

## 2018 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY:

# POSTSECONDARY

More than 20,000 State Need Grant eligible students attending Washington higher education institutions are not currently receiving a State Need Grant because the program has not been fully funded by the legislature.



**Opportunity:** The legislature established the State Need Grant (SNG) fifty years ago to increase access to higher education for low-income students. Although the SNG annually funds almost 70,000 students, the underfunding of SNG left over 20,000 eligible low-income students unserved in each of the last seven years.<sup>1</sup>

Over ten years ago Washington established the College Bound Scholarship<sup>2</sup> that provides financial aid to students from income eligible families who sign a pledge in middle school that they will earn a GPA of 2.0 or higher in high school and have no felony convictions.<sup>3</sup>

Both programs cover a portion of the cost of attendance leaving students cover the rest of the costs via family contributions, loans, or jobs.<sup>4</sup> As of 2012, the average SNG award covered 12% to 35% of the cost of attendance. On average, students cover between 14% and 28% of the cost through loans with the rest of the costs of attendance being paid through other types of aid or family and/or student generated sources.

**Research:** Preliminary research by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy indicates the State Need Grant has positive impacts on student enrollment and completion.<sup>4</sup> The same study also estimated that a decrease in the SNG award of 25% (\$600 for two-year institutions &

\$2,000 for four-year institutions) would result in a decline in persistence of 2% - 4% and a reduction of completion by 5% - 8%.

Both the State Need Grant and College Bound Programs are helping to reduce barriers to postsecondary education for low-income students, particularly students from historically marginalized communities.<sup>5</sup> Early indications also show a range of positive impacts from participation in the College Bound Scholarship Program. Initial findings show College Bound students are more likely than other low-income students to enroll in postsecondary

<sup>1</sup> Washington State Student Achievement Council Staff Presentation to the Council, Oct. 2017. <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2017/10/12.051.Affordability.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> College Bound Scholarship Background, <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/college-bound>

<sup>3</sup> "Fulfill the College Bound Pledge" Ready Set Grad (WSAC) website. <http://www.readyssetgrad.org/college/College-Bound-Pledge>

<sup>4</sup> The Effectiveness of Washington's State Need Grant Program: Final Evaluation Report, Washington State Institute for Public Policy, January 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Washington Student Achievement Council, Ten-Year Roadmap Issue Briefing, May 2013.

education<sup>6</sup> and to complete the needed courses to meet the minimum four-year college admission requirements in Washington.<sup>7</sup>

Fully funding the State Need Grant and expanding access to College Bound will reduce the opportunity gap for low-income and historically marginalized students, and continue to build a more equitable education system.

## Solution

### Legislative priority

- Continuing to expand access to postsecondary opportunities through the State Need Grant.
- Protecting and expanding financial aid for undocumented students, including making all undocumented students eligible for the College Bound Scholarship, in addition to the State Need Grant.

## Success Story

### Thru College Success

**Foundation:** Aubrieann Hale is a foundation alumna studying for a social work degree at Central Washington University. In addition to her financial-aid package, Aubrieann works two part-time jobs — one as a College Success Foundation peer mentor — and receives a student loan. “If I didn’t have the State Need Grant, there is no way I’d be the first in my family to attend college and earn a degree. It’s so important to me to get my degree in social work so that I can help better my community and those who really need help, like I did,” she said. “My parents make very little money and struggle with illness, so I would be at such a loss if it weren’t for financial aid allowing me to pursue my dream.”

<sup>6</sup> Baker, Duane, College Bound Scholarship Program Final Report, The Berc Group, Dec. 2013.  
<sup>7</sup> Chen, Vivien, A Longitudinal Profile of State Need Grant Recipients’ Educational Progress and Degree Completion, Educational Research & Data Center, 2017.