



# Fully Fund State Need Grant

Increase access, participation, and completion in higher education

## 2017-19 Strategic Action Plan Recommendation

### Fully fund the State Need Grant

Provide equitable opportunities for low-income students and improve completion rates by fully funding the State Need Grant program to support all eligible students. An additional \$100 million per year will serve over 24,000 additional students. Combined with existing funding, the program would serve all 93,000 eligible students.

### The Imperative

#### Increase access, participation, and completion in higher education

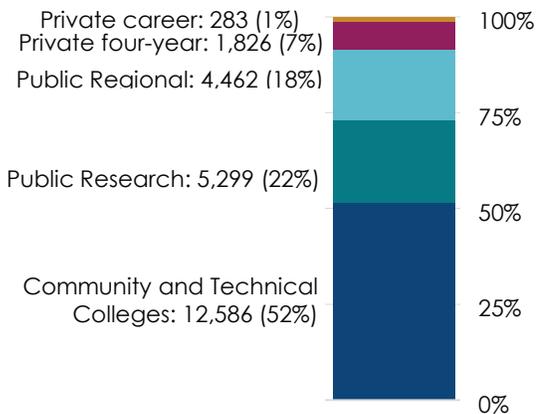
The State Need Grant helps the lowest-income undergraduates pursue degrees, sharpen skills, and retrain for new careers. As the grant is currently underfunded, many eligible students are not receiving the grant award. As a result, students are taking loans, increasing work hours, reducing their class load, and taking other measures to persist in their educational pathway. This creates an inequitable system, putting the educational aspirations of students and families at risk. Fully funding the State Need Grant simultaneously addresses all three key challenge areas: increasing access and affordability, supporting returning adults, and helping to close opportunity gaps. A fully funded State Need Grant serves working-age adults and underrepresented students across the higher education system.

### Context

#### The State Need Grant is critical to reaching Washington's educational attainment goals

State Need Grant is the state's largest aid program, and its reach extends from traditional students to working-age adults, from certificate programs through baccalaureate degrees. The grant assists students in the pursuit of their higher education goals at eligible colleges, universities, and career schools statewide, resulting in positive impacts on families, businesses, and communities across the state. Currently 68 institutions of higher education participate in the State Need Grant program, benefiting tens of thousands of students and families. However, its impact is undermined when eligible students receive no awards due to a lack of funds. Though the Legislature has allowed the State Need

#### Over 24,000 eligible low-income students weren't served in 2015-16



Source: 2015-16 WSAC Unit Record Report (September 2016)

Grant to keep pace with tuition and fees for the last nine biennia, the program currently leaves over 24,000 eligible and enrolled students unserved. Fully funding the program can help Washington address persistent secondary and postsecondary opportunity gaps, as evidenced by the successes of the College Bound Scholarship (an early promise of an enhanced State Need Grant). Any effort at addressing access to higher education should involve expansion of the state's largest investment in affordability. The State Need Grant is central to improving educational attainment in Washington.

### Outcomes and Measures

#### Reduce student debt while increasing persistence and completion

Ensuring eligible students receive aid can help boost college-going rates. Research consistently finds that state aid drives better student outcomes. Average student debt levels for eligible students would decrease, while persistence and completion rates for all students, including returning adults, would increase.

### Quick Facts:

Each year since 2009, at least a quarter of eligible students did not receive a grant.

The number of students filing a FAFSA grew during the recession, and remains high after it, demonstrating a strong demand for aid programs like the State Need Grant.

State financial aid conclusively boosts student success.