

# A New Era in College Affordability

## The New Washington College Grant Gives More Money to More Students for More Kinds of Postsecondary Education



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**A**s principals, you see every day how students' lives are made easier or harder due to circumstance. You also know how

challenging it is for a teacher to move the needle on a student's grades and goals if that student can't see a better future ahead. Well, here in Washington, educators have a new and very powerful tool in the bright-future toolbox: the Washington College Grant (WCG).

With WCG, Washington state has made a groundbreaking commitment to financial aid for low- and middle-income people of all ages. At the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), we're trying to get the word out about this generous new program.

We're asking you to partner with us to promote this opportunity, increase financial aid applications, and help students feel the support of their community and their state as they imagine their lives after high school.

### WCG CHANGES THE CONVERSATION

From welding to nursing, from English to computer science — whether 18-month apprenticeship or



four-year college degree — whatever the goal, Washington College Grant can help.

For students from the state's poorest families — those making up to 55 percent of the state's median family income, or about \$50,000 per year for a family of four — WCG covers full tuition at any public college in Washington. Students can use the funds at public or private universities, at community or technical colleges, and at many career schools. Recipients can study part-time or full-time, pursuing a bachelor's degree, associate degree, or vocational certificate. Partial grants are available up to the state's median family income, around \$92,000 per year for a family of four. Beginning in

2020-21, grant funding is guaranteed for eligible students and registered apprenticeships will also be covered.

It's our hope that a guarantee of money for more education after high school will change the conversation about what's possible. This kind of opportunity helps build a college-going culture. And WCG also supports career training for students who want a more direct line to a good-paying job after high school graduation.

### HOW CAN PRINCIPALS HELP?

**Talk about financial aid.** To receive WCG, eligible students must complete a financial aid application. For most students, this will be the FAFSA

(Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Students who aren't eligible for federal financial aid because of immigration status should complete a WASFA (Washington Application for State Financial Aid).

WSAC has a clear message we'd like to share with you, and we hope you will share it with your students: There are affordable college and career training opportunities for everyone. The first, best step is to apply for financial aid. Completing a FAFSA or WASFA is vital to maximizing options after high school.

If you are a high school principal, you have an additional tool at your disposal on this front. WSAC's FAFSA completion portal allows districts to track whether individual students have filed a FAFSA and whether that submission contains errors. Counselors can follow each senior's progress and provide individual support.

Another reason to talk to students about financial aid? Researching financial aid options and completing financial aid applications are current requirements of the state's High School and Beyond Plan.

“ Any education after high school — college, apprenticeship, or other training — expands career options and increases lifelong earning potential. Thanks to WCG, that post-high school education can become a reality for any student, regardless of circumstance.”

**Sign your school up to be a 12th Year Campaign site.** 12th Year sites hold events to help students and families complete applications for college and financial aid. WSAC provides free resources and printed materials, guidance for counselors, and help finding local volunteers to staff events.

**Use aspirational language.** The best thing principals can do is something you already do every day: let your students know that the adults around them believe in them. Encourage them to dream big and overcome challenges. Remind the teachers in your school that we shouldn't make assumptions about how far each student can go. If income-eligible students make it through school, Washington state will support them in meeting their goals.

## HELPING PEOPLE PROSPER

With Washington College Grant, we enter a new era in affordability for higher education. WCG can help bring prosperity to individuals, families, and Washington state.

For a young adult to succeed in life, high school graduation is a crucial step. But graduation isn't a finish line; it's a starting point. Any education after high school — college, apprenticeship, or other training — expands career options and increases lifelong earning potential. Thanks to WCG, that post-high school education can become a reality for any student, regardless of circumstance.

For more information about the Washington College Grant, visit [wsac.wa.gov/wcg](http://wsac.wa.gov/wcg). ■

## What about College Bound?

Middle and high school principals are likely familiar with Washington's College Bound Scholarship program. Since 2007, College Bound has provided an early commitment of state financial aid to eligible low-income students. So how will Washington College Grant affect College Bound?

College Bound is not only a financial aid program, but also a college access and support program. Students who sign up for College Bound graduate from high school and enroll in college at higher rates than their low-income peers who do not sign up.

College Bound helps promote a college-going culture by starting the conversation in middle school. Counselors and advocates receive resources and help increase family engagement. Students can get six years of support

and motivation to plan for the future. And while WCG would likely cover tuition for many eligible students, the College Bound award includes additional funding for a small book allowance.

WSAC encourages eligible students to maximize their financial aid opportunities by applying for the College Bound Scholarship.

Middle schools play a central role in getting students signed up for College Bound during 7th and 8th grade. High school counselors help students review program requirements and access scholarship funds. We look forward to your continued partnership in promoting both College Bound and WCG to eligible students.

Learn more and access resources for counselors at [collegebound.wa.gov](http://collegebound.wa.gov).