
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1136

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By House Postsecondary Education & Workforce (originally sponsored by Representatives Leavitt, Shavers, Callan, Bronoske, Simmons, Pollet, Nance, and Bernbaum)

READ FIRST TIME 01/31/25.

1 AN ACT Relating to student navigational supports to increase
2 postsecondary enrollment; amending RCW 28B.50.940; and creating a new
3 section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature recognizes that Washington
6 is ranked among the top states in the nation for the share of jobs
7 requiring postsecondary education and that large majorities of high
8 school students self-report aspirations to continue their education
9 beyond 12th grade. However, only an estimated 40 percent of
10 Washington's high school class of 2021 is projected to obtain a
11 postsecondary credential. This issue is particularly pressing for
12 students from lower income households. The legislature further
13 recognizes that the real or perceived cost of postsecondary education
14 is a critical systemic barrier that impedes prospective students from
15 applying for and enrolling in postsecondary education. This is
16 despite Washington boasting one of the most expansive and equitable
17 set of state-level postsecondary financial aid programs in the
18 country.

19 The legislature finds that counseling, advising, and coaching
20 that help students with the postsecondary financial aid application
21 and enrollment processes, and that provide hands-on assistance, are

1 evidence-based approaches to increasing rates of postsecondary
2 enrollment. The legislature further recognizes that on-site experts
3 deliver comprehensive school career counseling programs, which
4 provide support for students and their families in securing
5 postsecondary opportunities.

6 The addition of enrollment and outreach specialists can provide a
7 valuable resource for comprehensive school career counseling programs
8 and broaden access to student navigational supports throughout the
9 state. Therefore, Washington state should invest in student
10 navigational support and services to advise students to and through
11 postsecondary education and training.

12 It is the intent of the legislature to establish a postsecondary
13 outreach and enrollment specialist program for the purposes of
14 helping Washington high school students with postsecondary financial
15 aid and educational opportunities as well as encouraging completion
16 of financial aid and postsecondary enrollment.

17 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28B.50.940 and 2022 c 214 s 3 are each amended to
18 read as follows:

19 Subject to availability of amounts appropriated for this specific
20 purpose, the college board shall administer a ~~((free application for
21 federal student aid and Washington application for state financial
22 aid outreach and completion initiative pilot program.~~

23 ~~(1) The college board shall select community or technical
24 colleges to participate in the pilot program. The colleges selected
25 to participate must each be located within educational service
26 districts that are in the bottom two for free application for federal
27 student aid completion rates when combining their respective school
28 districts' free application for federal student aid completion rates
29 over the past three completed academic years prior to June 9, 2022.
30 Colleges selected to participate shall employ outreach specialists to
31 work directly with the high schools located in the corresponding
32 educational service district. It is the legislature's intent that the
33 outreach specialists be employed at a ratio of one to 600 high school
34 seniors within the corresponding educational service district. The
35 outreach specialists shall make significant contact with high school
36 students and their families for the purpose of increasing free
37 application for federal student aid and Washington application for
38 state financial aid completion rates. The outreach specialists shall
39 use the free application for federal student aid and Washington~~

1 application for state financial aid data maintained by the student
2 achievement council to conduct targeted outreach and free application
3 for federal student aid and Washington application for state
4 financial aid completion assistance to high school seniors. The
5 outreach specialists shall also provide information on how to access
6 private scholarships. The outreach specialists shall conduct other
7 outreach as appropriate, including virtual or in-person presentations
8 with students and families, announcements on school intercoms and
9 social media channels, outreach to recent high school graduates as
10 peer messengers, and events at school college or career fairs.

11 (2) The college board shall report annually to the appropriate
12 committees of the legislature in accordance with RCW 43.01.036
13 beginning December 1, 2023, on the free application for federal
14 student aid and Washington application for state financial aid
15 outreach and completion initiative pilot program. The report must
16 include details on how the colleges selected used the funding and how
17 the initiatives worked to increase free application for federal
18 student aid and Washington application for state financial aid
19 completion rates. The report must also include before and after free
20 application for federal student aid and Washington application for
21 state financial aid completion data and specific details about the
22 number of high school students assisted in completing the free
23 application for federal student aid and Washington application for
24 state financial aid) financial aid completion and postsecondary
25 enrollment program.

26 (1) (a) Depending on the needs of the educational service
27 district, the college board shall select at least one of the
28 following entities to participate in the program:

29 (i) Community or technical colleges;

30 (ii) Public four-year institutions of higher education;

31 (iii) Tribal organizations; or

32 (iv) Community-based organizations.

33 (b) The entities selected to participate must each be located
34 within educational service districts that are in the bottom five for
35 free application for federal student aid completion rates when
36 combining their respective school districts' free application for
37 federal student aid completion rates over the past three completed
38 academic years prior to the effective date of this section.

39 (c) The college board shall establish a selection committee for
40 selecting the entities to participate in the program.

1 (i) The selection committee must include at least two community
2 or technical college representatives as designated by the college
3 board and at least two public four-year representatives as designated
4 by an organization representing the public four-year institutions of
5 higher education.

6 (ii) The selection committee may consult with colleges,
7 institutions of higher education, and the student achievement council
8 in developing selection criteria.

9 (2) Entities selected to participate shall employ outreach and
10 enrollment specialists to work directly with the high schools located
11 in the corresponding educational service district.

12 (3) The outreach and enrollment specialists shall coordinate with
13 the secondary school counseling program and any other school district
14 staff as appropriate to make significant contact with high school
15 students and their families, with a focus on secondary schools that
16 have a higher percentage of students who are eligible for free or
17 reduced-price lunch compared to other schools in the same educational
18 service district, for the purpose of increasing free application for
19 federal student aid and Washington application for state financial
20 aid completion rates. The outreach and enrollment specialists must
21 use the free application for federal student aid, Washington
22 application for state financial aid, and college bound scholarship
23 eligibility data maintained by the student achievement council to
24 conduct targeted outreach and free application for federal student
25 aid and Washington application for state financial aid completion
26 assistance to high school seniors. The outreach and enrollment
27 specialists must also provide information on how to access private
28 scholarships. The outreach and enrollment specialists shall conduct
29 other outreach as appropriate, including virtual or in-person
30 presentations with students and families, announcements on school
31 intercoms and social media channels, outreach to recent high school
32 graduates as peer messengers, and events at school college or career
33 fairs.

34 (4) The outreach and enrollment specialists shall assist:

35 (a) High school students in navigating the application and
36 enrollment process for institutions of higher education and
37 coordinate with school district staff and other college access
38 partners as appropriate and as needed;

39 (b) High school students in connecting with appropriate staff at
40 institutions of higher education who can help students in exploring

1 campus services and programs to improve their skills, increase
2 academic achievement, and help students reach their education and
3 career goals; and

4 (c) High school students in connecting with staff or instructors
5 affiliated with state-registered apprenticeship programs who can help
6 students navigate apprenticeship application processes and utilizing
7 eligible financial aid.

8 (5) The tasks performed by outreach and enrollment specialists
9 must complement and support the work of secondary school staff and
10 administration in providing comprehensive postsecondary navigation
11 support.

12 (6) The college board, in collaboration with the office of the
13 superintendent of public instruction, an organization representing
14 the public four-year institutions of higher education, and college
15 access staff from the student achievement council, shall outline the
16 roles and responsibilities of colleges, institutions of higher
17 education, tribal organizations, and community-based organizations to
18 ensure outreach and enrollment specialists have the necessary
19 resources and support to effectively engage with students to promote
20 financial aid attainment and postsecondary enrollment. Resources and
21 support may include, but are not limited to: Access to buildings,
22 adequate meeting spaces, certain technology, school supplies, and
23 safe and secure access to individual student's high school and beyond
24 plans.

25 (7) The college board must develop a communication plan for
26 students and families about the presence and role of outreach and
27 enrollment specialists.

28 (8) The college board, the student achievement council, an
29 organization representing the public four-year institutions of higher
30 education, an organization representing the private four-year
31 institutions of higher education, statewide organizations
32 representing state-registered apprenticeship programs, and those
33 organizations representing teachers, counselors, and principals shall
34 collaborate in preparing a training program for outreach and
35 enrollment specialists.

36 (9) The college board shall report annually to the appropriate
37 committees of the legislature in accordance with RCW 43.01.036
38 beginning January 15, 2026, on the outreach and enrollment specialist
39 program. The report must include details on how:

1 (a) The colleges, institutions of higher education, tribal
2 organizations, or community-based organizations selected used the
3 funding; and

4 (b) The initiatives worked to increase free application for
5 federal student aid and Washington application for state financial
6 aid completion rates.

7 (10) The education data center established in RCW 43.41.400, in
8 collaboration with the college board, the public four-year
9 institutions of higher education, the office of the superintendent of
10 public instruction, and the student achievement council shall create
11 a report on the completion rates of the free application for federal
12 student aid and Washington application for state financial aid by
13 Washington high school seniors. The report must include data,
14 disaggregated by demographic data, on: The completion rates prior to
15 implementation of the program created in this section, the
16 postimplementation completion rates, and the rates of first-time
17 postsecondary enrollment of students within one year of high school
18 graduation. The report required by this subsection must be submitted
19 to the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 1, 2027.

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