



February 2019

The Washington College Promise will remove the major barrier to access to postsecondary education — a lack of financial assistance — for those who most need it and ensure more Washingtonians can compete for Washington jobs.

Washington College Promise

What is the Washington College Promise?

The Washington College Promise is a scholarship to 65 public and independent colleges and universities in the state. By guaranteeing qualifying students the opportunity to pursue postsecondary education, it will reduce the amount of loans students may need to pay for their education and improve students' ability to successfully graduate.¹

With a true promise in place, new high school graduates can rely on financial support and consider post-high school plans earlier in their academic life. At the same time, older or returning students will receive the aid they need to complete their education. This predictability and stability will make it possible for many to earn a college degree, postsecondary certificate or apprenticeship credential.

The Washington College Promise is proposed by Gov. Jay Inslee and sponsored by Rep. Drew Hansen ([House Bill 1340](#)) and Sen. Guy Palumbo ([Senate Bill 5393](#)).

How does the Washington College Promise work?

In 2021, the Washington College Promise will guarantee financial aid to eligible students (\$61,500 annual income for a family of four). Students may attend a community and technical college, public baccalaureate institution, independent college, eligible private career school or apprenticeship program.

The scholarship will pay up to the full value of tuition and mandatory fees. It may also cover other costs associated with postsecondary education, such as books, housing and food. A student who receives other forms of financial aid, such as an award made by the college itself, would add that amount on top of the College Promise Scholarship, so more education-related costs are covered.

With the state dollars coming first to the student, higher education institutions can spread their awards more widely and benefit more students, including those from middle-class families.

How is the Washington College Promise Program funded?

The governor's 2019–21 budget boosts funding for the State Need Grant over the biennium to eliminate the number of unserved students. In the third year, his budget converts the program to the Washington College Promise to serve a predicted 93,000 students.

Why do we need the Washington College Promise?

Washington needs more people with postsecondary credentials. Businesses here estimate they will have 740,000 job openings over

the next five years, with the vast majority of these jobs requiring postsecondary credentials.ⁱⁱ

In addition, research shows that individuals have a greater chance of supporting themselves and their families if they obtain a postsecondary credential. With higher levels of education, unemployment decreases and wages increase.

Yet too few of our students are pursuing postsecondary education. Only 40 percent of our high school students obtain a postsecondary credential and miss out on the best job opportunities on offer.ⁱⁱⁱ The Washington College Promise will remove the major barrier to access to postsecondary education — a lack of financial assistance — for those who most need it and ensure more Washingtonians can compete for Washington jobs.

ⁱGrant aid associated with higher retention and completion rates: Franke, 2016, Scott-Clayton, 2009, and Bania, N., Burley, M., & Penucci, A, 2013.; State Need Grant leads to higher retention in the community and technical colleges, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges research, 2013; Enrollment positively related to increases in need-based aid, Avery and Hosby, 2003; Retention and completion declines as "unmet need" increases, Breciani and Carson, 2002; Grant aid makes more of a difference than other aid, Heller, 2008; Lack of State Need Grant leads to increased borrowing, changes in living circumstances, increased work hours, and adjustment of educational plans, Washington Student Achievement Council student survey, 2013.

ⁱⁱPartnership for Learning, Education Foundation of the Washington Roundtable, "Washington Kids of Washington Jobs." 2017.

ⁱⁱⁱPartnership for Learning, Education Foundation of the Washington Roundtable, "The Path to 70% Credential Attainment for Washington Students." 2018. "Just 31% of students in the high school class of 2006 completed a credential — such as a degree, apprenticeship, or certificate — by age 26. Our research projects that number will reach 40% for the high school class of 2015."

WASHINGTON COLLEGE PROMISE



GUARANTEED
FINANCIAL AID
BY ACADEMIC YEAR
2021-22



PREDICTED
TO SERVE A TOTAL OF
90,000
STUDENTS



FREE
TUITION & FEES
FOR LOWEST INCOME
(\$44,000 FOR A FAMILY OF 4)



PARTIAL
TUITION & FEES
FOR LOW INCOME
(\$61,500 FOR A FAMILY OF 4)



Decreases financial
barriers to access



Decreases debt
burden



Improves student
success and completion