

<b>Title</b>	<b>Strategic Action Plan</b>
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<b>Synopsis:</b>	<p>The ten-year Roadmap for Washington’s education attainment is complemented with a short-term Strategic Action Plan, submitted in December of even-numbered years. The 2017-19 Strategic Action Plan recommends higher education strategies and highlights system-wide strategies that are needed to make progress on the state’s education attainment goals during the biennium.</p> <p>During the October meeting the Council will amend and approve the recommendations before adopting the final 2017-19 Strategic Action Plan at the November Council meeting.</p>
<b>Guiding questions:</b>	<p>Do the recommendations reflect the input provided by the Council at the August and September meetings?</p> <p>What does the Council want to emphasize in the transmittal letter?</p>
<b>Possible council action:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Information Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approve/Adopt <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<b>Documents and attachments:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Brief/Report <input type="checkbox"/> PowerPoint <input type="checkbox"/> Third-party materials <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other



WASHINGTON STUDENT  
**ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL**  
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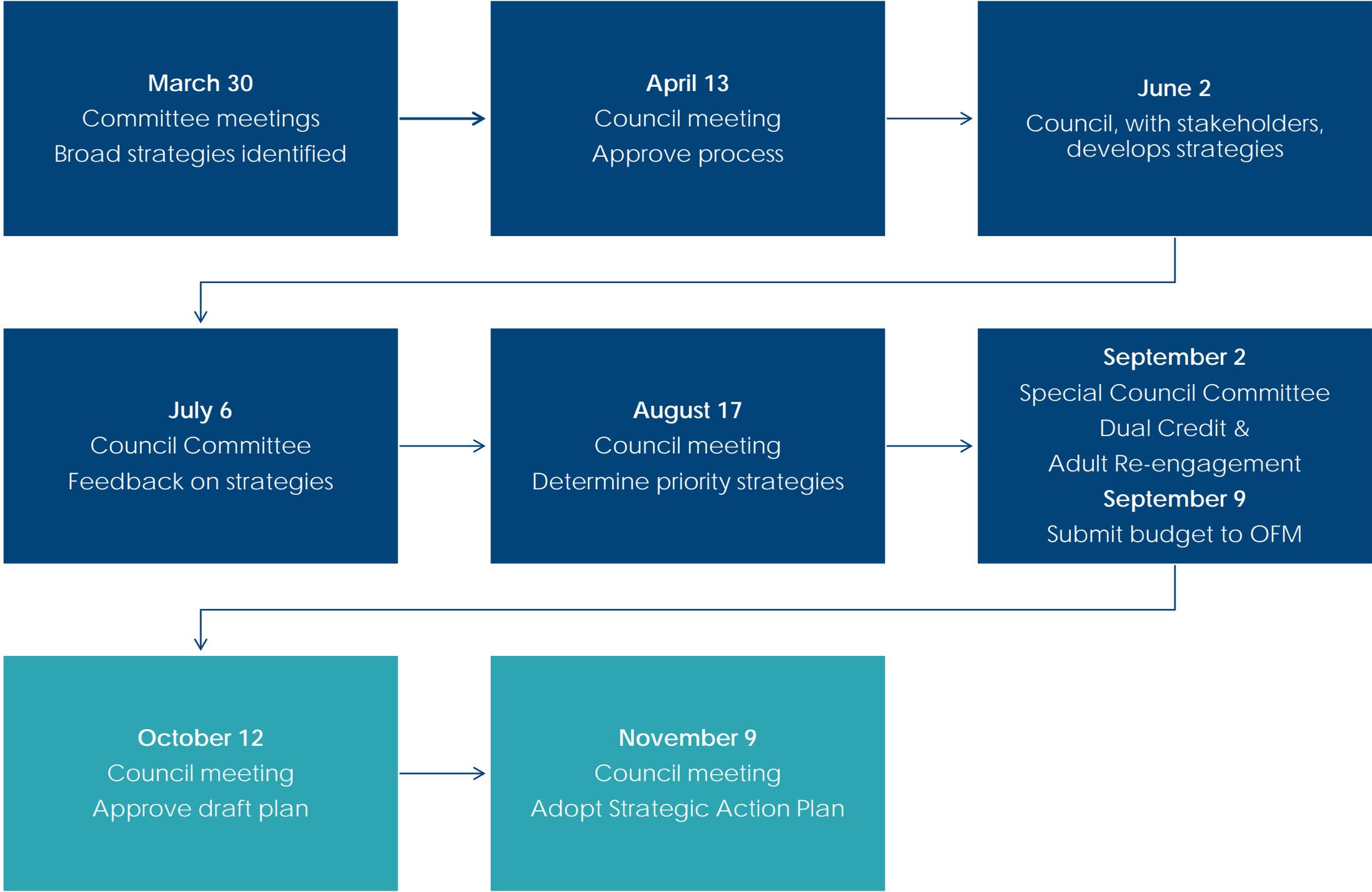
# 2017-19 Strategic Action Plan

*to advance educational attainment*

**October 12, 2016 Council Meeting**

Maddy Thompson  
Director of Policy & Government Relations





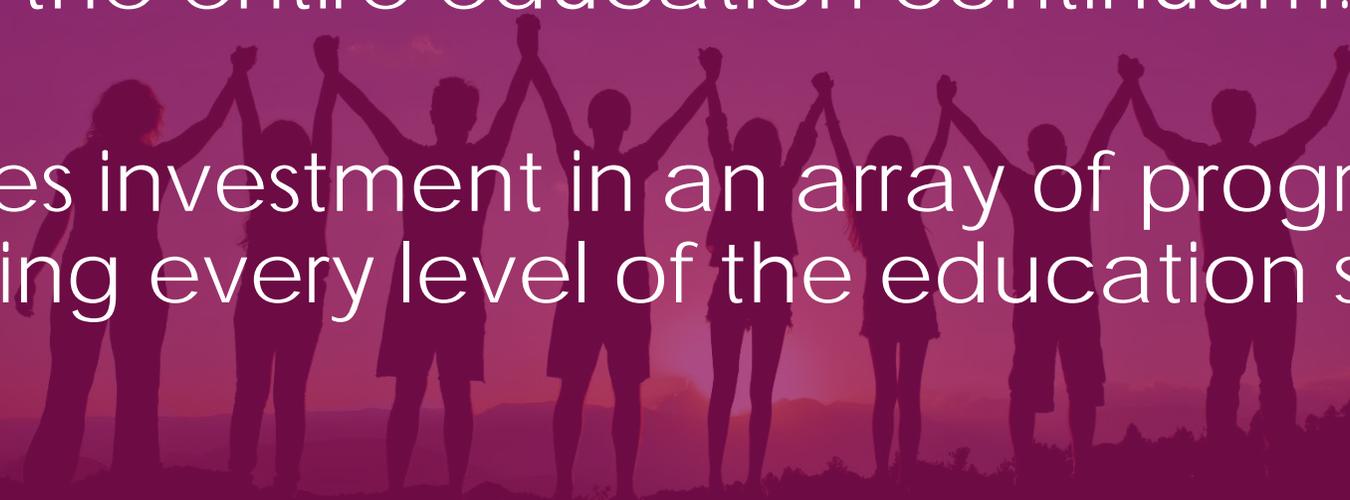


# 2017-19 Strategic Action Plan

## Call to Action

Proposes strategies to support the entire education continuum.

Urges investment in an array of programs targeting every level of the education system.





# Strategies address three key challenges

## Opportunity gap

- High school completion and postsecondary access and completion for historically underserved populations.

## Reengaging adults

- Postsecondary recruitment and completion of a credential for working-age adults.

## Affordability

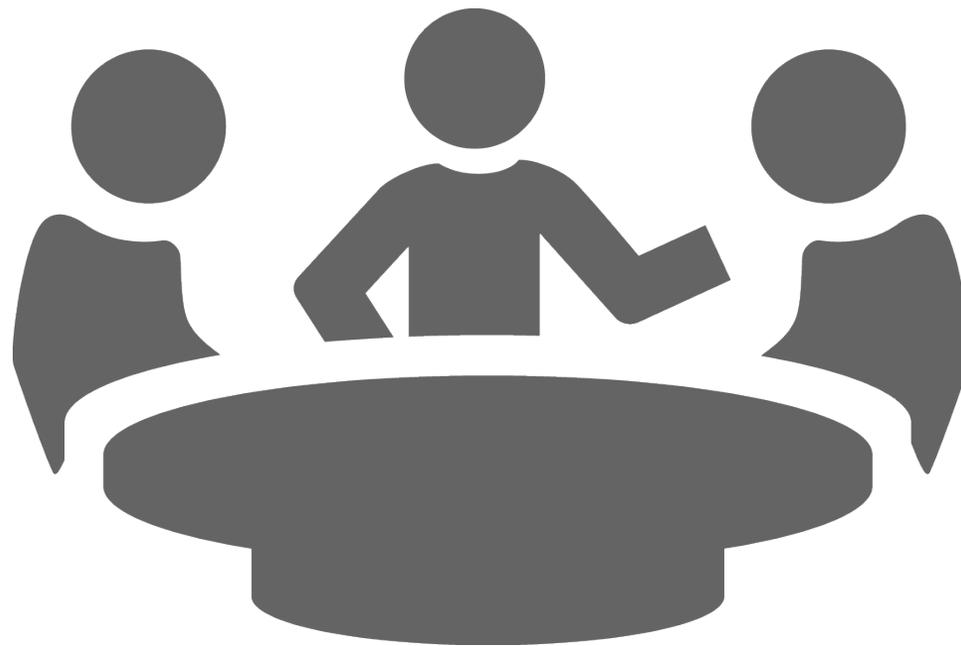
- Improved access and affordability for low-income students.



# Focus for 2017-19

Policymakers should support policies and initiatives that:

- Improve college and career readiness.
- Improve affordability.
- Increase college completion and meet workforce demands.





# Improve college and career readiness



- Increase dual-credit opportunities.
- Invest in guidance and proven high school completion efforts.



# Improve affordability



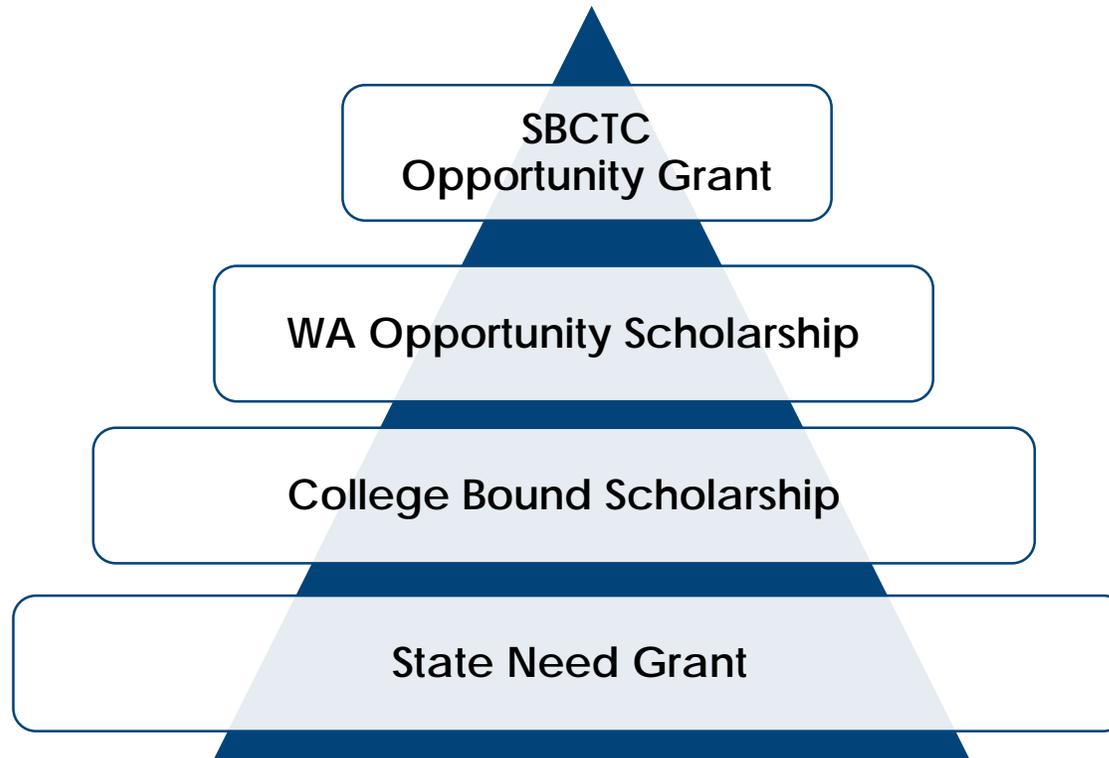
Provide ample funding for higher education to:

- Maintain tuition policy.
- Expand student support services and other programs.



# Improve affordability

Expand state financial aid programs.





# Increase completion, meet workforce demands

Fund successful student support programs that:

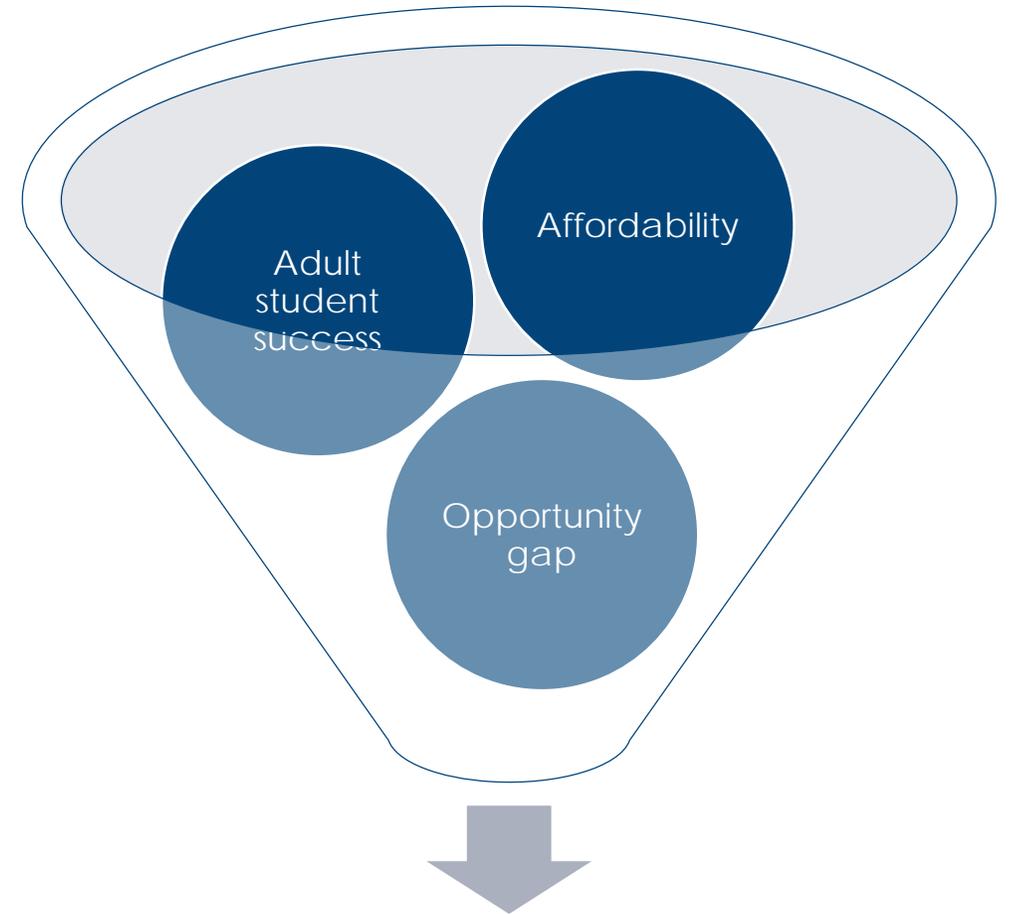
- Prepare students in middle and high school for postsecondary opportunities.
- Guide postsecondary students to completion.
- Expand investments in programs that prepare individuals to work in fields experiencing workforce shortages, for example:
  - Teaching
  - STEM



# 2017-19 Priorities

- State Need Grant \$201M
- Dual Credit
  - Exam Fees for Low-Income \$3.5M
  - Low-Income Running Start
    - Transport and Books \$26.6M
  - Implement current College in the High School Policy \$4.3 M
- State Work Study \$10M
- Innovation grants \$3M
- Adult reengagement N/A

\*Biennial Requests for 17-19

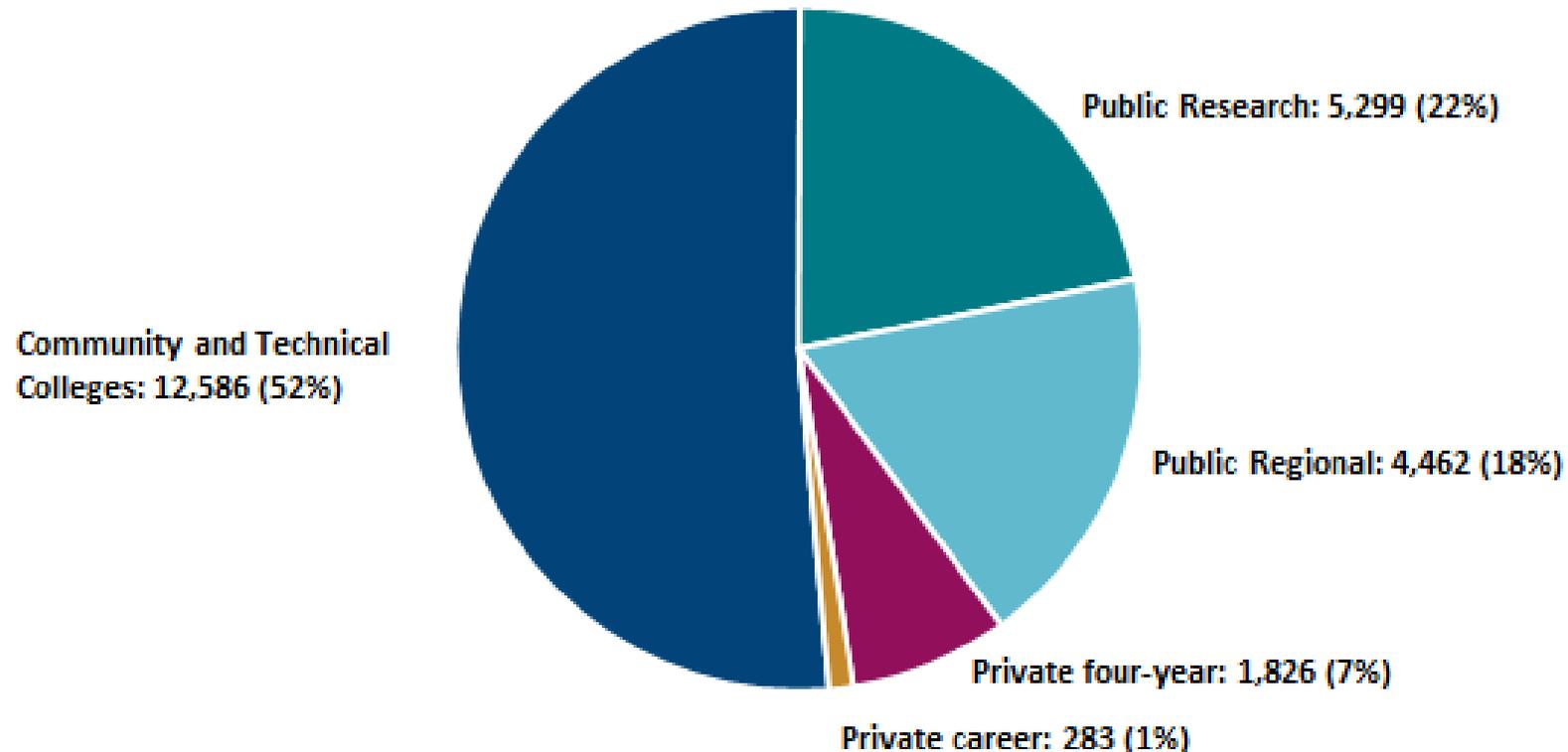


**Increased educational attainment**



# Fully fund the State Need Grant

24,385 Low-Income Students Eligible for the State Need Grant Were Unserved in 2015-16



SOURCE: WSAC Unit Record Report, 2015-16 Academic Year (September 2016).



# Expanding dual-credit opportunities

- Students enrolled in dual-credit programs are more likely to complete high school and continue on to postsecondary education.
- Enhanced funding would lead to increased overall participation in dual-credit programs and greater participation among low-income and underrepresented students.



# Rebuild State Work Study

Since 2009

Funding to State Work Study has been cut by nearly two-thirds.

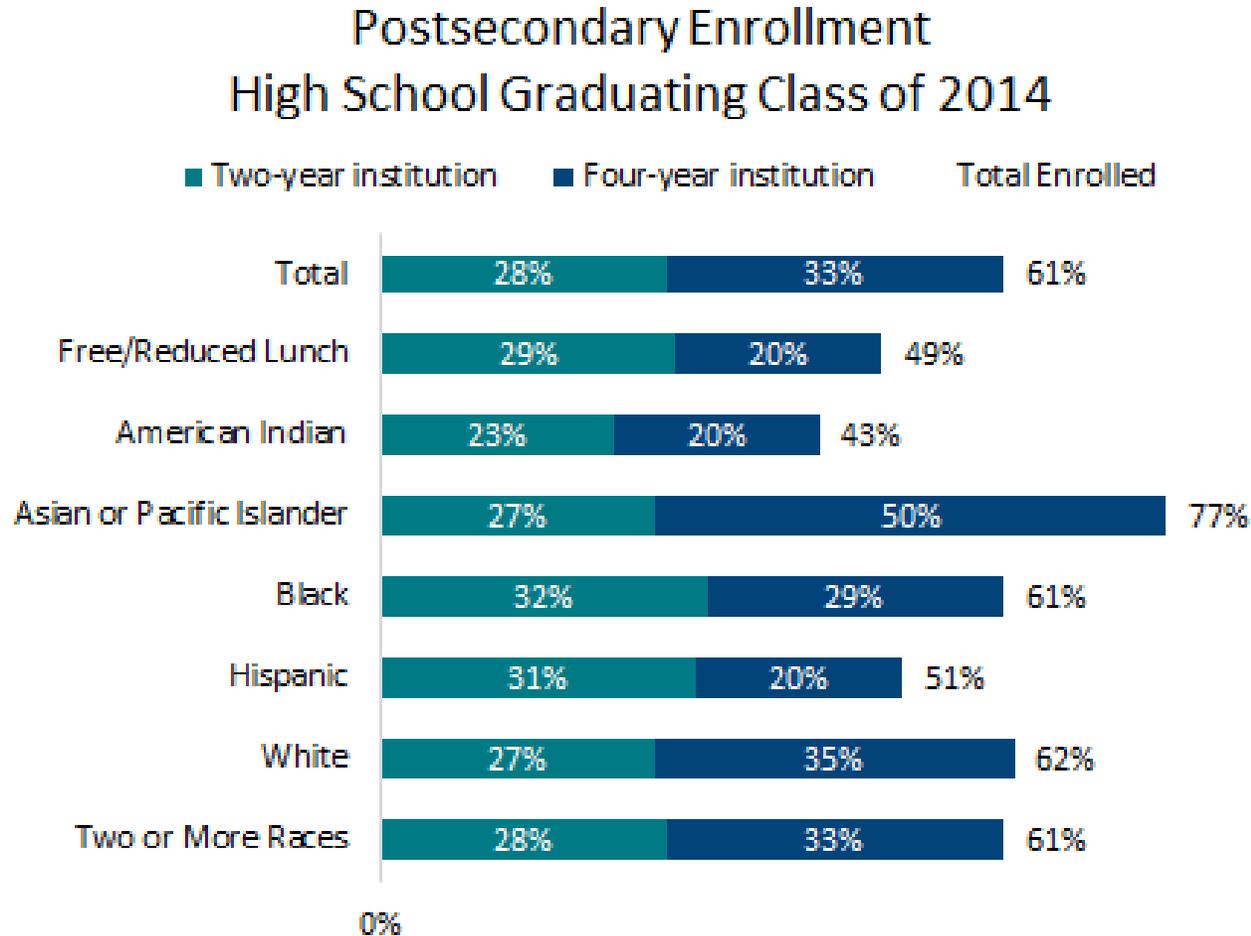
Over 94 percent of Work Study students said they learned important work skills that will transfer to their future careers.

“I have hired several of the work study students following their graduation and have never been disappointed!”

—Employer



# Opportunity gap innovation grants for support services

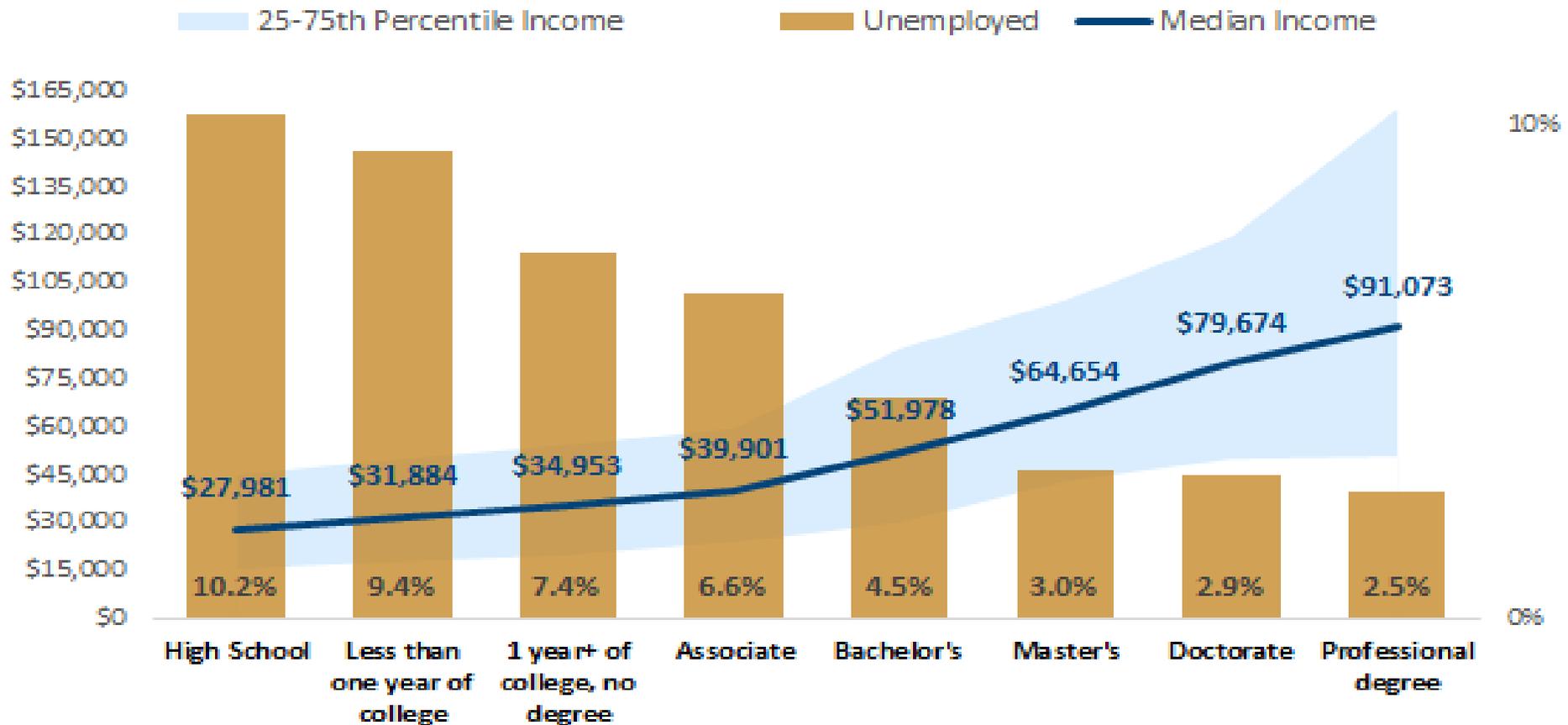


- Grants to schools, community organizations, and higher education institutions will enhance and expand student supports and services and incentivize creative partnerships.
- Support improves outcomes for underrepresented students.



# Statewide initiative to reengage adults

## Income and Unemployment by Educational Attainment



SOURCE: WSAC staff analysis of ACS 2009-2013 Employed and "Not Currently Attending" Washington Residents (September 2015).



# Impact

An estimated increase of 16,000 degree awards in 2017-19, compounded to an additional 80,000 degrees by 2023.

- A high school graduation increase of 78 to 80 percent could lead to more than 7,000 additional postsecondary credentials.
- Research estimates that every \$1,000 in aid improves probability of graduation by 4%.
- Reengaging adult students who have some college credit.
- Supporting and guiding students already enrolled to completion.

# 2017-19 Strategic Action Plan

December 2016

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education is the catalyst for families, communities, and businesses to thrive. While Washington's employers report a growing need for a more educated workforce in order to stay competitive, many individuals need higher levels of education to obtain work that can support themselves and their families.<sup>1</sup> Washington's Roadmap goals identify the long-term education needs of our individuals and our economy. The 2014 Legislature approved the following ten-year goals for educational attainment:

- By 2023, all adults in Washington, ages 25–44, will have a high school diploma or equivalent.
- By 2023, at least 70 percent of Washington adults, ages 25–44, will have a postsecondary credential.<sup>2</sup>

Due to changes in the economy and population, enrollment levels have dropped.<sup>3</sup> We also know that in order to make significant progress toward meeting the state's needs, keeping up with population growth will not be adequate. We must improve educational attainment for underrepresented populations and ensure that adults with some credit but no credential complete their program. These are serious challenges, and we cannot wait until students' last years of high school to promote high school completion and postsecondary enrollment, nor can we wait for the next cyclical surge in nontraditional enrollment.

Washingtonians have a rich and diverse menu of educational pathways. The combined opportunities across the higher education sectors provide a robust higher education system for Washingtonians of all ages to enrich their lives and meet the needs of the state's economy. While Washington is recognized for strong dual-credit opportunities between K-12 and postsecondary institutions, a strong transfer system between community and technical colleges and four-year institutions, and high quality programs, there is much more work to be done. It is critical that Washington continue to build on the current education system from early learning through postsecondary education, public and private, to meet the rapidly growing and changing education needs of our state.<sup>4</sup>

Three key challenges must be addressed to meet Washington's education needs:

1. Closing gaps in educational outcomes for historically underrepresented populations.

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<sup>1</sup> *A Skilled and Educated Workforce*. Retrieved September 25, 2016, from <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2016.04.01.Skilled.and.Educated.Workforce.pdf>  
The report is a joint product of the Washington Student Achievement Council, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 209, Laws of 2014. (2009). Retrieved September 28, 2016, from <http://lawfilesexext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2013-14/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/2626-S.SL.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Hillman, N.W. & Orians, E.L. *Community Colleges and Labor Market Conditions: How Does Enrollment Demand Change Relative to Local Unemployment Rates?* Research in Higher Education (2013) 54: 765.

<sup>4</sup> Washington has made only modest progress toward meeting the attainment goals. The population aged 25–44 with a high school diploma or equivalent has increased from 89 to 90 percent. The population in that age group with a postsecondary credential has increased from 50 to 51.2 percent. Gaps in educational outcomes persist, especially for low-income and underrepresented minority students. For more information, see 2015 Roadmap Update at <http://wsac.wa.gov/2015-roadmap-update>

2. Improving postsecondary recruitment, retention, and completion for working-age adults.
3. Making college affordable for low- and middle-income students.

These challenges are broad, persistent, and systemic. Washington's response must be equally substantial. A focus on any one part of the education pipeline will not be enough; dramatic improvements in P-12 student achievement, college-going rates, and college completion rates are required to meet the state's ambitious attainment goals. Washington must invest in an array of programs targeting every level of the education system. Thus, the strategies listed below go beyond the incremental needs of any single institution or education sector.

### **Strategies for 2017-19 to Increase Attainment**

The Washington Student Achievement Council's five priorities complement system-wide recommendations designed to increase high school completion, college preparedness, and college completion, which will lead to significant progress toward meeting Washington's attainment goals.<sup>5</sup> Full implementation of the plan would require that the Governor and the Legislature support policies and investments that improve college and career readiness, improve affordability, increase college completion, and meet workforce demands. Specifically, the Council recommends the strategies listed below.

Improve college and career readiness by:

- Increasing dual-credit opportunities.
- Investing in proven dropout-prevention and high school completion efforts.

Improve affordability by:

- Maintaining a stable and predictable tuition policy.
- Providing ample funding for higher education.
- Expanding state aid programs.

Increase college completion by:

- Funding successful student support programs.

Meet workforce demands by:

- Expanding investments in programs that prepare individuals to work in fields experiencing workforce shortages.

These system-wide strategies and priorities are discussed below under **Strategies to Increase Attainment**.

The Council has identified the following five funding requests for 2017-19:

1. Fully fund the State Need Grant to serve nearly 24,000 students who are eligible but unserved.
2. Increase equity in access to dual-credit opportunities for low-income students by:

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<sup>5</sup> "College completion" includes postsecondary certificates with value in the labor market, associate degrees, apprenticeships, and baccalaureate degrees.

- Eliminating student fees for exam-based programs.
  - Fully implementing the recently adopted College in the High School policy.
  - Mitigating book and transportation expenses for Running Start students.
3. Expand the State Work Study program to serve an additional 3,000 students and incentivize creation or expansion of programs that allow Work Study recipients to mentor K-12 students.
  4. Provide opportunity gap innovation grants to incentivize creative approaches to support services for underrepresented students.
  5. Reengage adults who have some college credit but no postsecondary credential by developing a statewide framework to recruit, enroll, and support adult students.

Please see ***WSAC 2017-19 Strategic Action Plan Priorities*** for more information on these funding requests.

## KEY CHALLENGES

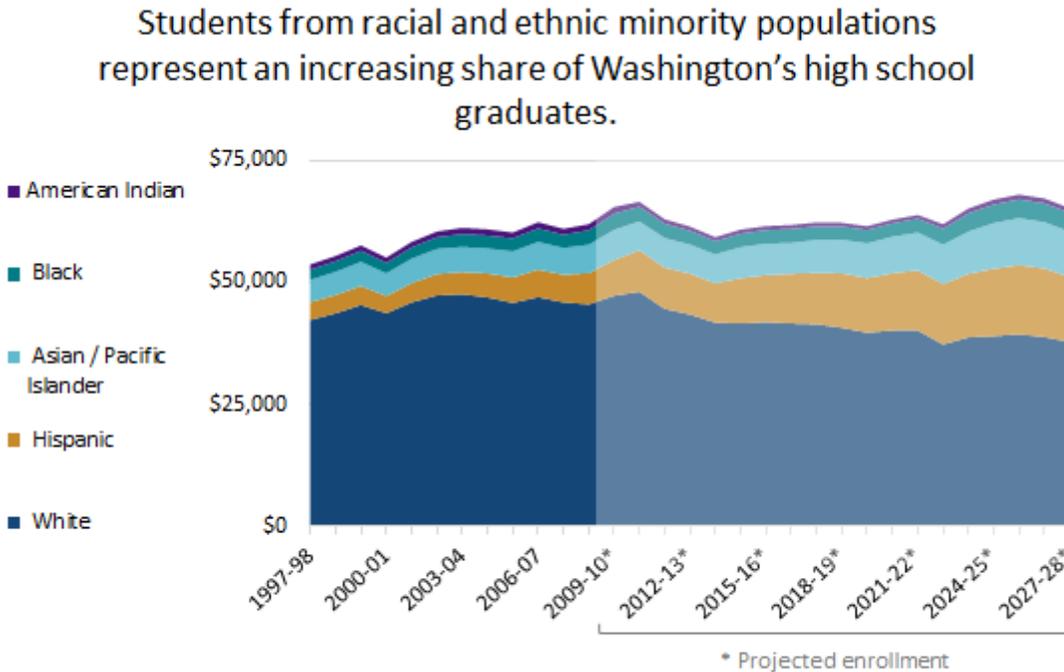
Meeting the state’s educational attainment goals will require significant progress in closing opportunity gaps, supporting adults to complete credentials, and improving overall access and affordability.

### Underrepresented Students

The 2015 Roadmap Update found that reaching the goals is dependent upon dramatic improvements to high school completion, postsecondary access, and completion for historically underrepresented populations.

Students of color represent an increasing share of Washington’s high school enrollments and account for all projected growth among high school graduates.<sup>6</sup> At a time when 42 percent of K-12 students are nonwhite and 46 percent are students from low-income families, the continuing disparities in high school graduation rates must be eliminated. Low-income students' graduation rates fall 10 percentage points below the state average.<sup>7</sup> For many racial and ethnic subgroups, the gaps are even wider.

Figure 1.



SOURCE: Knocking at the College Door (2012), WICHE (September 2016). Note: Race/ethnicity categories are sorted by 2028 population size.

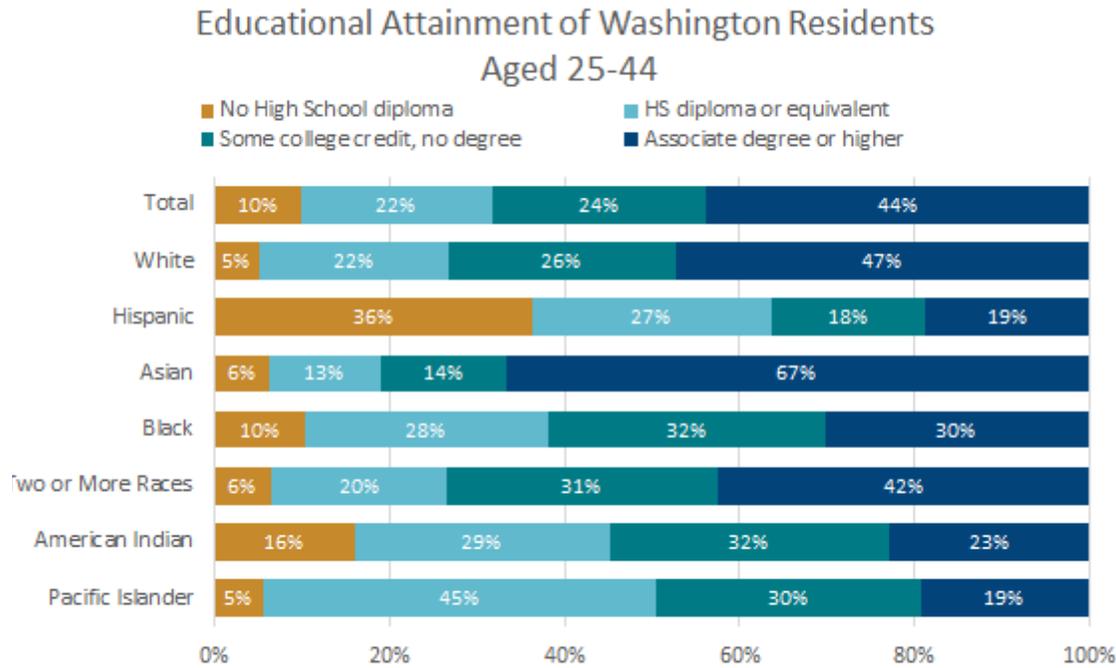
These gaps in educational attainment continue into postsecondary education. For example, the Hispanic population is overrepresented among those with less than a high school diploma and

<sup>6</sup> *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity, 1997-2028*. (2012). Retrieved September 09, 2016, from <http://www.wiche.edu/info/knocking-8th/profiles/wa.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> *Graduation and Dropout Statistics Annual Report (2016)*. Retrieved September 16, 2016, from <http://www.k12.wa.us/dataadmin/pubdocs/GradDropout/14-15/2014-15GraduationDropoutStatisticsAnnualReport.pdf>

underrepresented at all other levels of educational attainment. Black, American Indian, and Pacific Islander populations are also underrepresented among college graduates. This is further evidence of the need to address opportunity gaps and to reengage adults in secondary and postsecondary programs.

Figure 2.



Source: WSAC staff analysis of ACS 3-year 2011-2013 (September 2016). Race/ethnicity categories are sorted by population size.

### Adult Reengagement

Nearly 800,000 adults in Washington ages 25-44 have a high school diploma but have not completed a college degree and are not enrolled. One-third of these adults have attended at least a year of college but have not completed a degree.<sup>8</sup> Financial constraints and family obligations often lead college students to withdraw from or postpone their education.<sup>9</sup> With less education, adults are more likely to experience periods of unemployment and have lower wages. Finishing their college credential would improve career earnings and employment outcomes.<sup>10</sup> The completion of a postsecondary credential is critical for participation and success in the 21st century economy.

**1.2 million** Washingtonians ages 25-44 are not enrolled and do not have a degree.

400,000 have some college credit, but no degree.

Close to 300,000 have over a year of college credit, but no degree.

<sup>8</sup> American Community Survey, 2009-2013 5-Year Estimates; generated by Lexi Shankster. Race/ethnicity categories are sorted by population size.

<sup>9</sup> Erisman, W., & Steele, P. (2015, June). *Adult College Completion, In the 21st Century, What We Know and What We Don't Know* (Rep.). Retrieved February 26, 2016, from [http://www.adultcollegecompletion.org/sites/files/documents/images/Adult College Completion in the 21st Century.pdf](http://www.adultcollegecompletion.org/sites/files/documents/images/Adult%20College%20Completion%20in%20the%2021st%20Century.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> See chart in Adult Reengagement Section of this report. Source: American Community Survey, 2009-2013 5-Year Estimates; generated by Lexi Shankster

## Affordability Gaps

Affordability gaps exist for low- and middle-income students.<sup>11</sup> Affordability is more complex than the tuition “sticker price.” Tuition makes up less than half the cost of attendance for most students.<sup>12</sup> Students must also pay for housing, books, fees, child care, and transportation. Students combine available financial aid and scholarships with work hours, loans, and other choices to meet educational expenses.

To ease the burden of higher education costs, the Governor and Legislature lowered tuition at public institutions in 2015 and 2016. This was an unprecedented step to curb the trend of tuition increases. Even with these investments, affordability remains an issue. Students are covering 58 percent of the cost at public four-year institutions, far above the pre-recession share of 38 percent. Financial aid applications have increased 50 percent since the great recession, while enrollments in public institutions increased seven percent.<sup>13,14</sup>

## STRATEGIES TO INCREASE ATTAINMENT

### Supporting our Education Continuum

This action plan builds on the strengths of our institutions and targets students at each stage of the educational continuum. The system-wide recommendations will improve P-12 student achievement, college-going rates, and college completion rates. This strategic and comprehensive approach will allow meaningful progress toward the state’s attainment goals providing economic benefits for our residents and a talented workforce to meet the state’s economic needs.

### College and Career Readiness

A fully-funded K-12 system will support progress toward the state’s educational attainment goals. Reducing class sizes, providing additional counselors, strengthening teacher compensation, and expanding the pool of talented educators will help ensure students reach high school prepared for success, and are college and career ready by graduation.

Accessing postsecondary education—and the better employment and earnings outcomes that education provides—requires a high school diploma or equivalent. To increase high school attainment rates, OSPI is working to retain and reengage high school students through the *Graduation: A Team Effort* (GATE) initiative, and the community and technical colleges are expanding the *High School 21+* completion program. Educators in K-12 and higher education have also collaborated to create senior

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<sup>11</sup> *Affordability Framework* (December 2015). Retrieved September 20, 2016 from <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2015.11.18.06.Affordability.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Non-tuition costs exceed public tuition costs for independent students and students who live on campus. Please see the Washington Financial Aid association’s 2016-17 student budgets. Retrieved September 30th, 2016 from [https://www.wfaa.org/docs/students/WFAAbudget16\\_17.pdf](https://www.wfaa.org/docs/students/WFAAbudget16_17.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> WSAC staff analysis of *Budget Driver Reports, 2007-08 through 2014-15* (Publication). Olympia, WA: Office of Financial Management.

<sup>14</sup> WSAC staff analysis of FAFSA record data. Washington D.C.: US Department of Education.

year Bridge to College courses to further boost college-readiness and help students avoid remedial coursework.<sup>15</sup>

Washington has seen slight improvement in high school graduation rates and remediation rates for recent high school graduates in recent years. Unfortunately, following recent changes to the sole state high school equivalency assessment, there has been a sharp decline in the number of students who successfully obtain a high school equivalency diploma.<sup>16</sup> Efforts that are yielding promising results for students should be supported and expanded, and additional attention should be directed to improving results for students seeking an equivalency credential.

Dual-credit programs such as College in the High School and Running Start are a key part of the state's college readiness strategy. Rigorous, college-level coursework challenges young students and builds their confidence. But for many low-income students and students from underrepresented groups, cost, academic preparation, and lack of clear information about dual-credit opportunities impede access to dual-credit programs. Eliminating these barriers is essential to ensure students have equitable access to college-ready curriculum.

Policymakers should increase funding for dual-credit programs to cover exam-based programs, to help pay for transportation and books for Running Start students, and to expand College in the High School to serve all college-ready high school students.

### **Supporting Access, Affordability, and Quality**

Stable and sufficient funding provides predictability for Washington students and their families as they consider the wide array of postsecondary options in our state. Despite recent increases in state funding, Washington's public colleges and universities are still recovering from historic reductions in state support experienced during the Great Recession. And our state remains below the national average with respect to per-student funding for higher education.<sup>17</sup> Additional state investment in 2017 will increase student access to critical support services, increase enrollments in STEM and other high-demand programs, and keep our institutions competitive with their peers around the nation.

Stable funding is required to maintain quality in our higher education institutions. The current tuition policy, which limits tuition growth and ensures institutions receive the appropriate levels of funding, provides predictability both for institutions and for Washington families.<sup>18</sup> In addition, this policy will empower higher education institutions to increase student support services.

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<sup>15</sup> Bridge to College Courses. (2016, September 16). Retrieved September 28, 2016, from <http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/BridgetoCollege/>

<sup>16</sup> For a fuller discussion of challenges with the new GED see: Larson, K., Gaeta, C., & Sager, L. (2016, August). *GED Test Changes and Attainment: Overview of 2014 GED Test Changes and Attainment in Washington State* (State of Washington, Washington Student Achievement Council). Retrieved September 30, 2016, from <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2016.GED.Report.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> *State Higher Education Finance Report: Fy 2015*. (2016). Boulder, CO: State Higher Education Executive Officers.

<sup>18</sup> The tuition growth restrictions are laid out in RCW 28B.15.067, while the state funding backfill - which must be adjusted for inflation - is described in RCW 28B.15.066(1)

## Expanding Financial Aid

Financial constraints are the key reason that many students do not finish their credential.<sup>19</sup> And financial aid is an essential tool to increase attainment and improve affordability. Washington maintains one of the best systems of student financial aid in the nation. With a diverse assortment of high-quality programs targeting different populations, our entire state benefits from investments in student financial aid through increased postsecondary participation and completion, as documented in national and Washington-specific studies.<sup>20,21,22</sup>

Low-income students and their families rely on tuition assistance as they pursue their educational dreams. Washington's College Bound Scholarship is an early promise of the State Need Grant for students from low-income families. Students enrolled in the program graduate at the same rate as all students, effectively eliminating the attainment gap in high school graduation rates for low-income students. College Bound demonstrates how the promise of financial assistance improves progress toward a student's educational goals.

Yet the state's foundational aid program, the State Need Grant, remains underfunded, leaving students and families unsure if aid will be available. As the largest aid program in the state, the State Need Grant is an essential part of any strategy to increase attainment and reduce opportunity gaps. The program should be the engine of state affordability and access efforts. But every year since 2009, nearly one-third of eligible students—about 25,000 students annually—have gone unserved because funding ran out.<sup>23</sup>

While State Need Grant serves as the foundation to multiple state aid programs, there are other critical programs that provide additional supports. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges' Opportunity Grant, for example, targets students enrolled in high-demand programs and provides wrap-around services to ensure students remain enrolled and on-track to graduate. The community and technical college system's Worker Retraining program provides a similar combination of student aid and support services to unemployed and dislocated workers without a college credential. The state's public-private Opportunity Scholarship program provides scholarships to low- and middle-income students pursuing STEM degrees. By requiring full-time attendance and increasing grant awards as a student progresses, the grant provides access to STEM education while incentivizing completion.

State Work Study is the only state aid program available to all students, including graduate students, with income eligibility stretching well into the middle class. Not only do students receive aid, but they gain work experience and mentorship and networking opportunities that can help them after graduation. This partnership between the state, students, and employers creates innovative networks

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<sup>19</sup> Erisman, W., & Steele, P. (2015, June). *Adult College Completion, In the 21st Century, What We Know and What We Don't Know* (Rep.). Retrieved February 26, 2016, from [http://www.adultcollegecompletion.org/sites/files/documents/images/Adult College Completion in the 21st Century.pdf](http://www.adultcollegecompletion.org/sites/files/documents/images/Adult%20College%20Completion%20in%20the%2021st%20Century.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Bania, N., Burley, M., & Pennucci, A. (2013). *The effectiveness of the State Need Grant program: Final evaluation*. (Doc. No. 14-01-2301). Retrieved September 28, 2016, from <http://wsipp.wa.gov/Reports/529>

<sup>21</sup> Franke, R. (2016). *Examining the Role of the State: Need-Based Grants and Their Effect on Student Persistence and Degree Completion*. Speech presented at American Educational Research Association in Washington D.C.

<sup>22</sup> Scott, C. J. (2009, October). On Money and Motivation: A Quasi-Experimental Analysis of Financial Incentives for College Achievement. *Journal of Human Resources*, 49.

<sup>23</sup> WSAC staff analysis of interim report data, 2009-2016.

that link college students to K-12 students in an effort to raise kids' college-going aspirations. Currently, 4,400 students gain work experience and earn money for college through the program—less than half the number served before its funding was cut during the recession.

Washington's financial aid system is uniquely suited to address each of the key challenge areas described above. College Bound has shown promise in increasing academic achievement for low-income students in K-12. State Work Study provides work experience for both undergraduate and graduate students. The State Need Grant and the Opportunity Grant serve working adults and provide a pathway to a credential. These programs together make participation easier and more affordable for our neediest students.

### **Expanding Innovative, Targeted Student Supports to Increase Completion**

Underrepresented students' academic, social, and financial success depends on support services.<sup>24</sup> While a number of strategies have proven to increase high school graduation rates and college completions, they are only reaching a fraction of the students who need them.<sup>25</sup> To ensure more students receive the supports they need, Washington must increase its investment in student support. Innovative programs designed to support underserved students in high schools and postsecondary institutions at scale should be a top priority.

Washington's community and technical colleges are making significant changes to increase student completions through *Guided Pathways* and other programs. *Guided Pathways* provides students clear pathways that lead to certificates or degrees. It is an outcome-based approach to student advising, from initial intake to completion. An expansion of this program in 2017-19 is estimated to increase retention rates by 10 percent.

*I-BEST*, a nationally recognized program pioneered by the community and technical college system, integrates literacy, work, and college readiness curricula so students can earn a postsecondary credential and move into living-wage jobs faster. Additional funding is needed to expand the reach of this successful model.

The public four-year colleges and universities are also focused on the need for new and expanded student-success programs. Additional state investments in 2017 will allow each college or university to target new services to underrepresented first-year students, transfer students, and returning adults. Students at the main and branch campuses, higher education centers, and other teaching locations across the state will benefit from additional peer mentors, advisers, case managers, tutors, and career and internship counselors.

The state must invest in innovative K-12 to higher education partnerships. Using an innovation grant approach supports projects that expand the reach of successful programs, test new approaches, involve key partnerships, and commit to sustainability. Seed funding would build upon current education sector efforts to increase recruitment and outreach in coordination with K-12, community and technical colleges, and four-year colleges and universities.

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<sup>24</sup> Tierney, W. G., Corwin, Z. B., & Colyar, J. E. (2005). *Preparing for college: Nine elements of effective outreach*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

<sup>25</sup> Zeiser, K., & Chan, T. (2015, August). *Persistence and Completion in Postsecondary Education of Participants in the TRIO Student Support Services Program* (United States, Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education). Retrieved September 30, 2016, from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/triostudsupp/sss-heoa-report-2015.pdf>

One example of a successful program that increases college-going and preparation for underrepresented students is *Washington MESA* (Math, Engineering, Science Achievement). This program builds a pathway to college and careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) for students who are underrepresented in STEM fields. The K-12 program includes seven university partners and serves over 3,000 students in 80 schools. The *MESA* program is offered at six community colleges. At these *MESA* colleges 47 percent of Associate of Science graduates were students of color and 100 percent of those who transferred earned bachelor's degrees in a STEM field.<sup>26</sup> Additional funding would expand this highly successful program across the college system.

Together, the expected outcome from these investments will be to drive improvements in student access, retention, and persistence, as well as graduation and job placement rates. Investing now to improve attainment rates is critical to the state's future economic prosperity.

### **Adult Reengagement**

To reach the attainment goals, efforts must be expanded beyond a focus on students moving directly from high school to college. Working adults without a postsecondary credential have a lot to gain by returning to complete a degree or certificate, including higher wages, fewer periods of unemployment, and more options to meet personal and career goals. However, for many adults the prospect of enrolling in college is daunting. In addition to the typical challenges of affordability and academic preparation, which many students face, adult students also tend to have additional barriers, such as scheduling conflicts, child care availability, and other family commitments. Students who have previously attended college may also have challenges associated with outstanding debt or receiving credit for previous coursework.

Developing a plan to address those barriers, and to provide information and supports to adults who are considering returning to school, will be a key project for the Washington Student Achievement Council in 2017. Such an effort requires undertaking high-quality research and data efforts, conducting an environmental scan, and planning and collaborating across the higher education sectors and with other public and private entities. The program would build on national and state best practices and leverage existing strengths of our system, and institutional outreach and engagement initiatives. A statewide approach is needed to provide coordinated outreach and information and to ensure students are able to access the information and resources they need to successfully return to college and complete a certificate or degree. The collaborative effort will yield a plan ready for implementation in the 2018-19 fiscal year.

### **Addressing workforce shortages**

More than three-quarters of projected job openings by 2023 will require at least some education beyond high school, with two-thirds of all openings requiring at least a year of college. Demand at the associate and certificate level is largest in a range of occupations related to the economic recovery, including business, management, and sales; production and trades; and service occupations. At the bachelor's level the largest gaps are in computer science, engineering, and other STEM occupations.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Who We Serve. (n.d.). Retrieved September 30, 2016, from <http://washingtonmesa.org/who-we-serve/>

<sup>27</sup> *A Skilled and Educated Workforce*. Retrieved September 28, 2016, from <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2016.04.01.Skilled.and.Educated.Workforce.pdf>  
The report is a joint product of the Washington Student Achievement Council, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Expanding STEM-based dual-credit opportunities and increasing funding to STEM-based and other high-demand higher education programs can help Washington address this workforce gap.

Washington is also experiencing a substantial shortage of educators. Principals report difficulty recruiting teachers.<sup>28</sup> Many teachers are retiring, and nationally 17 percent of beginning teachers leave teaching within five years.<sup>29</sup> Strategies proposed by the K-12 system and our colleges and universities to increase the number of teachers, and to retain beginning teachers in particular, should be supported. Targeted student financial aid programs that meet the need for effective educators in every classroom—such as Future Teachers and Alternative Routes—should also be enhanced.

## OUTCOMES

Meaningful progress must occur soon for Washington to reach the 2023 attainment goals. Investing in the strategies outlined above would be a critical step forward, resulting in an increase of degree awards by 16,000 in the 2017-19 biennium. Further, those improvements in completion rates would compound, adding an estimated 80,000 degrees in total by 2023. This section examines in more detail the impact of specific strategies on overall attainment.

### Increase High School Completion Rates

Even small changes in graduation rates can have significant impacts. For example, improving Washington's high school graduation rate from 78 percent to 80 percent could lead to more than 7,000 additional postsecondary credentials.<sup>30</sup> Expanding participation in dual-credit coursework and senior-year Bridge to College courses and reducing persistent opportunity gaps will not only improve graduation rates, but also influence the percentage of high school graduates who enroll in and complete college.

### Improve Affordability

Research consistently shows that state financial aid exerts a measurable impact on a recipient's chances of graduating from college. Estimates vary, but national research shows that every \$1,000 of state aid improves a student's probability of graduation by four percent.<sup>31</sup> Using this assumption, fully funding the State Need Grant would improve graduation rates for four-year students by about 10

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<sup>28</sup> Of the principals responding, 69 percent reported significant challenges in hiring teachers and 24 percent reported being in "crisis-mode." Source: *Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and Association of Washington Principals Substitute Teacher and Teacher Shortage Survey* (2015). Retrieved September 20, 2016 from <http://www.k12.wa.us/LegisGov/2016documents/SubShortageSurvey.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> *Public School Teacher Attrition and Mobility in the First Five Years: Results from the First Through Fifth Waves of the 2007-08 Study of Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study, First Look* (2015). Retrieved September 28, 2016, from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015337.pdf>. The report is a joint product of the Institute of Education Science, the National Center for Education Statistics, and the U.S. Department of Education.

<sup>30</sup> *Calculating the Economic Value of Increasing College Credentials by 2025: Washington* (Rep.). (2014). Retrieved September 15, 2016, from National Center for Higher Education Management System website: <http://www.nchems.org/NCHEMSCLASPWashingtonModel.swf>

<sup>31</sup> See Franke (2016), Scott-Clayton (2009), and Bania, N., Burley, M., & Pennucci, A. (2013)

percent, and for community and technical college students by three percent.<sup>32</sup> Expanding the Opportunity Grant program and State Work Study would also improve completion rates.<sup>33</sup>

### Increase College Completion Rates

Ensuring the public two- and four-year institutions of higher education receive stable, adequate funding will enable the institutions to provide more support services to eligible students. Such supports increase a recipient's chances of graduating by 10 percent at baccalaureate institutions and 13 percent at community and technical colleges.<sup>34</sup> For every \$1 million increase in funding, such programs would serve an additional 700 students and result in 70 additional bachelor's degrees or 90 additional associate degrees or certificates per year.<sup>35</sup>

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges' *Guided Pathways* initiative budget request aims to improve the system's retention rate by 10 percent and total completions by 17 percent. Such an improvement could create 6,500 additional workforce-training credentials and nearly 5,500 additional academic transfer degrees. Again, sustaining this level of improvement would result in consistent gains in each year, as each successive cohort benefits from the project.

Adult reengagement strategies offer an opportunity to boost attainment quickly, nearly 400,000 adults ages 25-44 in Washington have some college credit but no degree. About two thirds of these have earned at least a year of college credit.<sup>36</sup> Engaging these students and ensuring they complete could generate a significant increase in degree awards.

This action plan provides a blueprint for coordinating and building on the strengths of the current system, and highlights innovations that can improve and transform it. Targeting each section of the educational pipeline will improve overall attainment, providing economic benefits for our residents and a talented workforce to meet the state's economic needs. This is an ambitious agenda that represents a system-wide, intentional, and strategic approach to make meaningful progress toward the state's attainment goals.

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<sup>32</sup> The effect differential between community college and four-year students arises from the differing award sizes in the sectors.

<sup>33</sup> *State Work Study Survey (2016)*. Retrieved September 28, 2016, from <http://wsac.wa.gov/reports-and-publications>

90 percent of work study students responding reported that the program provides them with skills that help in class.

<sup>34</sup> Bradford, C. (2010, April). *National Evaluation of Student Support Services: Examination of Student Outcomes After Six Years*. Retrieved September 15, 2016, from <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/highered/student-support/final-report.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> American Community Survey, 2009-2013 5-Year Estimates; generated by Lexi Shankster.

## WSAC 2017-19 STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES

Reaching the educational attainment goals will require implementing high-impact policies. In addition to the system-wide policy recommendations and investment priorities outlined earlier in this report, the Council has identified five priority strategies.

The priority strategies will address opportunity gaps, improve college readiness, and increase college completions.

WSAC State Investment and Policy Recommendations FY 2017-19	FY Cost (millions)		
	2017-18	2018-19	Total
1. Fully fund the State Need Grant program to support all eligible students.	\$99	\$101	\$200
2. Increase access to dual-credit programs by funding:			
- Districts to cover Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Cambridge International exam fees for students eligible for free and reduced price lunch.	\$3.1	\$3.4	\$6.5
- Transportation and book costs for students enrolled in Running Start who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch.	\$12.9	\$13.7	\$26.6
- Full implementation the current College in the High School policy.	\$2.6	\$1.7	\$4.3
3. Expand work-based learning by increasing funding for State Work Study by \$5 million to serve an additional 3,000 students, and incentivize colleges to create mentoring partnerships with K-12.	\$5	\$5	
4. Provide opportunity gap innovation grants to incentivize creative partnerships to support services for underrepresented secondary and postsecondary students.	\$1.5	\$1.5	
5. Collaborate with partners to develop a statewide framework to recruit and retain adult students, with an emphasis on those with some college credit but no credential.	N/A	2018-19 Request <sup>37</sup>	

<sup>37</sup> The supplemental request will be developed following the recommendations of a 2017 Washington Student Achievement Council work group including the public baccalaureate institutions, the community and technical colleges, the Independent Colleges of Washington, and the Workforce Board.

## State Need Grant

### **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.

### **Imperative: Increase access, participation, and completion in higher education**

State Need Grant simultaneously reaches all three key challenge areas; full funding would increase access and affordability, support returning adults, and help close opportunity gaps. The program serves many working-age adults and underrepresented students across all sectors of our 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. Its impact is undermined when tens of thousands of eligible students receive no awards due to a lack of funds. 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 for all in Washington.

### **Outcomes and Measures:**

Ensuring eligible students receive aid can help boost college-going rates. Research consistently finds that state aid drives better student outcomes.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup>
- 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.<sup>40</sup>
- State financial aid conclusively boosts student success.<sup>41</sup>

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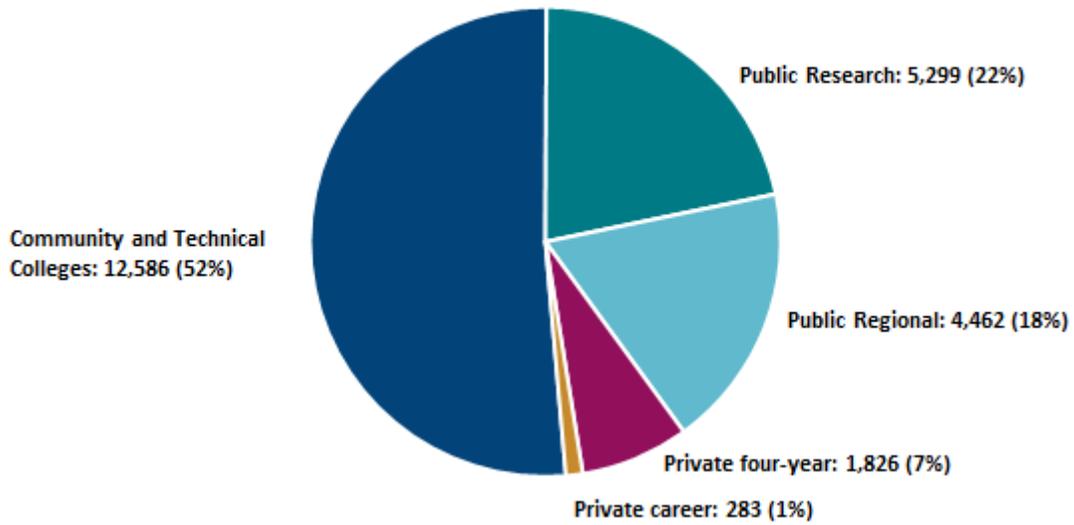
<sup>38</sup> See Franke (2016), Scott-Clayton (2009), and Bania, N., Burley, M., & Pennucci, A. (2013)

<sup>39</sup> WSAC staff analysis of State Need Grant payment data, 2009-2016

<sup>40</sup> WSAC staff analysis of U.S. Department of Education FAFSA data.

<sup>41</sup> See Franke (2016), Scott-Clayton (2009), and Bania, N., Burley, M., & Pennucci, A. (2013)

### 24,385 Low-Income Students Eligible for the State Need Grant Were Unserved in 2015-16



Source: WSAC State Need Grant reports submitted by institutions, 2015-16.

## State Work Study

### **Recommendation: Expand State Work Study**

Expand work-based learning by increasing funding for State Work Study by \$5 million in each year of the biennium to serve an additional 3,000 students. This additional funding would also allow colleges to create new mentoring partnerships with K-12. These programs can qualify for special employer match rates making it easier for colleges to create or expand programs that bring college students to help at-risk secondary school students.

### **Imperative: State Work Study provides valuable education and employment experience**

State Work Study's blend of work and aid provides unique benefits. In addition to receiving state aid, students gain knowledge and skills from their employment. Work study contributes to economic growth by creating jobs and adding experienced, high-skill college graduates to the state's workforce. When fully funded, the program can help schools create innovative and successful mentoring and outreach programs.

### **Context: Students and employers benefit**

In a 2016 survey, over 90 percent of State Work Study student respondents said that they learned work skills that will translate to their future career. Meanwhile, about 95 percent of employer respondents said that State Work Study students made their organization more productive, and two-thirds said they sometimes or often hire State Work Study students upon graduation.<sup>42</sup>

Several Washington colleges have created K-12 mentorship programs designed to increase college attendance rates throughout the state. Fully funding State Work Study will enable these efforts to expand.

### **Outcomes and Measures:**

Fully funding the program will result in lower student debt levels at graduation and better post-graduation employment outcomes. Because state investment works with employers to pay State Work Study wages, \$5 million in state funding leverages an additional \$3.3 million in employer contributions to student wages.

### **Quick Facts:**

- Funding to State Work Study has been cut by nearly two-thirds since 2009.
- The number of participating employers is down by nearly 60 percent since 2009.
- Over 94 percent of Work Study students said they learned important work skills that will transfer to their future careers.<sup>43</sup>

### **Pull quotes:**

•“I have hired several of the work study students following their graduation and have never been disappointed!”

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<sup>42</sup> *State Work Study Survey (2016)*. Retrieved September 28, 2016, from <http://wsac.wa.gov/reports-and-publications>

<sup>43</sup> *State Work Study Survey (2016)*. Retrieved September 28, 2016, from <http://wsac.wa.gov/reports-and-publications>

- “At the moment, SWS employees are essential to our organization’s operations. We could not accomplish what we do without their help.”

## Dual Credit

### Recommendation: Increase equity in access to dual-credit programs

Increase access to dual-credit programs by: funding student fees for Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Cambridge International programs; mitigating book and transportation expenses for Running Start students; and expanding access to College in the High School opportunities regardless of grade level or zip code.

To achieve this, the Council first recommends the following actions in the 2017-19 biennium:

Strategy	2017-18	2018-19	Total
Provide funding to allow districts to cover exam fees for 25,000 students in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Cambridge International programs who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch.	\$3.1M	\$3.4M	\$6.5M
Subsidize transportation and book costs for 8,600 students enrolled in Running Start who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch.	\$12.9M	\$13.7M	\$26.6M
Fully implement the current College in the High School policy to serve all eligible students enrolled in small schools, those distant from a college with a Running Start program, and students eligible for free and reduced price lunch.	\$2.6M	\$1.7M	\$4.3M

### Imperative: Equitable access to help close opportunity gaps

Although 97 percent of high school districts offer dual credit, and 47 percent of all public high school students enroll in at least one dual-credit course, the costs of these programs present a barrier to enrollment for low-income students. Running Start, Advanced Placement, and College in the High School program data show participation gaps among students eligible for free and reduced priced lunch. In addition, costs may contribute to disproportionate enrollment by race or ethnicity. For example, Hispanic students make up 19 percent of the high school population, yet are represented at rates of 12 percent in Advanced Placement and Running Start programs, and 13 percent in College in the High School programs.<sup>44</sup>

### Context: Dual-credit costs can be prohibitive for students

Dual-credit programs are either college-level courses that also meet high school requirements, or rigorous high school courses coupled with standardized exams or articulation agreements. In all cases students can earn both high school and college credit.

Students in dual-credit programs face costs that may discourage or prevent participation. For example, costs for exam-based programs range from \$91 for Advanced Placement test fees to \$168 for registration plus \$116 per test for International Baccalaureate. Running Start students may receive a waiver for tuition; however, they face all the other costs of a typical college student, including student fees, books and transportation, and other education-related expenses. The College in the High School

<sup>44</sup> Light, N. (2016, October). *Dual Credit Report*. (State of Washington, Washington Student Achievement Council). Retrieved September 30, 2016, from <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/>

program limits funding to cover only one to two classes per year; yet even with that limitation, funding is short of what is needed to meet all the needs identified by school districts.

**Outcomes and Measures:**

Students enrolled in dual-credit programs are more likely to complete high school and continue on to postsecondary education. For the five-year period from 2010-11 through 2014-15, student enrollments in nearly every dual-credit program increased.<sup>45</sup> Enhanced funding would lead to increased overall participation in dual-credit programs and greater participation among low-income and underrepresented students.

**Quick Facts:**

- Rainier Beach High School in Seattle has improved graduation rates by 25 points—to 79 percent—since implementation of its International Baccalaureate program in 2013.<sup>46</sup>
- 37.4 percent of Washington high school graduates in the class of 2015 took at least one Advanced Placement exam. AP exam scores also rose, with 22.6 percent of exam-takers scoring a 3 or higher in 2015.<sup>47</sup>
- In 2015, 2,083 high school students in Washington graduated with both a high school diploma and an associate degree.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *ibid*

<sup>46</sup> Rowe, C. (2016, March 18). Stunning surge in graduation rate as Rainier Beach gamble pays off. The Seattle Times. Retrieved September 30, 2016, from <http://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/stunning-surge-in-graduation-rate-as-rainier-beach-gamble-pays-off/>

<sup>47</sup> College Board. (n.d.). *AP Cohort Data Report: Graduating Class of 2015*.

<sup>48</sup> J. Holliday, Personal communication, September, 2016.

## Opportunity Gap Innovation Grants

### **Recommendation: Expand student support services for underrepresented students**

Provide opportunity gap innovation grants to strengthen support services for underrepresented secondary and postsecondary students. The grants would complement general student support and target individualized and high-impact services to students. An allocation of \$1.5 million will fund grants to schools, community organizations, and higher education institutions to enhance and expand student supports and services and incentivize creative partnerships.

### **Imperative: Washington’s patchwork support programs serve too few students**

The postsecondary participation gap between low- and high-income students is growing at a time when the majority of jobs require postsecondary training. Low-income students, ethnic minority students, homeless youth, and students in foster care have higher dropout rates, lower graduation rates, and lower rates of college enrollment and completion.<sup>49</sup> Washington has a patchwork of support programs providing services to a fraction of its underrepresented students. It is imperative that we employ new and effective models of support services to provide equitable opportunities for all students.

### **Context: Student success often relies on support services**

Washington’s future workforce will be composed largely of today’s underrepresented students, including those who participate in Washington’s College Bound Scholarship program.<sup>50</sup> To increase the educational attainment rate of that future workforce, the state must do more to target resources toward underrepresented students, whose academic, social, and financial success often depends on support services.<sup>51</sup> Using an innovation grant approach supports projects that expand the reach of successful programs, test new approaches, involve key partnerships, and commit to sustainability.

### **Outcomes and Measures:**

Opportunity gap innovation grants will foster creative and diverse student services programs designed to address academic opportunity gaps among underrepresented students.

### **Quick Facts:**

- 477,828 Washington students are eligible for free and reduced price lunch.<sup>52</sup>

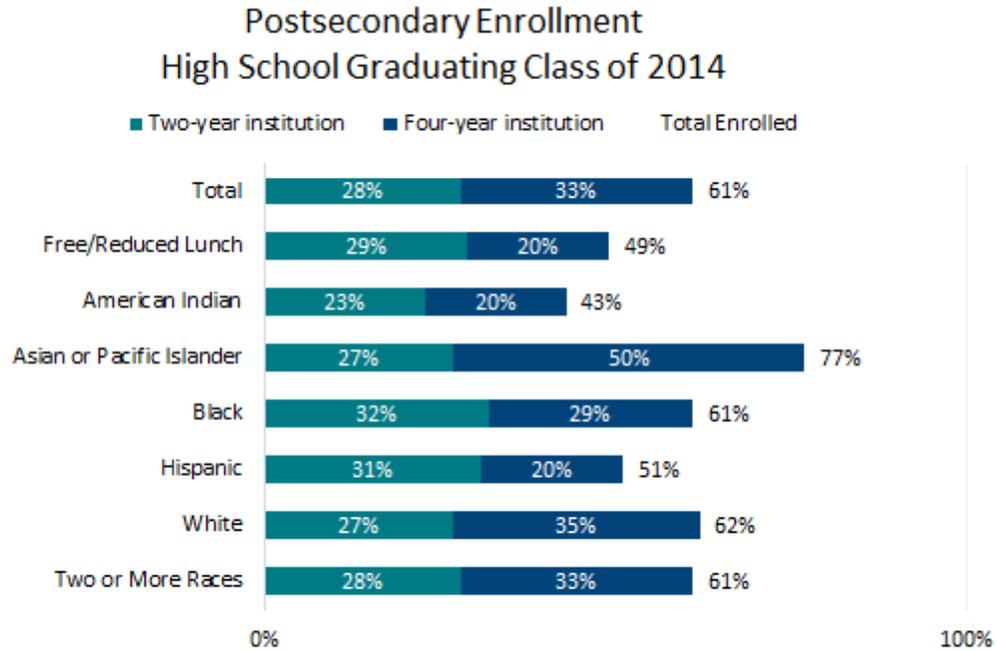
<sup>49</sup> Aud, S., Fox, M. A., & Ramani, A. K. (2010). *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups* (United States, Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics). Washington, DC: Department of Education. Retrieved September 30, 2016, from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010015.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity, 1997-2028*. (2012). Retrieved September 09, 2016, from <http://www.wiche.edu/info/knocking-8th/profiles/wa.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> Tierney, W. G., Corwin, Z. B., & Colyar, J. E. (2005). *Preparing for college: Nine elements of effective outreach*. Albany: State University of New York Press

<sup>52</sup> *Graduation and Dropout Statistics Annual Report*. (2016, March). Retrieved September 26, 2016, from <http://www.k12.wa.us/dataadmin/pubdocs/GradDropout/14-15/2014-15GraduationDropoutStatisticsAnnualReport.pdf>

- The high school graduation rate is 10 percentage points lower for low-income students.<sup>53</sup>
- Low income students transition directly from high school to college at a rate 12 percentage points lower than the average for all students.<sup>54</sup>



SOURCE: High School Feedback Report, Education Research and Data Center (September 2016).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>54</sup> *High School Feedback Report*. Retrieved September 26, 2016, from <http://erdcdata.wa.gov/hsfb.aspx>  
The report compiles data from K12 and Higher Education administrative data sets and the National Student Clearinghouse

## Adult Reengagement

### **Recommendation: Develop strategies to reengage adult students**

Collaborate with partners to develop a statewide framework to recruit and retain adult students, with an emphasis on those with some college credit but no credential. The framework would address a range of issues related to communication and information resources, student identification and outreach, affordability, targeted student support, and program delivery.

### **Imperative: Nearly 400,000 adults have some college credit but no degree**

Reaching the state's educational attainment goals will require a renewed commitment to serve students who must overcome a variety of barriers to attend school and complete a degree or certificate. In Washington, nearly 400,000 adults ages 25-44 have some college credit but have not completed a degree.<sup>55</sup> Encouraging and supporting these students as they complete their education will help them secure living-wage employment and achieve their career and educational goals.

### **Context: Identifying opportunities to reengage with adult learners**

College students who withdraw from or postpone their education most often cite family obligations or a need to work and earn money as the reason they dropped out. In a survey of 45,000 students, only seven percent indicated they were dropping out for academic reasons.<sup>56</sup> The same work-life considerations that cause students to leave also prevent them from returning.

Colleges have implemented a number of strategies to reach former students. Successful programs redefine institutional relationships with adult learners, focusing program delivery and support services. In Washington, creating a successful statewide program would require a sustainable effort to reach adult learners, leveraging and expanding on the excellent work that is already taking place on campuses and online.

### **Outcomes and Measures:**

The framework would build on national best practices and leverage existing strengths of our system to provide the information and support students need to successfully return to college and complete a certificate or degree. The collaborative effort would yield a plan that could be implemented in the 2018-19 fiscal year, resulting in increased college participation, retention, and completion rates of adult students.

### **Quick Facts:**

- 400,000 adults have college credit but no degree.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> American Community Survey, 2009-2013 5-Year Estimates; generated by Lexi Shankster.

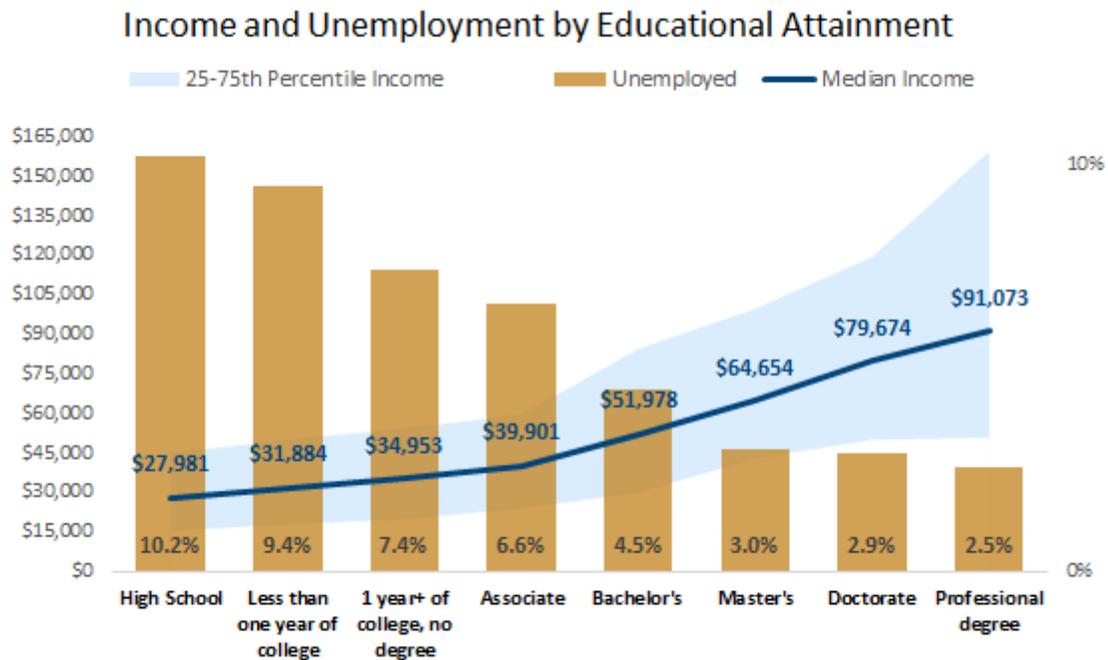
<sup>56</sup> Erisman, W., & Steele, P. (2015, June). *Adult College Completion, In the 21st Century, What We Know and What We Don't Know* (Rep.). Retrieved February 26, 2016, from [http://www.adultcollegecompletion.org/sites/files/documents/images/Adult College Completion in the 21st Century.pdf](http://www.adultcollegecompletion.org/sites/files/documents/images/Adult%20College%20Completion%20in%20the%2021st%20Century.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> American Community Survey, 2009-2013 5-Year Estimates; generated by Lexi Shankster.

- In nine counties—Adams, Klickitat, Lewis, Mason, Okanogan, Pacific, Pend Oreille, Wahkiakum, and Yakima—fewer than 30 percent of adults have at least an associate degree.<sup>58</sup>
- King County has the highest percentage of adults with an associate degree (58 percent).<sup>59</sup>
- Students aged 25 and older with prior credit take 2.8 years to complete a four-year degree.<sup>60</sup>

**Chart:**

Earnings by attainment graphic in some college no degree



SOURCE: WSAC staff analysis of ACS 2009-2013 Employed and "Not Currently Attending" Washington Residents (September 2015).

<sup>58</sup> *A Stronger Nation* (2016). Retrieved September 28, 2016, from [https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/publications/stronger\\_nation/2016/A\\_Stronger\\_Nation-2016-Full.pdf](https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/publications/stronger_nation/2016/A_Stronger_Nation-2016-Full.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> *Adult Reengagement Pilot Program Washington Site Visit* [National Student Clearinghouse data as cited in SHEEO PowerPoint slides] (2016). Retrieved September 28, 2016, from <http://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2016.09.14.SHEEOAdultEngagementMaterials.pdf>