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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Washington Receives Grant for Program to Make Higher Ed More Accessible**

**Olympia** – On October 4, the Washington Student Achievement Council received a \$22,000 grant from USA Funds to help more students apply for financial aid and enroll in higher education.

The funds will directly support College Goal Washington, a statewide program designed to help students and families complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the form that is required to apply for federal financial assistance for higher education.

College Goal Washington’s mission is to increase FAFSA awareness, help students apply on time, and identify resources to support their enrollment in higher education. Late FAFSA submissions often result in reduced financial awards or non-service, causing fewer students to have the financial means to enroll in higher education programs.

Gene Sharratt, Executive Director of the Washington Student Achievement Council, is thrilled to be partnering with the Governor’s office in this statewide initiative. “Higher education accessibility is a challenge for our state. Washington is first in the nation for providing need-based financial aid, but 47th in the nation for participation in undergraduate education (ages 20-34). College Goal Washington will link students to resources, and expanding this program will make higher education more accessible to our students.”

Formerly known as College Goal Sunday, the program is expanding to include events during January and February at locations across the state, where students will receive step-by-step instructions for completing and submitting their FAFSA. Program administration will transfer from the Northwest Education Loan Association (NELA) to the Washington Student Achievement Council.

For more information about College Goal Washington, visit [www.collegegoalsundaywa.org](http://www.collegegoalsundaywa.org).

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**About the Washington Student Achievement Council:** Established as a new cabinet-level state agency on July 1, 2012, the Council provides strategic planning, oversight, and advocacy to support increased student success and higher levels of educational attainment in Washington. The Council proposes improvements and innovations to meet the evolving needs of students, employers, and the educational community. In recognition of the economic, social, and civic benefits of public education, the Council advocates for increased financial support and civic commitment to ensure a thriving Washington.

The nine-member Council includes five citizens (including a current student) and one representative from each of Washington's four major educational sectors. More information about the Council can be found on our website: [www.wsac.wa.gov](http://www.wsac.wa.gov).