
HOUSE BILL 1136

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Representatives Leavitt, Shavers, Callan, Bronoske, Simmons, Pollet, Nance, and Bernbaum

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1 AN ACT Relating to student navigational supports to increase
2 postsecondary enrollment; amending RCW 28B.50.940; adding a new
3 section to chapter 28B.77 RCW; adding a new section to chapter
4 28A.415 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

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

20 The legislature finds that counseling, advising, and coaching
21 that help students with the postsecondary financial aid application

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

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

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

18 Furthermore, the legislature intends to ensure that every school
19 district has access to at least one qualified financial aid
20 professional to provide support and ensure accurate and timely
21 administration of financial aid forms. To achieve this, the
22 legislature intends to make available, at no cost to participants,
23 comprehensive financial aid training for teachers, school career
24 counselors, and postsecondary staff or community partners.

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

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

31 ~~(1) The college board shall select community or technical
32 colleges to participate in the pilot program. The colleges selected
33 to participate must each be located within educational service
34 districts that are in the bottom two for free application for federal
35 student aid completion rates when combining their respective school
36 districts' free application for federal student aid completion rates
37 over the past three completed academic years prior to June 9, 2022.
38 Colleges selected to participate shall employ outreach specialists to
39 work directly with the high schools located in the corresponding~~

1 educational service district. It is the legislature's intent that the
2 outreach specialists be employed at a ratio of one to 600 high school
3 seniors within the corresponding educational service district. The
4 outreach specialists shall make significant contact with high school
5 students and their families for the purpose of increasing free
6 application for federal student aid and Washington application for
7 state financial aid completion rates. The outreach specialists shall
8 use the free application for federal student aid and Washington
9 application for state financial aid data maintained by the student
10 achievement council to conduct targeted outreach and free application
11 for federal student aid and Washington application for state
12 financial aid completion assistance to high school seniors. The
13 outreach specialists shall also provide information on how to access
14 private scholarships. The outreach specialists shall conduct other
15 outreach as appropriate, including virtual or in-person presentations
16 with students and families, announcements on school intercoms and
17 social media channels, outreach to recent high school graduates as
18 peer messengers, and events at school college or career fairs.

19 (2) The college board shall report annually to the appropriate
20 committees of the legislature in accordance with RCW 43.01.036
21 beginning December 1, 2023, on the free application for federal
22 student aid and Washington application for state financial aid
23 outreach and completion initiative pilot program. The report must
24 include details on how the colleges selected used the funding and how
25 the initiatives worked to increase free application for federal
26 student aid and Washington application for state financial aid
27 completion rates. The report must also include before and after free
28 application for federal student aid and Washington application for
29 state financial aid completion data and specific details about the
30 number of high school students assisted in completing the free
31 application for federal student aid and Washington application for
32 state financial aid) financial aid completion and postsecondary
33 enrollment program for every educational service district.

34 (1) (a) Depending on the needs of the educational service
35 district, the college board shall select at least one of the
36 following entities in each educational service district to
37 participate in the program:

38 (i) Community or technical colleges;

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

40 (iii) Tribal organizations; or

1 (iv) Community-based organizations.

2 (b) The college board shall establish a selection committee for
3 selecting the entities to participate in the program.

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

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

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

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

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

38 (a) High school students in navigating the application and
39 enrollment process for institutions of higher education and

1 coordinate with school district staff and other college access
2 partners as appropriate and as needed; and

3 (b) Students in connecting with appropriate staff at institutions
4 of higher education who can help students in exploring campus
5 services and programs to improve their skills, increase academic
6 achievement, and help students reach their education and career
7 goals.

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, and those organizations
32 representing teachers, counselors, and principals shall collaborate
33 in preparing a training program for outreach and enrollment
34 specialists.

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

20 NEW SECTION. Sec. 3. A new section is added to chapter 28B.77
21 RCW to read as follows:

22 (1) The council shall administer a financial aid training program
23 that is available to secondary school teachers and counselors, staff
24 at the institutions of higher education, and community partners in
25 order to have at least one qualified financial aid professional at
26 each school to provide support and ensure accurate and timely
27 administration of financial aid forms. The council must coordinate
28 with the office of the superintendent of public instruction to
29 develop the topics that the training program will cover. The council
30 may contract with a third-party entity to provide the training
31 program. The training program must be offered at no cost to program
32 participants.

33 (2) The council shall provide a report by December 1, 2027, to
34 the governor and the education and higher education committees of the
35 legislature in accordance with RCW 43.01.036. The report must:

36 (a) Describe the development and content of the training program;
37 and

38 (b) Report on the number of trainings provided, the number of
39 unique adults who participated in the program, a summary of the

1 geographic location of training program participants, the
2 professional roles of training program participants, and a
3 description of how skills gained through the program have been used
4 by training program participants.

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.415
6 RCW to read as follows:

7 (1) By September 1, 2027, the office of the superintendent of
8 public instruction, in collaboration with the student achievement
9 council and the Washington professional educator standards board,
10 shall offer continuing education credits to in-service educators on
11 the topic of financial aid, in accordance with section 3 of this act.

12 (2) By October 1, 2028, the office of the superintendent of
13 public instruction, in collaboration with the student achievement
14 council and the Washington professional educator standards board,
15 shall make recommendations to the legislature regarding additional
16 incentives that should be available to encourage participation in the
17 training program described in section 3 of this act.

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