Report* (SAR)

Home » FAFSA®: solicitar ayuda económica

FAFSA®: solicitar ayuda económica

Utilice el formulario *Solicitud Gratuita de Ayuda Federal para Estudiantes* (FAFSA®) para solicitar ayuda económica para pagar la universidad o los estudios de posgrado.

¿ES USTED NUEVO PARA EL PROCESO DE LA FAFSA®?

Llenar el formulario FAFSA es gratuito.
Llénelo ahora mismo.

¿ES USTED UN USUARIO QUE REGRESA?

Corregir info • Agregar una institución educativa

English

Español



Studentaid.gov account (FSA ID) – The First Step to the FAFSA

Social Security
Number
(if applicable)

Their own
email address

Create an Account

Whether you're a student, parent, or borrower, you'll need to create your own account to fill out the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) form and manage your federal student aid.

Language Preference ?

☒ English ☐ Español

Get Started

⌚ 7 minutes

What You'll Need

- Your Social Security number (if you have one)
- Your own email address

Already have an account? [Log In](#)

Add Your Email Address

Email Address

Continue

Secure Code Sent

Enter the secure code we sent to your email:

Enter the secure code below.

[Resend code](#)

[Didn't receive a code? ▾](#)

Cancel

Continue



Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA)



**WASHINGTON STUDENT
ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL**
EDUCATION · OPPORTUNITY · RESULTS

info@wsac.wa.gov | (360) 753-7800

Select Language

Powered by Google Translate

ABOUT US

MEETINGS

STRATEGY & PARTNERSHIPS

FINANCIAL AID

ADMINISTRATION

OUTREACH & INITIATIVES

NEWS & RESEARCH

[home](#)

WASFA QUESTIONNAIRE

The Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) is for people who choose not to file a federal FAFSA application. People who complete a WASFA are applying for state aid only. There are various reasons people choose to complete a WASFA instead of a FAFSA. For example:

- You or your parent(s) are undocumented or do not qualify for federal financial aid because of your immigration status.
- Your parent(s) or family member(s) do not wish to file a FAFSA.
- [You have privacy concerns.](#)
- You or your parent(s) do not and will not file federal income taxes.
- You have federal loans that are in default.
- You owe a repayment on federal grants.

After you complete the WASFA, the college(s) or program(s) you choose will determine whether you meet [state residency requirements](#) and [state financial aid eligibility](#). State financial aid could include Washington College Grant (WA Grant), College Bound, Passport to Careers, National Guard Grant, or State Work Study.

The following questions will help you decide which application to complete, recognizing that anyone can choose to file a WASFA instead of a FAFSA. If, for any reason, you have filed both a FAFSA and a WASFA for the same year, please notify your financial aid office to avoid any delays in your financial aid.

Start



© 2025 WSAC

wsac.wa.gov/WASFA



27-28 FAFSA Process Improvements

For the 2027–28 cycle, beta testing will begin in August 2026 and consist of two rounds

Students' data will be pre-populated from previous FAFSA forms, allowing for a much faster experience for returning students.

Parents with multiple children applying for federal student aid will be able to reuse their information across all applications instead of being required to reenter it for every child.

The 2027–28 FAFSA form has been updated to reflect ongoing feedback from students and families. Changes primarily focus on simplifying question and response options to be more easily readable and understandable.

Students Experiencing Homelessness - The FAFSA team simplified the wording of the question and made the responses more descriptive. Applicants in this vulnerable situation can now more easily answer the question and move on to complete and submit their form.



27-28 Real-Time FAFSA Results

- A new enhancement that enables real-time FAFSA results for students.
- After the initial submission, students can make up to four corrections without waiting for the typical one-to-three day processing delay between transactions.
- This enhancement allows students to review and resolve issues more quickly.



WA.gov Account— The First Step to the WASFA

You will need
your own email
address

The WASFA is
available in
multiple
languages

You will need
internet access

You will need to
create a WA.gov
account



Create an account

Enter your email and we'll send you a code to verify it. Then you can continue setting up your account.

* Email

Choose an email you'll have long-term access to.

Next



Is a Student Dependent or Independent*

Dependent Student

Requires Parent Information

A student who does not meet any of the criteria for an independent student

*for financial aid purposes

Independent Student

Does Not Require Parent Information

An independent student is one of the following:

- at least 24 years old
- married
- a graduate or professional student
- a veteran
- a member of the armed forces
- an orphan
- a ward of the court
- someone with legal dependents other than a spouse
- an emancipated minor
- someone who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and self supporting



What Do I Need to Apply for Financial Aid

Your driver's license or state ID. (If you have one)

Your income information

- This includes bank statements, a W-2 or pay stub, and a 2025 tax return if applicable.

Your parent most likely will need to provide information, if you are 24 or younger.

- This includes bank statements, records of child support received, W-2 or pay stubs, and a 2025 tax return if applicable.

FAFSA Filers Should Also Have Access to:

- Your Studentaid.gov account (FSA ID) and your parent(s) will also need to create a Studentaid.gov account (FSA ID)
- Your Social Security Card or green card.
- Parent's Social Security Number (if they have one).



CSS Profile

CSS Profile

About CSS Profile ▾

Application Steps ▾

APPLY WITH CSS PROFILE

CSS Profile

Each year CSS Profile unlocks access to more than \$14 billion in nonfederal aid to thousands of students.

Sign in to Fall 2027/Spring 2028

Sign in to Fall 2026/Spring 2027

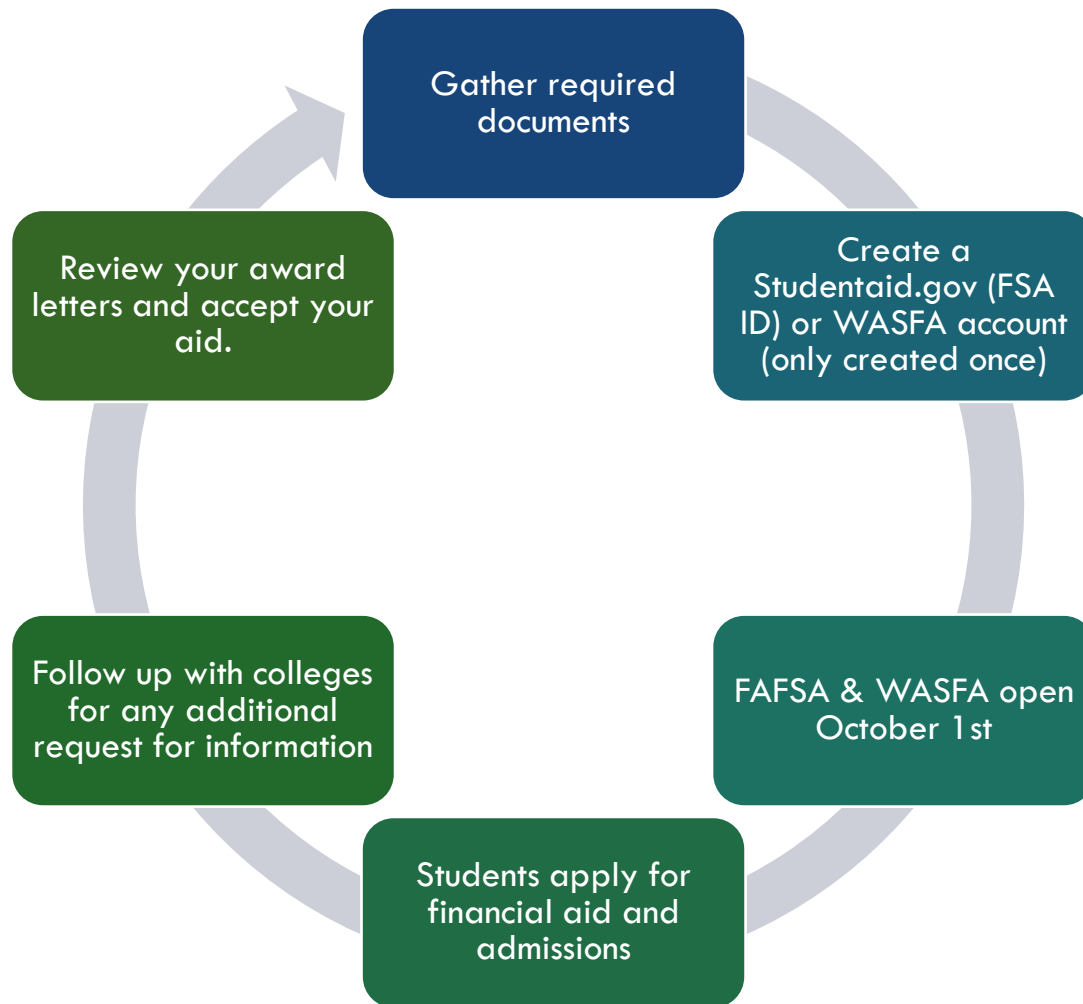
Additional profile that some colleges use to award institutional aid.

The CSS Profile is free for domestic undergraduate students whose family income is up to \$100,000. The fee for the initial application is \$25. Additional reports are \$16.

<https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/>



Financial Aid Timeline





Class of 2027 Next Steps

Explore Your Options

- Explore your post secondary options using your high school and beyond plan.
- Talk to your counselor to make sure you are on track for graduation.

Determine Which Financial Aid Application To Use

- If you are not sure which application to complete go to <https://wsac.wa.gov/WASFAelig>

Create a Studentaid.gov (FSA ID) or WASFA Account

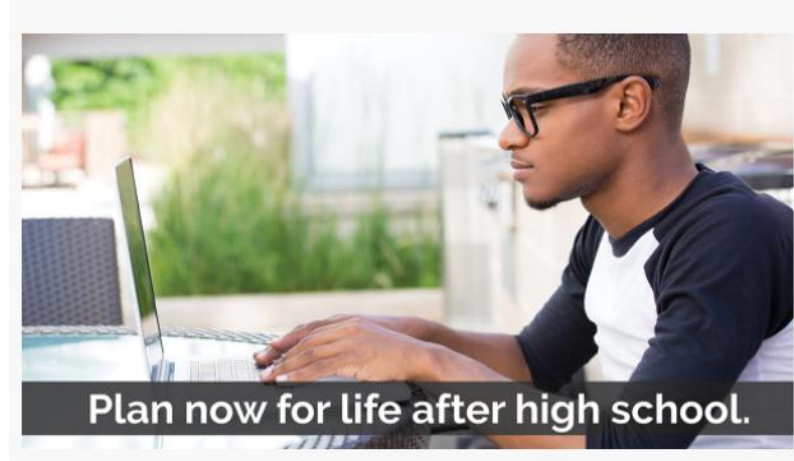
- You can create Studentaid.gov (FSA ID) by going to <https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch>
- You can create a WASFA account by going to <https://wsac.wa.gov/WASFAelig>
- Complete your 2027-28 application starting October 1st 2026



Resource: www.wsac.wa.gov/actionplan

One-stop site for juniors and seniors

Career exploration resources to application information





Resource: 12th Year Campaign Resources and Events

Free virtual and in-person financial aid events to help you take the next step!

This calendar is updated with events from around Washington State

Calendar of upcoming financial aid events

September 2026						
SUN 30	MON 31	TUE Sep 1	WED 2	THU 3	FRI 4	SAT 5
6	7	8	9	10 • 12pm Skagit Valley C	11	12
13	14	15	16 • 12pm Skagit Valley C	17	18 • 9am Skagit Valley Co	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29 • 5:30pm Financial Aid	30 • 5:30pm Class of 202	Oct 1	2	3

Washington State Financial Aid Events

Events shown in time zone: (GMT-07:00) Pacific Time - Los Angeles

to Google Calendar

Google Calendar

<https://wsac.wa.gov/actionplan>



Resource: Financial Aid Padlet For Students

Christina Winstead • 1 • 13d

Financial Aid Resources for Students

Welcome to the 12th Year Campaign student padlet. These resources will help you with completing financial aid and admissions applications.

How to Apply For the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®)

Federal Student Aid Pro Tips for the FAFSA® Form
studentaid.gov
Federal Student Aid
Use these tips to help you successfully complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form.

Step #1 - Create a studentaid.gov (FSA ID) Account
studentaid.gov
Create Account | Federal Student Aid
This is your first step! Whether

How to Apply For The Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA)

Step #1 - Determine WASFA Eligibility With Questionnaire
wsac.wa.gov
WASFA Questionnaire
You can use this tool to assess yourself for WASFA Eligibility.

Use This WASFA Account Creation Worksheet to Help You Create an Account
wsac.wa.gov
Take the First Step to Paying for College or Career by Creating Your Account Today for the FAFSA or WASFA.

Step #2 - Apply for the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA)
wsac.wa.gov

Stuck or Need Help

A Step-By-Step Guide To Completing The 2025-2026 FAFSA
salliemae.com
2024-25 FAFSA Guide | How to Complete the New FAFSA Questions
This is a break down of the 2025-2026 FAFSA, question by question. In this interactive guide (screenshots included), clarifies why each question is asked, and how to best answer each one accurately.

12th Year Campaign and Partner Events
wsac.wa.gov
Financial aid events
The 12th Year Campaign can help you with two important steps you need to take to go to college: applying for college and applying for financial aid. The first step is to file a FAFSA or WASFA financial aid

Other Financial Aid Resources

2024-25 WA College Financial Aid and Admissions Deadlines
portal.wsac.wa.gov
Financial Aid Calculator | WSAC
Many undergraduate students can cover some or all their college costs with the Washington College Grant (WCG) and Federal Pell Grant (Pell).
To get an estimate, you'll need to

Washington State Financial Aid Calculator
portal.wsac.wa.gov

Next Step: Award Letters/College Financial Aid offers

Off Campus Financial Aid Offer Worksheet
award letter worksheet off campus home fillable pdf 0
Use this worksheet to help you understand your financial aid offer if you are going to live off campus or at home

Key Components to Understanding your Award Letter
award letter worksheet key components 22

Financial Aid Informational Videos

Washington Financial Aid for Education and Training Videos
YouTube
Washington Financial Aid for Education and Training (English)
A series of 5 short videos about Washington College Grant in 7 languages.



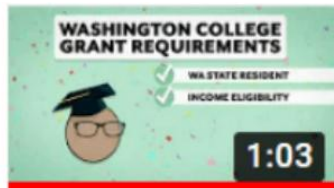
<https://padlet.com/christinaw12/t6jfitu7m8in10xc>



Washington Financial Aid for Education and Training Videos

Informational videos about education after high school in the following languages:

- English
- Mandarin
- Russian
- Somali
- Spanish
- Tagalog
- Vietnamese





OtterBot For Students



A free texting service to support all Washington high school students and their parents/guardians. A great source of info about financial aid, college planning, and reminders.

Available 24/7. Get started TODAY!





OtterBot for Parents



Helps parents/guardians walk alongside their student(s) in the college planning process by explaining their role in the financial aid completion



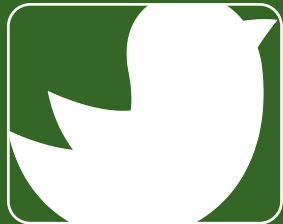


We Are Here to Help!



Online:

- wsac.wa.gov
- www.thewashboard.org
- wastate529.wa.gov



On Twitter:

- [@WSACouncil](https://twitter.com/WSACouncil)



On Facebook:

- www.facebook.com/WSACouncil

