



COUNCIL CONVERSATIONS

WASHINGTON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Washington Student Achievement Council members were pleased to participate in the bill-signing ceremony for House Bill 2626 on April 3. This bill places in statute the two educational attainment goals that by 2023 every adult ages 25-44 earns a high school diploma and at least 70 percent earn a postsecondary credential, degree, or certificate. These goals were the result of a comprehensive effort of multiple stakeholders committed to the state's postsecondary attainment goals.

Such stakeholders are crucial to our success. At the Student Achievement Council, we are fortunate to have a growing number of partners in our work. For example, in partnership with State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, Council staff are preparing the annual report that identifies the number and type of higher education and training credentials required to meet employer demand.

Another great example of partnership took place on April 16, when the Council convened over 200 people in Yakima to explore issues of diversity and educational attainment at the Educational Attainment for All Diversity conference. This first annual event was highly successful, and we look forward to keeping the conference going for many years to come.

Agencies such as the State Board of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and others continue to provide leadership on Improving Student Learning at Scale (implementing Common Core State Standards).

In a recent interview, historian David McCullough commented, "In hard work is happiness." I would agree, but I would say that working hard, together, makes all the difference. We look forward to our opportunities to work with you, and we are happy to be working hard on behalf of those we serve.

LETTER FROM RAI NAUMAN MUMTAZ, WASHINGTON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL STUDENT MEMBER

It is truly an exciting time at the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC). This past legislative session we were excited to see several education-related bills, such as the Dream Act/Real Hope Act, successfully navigate both chambers and be signed into law by the Honorable Governor Jay Inslee. One

of these notable bills was ESHB 2626, which established statewide educational attainment goals. ESHB 2626 passed, in large part, due to stakeholder support from the various educational sectors, the entrepreneurial community, and our most notable education advocates: students! Our efforts do not end here, however.

The Council's three subcommittees are connecting the Roadmap strategies to the overarching goals of increased levels of educational attainment in secondary and postsecondary education in Washington State. Each of these subcommittees will be integral to the development of a coherent and well-structured strategic action plan (due to the Legislature in December 2014).

Lastly, we have a few statewide teams and task forces that are continuing their efforts as well. The Improving Student Learning at Scale (ISLS) team is working hand-in-hand with the National Governor's Association to ensure a smooth transition and implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Both the CCSS and the NGSS have tremendous statewide support. Additionally, the Legislative Task Force for Students with Disabilities is entering its second year. The task force is working towards comprehensive and accessible resources as well as smooth transitions between K-12 and postsecondary education for students with disabilities.

As the year continues, our sincerest gratitude is extended to our stakeholders for their support as we work together for the betterment of students!

READYSETGRAD.ORG NOMINATED FOR PRESTIGIOUS WEBBY AWARD

ReadySetGrad.org has been nominated for Best Education Website in the 18th Annual Webby Awards. Hailed as the "Internet's highest honor" by The New York Times, The Webby Awards, presented by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences (IADAS), is the leading international award honoring excellence on the Internet.

ReadySetGrad.org, managed by the Washington Student Achievement Council, is a comprehensive career and college readiness website for 6th grade through continuing education students, their families, and educators. The site provides relevant, timely, and accurate information on academic requirements, college readiness standards, goal setting, and financial aid programs.

"Nominees like ReadySetGrad.org are setting the standard for innovation and creativity on the Internet," said David-Michel Davies, Executive Director of The Webby Awards. "It is an incredible achievement to be selected among the best from the 12,000 entries we received this year."

The IADAS, which nominates and selects The Webby Award Winners, is composed of web industry experts, including media mogul Arianna Huffington, Skype CEO Tony Bates, Mozilla CEO and Chair Mitchell Baker, Instagram co-founder Kevin Systrom, mobile phone inventor Martin Cooper, and creator of the GIF Steve Wilhite.

Winners will be announced on Tuesday, April 29, and honored at a May 19 ceremony in New York.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION ENDS

The 2014 Legislative Session came to an end on March 13. The Council had a successful session, with the passage of many Council-supported bills, including several with direct alignment to Roadmap strategies. Most notable was the Legislature's passage of the bill endorsing the Council's recommended goals for increasing educational attainment (HB 2626). Other successful bills supported by the Council include the following:

- SB 6523 (Real Hope/Dream Act) – Making certain undocumented resident students eligible for the State Need Grant.
- SB 5318 – Removing the one-year waiting period for veterans or active members of the military for purposes of eligibility for resident tuition.
- SB 5969 – Requiring public institutions of higher education to adopt policies for awarding academic credit for military training courses or programs.
- SB 6552 – Relating to the 24-credit graduation requirement for high school students.
- SB 6436 – Creating a workgroup to make recommendations for the continued viability of the College Bound Scholarship program.
- SB 6358 – Requiring institutions of higher education to provide certain financial aid information to admitted and prospective students.

The final supplemental operating budget maintained the freeze on tuition increases for undergraduate resident students through the remainder of the 2013-15 biennium. The Legislature's conference budget also included \$25.5 million for the Opportunity Scholarship Program and \$12.26 million for the College Bound Scholarship. In addition, SB 6523 included \$5 million for the State Need Grant. The major K-12 enhancement was an increase in the base Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC) rate to \$848.04, as well as additional funding to support the 24-credit diploma, per SB 6552. The Legislature did not pass a supplemental capital budget.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL LAUNCHES 12TH YEAR CAMPAIGN

The Washington Student Achievement Council is launching the 12th Year Campaign, a new initiative encompassing both the American College Application Campaign and College Goal Washington.

The focus of the American College Application Campaign is to help high school seniors navigate the college admissions process and increase the number of students—especially first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students—pursuing a college degree or other higher education credential. College Goal Washington aims to provide support to students and families completing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Combining these two efforts into a concentrated campaign enables the alignment of resources and the creation of college-going culture in more of our state's schools and communities, furthering the state's goal of ensuring at least 70 percent of Washington adults will have a postsecondary credential.

All Washington high schools are invited to participate in the campaign. For more information, please visit www.readyssetgrad.org/educators/grad/12th-year-campaign.

WASFA APPLICATION NOW AVAILABLE FOR REAL HOPE ACT/DREAM ACT

On March 28, just a month after SB 6523 was signed into law, the Student Achievement Council announced the availability of the web-based Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA). This applications allows REAL Hope Act students who meet residency criteria to apply for State Need Grant funds for the 2014-15 academic year. To date, over 1,000 students have applied. Council staff, in partnership with advocacy groups, continue to provide information on the State Need Grant and WASFA to students and families throughout the state. The application, as well as information for students and families, is online at www.readysetgrad.org/WASFA.

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS RECEIVE WASHINGTON'S HIGHEST ACADEMIC HONOR

The Washington Student Achievement Council and Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) have announced the names of 196 high school seniors recognized as Washington Scholars or Washington Scholar Alternates for their outstanding accomplishments. The Washington Scholars recognition award represents the highest academic honor conferred by the State of Washington and is awarded to students who demonstrate the educational excellence and civic commitment so vital to the future of our state.

“Washington Scholars exemplify the best in student academic performance, commitment to rigorous standards, and personal accountability. This honor demonstrates that effort and academic discipline matter, and that setting and achieving learning goals is foundational to success,” said Student Achievement Council Executive Director Gene Sharratt.

Three high school students from each of Washington’s 49 legislative districts receive the Washington Scholar award each year, and an additional student from each district is designated as a Washington Scholar Alternate. You can find your district’s Washington Scholars and Alternate on the Council’s website.

The Student Achievement Council and AWSP collaboratively lead the process of selecting Washington Scholars. High school principals nominate candidates based on their cumulative grade point average and SAT/ACT scores, as well as leadership, community service, and other activities. Recipients are then selected by a committee of representatives from public and private high schools, state educational agencies, and public and private four-year colleges and universities.

“These awards not only highlight outstanding academic achievement, but they also recognize efforts in leadership and community service. These recipients represent well-rounded students who are poised to make positive contributions to our society,” said Gary Kipp, executive director of the Association of Washington School Principals.

In addition to recognizing the outstanding achievements of graduating seniors, the Washington Scholars program also encourages privately funded scholarship awards by non-state organizations and stimulates recruitment of exemplary students to Washington public and independent colleges and universities.