

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY ITEM SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: President Sabah Randhawa

DATE: Thursday, April 12, 2018

SUBJECT: **College Promise Coalition**

PURPOSE: Discussion Item

Purpose of Submittal:

Kelly Evans, Partner, Soundview Strategies, Bill Lyne, Professor, English and President, United Faculty Senate of Washington State, Gene Sharratt, Former Executive Director, Washington Student Achievement Council will present information on the work of the College Promise Coalition.

Background:

The College Promise Coalition (CPC) brings together advocates for Washington state's public and private four- and two-year colleges and universities, students, families, faculty, alumni, education supporters and leaders in business and labor. CPC advocates for affordable, accessible education and training opportunities for our students after they finish high school. Founded in 2011 in response to dramatic state cuts to higher education funding, the coalition works to ensure that access to an affordable, quality education remains an option for all Washingtonians.

Supporting Documents:

- College Promise Coalition 2018 Overview
- College Promise Coalition Higher Education Projects
- College Promise Coalition PowerPoint Presentation



Who we are

The College Promise Coalition (CPC) is an unprecedented partnership that brings together advocates for Washington state's public and private four- and two-year colleges and universities, students, families, faculty, alumni, education supporters and leaders in business and labor. We advocate for affordable, accessible education and training opportunities for our students after they finish high school. Founded in 2011 in response to dramatic state cuts to higher education funding, the coalition is fighting to ensure that access to an affordable, quality education remains an option for all Washingtonians.

The Problem

In 2013 the Washington legislature adopted **a goal that at least 70% of adults ages 25-44 possess a postsecondary credential or degree by 2023**. This means four- and two-year degrees, apprenticeships, or certificates that prepare students for careers.

But today just **51% of adults** have a post-high school credential. For Washington students specifically, **less than one-third** attain a postsecondary credential. Washington is projected to have 740,000 job openings by 2021. A majority of these jobs will require workers to get a credential of some kind after high school. CPC is working to make sure Washington students are prepared to take advantage of the career opportunities in their home state.

We are not yet on track to meet the 2023 adopted goal – working together on shared priorities to achieve our higher education attainment goals is CPC's mission, improving workers' quality of life and our economy.

Our 2018 Priority

Washington students have big dreams for their futures. But for thousands of our students, the cost of a credential after high school is a nearly insurmountable barrier. The State Need Grant (SNG) makes education after high school possible for more 69,000 Washingtonians who are low-income. But there is not enough funding to provide grants to an additional 20,000 students who qualify this year.

The CPC's 2018 priority is fully funding the SNG, our state's largest financial aid program. For over 40 years, Washington's students who have the most financial need have been able to pursue degrees and skills training because of SNG assistance. Unlike other need-based student financial aid programs, the SNG serves a range of students, from those who have just graduated high school to adult learners, making Washington's SNG program a national model for need-based access programs. But thousands of eligible students miss out on SNG assistance because of a lack of state funding.

Fully funding the SNG will boost enrollment and completion, ensuring students have the opportunity to succeed regardless of income level or background. College and career training are the keys to giving Washington students the opportunities they need to be successful, while also addressing the state's skill and opportunity gaps.

College Promise Coalition

The College Promise Coalition will engage higher education stakeholders in the work of increasing higher education attainment in Washington state. The Coalition will identify the programs and policies that will bring the state to its goal of 70% of adult higher education attainment by 2023. It will then create a broad and sustained advocacy program to advance that goal. The Coalition's work will be divided into five broad categories:

1) *Continued Coalition Building*

The Coalition already has a broad base of business, labor, institutional, municipal, student, and faculty groups. We will build on this base by further integrating, expanding, and strengthening our Coalition's membership geographically and with community based groups. Specifically, we will focus on establishing and building partnerships with communities, municipal groups, education groups, and business groups outside of the Central Puget Sound area. In addition, we will make a major effort to recruit groups representing low-income students, underrepresented communities, and communities of color to become part of the Coalition.

2) *Evidence, Analysis and Policy and Program Creation*

The Coalition will use research, evidence, and analysis from these Coalition partners and state agencies to develop a policy agenda aimed at increasing postsecondary attainment in Washington.

3) *Communications*

The Coalition will make higher education a priority in Olympia and with policy makers across the state with a vigorous and sophisticated communications program, a broad education effort, and ongoing constituency building that engages the Governor and members of the Legislature. We will use opinion research to gauge attitudes and develop messaging. We will organize and coordinate Coalition communications including targeted social media campaigns, earned media (media stories, editorial boards, op-ed pieces), and the coordinated communications of Coalition partners to raise the profile of higher education as an important issue in Washington.

4) *Public Mobilization*

Working with alumni organizations and other Coalition partners, the Coalition will create a centralized infrastructure that will allow each institution to educate and inform their alumni about institutional issues, Coalition priorities, and the state of higher education debate in the state capitol. The Coalition will also develop a suite of social media tools for use by both the central Coalition and individual Coalition partners. Tailoring campaigns around specific issues and targeting them toward specific decision makers, we will use those tools to educate and engage stakeholders and decision makers.

5) *Decision Maker Engagement*

The Coalition will create and establish regular opportunities for college and university regents and trustees, faculty, students, business and labor leaders, local political leaders, civil rights leaders, and prominent alumni to directly communicate with and engage legislators, the Governor's office, and other policymakers. This diverse group of influencers will educate lawmakers about investments and policies that increase higher education attainment.

We will focus much of our work on growing "Champions" – elected leaders and policy makers who are committed to championing higher education and policies that increase postsecondary attainment in Washington State.

The Coalition's work will be informed and supported by a number of other projects, including:

**Advancing Postsecondary Success Opportunities in Washington's Regional Economic Centers
Washington Student Achievement Council**

Focused and meaningful conversation in Washington's regional economic centers about postsecondary needs, opportunities, and challenges will strengthen coordinated efforts to increase educational attainment. Building awareness of the state's attainment goals at the regional level and identifying local champions for change, including engaging regional employers, will support statewide advocacy efforts. To that end, the Washington Student Achievement Council submitted a proposal to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to hold regional convenings in five regions of the state with local leadership from education, the workforce, and community organizations. The objectives are to explore effective ways to align key resources, strengthen partnerships, and boost advocacy to achieve the greatest educational impact.

Local participants will be invited to three convenings in their region. Stakeholders include elected officials, leadership from K-12, community leaders, local philanthropy, higher education, workforce, business and industry, and community-based organizations.

**Washington's Regional Education-to-Workforce Pathways
University of Washington**

This project aims to communicate the results of the Central Puget Sound higher education capacity study, begin to support strategic systemic improvements in that region based on those results, and to scale that project's methodology and approach to the rest of the regions of Washington State. The research team aims to procure and integrate the necessary postsecondary pathways data for each Washington state region (WDAs) to uncover promising practices as well as key bottlenecks in the higher education and labor market systems and institutions. The project will highlight the need to think regionally about student postsecondary pathways, both as a way to comprehend complex student data as well as a way to improve systems in order to achieve more equitable outcomes for the new majority of students who are low income, first generation, students of color, and working adults. The findings will inform the Washington Postsecondary Coalition's efforts.

**Roadshow of Washington's Regional Higher Education to Workforce Pathways
Seattle Region Partnership**

The Seattle Region Partnership (SRP) will assist Jenee Myers Twitchell and her team at the University of Washington in elevating the findings of their research on education to workforce pathways both regionally and across the state. The goal is to socialize the findings of the Central Puget Sound Higher Education Capacity Study among a broad set of stakeholders across the state and use an evidence-based approach to engaging decision makers in driving solutions towards achieving the State's 70% postsecondary attainment goal.

**Washington Credential Pipeline Analysis & Communications
Partnership for Learning/Washington Roundtable**

This research project sets out to understand and address the barriers to postsecondary credential attainment for Washington students. The research will identify and prioritize evidence-based policy enhancements that will lead to the greatest credential attainment gains. It will strengthen the case and provide a platform for advocacy and communications aimed at raising the postsecondary credential attainment rate for Washington students.

The research will use quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate, at a statewide level, how Washington compares to the rest of the U.S. at each stage of the education pipeline; what we could achieve with a “U.S. leading” system; and what specifically we need to do at each stage of the P-16 education pipeline to meet the 70 percent credential attainment goal for Washington students by 2030.

Specifically, the research will:

- Assess the largest leaks in Washington’s education pipeline and examine the primary factors affecting credential attainment for Washington students – such as preparation, affordability, access/awareness, retention, and postsecondary capacity.
- Identify and prioritize policy enhancements that will lead to the greatest credential attainment gains. This includes investigation of interventions aimed at improving early learning; raising performance at low-performing schools; increasing the number of career and college ready high school graduates; improving postsecondary capacity and completion; providing and promoting Guided Pathways and transfer efficiency; and improving recovery and reengagement programs for opportunity youth.
- Directly inform development of an intermediate- and long-term policy agenda that will result in consistent increases in credential attainment for Washington students.

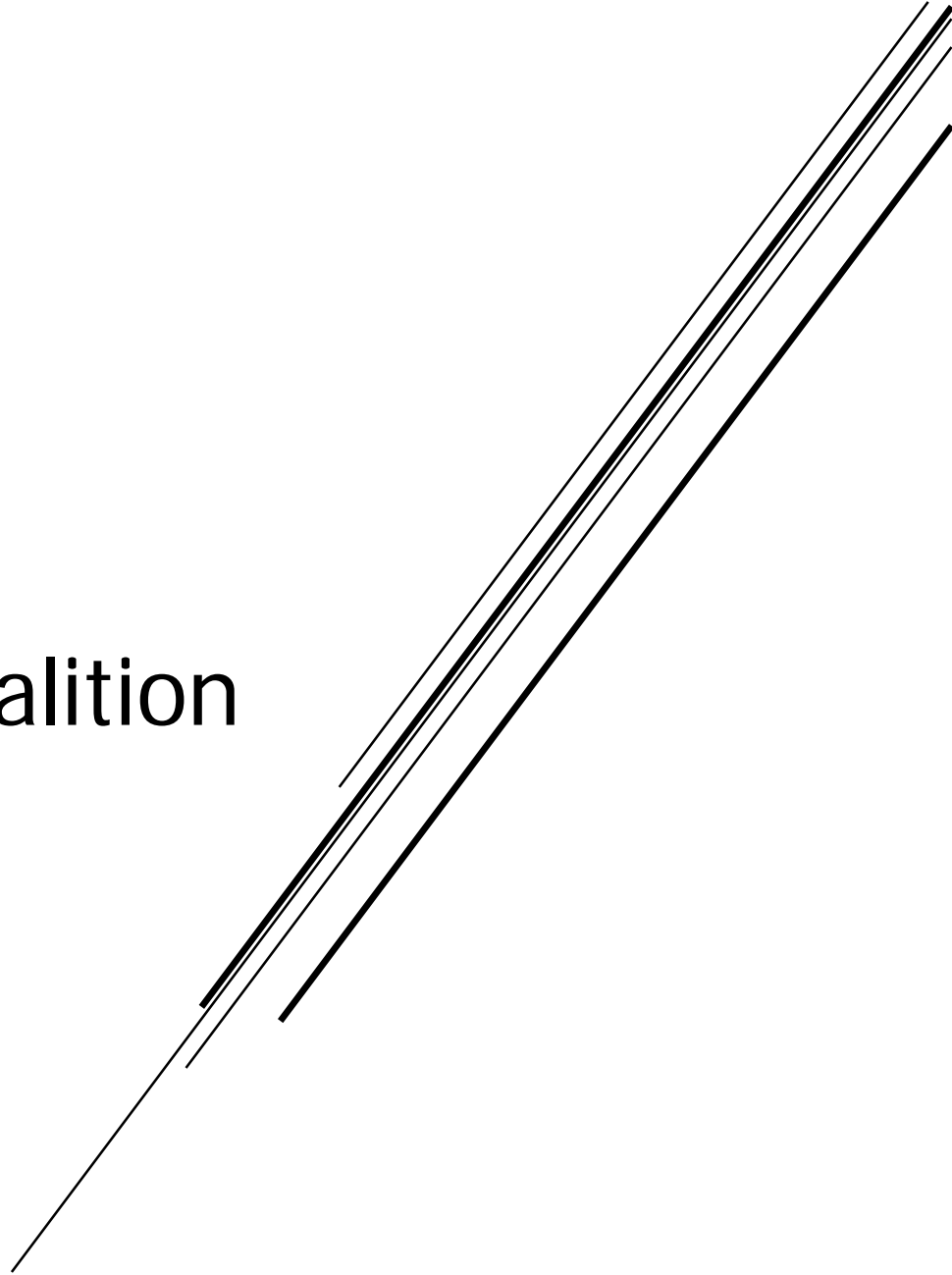
Student Engagement Networks Independent Colleges of Washington

The purpose of this project is to establish Student Engagement Networks, a well-informed, self-sustaining group of students on public and private, four and two-year college campuses to activate the student voice in a cohesive unified manner where and when it is needed most. The primary outcome is to engage student constituents with policymakers regularly in the district and annually during the legislative session to address the need of greater focus on higher education in Washington.

The Student Engagement Networks (SEN) of the Coalition will work with a cross-sector steering committee of partners to impact funding for the State Need Grant, higher education in Washington, increase educational attainment, and advance equity.

These student leaders will receive guidance about the higher education issues, the legislative process, and best practices in building coalitions of diverse students on campus. Empowered with this new knowledge, they will develop interactive content and engagement tools to mobilize students on their campuses to engage with policymakers—regularly in the district, and annually during the legislative session—via centrally organized events/communications, but most importantly through testimonials and self-generated activities on each campus that emphasize the importance of higher education for all Washingtonians.

College Promise Coalition



Coalition Projects

Research

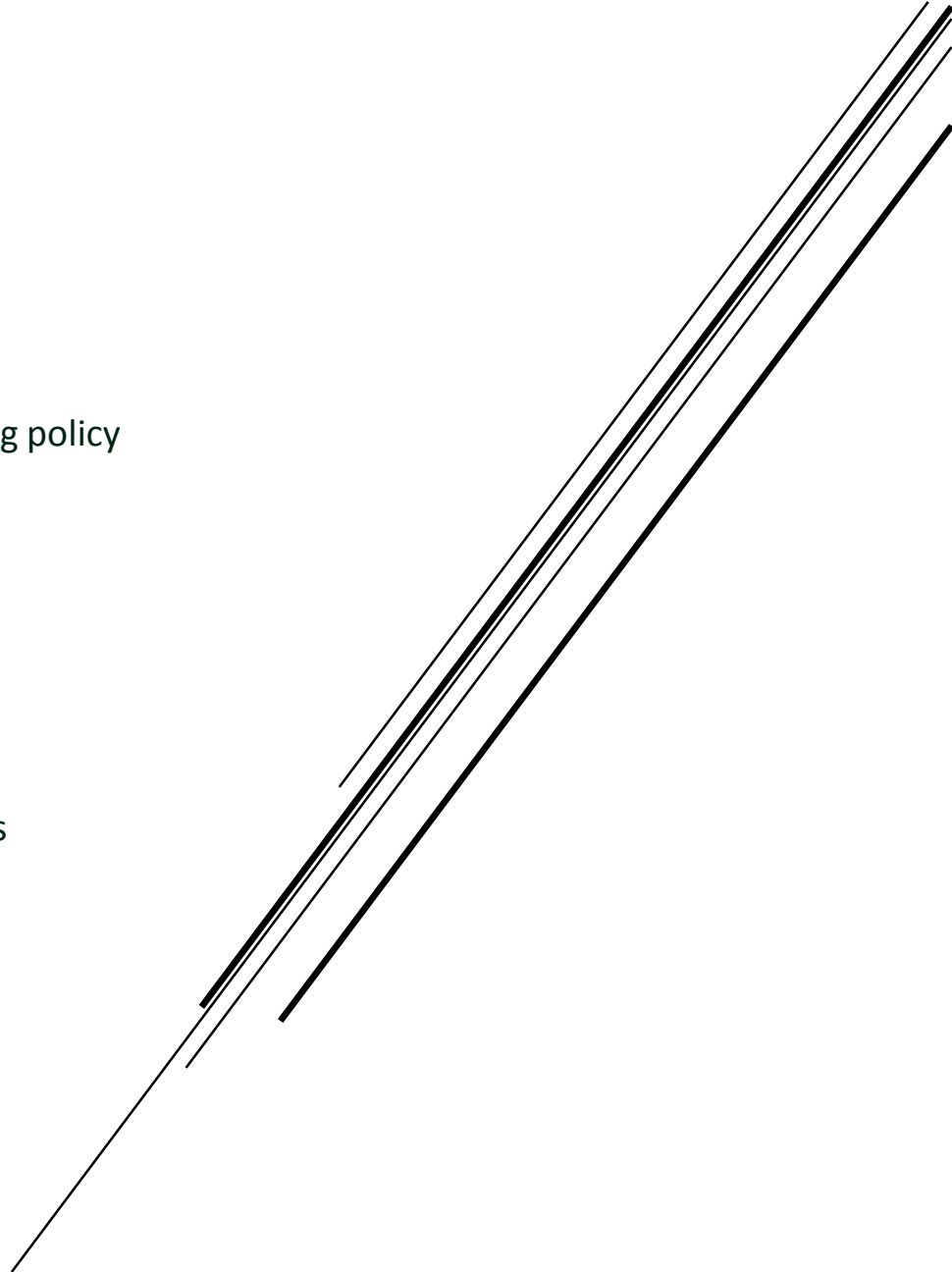
- Washington Roundtable/Partnership for Learning policy roadmap
- UW Regional Education-to-Workforce Pathways
- Opinion Research

Organizing & Advocacy

- Student Engagement Network
- Washington Student Achievement Council: Conversations in Our Regional Economic Centers
- Alumni organizing
- Coalition expansion

Communications

- Social media
- Earned media



2018 Legislature

- Legislative session focus:
State Need Grant, DACA
students/College Bound
- Laying groundwork for 2019
budget
- Regents & Trustees Day
- Social media





Exploring Views of Higher Education in Washington State

*Key Findings from Focus Group Sessions
Conducted December 11-12, 2017*

*Fairbank,
Maslin,
Maullin,
Metz &
Associates*

FM3

DAVE METZ & MIRANDA EVERITT

Focus Group Methodology

- Six two-hour focus groups were held in suburban areas of Washington in December 2017.
- In each location, participants in one group all held a college degree, and the other set did not.
- Participants were recruited to reflect a mix of party identification, age, ethnicity and socioeconomic status; no more than four with a child in or about to be in college participated in any one group. Strong partisans were screened out.

Non-four year degree participant quotes are in red bubbles.

Four-year degree participant quotes are in blue bubbles.

Date	Location	Profile
Dec. 5, 2017	Spokane	In each city, one group without four-year college degrees, and one with them.
Dec. 11, 2017	Bothell	
Dec. 12, 2017	Tacoma	



CAUTION

- » Qualitative research like focus groups does not measure directly the frequency by which opinions and attitudes may exist within a particular universe of people.
- » Accordingly, the results of these focus groups may be considered suggestive of the attitudes of Washington swing voters, but cannot be considered to represent their views with any kind of statistical precision – even on questions where their views are quantified.
- » However, they do provide helpful insights into language, core values and the “why” behind voter opinions.
- » Findings from these sessions will help to guide the design of an upcoming survey early this year.

Higher education did not stand out as a top-of-mind concern for participants.

- ✓ The rising cost of living was a prominent concern, driven mainly by housing costs.
- ✓ For those with kids around college age, higher education was a part of the mix.
- ✓ When higher education did come up in these initial issue discussions, the focus was on cost.



*My kids are 22 and 24, both went to college, and they can't afford to live on their own. They can't offer a competitive wage that will allow them to afford housing. – **Bothell Woman***

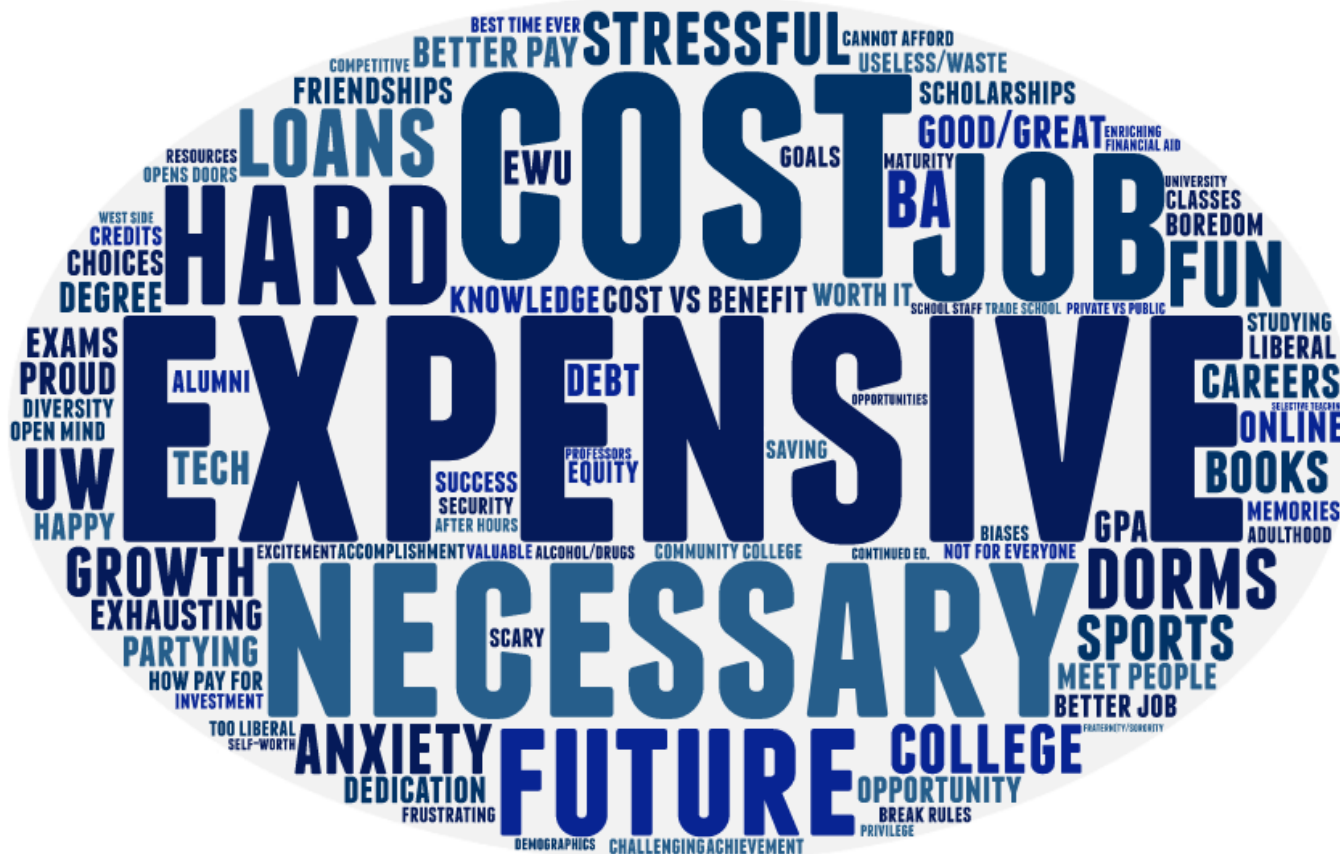
*Amazon has brought a lot of transplants. It's driven up housing prices and rent prices. It can be good for the economy, but it's pushing people out, too. – **Bothell Man***

*Cost of living is going up, but my paycheck isn't. – **Tacoma Woman***

*Higher education is very, very expensive and it's not going down, it just keeps continuing to go up. – **Spokane Man***

For most, “higher education” invoked a concerns about cost.

An initial “mind-mapping” activity asked participants to write down any associations they had with the phrase “Higher Education.” Some of the most common language they used is shown below with the font reflecting the frequency with which it was used.



Few had a clear sense of the performance of the state's public system of higher education.

- ✓ Participants were asked to grade the overall performance of the state's public system of higher education on a scale of A, B, C, D or F.
- ✓ Most defaulted to a B or C grade, largely pleading ignorance of the performance of the system.

Group	Modal Grade
1) Spokane Non-College	C
2) Spokane College+	B
3) Bothell Non-College	C
4) Bothell College+	C
5) Tacoma Non-College	C
6) Tacoma College+	B

- ✓ Only a handful faulted colleges for having a liberal agenda or teaching impractical material.



When asked to rank the benefits of education beyond high school, participants focused on improving economic opportunity.

(Times Ranked in Top Three, by Session)

Benefit	Spokane <4	Spokane 4+	Bothell <4	Bothell 4+	Tacoma <4	Tacoma 4+	TOTAL
Helping people get good-paying jobs with benefits that can support a family	10	5	5	6	7	7	40
Training workers for growing industries like healthcare, education, and the sciences	4	10	4	3	5	6	32
Producing well-rounded, informed citizens who make our communities strong	7	2	4	8	5	5	31
Providing a pool of qualified workers to attract and retain Washington businesses	2	6	3	5	5	4	25
Reducing the need for Washington businesses to look outside the state to recruit skilled workers in fields like technology and computer science	5	4	6	3	4	3	25
Ensuring that people who grow up in Washington are qualified for the jobs of the future	0	2	2	2	3	1	10
Preparing people for rewarding careers	2	1	0	3	1	1	8

Most who had obtained a four-year degree thought it was worth it – those without one debated the cost/benefit tradeoff.

- ✓ Those with less than a four-year degree saw its primary benefits as economic – and thus matched the increased earning power provided a degree against the cost of associated debt.
- ✓ Those with a four-year degree talked about college's role learning how to learn, establishing friendships, discovering new intellectual interests, and becoming a well-rounded citizen.

Hopefully it will increase my wage opportunity but I also see it as an opportunity to find out what is important to me.

– Spokane Woman

... But the friendships I made, the things I learned. I have a drama degree. I'm not doing drama, but how I use what I learned later in life was absolutely invaluable.

– Bothell Woman

There are some people that literally it took everything they could to get through college. I am not going to encourage my kid to go into \$125,000 debt because I think they might work in HR as a secretary or something like that.

– Bothell Woman



The Future of Education Beyond High School

There was a general consensus that some education beyond high school would become necessary for success – but not necessarily a four-year degree.



We may not think [a B.A. is] important. People who are hiring think it's important.
– **Bothell Woman**

You can wash dishes with a high school diploma. That's about it. – **Tacoma Woman**

- ✓ Participants drew distinctions between the education one would need for a “job” and a “career;” most felt it would be increasingly hard to get a job without education beyond high school, and to start a career without a four-year degree.
- ✓ Beyond its value in preparation for a job or career, many felt education beyond high school helped students discover their talents and interests, and give them direction.
- ✓ Many noted that while a Bachelor’s may not be directly relevant to a specific job, it was a criterion employers used when deciding who to hire in a crowded field.
- ✓ A few felt strongly that military training should be considered a valuable type of education beyond high school.

Participants saw the Attainment Goal as worthwhile but challenging.

- ✓ The mean guess at the state's current share of adults with higher education was 51% - very accurate on average –but ranged widely, from 18% to 85%.
- ✓ Participants overwhelmingly supported the Attainment Goal, but with two conditions:
 1. That it explicitly include all forms of higher education beyond a four-year degree, and
 2. That no student would be forced to take on education beyond high school if they lacked the desire or ability to do so.



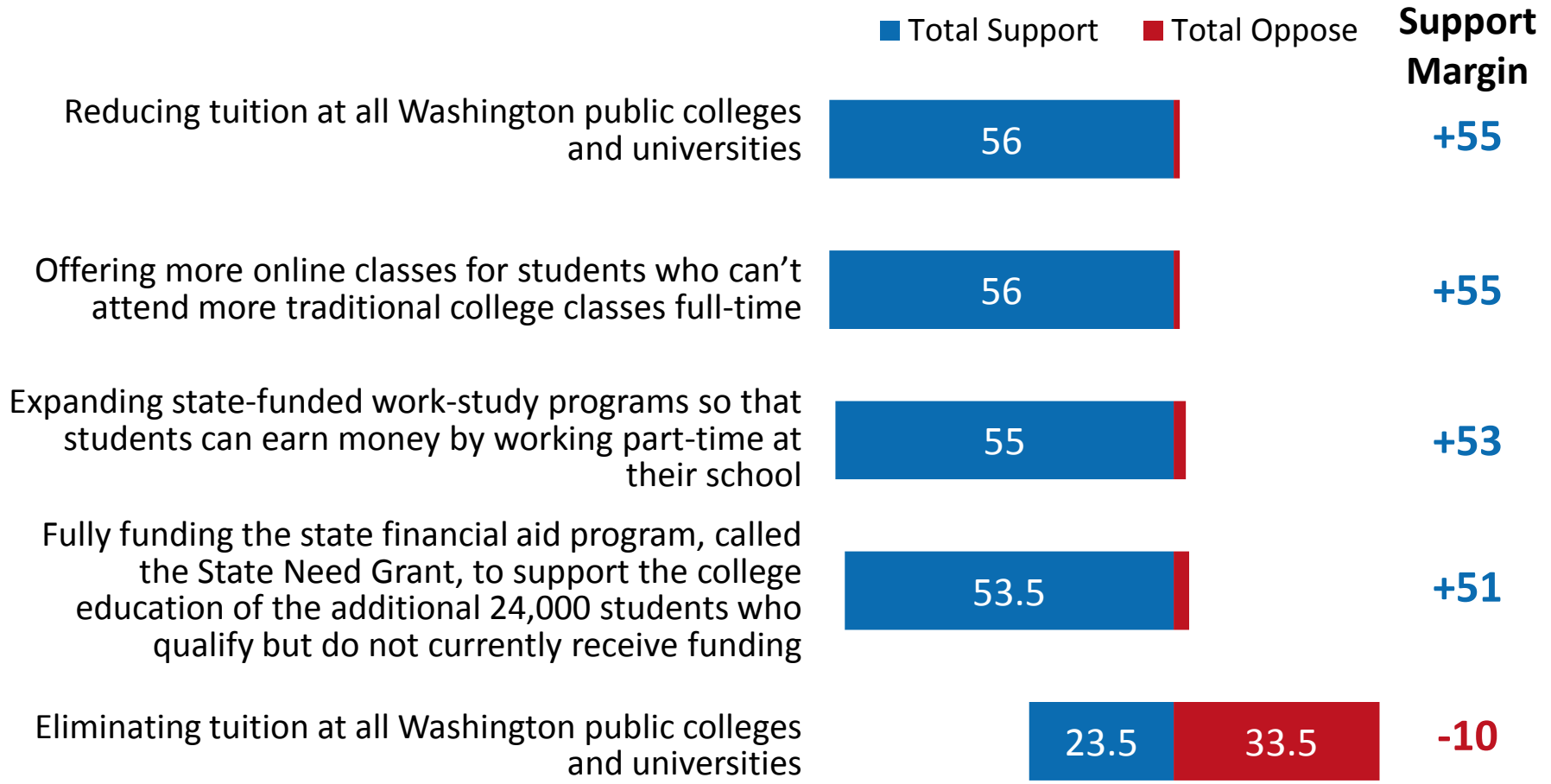
I think by using technology more efficiently ... being flexible ... we can open up the door and get to the goal we want.

– Spokane Man

It's an admirable goal, but not necessary, because what if students don't want to continue their education? What if they are tired of sitting in the classroom?

– Bothell Man

Other than completely eliminating tuition, participants overwhelmingly supported a variety of options for expanding access to higher ed.



On the next page in your booklet, you'll see a short list of policy ideas that could help make it easier for people to get higher education. I'd like you to read through them, and mark whether you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose each one.

Participants liked the idea of increasing aid or reducing tuition – but not eliminating it.

- ✓ Respondents had no idea about ratio of cost-sharing between students and taxpayers for public higher education.
- ✓ Participants' instinct, however, was that participants are likely paying more than they should.
- ✓ At the same time, respondents overwhelmingly believed students should have “skin in the game” (and nearly always used this metaphor).
- ✓ Having to pay for at least some of their education would ensure that students are attending because they *want* to, and that they will work hard once they are there.

People are going to go [to college] if they have skin in the game. It's a check that people are interested enough to be there. – Bothell Man

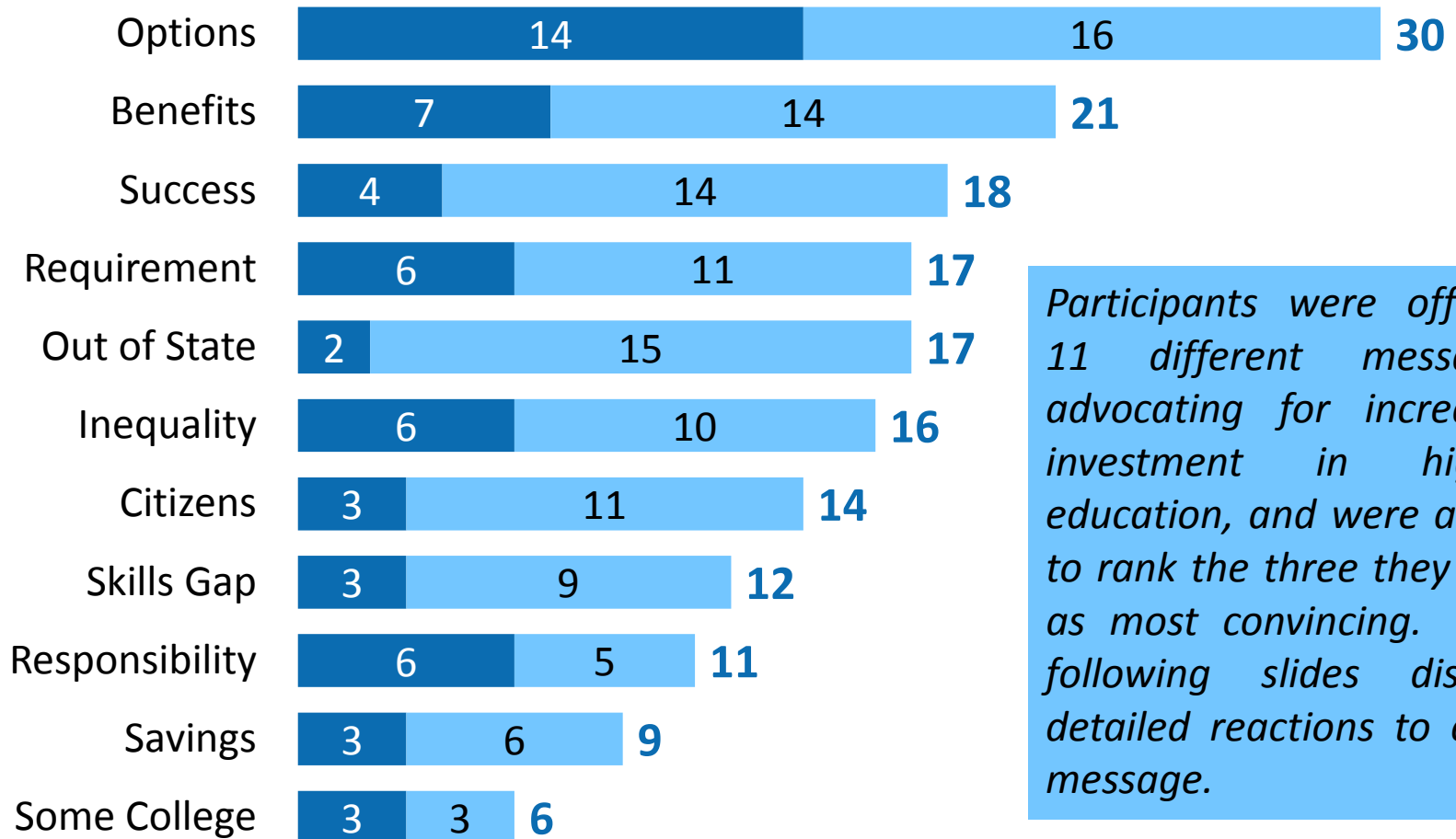
I think by using technology more efficiently ... being flexible ... we can open up the door and get to the goal we want. – Spokane Man



Messaging Themes

A message encompassing the full range of post-secondary options for all types of students was clearly the best-performing.

■ Ranked First ■ Ranked Second / Third



Participants were offered 11 different messages advocating for increased investment in higher education, and were asked to rank the three they saw as most convincing. The following slides discuss detailed reactions to each message.

Mentioning nontraditional students resonated.

Q

30

Times
in Top 3

(OPTIONS) Just as working a 40-hour week for 40 years to secure a pension is no longer the standard work experience; 18-year-olds headed to a four-year college right after high school is no longer the standard higher education experience. More than half of today's students are parents, single parents, working, older, part-time, married, or independent students. Post-high school education has grown to include credential and certificate programs, lower-cost community college options, online college, vocational school, and two-year programs. In Washington, we need to invest to ensure that there more options for students starting higher education, and that there are more options to make sure they finish a degree once they get there.

They have certificates up their sleeve, which allows you to go on and do other things. It sounds like a good jumping start for 18-year-olds.

It doesn't have to be University of Washington. It can be many things, we're not all the same. We don't all think the same. That's important for society to think differently.

- This message resonated with non-college participants, who drew on experience from their own lives and that of friends and family who are returning to school.
- The breadth of the opportunities listed also appealed – “it touched on everybody.”

The diverse benefits of higher education were convincing and credible.

P

21

Times
in Top 3

(BENEFITS) Americans' belief in the value of higher education is well-placed: in key indicators, earning an education after high school gives people a strong foundation and a leg up in tough times. From increased pay to being able to get and keep a job even in an economic downturn, to advancing to a new job, higher education is critical. College graduates earn 56% more than those with a high school degree; have lower unemployment rates; are more likely to have their own children go to college; and have lower rates of chronic diseases.

Even when the economy gets rough, educated people have a better time retaining their jobs ... you're creating a legacy that helps build up our culture.

You're on welfare, you think that's OK so your kids are on welfare, so the cycle is hard to break. Well, let's build the cycle the other way.

- This message emphasized the “trickle down” or generational impact of higher education.
- Overall, participants found the long-term benefits of higher ed, as described, to be believable.
- The chronic disease connection was harder to believe for one respondent (though one connected it to the likelihood to have health insurance).

A path to higher earnings was important.

N

18

Times
in Top 3

(SUCCESS) College and career training are the keys to giving Washington’s kids the opportunities they need to be successful. Studies show that the more education students have, the more they can earn when they enter the workforce – setting them on a lifelong path for higher earnings and more opportunity. Supporting higher education pathways ensures kids have the chance to succeed regardless of their family circumstances.

When they’re successful in the workforce it gives them a better outlook to themselves, a positive attitude; it gives them the ability to make an income, take care of a family, help others.

It’s not just that four years out of high school, it’s a lifelong learning that puts them on that path.

- “Give them a chance” resonated, especially in a non-college groups.
- Participants appreciated the explicit reference to career training.
- Many referred to their own personal experience of obtaining a degree or additional training explicitly to get an increase in pay.
- The generational and “positive cycle” aspects of this message appealed to many respondents as well.

The sense that training after high school is a requirement for jobs now rang true.

G

17

Times
in Top 3

(REQUIREMENT) Four decades ago, only one in four jobs required education beyond high school. In the next five years, nearly two-thirds of jobs will require some education beyond high school. We need to help make sure that all Washington students have a chance at education after their diploma – their future depends on it.

It's different now than when I went to college and even different from my parents. Looking forward it's college, the training, all of it.

- This message expressed urgency, paired with straightforward facts.
- Participants found the statistics, both looking backwards and forwards, to be believable.
- As with another popular message, “have a chance” resonated.
- Some noted that even hands-on jobs require more training than they did in the past (such as car mechanics who now need to understand software).

A message about workers coming from other states drew a middling response.

H

17

Times
in Top 3

(OUT OF STATE) Washington state is projected to have 740,000 job openings over the next 5 years – but only half of adults here have a post-secondary education. If we don't train and educate our students here at home, companies will bring in workers from out-of-state, or move away to where the talent is.

If we don't skill our workforce and educate them there's going to be a lot of people coming from out of state or businesses will move elsewhere. That affects our economy huge.

Homegrown talent!

- Several respondents had, at the beginning of the discussion, talked about how too many job opportunities in Washington are going to workers coming from out of state.
- Respondents liked the idea of training and equipping Washington's own students (and many had noted the influx of new workers in tech especially), but this was not a top message.
- A few noted that the message implies giving businesses a taxpayer subsidy by offering additional training to their workers.

Messages on citizenship and income inequality also fell in the middle of the pack.

L

16
Times
in Top 3

(INEQUALITY) Growing income inequality is one of the biggest challenges we face in Washington today, and lack of access to a higher education contributes to the widening gap between rich and poor. Higher education – whether it’s a training program or a four-year degree – will help ensure Washington students in need are not left behind.

The rich get richer, but this could slow it down.

This one here is what we see glaringly out in front of us now because it is happening every day with the high prices.

J

14
Times
in Top 3

(CITIZENS) Having a strong college and university system is critical to producing the kind of well-rounded, informed citizens we need to make our communities strong. Investing in higher education strengthens the fabric of our communities.

We don't do enough on this [east] side of our state for our people or our students and I think we need Spokane to be strong. We're not building ourselves up very well.

When you have people who are well-educated, -informed and well-rounded, they are more likely to be engaged citizens.

The focus on important skills in healthcare and the sciences was important.

K

12

Times
in Top 3

(SKILLS GAP) There are currently 25,000 unfilled jobs in Washington – primarily in the sciences and health care – because our state’s workforce does not have the right skills to fill those jobs. We need to produce more highly-skilled workers in these fields to reduce the unemployment rate, save the state money, and get our economy moving again.

Science and healthcare, those are the occupations that support people. I think it’s important to have quality people in those positions.

- To those who ranked this message highly, it was important to equip today’s workers for the jobs that help others.
- Most agreed that health care and the sciences are the growing sectors of the state’s economy.
- The main deficiency of the message is that it approaches the issue from the perspective of the economy overall – which participants saw as being in good shape – and not workers themselves.
- In addition, none seemed to latch onto the idea of saving the state money; they were more concerned with the shorter-term benefit of filling jobs in needed fields.

Preparing different people for the variety of jobs needed for the future yielded passive agreement.

0

11

Times
in Top 3

(RESPONSIBILITY) The jobs of today and the future require education after high school – whether that’s a four-year college degree or career training or certification. The state must invest in future generations and the economy in the long-term – and that means funding higher education for all of our students.

We’re going to need lots of blue-collar jobs, lots of hands-on training, infrastructure, obviously medical as we have an aging population.

We need electricians, we need plumbers – not just cranking out four-year degree kids or no education at all.

- Participants generally agreed with the thrust of this message, but saw little that they found highly persuasive.
- The message lacked some of the detail and specific benefits for workers and students offered by some of the other messages.
- This message resonated slightly more among those with a college degree or more, who thought about the wider context for these jobs of the future.

The long-run savings argument was relatively less persuasive, inspiring no strong reactions.

M

9
Times
in Top 3

(SAVINGS) Funding higher education through programs like the State Need Grant saves us money in the long run. Studies show that the more states invest in higher education, the more tax revenue they generate and the less they have to spend on the corrections system and health care for the poor.

Building up our economy by training a better population and creating people that are less stressed out because they enjoy what they do and can be successful. That's a good place to start.

- This message inspired no strong reactions.
- The themes of improved life outcomes were more persuasively stated in other messages.
- Again, framing the message from the perspective of the state budget rather than from the perspective of families, students and workers made it less relevant for participants.
- The widespread lack of familiarity with the State Need Grant (except among parents of current or recent students) likely also hindered the message's reach.

A message focused on returning students did not rank as highly as others.

1

6

Times
in Top 3

(SOME COLLEGE) About 700,000 of Washington’s working-age adults have earned some college credit, but haven’t completed a degree. Supporting these students when they choose to return to finish their education provides them the opportunity to increase their earning power for a lifetime.

Some like myself have earned some college credits but they haven’t completed their degree ... but when they do, if they can, they’ll be able to make more money and start putting more away for retirement and a better quality of life.

- While participants appreciated the reference to returning students, the “options” message seemed more inclusive of different types of students and different pathways they could take.
- In addition, the message did not specify the potential benefits to returning students; for many, completing a degree was not necessarily a high-priority goal in the absence of some other clear benefit.



Conclusions

Ideas Participants Said Would Stick with Them

We need to make education more accessible and cheaper for kids. Looking to the future our state and our businesses have jobs to fill. Let's invest in our children.

There was a decided concern for developing well-rounded, creative citizens that enrich others and society in general. Is this really available now in higher education?

Everyone should have the opportunity to attend college or trade school without breaking the bank.

If only 31% are attaining higher education, proven needed for future jobs, where will Washington be in 15 years? Who will be employed in our state and what quality?

Education of some kind after high school is necessary if we want our students to be competitive. We need to invest in our future by students need to invest in their future too.

Higher education makes for stronger society. It allows for expanded salary options and opens doors.

Continuing education is important. Hard to find a way to make it affordable. Taxes can't be the only answer.

"Education" does not necessarily mean "college." When people think post-high school education, they don't often think of technical school, internships, apprenticeships, etc.

Glad to see recognition that there are options beyond four-year colleges.

Conclusions

- ✓ Overall, participants placed a high value on education beyond high school.
 - Most saw it as increasingly essential for getting a good job, and certainly for developing a career.
 - Participants heavily emphasized the importance of encouraging students to pursue a wider range of post-secondary education, including two-year degrees, vocational and trade school, credentials and certificates, and apprenticeships.
 - Few seemed to view the higher education system as ideologically liberal.
 - Most supported a range of steps to increased investment in higher education to expand access.
- ✓ At the same time, numerous concerns were evident.
 - There was broad concern about the rising cost of higher education, and about student loan debt.
 - As a result, the prevailing emotions that participants connected with higher education were anxiety and worry.
 - Very few knew much about the public system of higher education, and none had a clear idea of how it was funded.
- ✓ Respondents generally agreed that the Attainment Goal was a good idea, but worried about how practical it was. It was very important to them that the goal 1) explicitly include options beyond a four-year college, and 2) not *require* students to get education beyond high school, as not all students want to attend or are suited to do so.
- ✓ While participants backed increasing financial aid or reducing tuition, eliminating tuition entirely was relatively unpopular – respondents wanted students to have “skin in the game.”
- ✓ The strongest messages for increased investment built on participants’ existing perceptions: the need for more higher education options to serve an increasingly diverse range of students, and the benefits that accrue to workers – from higher wages to better health – as a result of higher education.