

Washington Promise Scholarship Program



House Higher Education Committee

February 7, 2003

W A S H I N G T O N
H I G H E R
EDUCATION
C O O R D I N A T I N G B O A R D

Promise Scholarship

Two year scholarship established to:

- Reward academic achievement in high school, and
- Help make college more affordable for students from low- and middle-income families

Student Eligibility

- Academic Achievement
 - Top 15% of graduating class, or
 - 1,200 SAT or 27 ACT score on first attempt
- Income Limit
 - Up to 135% of the state's median family income
 - This year, maximum is \$85,900 for family of 4
- College Enrollment
 - Any accredited college or university in Washington
 - Students are attending more than 70 different schools

Scholarship Amount

Maximum

- No more than full-time annual resident tuition charged by the community colleges (budget limited this year's awards for new students to \$1,000)
- CTC tuition for 2002-03 -- \$1,982

Actual

- Available funds divided by number of eligible students
- 6,500 students are receiving scholarship for 2002-03 of \$948

Scholarship as percent of tuition

The scholarship amount has always been less than the maximum. It has declined in dollar amount and percent of tuition since 2000-01

1999-00 -- \$1,225 -- 77% of tuition

2000-01 -- \$1,542 -- 94%

2001-02 -- \$1,404 -- 81%

2002-03 -- \$948 -- 48%

HECB Evaluation

- Responded to legislative questions
- Evaluated extent to which current design supports achievement of statutory goals
- Considered modifications to improve the program
- Studied impact on high school achievement, college participation, affordability, and academic criteria

Findings

- Affordability
- Impact on high school achievement
- College participation
- Academic eligibility

Affordability

- Students benefited from receiving the Promise Scholarship
- Recipients on average borrowed 30% less than similar students who did not receive Promise Scholarships
- Program rules ensured that Promise recipients did not lose other grant assistance as a result of receiving the scholarship

Impact on High School Achievement

- 71% of students said availability of the scholarship caused them to work harder academically in high school
- 59% of high school counselors and administrators agreed
- Many counselors said they did not tell students about the scholarship because of the uncertainty of state funding

College Participation

- A high percentage of students who were in the Top 15% attended college, and scholarship recipients performed well
 - 92% attended full-time
 - 90% had a 2.5 or higher GPA during their first year in college
 - 94% returned the second year

Academic Eligibility

- Using the Top 15% eligibility standard ensures that students at all schools -- urban and rural, large and small, public and private -- will be considered for the scholarship
- Using passage of the WASL as an academic standard would significantly change the number and geographic distribution of the scholarship recipients

Academic Eligibility – WASL issues

- Replace the Top 15% with WASL?
 - Adds 1,350 new recipients each year
- Require both the Top 15% and WASL?
 - Reduces 1,400 new recipients each year
- Permit either Top 15% or WASL?
 - Adds 2,700 new recipients each year

NOTE: Estimates are based on the number of 2001 graduates who passed all subject areas of the 10th grade WASL in 1999. Passing rates are improving and these numbers are expected to increase.

Academic Eligibility – WASL issues

- If the number of eligible students increases, additional funding will be needed to prevent further erosion of the value of the award
- If fewer students are served, the scholarship will provide less incentive for high school achievement
- Replacing the Top 15% standard with WASL passage will redistribute recipients by county and school district – King County would gain, but Pierce, Yakima and Spokane would lose

HECB Recommendations

- Funding for the Promise Scholarship program should support awards that are equal to full-time community college tuition
- The program should be evaluated again later, when three or four groups of students have graduated with baccalaureate degrees

HECB Recommendations

- Current standards to establish academic and financial eligibility should be maintained
- Use of the WASL to measure academic eligibility should be studied further – this evaluation covered just the first year of statewide use of the 10th grade WASL