

FINAL BILL REPORT

2SHB 1835

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Creating outreach and completion initiatives to increase postsecondary enrollment.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Hansen, Leavitt, Santos, Simmons, Chopp, Slatter, Bergquist, Valdez, Pollet and Ormsby).

House Committee on College & Workforce Development
House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

Financial Aid Applications.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the federal form that current and prospective students fill out to determine their eligibility for federal and state financial aid for the purpose of attending postsecondary education institutions. The FAFSA asks a variety of questions based on federal income tax returns to determine a student's financial need, taking into account the student's dependency status, income, assets, family size, and other factors. Students without legal immigrant status are ineligible for federal financial aid. The Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) is an alternative form for students who cannot file a FAFSA, but may still be eligible for state financial aid. The WASFA is administered by the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC).

The Washington College Grant.

The Washington College Grant (WCG) is the state's largest financial aid program and provides grants to low-income students to pursue postsecondary education. The WCG is an entitlement program administered by the WSAC with guaranteed grants for students who qualify. To qualify, a student must:

- demonstrate financial need;
- be a state resident;

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- be enrolled at a Washington higher education institution or be enrolled in an approved, registered apprenticeship program;
- file a financial aid application; and
- not already have a bachelor's degree or higher.

The WCG award amounts vary based on the institution the student attends and the student's financial need. Financial need is based on the state's median family income (MFI) and the student's family size. The WCG awards are prorated based on the student's family income level as follows:

Median Family Income	Grant Award Amount
0-55 percent of state MFI	Maximum Award
56-60 percent of state MFI	70 percent of maximum award
61-65 percent of state MFI	60 percent of maximum award
66-70 percent of state MFI	50 percent of maximum award
71-75 percent of state MFI	24.5 percent of maximum award
76-100 percent of state MFI	10 percent of maximum award

The maximum WCG award covers tuition and services and activities fees for 15 quarter credits or the equivalent at the state's public institutions. For example, the 2021-22 maximum award for students attending the University of Washington is \$11,339. For students attending private institutions, the maximum award amounts vary based on statutorily set amounts. For example, the maximum award for a student attending a private nonprofit institution is \$9,739. A student is eligible to receive the WCG for five years or up to 125 percent of the published length of the student's program.

Summary:

Statewide Marketing Campaign.

Subject to appropriation, the WSAC must conduct a statewide marketing campaign to increase awareness of the WCG program. The WSAC must issue a request for proposal to hire a marketing firm to produce high-quality advertisements to promote the WCG program. Advertisements should be marketed towards potential postsecondary education students and their parents with the goal of increasing awareness of the WCG to further the state's educational attainment goals. Advertisements may include television commercials, billboards, advertisements on public transit, paid Internet search advertisements, and social media marketing.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid and Washington Application For State Financial Aid Outreach and Completion Initiative.

Subject to appropriation, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) must administer a FAFSA and WASFA Outreach and Completion Initiative Pilot Program. The SBCTC must select community or technical colleges to participate in the pilot

program. The colleges selected must each be located within educational service districts that are in the bottom two for FAFSA completion rates when combining their respective school districts' FAFSA completion rates over the past three academic years prior to the effective date of the act. The colleges selected to participate must employ outreach specialists to work directly with high school students and their families for the purpose of increasing FAFSA and WASFA completion rates. It is the Legislature's intent that the outreach specialists be employed at a ratio of one outreach specialist to 600 high school seniors within the corresponding educational service district. The outreach specialists must use FAFSA and WASFA data maintained by the WSAC to conduct targeted outreach and completion assistance. The outreach specialists must also provide information on how to access private scholarships. The outreach specialists must conduct outreach as appropriate, including virtual or in-person presentations with students and families, announcements on school intercoms and social media channels, outreach to recent high school graduates as peer messengers, and events at school college or career fairs. The SBCTC must report annually to the Legislature beginning December 1, 2023, on the FAFSA and WASFA Outreach and Completion Initiative Pilot Program. The report must include details on how the colleges used the funding and how the initiatives worked to increase FAFSA and WASFA completion rates, including FAFSA and WASFA completion data and specific details about the number of students assisted.

State Library Free Application for Federal Student Aid and Washington Application For State Financial Aid Outreach Pilot Program.

Subject to appropriation, the State Library must administer a pilot program to distribute grants to local, public libraries to conduct community outreach to increase FAFSA and WASFA completion rates. The State Library must administer grants to public libraries located within educational service districts that are in the bottom two for FAFSA completion rates when combining their respective school districts' FAFSA completion rates over the past three academic years prior to the effective date of the act. The public libraries are required to partner with community-based organizations that are embedded in their communities, have a strong foundation of trust among the community, and are committed to working directly with individuals to assist with one-on-one FAFSA and WASFA completion and will provide information on how to access private scholarships. The State Library must report annually to the Legislature beginning December 1, 2023, on the progress of the pilot project to boost FAFSA and WASFA completion rates, including data on the specific number of students assisted.

Washington College Grant Changes.

The WCG is modified to allow a student to either demonstrate financial need by meeting the income requirements or by the WSAC confirming the student's participation in one of the following state public assistance programs: Aged, Blind, or Disabled Assistance Benefits; Essential Needs and Housing Support; Pregnant Women Assistance; or Refugee Cash Assistance. The WSAC is required to enter into a data-sharing agreement with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to facilitate the sharing of individual-level data for the purpose of confirming WCG income eligibility through a public assistance

program. The DSHS is permitted to release individual-level data of state-funded public assistance programs to the WSAC for this purpose, unless prohibited by federal law.

In addition, the WSAC is required to collaborate with the DSHS to facilitate individual-level outreach to individuals receiving benefits under the public assistance programs listed above, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the State Family Assistance Program, and the Basic Food Program in order to inform the individuals of their WCG eligibility.

The WSAC must also issue certificates for students in grades 10, 11, and 12 whose families are receiving benefits through one of the public assistance programs. This certificate validates the student's WCG financial need eligibility for one year after high school graduation upon enrollment in a higher education institution, provided the student meets the other WCG eligibility requirements. The WSAC must maintain records of which high school students received certificates as the student does not need to present the certificate to receive the WCG.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	88	8	
Senate	27	21	(Senate amended)
House	83	14	(House concurred)

Effective: June 9, 2022