



Washington State College Bound Scholarship Program Report 2024



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Washington Student Achievement Council
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Purpose of the Report

This report is intended as an analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the College Bound Scholarship program as specified in RCW 28B.118.090. This is the first in a series of annual reports on the topic. The data for this analysis have been provided by the Washington Student Achievement Council and the Washington State Education Research and Data Center (ERDC), with data provided by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the state’s postsecondary institutions, both public and private.

The research presented here uses confidential data from the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) located within the Washington Office of Financial Management (OFM). ERDC’s data system is a statewide longitudinal data system that includes de-identified data about people’s preschool, educational, and workforce experiences. The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of OFM or other data contributors. Any errors are attributable to the authors

Summary and Highlights

The College Bound Scholarship (CBS) program is a key state financial aid program that connects with low-income students in middle school, which is a critical stage in their education journey, to encourage and support them in continuing their education beyond high school. It combines financial aid with effective communication strategies to provide CBS Students with the tools they need to succeed. It also advances more equitable education opportunities for historically underrepresented student groups by addressing college financial access barriers.

To promote a college-going culture, the original program guidelines required that to receive a scholarship award, eligible students must (a) graduate with a 2.0 GPA or higher, (b) have no felony convictions before high school graduation, (c) enroll in a college within one year of high school, and (d) have a Median Family Income (MFI) of 65% or less. CBS scholars were required to use their award eligibility within five years after high school graduation, for a maximum of 12 quarters, 8 semesters, or the equivalent.

Essential College Bound Scholarship Terms

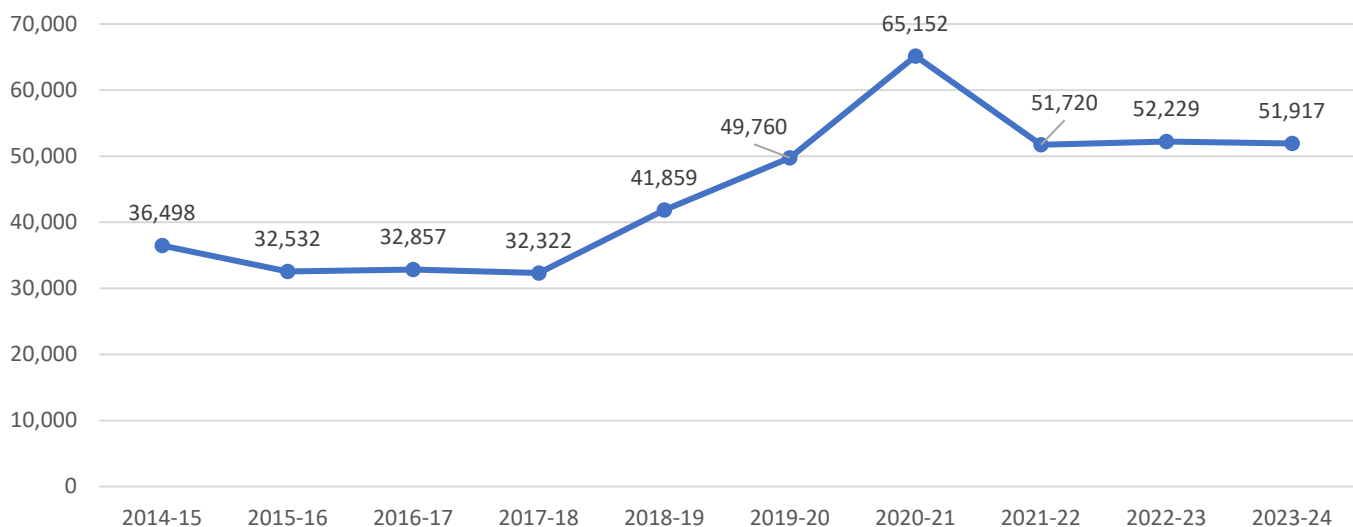
College Bound Student: A high school student who has completed a College Bound Scholarship (CBS) application or has been automatically enrolled.

College Bound Recipient: A College Bound student who has graduated high school, met all eligibility requirements, is attending an eligible institution in Washington, and received CBS funding for one or more terms during the year.

Applications for CBS are on the rise.

As a result of the introduction of automatic enrollment in 2020 and its formalization in SB 5321 in Fall 2021, the process of enrolling has been greatly streamlined, eliminating the need for students and parents to navigate the complexities of the application process. As a result, the number of completed applications has grown significantly since 2020. Figure 1 shows the number of completed applications from the 2014-15 academic year to 2023-24. There was a substantial rise in completed applications beginning in the 2019-20 academic year when automatic enrollment was first introduced during the pandemic and reaching a peak in 2020-21 before leveling off.

Figure 1: Completed CBS Applications by Academic Year

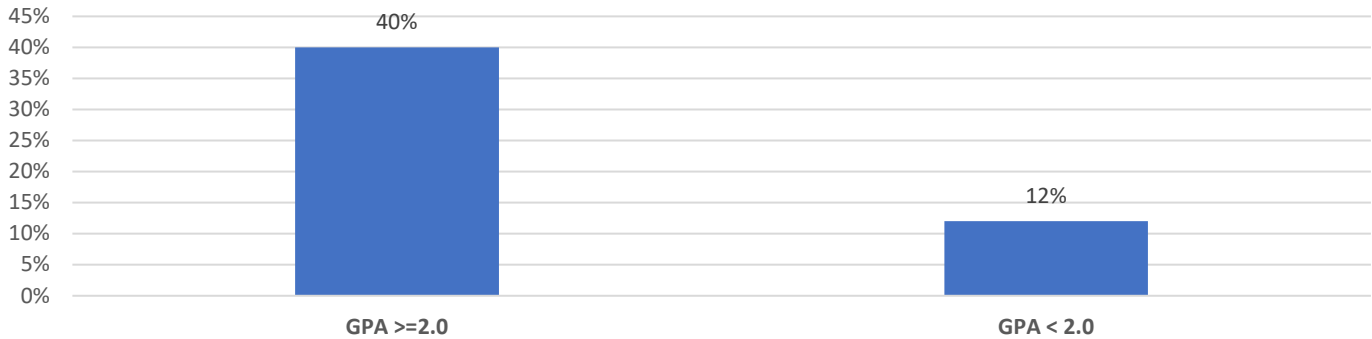


Source: WSAC CBS program administrative data.

CBS Students with a high school GPA of 2.0 or higher are more likely to continue their education after high school than students with GPAs of less than 2.0.

One of the fundamental requirements of the CBS program, as it was originally designed, was that CBS Students must maintain a 2.0 GPA or higher. This was to help promote a college-going culture within the CBS cohorts. This requirement has been removed for CBS Students who are planning to attend a two-year community or technical college, but the standard is still in effect for those planning to attend a four-year institution. The data suggest that CBS Students who maintain this minimum 2.0 GPA are more likely to pursue higher education after graduation. For example, Figure 2 shows the percentage of CBS Students in 2022 who enrolled in a two-year or four-year postsecondary institution within the first year after graduation by high school GPA. CBS Students with GPAs of 2.0 or higher enrolled in postsecondary education at a significantly higher rate (40 percent), compared to those with lower GPAs (12 percent).

Figure 2: Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for CBS Students High School Class of 2022 by GPA



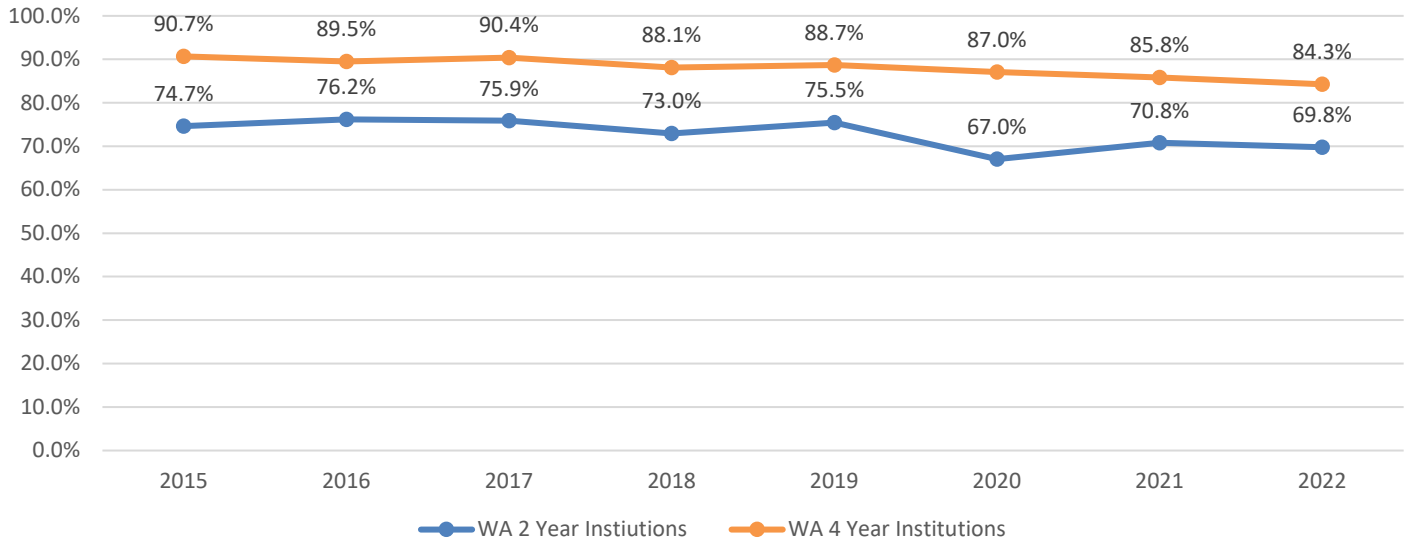
Source: WSAC analysis of Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) data.

Note: College Bound Students are students who completed a College Bound Scholarship application. Graduation year is the confirmed year a student graduated, as reported by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Postsecondary enrollment is defined as enrollment in a Washington public four-year or two-year institution following a student’s high school graduation date.

Postsecondary persistence rates for CBS Recipients tend to vary by institutional type and have been on a downward trend for nearly a decade, with the decline accelerating in the wake of the pandemic’s onset.

An important key to success in pursuing education after high school is persistence. For this report, persistence is defined as continuing to enroll for a second year following the student’s first year in a postsecondary institution in Washington. Persistence rates for CBS Recipients - defined as CBS Students who have graduated high school, enrolled in a WA postsecondary institution, and are receiving CBS funding - remain relatively high. However, they also reflect the overall decline in enrollment that accompanied the pandemic and its aftermath. For CBS Recipients with a high school GPA of 2.0 or higher, the percentage who enrolled for a second year at four-year institutions was relatively high, close to 90 percent, but then showed a steady decline beginning in 2019 and 2020 (see Figure 3). The persistence rate at two-year institutions, for CBS Recipients with a high school GPA of 2.0 or higher, was lower, around 75% from 2015 to 2019. They were also more volatile, declining sharply in 2020, dropping to around 67 percent then increasing once again.

Figure 3: Persistence Rates of CBS Recipients at WA Institutions by Postsecondary Cohort Year



Source: WSAC analysis of Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) data.

Note: Persistence is defined as a student enrolling in any WA postsecondary institution for a second year immediately following their first year in postsecondary. A student’s postsecondary cohort year is the spring year of postsecondary enrollment after high school graduation. CBS Recipients are students with at least one College Bound Scholarship award.

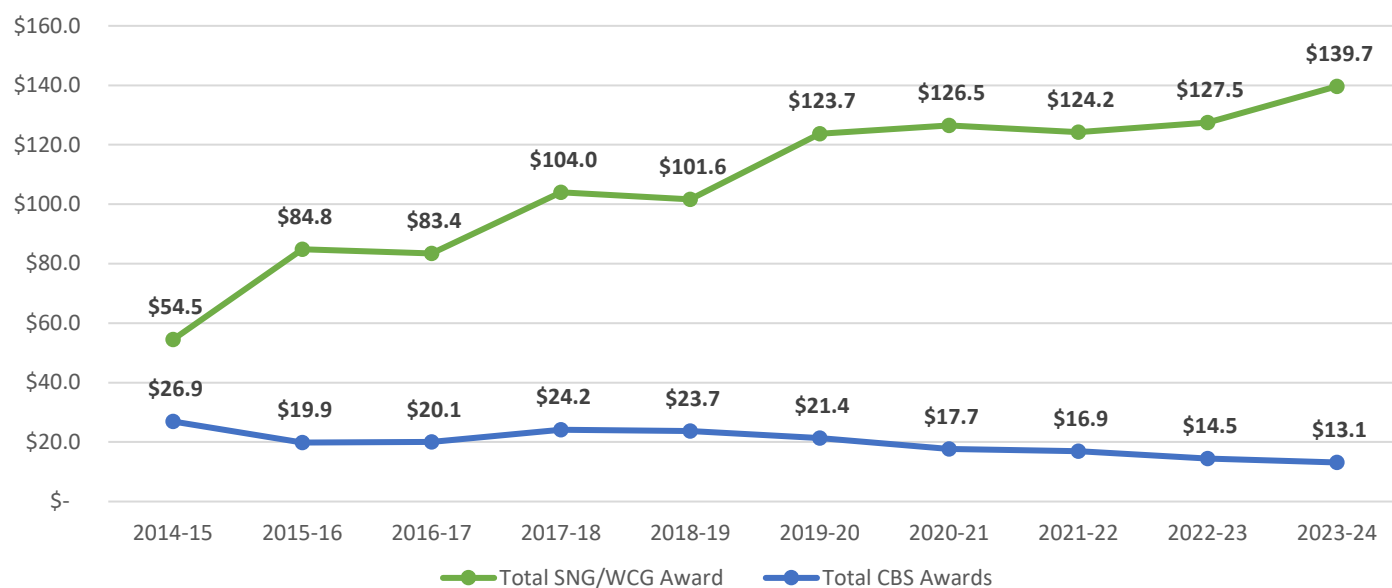
CBS Recipients Are Earning Postsecondary Credentials

Many CBS Students are taking advantage of the program, pursuing postsecondary education after high school graduation, and earning key credentials. In the 2015 high school graduation cohort, 49.3 percent of the CBS Recipients at four-year institutions (headcount: 1,924) earned a postsecondary credential within six years of graduating. In the 2016 high school graduation cohort, 50.7 percent (headcount: 2,300) earned a credential. In the two-year sector, 37.2 percent of CBS Students in the 2015 cohort (headcount: 2,312) and 36.9 percent of 2016 cohort earned a credential (headcount: 2,528).

Paying for the Program: the Washington College Grant and CBS funding

Typically, award packages for CBS Recipients begin with a full Washington College Grant (WCG), or with a full State Need Grant (SNG), if prior to 2019. After taking the WCG and any other state financial aid programs the recipient might be eligible for into account, CBS funds are then used to make up any difference that might remain to meet the state’s aid commitment. Figure 4 shows the total SNG/WCG funds and CBS funds that were used for awards to CBS Recipients from 2014-15 to 2023-24. Expenditures from SNG and WCG funding sources have grown significantly during this period. For example, SNG and WCG award expenditures expanded from 54.5 million dollars in 2014-15 to 139.7 million dollars in 2023-24. On the other hand, expenditures from CBS funding has declined over this period. Expenditures from CBS funds decreased from 26.9 million in 2014-15 to 13.1 million in 2023-24. The significant decline in the use of CBS funds beginning in 2019 is not surprising, since it coincides with the creation of the WCG, a guaranteed funding source, which provided more of the state’s CBS commitment to students than the SNG.

**Figure 4: Total SNG/WCG and CBS Awards (in millions)
by Academic Year**



Source: WSAC WCG and CBS program administrative data.

Note: SNG refers to the State Need Grant, which was renamed as the Washington College Grant (WCG) in 2019, with funding beginning in the 2020-21 academic year.

Overall, the data suggest the CBS program is having a positive effect on CBS Students' postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and program completion rates.

Introduction

Program Overview. The College Bound Scholarship (CBS) program is a guaranteed four-year tuition scholarship that was created in 2007 to inspire and encourage low-income students to pursue postsecondary education and assist them in meeting the costs. The program is designed to cover the full cost of four years of tuition at public rates, primarily met by a full Washington College Grant award (or by the State Need Grant, prior to 2019) plus a \$500 book allowance. Beginning in the seventh grade, students are notified of their eligibility and the requirements for award of the scholarship. To be eligible, a student must qualify for free and reduced-price lunches (FRPL) in the seventh or eighth grade (or be newly eligible in ninth grade), be a dependent of the state in grades seven through twelve or receiving extended foster care services.

Award packages for CBS Recipients are filled by first using Washington College Grant funds, after considering their eligibility for other state aid programs, such as the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) Opportunity Grant, American Indian Endowed Scholarship (AIES), or Passport to Careers (PTC). CBS funding is then used to make up the difference to meet the state's aid commitment to CBS Students. In practice, award amounts vary by the cost of tuition at the institution the student is attending and by the student's enrollment status (full-time or less).

Recent legislative changes have increased student access. To promote a college-going mindset, the original program guidelines required that to receive a scholarship award, eligible students must (a) graduate with a 2.0 GPA or higher, (b) have no felony convictions before high school graduation, (c) enroll in a college within one year of high school, and (d) have a Median Family Income (MFI) of 65% or less. CBS scholars were required to use their award eligibility within five years after high school graduation, for a maximum of 12 quarters, 8 semesters, or the equivalent. In recent years, however, several legislative changes to the CBS program have expanded student access and made it easier for CBS Recipients to complete postsecondary programs and earn credentials. These changes include the following:

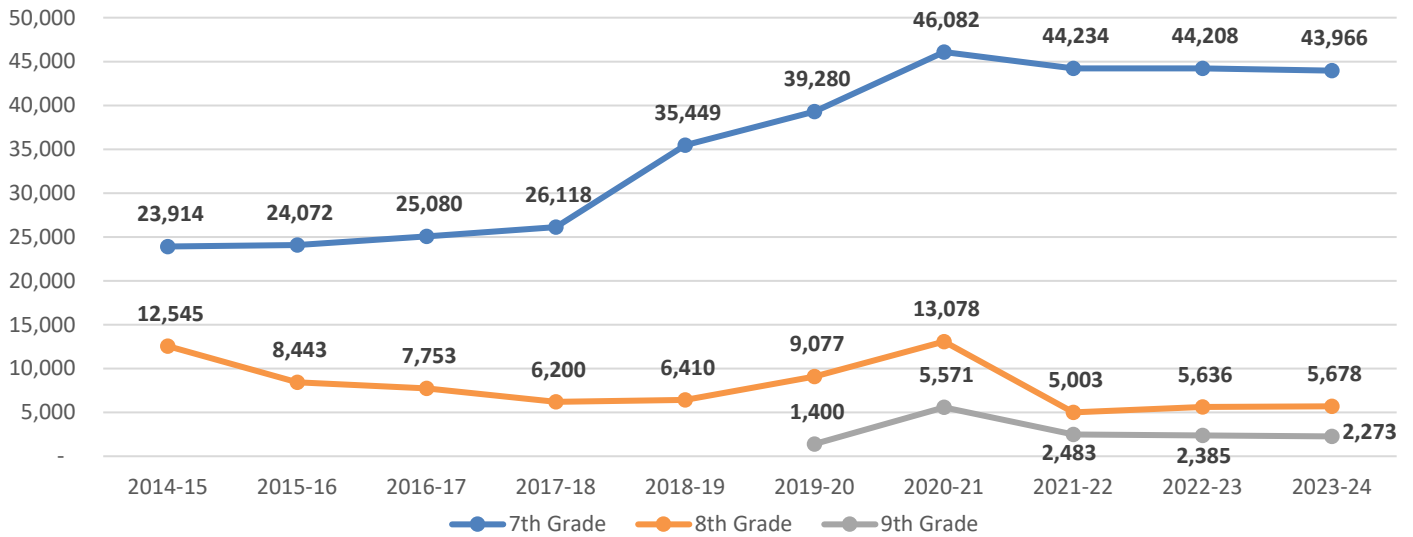
Year of Implementation	Legislation	Description of Policy Change
2019-20	<u>HB 1311</u>	Extended CBS eligibility to students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch in the ninth grade, even if they were previously ineligible in the seventh or eighth grade.
Fall 2021	<u>SB 5321</u>	Students are automatically enrolled in CBS if they attend a public school and are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch in 7 th or 8 th grade or were newly eligible in 9 th grade.
Fall 2023	<u>HB 1232</u>	The minimum 2.0 GPA requirement was eliminated for CBS Students who plan to attend a community college or technical school.
Fall 2024	<u>SB 5904</u>	The window of eligibility for CBS Recipients was extended from five years to six years or 150 percent of the published length of the program in which the student is enrolled

CBS Auto-Enrollment Improved Student Access and Equity

The CBS program was designed to provide encouragement and critical grant funding to low-income students and expand awareness of how that funding can alleviate financial barriers that prevent many from even considering college. However, despite this clear advantage, prior to 2020 about 30 percent of the student population that qualified for free and reduced-price lunch did not complete a CBS application by the end of 8th grade. This was due in part to the challenges of navigating the application process and acquiring the necessary signatures (Washington Student Achievement Council, January 2023). In 2020, in response to the closing of schools during the COVID-19 crisis, Governor Inslee temporarily suspended the signature requirements, allowing the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) to automatically complete applications for those that lacked signatures. Then in 2021, Senate Bill 5321 rendered the automatic enrollment of eligible CBS Students permanent. This bill greatly simplified the process, eliminating the need for students and parents or guardians to sign application forms to enroll in the program. As a result, there was a substantial increase in completed applications beginning in 2019-20 with the Governor’s Proclamation and reaching a peak in 2020-21 before leveling off.

Figure 5 shows the number of completed CBS applications by grade level from 2014-15 to 2023-24. A rise in applications can be seen beginning in 2020. Most of the applications were completed when the students were in 7th grade, with some in 8th grade, and a much smaller number in 9th grade. With the start of automatic enrollment, more efficiency is seen with 7th grade CBS enrollments. Prior to 2020, the number of applications completed in 8th grade were about a quarter of the number completed in 7th grade. After 2020, the number completed in 8th grade dropped to less than an eighth of those in 7th grade.

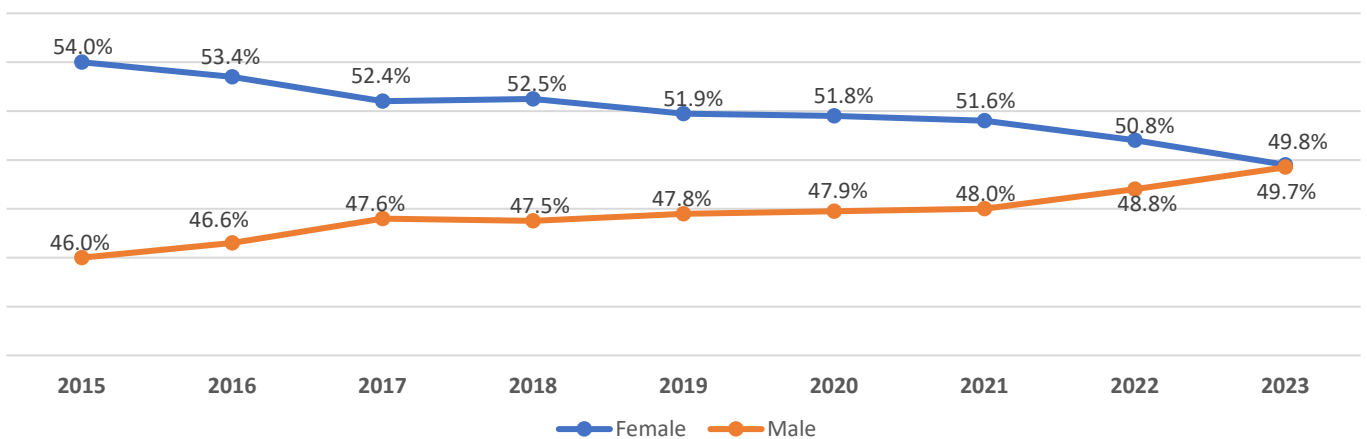
Figure 5: Completed CBS Applications by Grade Level and Academic Year



Source: WSAC CBS program administrative data.

Figure 6 displays the proportion of CBS Students by gender and high school graduation year. Over this period, the gap between female and male CBS Students has narrowed. In 2015, 54 percent of CBS high school students were female, considerably outnumbering male students at 46 percent. Since then, however, this gap has narrowed to the point where gender difference is closer to parity, with male students outnumbering female students for the first time in 2023.

Figure 6: Proportion of CBS Students by Gender and High School Graduation Year



Source: WSAC analysis of Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) data.

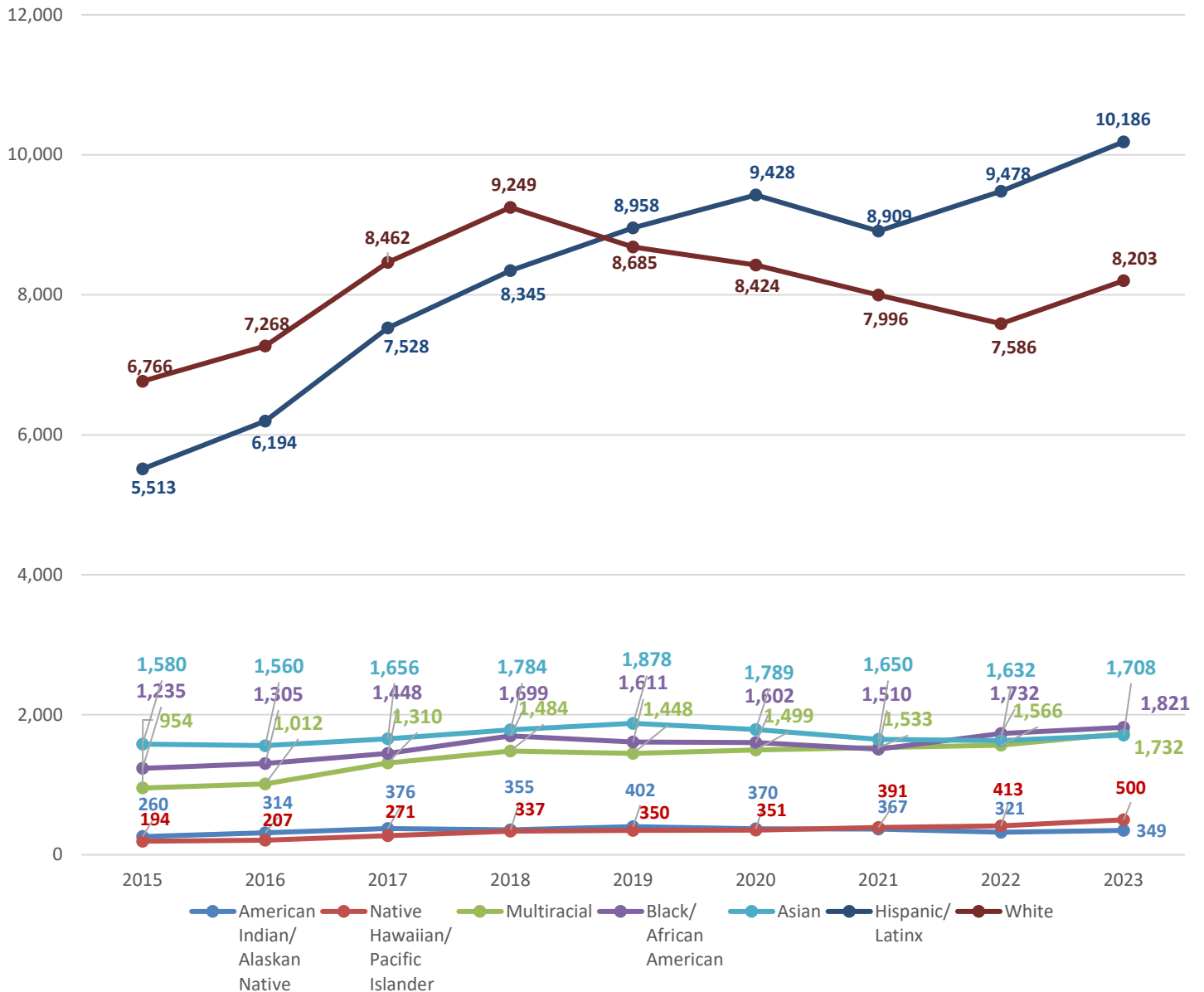
CBS Increasing Postsecondary Access for Underrepresented Students

Students of the BIPOC community are a key component of the low-income population that the CBS program is designed to assist. Students in this group are more likely than the overall K-12 population to qualify for the program, and they tend to be represented in the CBS student population at higher percentage rates. For example, Hispanic/Latinx students represent about 23.4 percent of the overall K-12 student population but over 41 percent of CBS Students. Black and African

American students comprise 4.4 percent of the overall population compared to 7.3 percent of CBS Students (Washington Student Achievement Council, September 2023).

Figure 7 shows the number of CBS Students by graduation year broken out by race and ethnicity. The largest gains are seen among Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students growing from 194 in 2015 to 500 in 2023, for a 158 percent increase. Hispanic/Latinx students grew from 5,513 to 10,186 during this same period (an 85 percent increase). Other groups have also shown significant growth during this period. Black/African American students grew from 1,235 to 1,821 (a 47 percent increase), and American Indian/Alaskan Native students grew from 260 to 349 (a 34 percent increase).

Figure 7: High School Graduation Headcount of CBS Students by Graduation Year and Race/Ethnicity



Source: WSAC CBS program administrative data and Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) data.

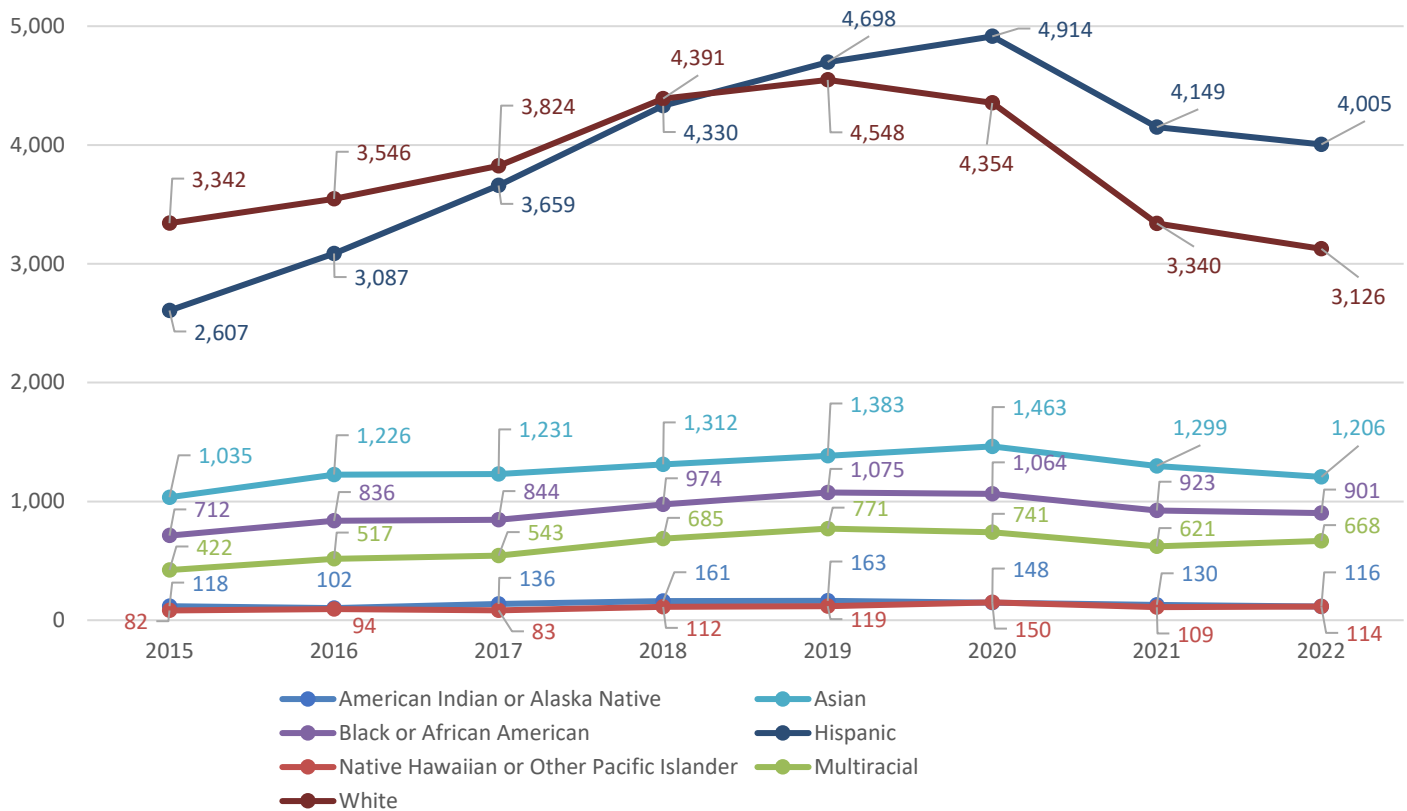
Note: College Bound Students are students who completed a College Bound Scholarship application. Graduation year is the confirmed year a student graduated, as reported by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI),

Postsecondary Enrollment for CBS Students and Recipients

First-year postsecondary enrollment for CBS Students were gaining rapidly before the pandemic but recent trends reflect an overall decline in enrollments

The trend for CBS Students enrolling in postsecondary programs within the first year after high school graduation reflects the overall decline in enrollments in the wake of the COVID -19 pandemic (Washington Student Achievement Council, September 2023). As shown in Figure 8, first year enrollments for Hispanic students reached a peak in 2020 with 4,914 continuing on to postsecondary studies and then dropped off significantly with only 4,005 in 2022. Postsecondary enrollments among Black and African American CBS students peaked at 1,064 in 2020 and then declined to 901 by 2022. Similar declines are seen for American Indian/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander populations.

Figure 8: Headcount of CBS Students by Postsecondary Cohort Year and Race/Ethnicity



Source: WSAC analysis of Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) data.

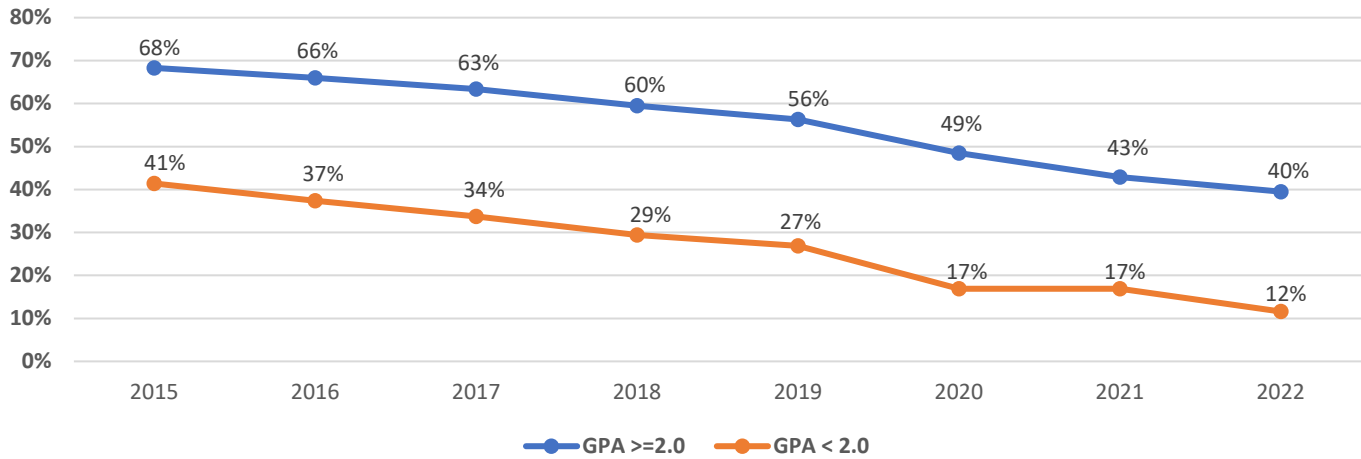
Note: A student's postsecondary cohort year is the spring year of postsecondary enrollment after high school graduation.

CBS Students with a high school GPA of 2.0 or higher enroll in postsecondary education at higher rates

The CBS program was designed to encourage high school students to maintain a 2.0 grade point average or higher to be prepared for college-level studies. Postsecondary enrollment rates for CBS Recipients suggest that the program is having a positive effect on their continuing education beyond high school. Figure 9 shows the postsecondary enrollment rates in the first year after graduation for CBS Students by High School GPA. The enrollment rates are substantially higher for students who met the minimum GPA of 2.0. For example, in 2018, 60 percent of the CBS Students with a GPA of 2.0 or higher continued on to enroll in either a two-year or four-year institution in the first year after graduation, compared to 29 percent with a GPA less than 2.0 who enrolled, a difference of 31 percentage points. As a result of the onset and

aftermath of the pandemic in 2019 and 2020, postsecondary enrollments for eligible CBS Students began to decline, corresponding to the overall enrollment decline that occurred in the broader student community. However, even with this decline enrollment rates for students with a 2.0 GPA or greater remained significantly higher. In 2022, the first year enrollment rate for students in this group was 40 percent, compared to 12 percent for lower GPAs.

Figure 9: Postsecondary Enrollment Rate of CBS Students by High School Graduation Year and GPA



Source: WSAC analysis of Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) data.

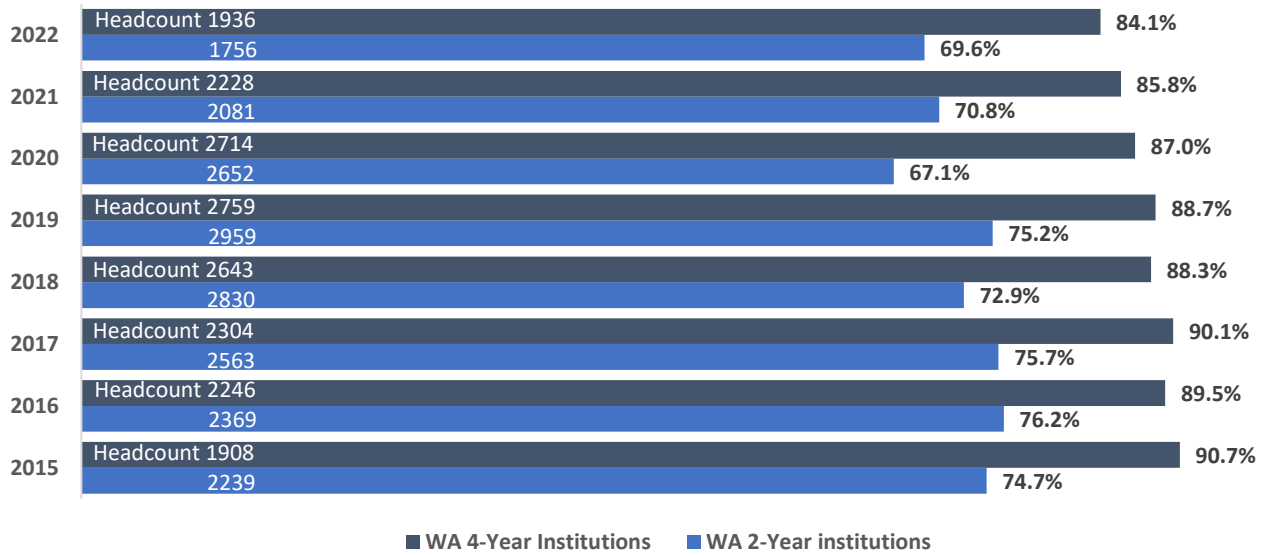
Note: College Bound Students are individuals who completed a College Bound Scholarship application. Graduation year is the confirmed year a student graduated, as reported by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Postsecondary enrollment is defined as enrollment in a Washington public four-year or two-year institution following a student’s high school graduation date.

Persistence Rates for CBS Recipients

Postsecondary persistence rates for CBS Recipients have been strong but also reflect the trend in recent enrollment declines and vary by institution type and GPA

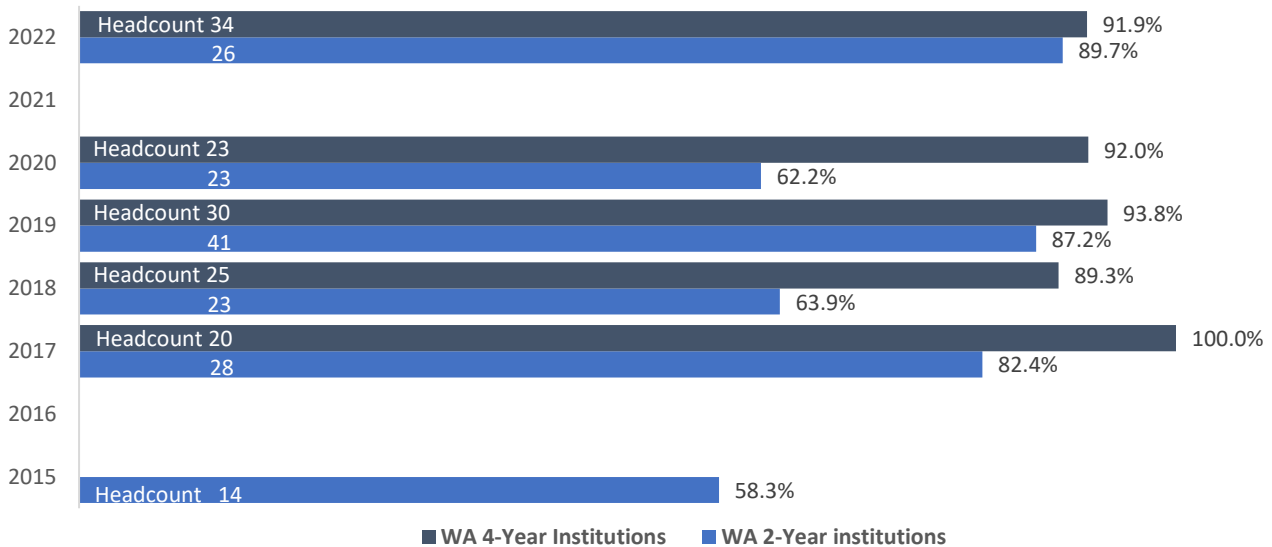
An important key to success in pursuing education after high school is persistence, which is continuing to enroll in the year following the student’s first year. The persistence rates for CBS Recipients for the 2015-2022 academic years tend to vary by high school GPA and whether they are attending a two-year or four-year institution. They also reflect the overall decline in enrollment that accompanied the pandemic and its aftermath. For CBS Recipients with a high school GPA of 2.0 or higher, the percentage who enrolled for a second year at four-year institutions was relatively high, close to 90 percent, but then showed a steady decline beginning in 2019 and 2020 (see Figure 10). The persistence rate at two-year institutions, for CBS Recipients with a high school GPA of 2.0 or higher, was lower, around 75% from 2015 to 2019. They were also more volatile, declining sharply in 2020, dropping to around 67 percent then increasing once again. Figure 11 shows persistence rates for CBS Students with less than a 2.0 high school GPA. More variability is shown here, due in part to the low number of students in this category. For CBS Recipients with less than a 2.0 high school GPA at two-year institutions, the persistence rate declined sharply in 2018 (to 63.9 percent) and then again in 2020 (to 62.2 percent) before rising to nearly 90 percent in 2022. Persistence rates for CBS Recipients with less than a 2.0 high school GPA at four-year institutions, were more consistent, ranging from around 87 percent to 94 percent or higher.

Figure 10: Persistence Rates of CBS Recipients with 2.0 GPA or Greater at WA Public Institutions by Postsecondary Cohort Year



Source: WSAC analysis of Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) data.

Figure 11: Persistence Rates of CBS Recipients with Less than 2.0 GPA at WA Public Institutions by Postsecondary Cohort Year

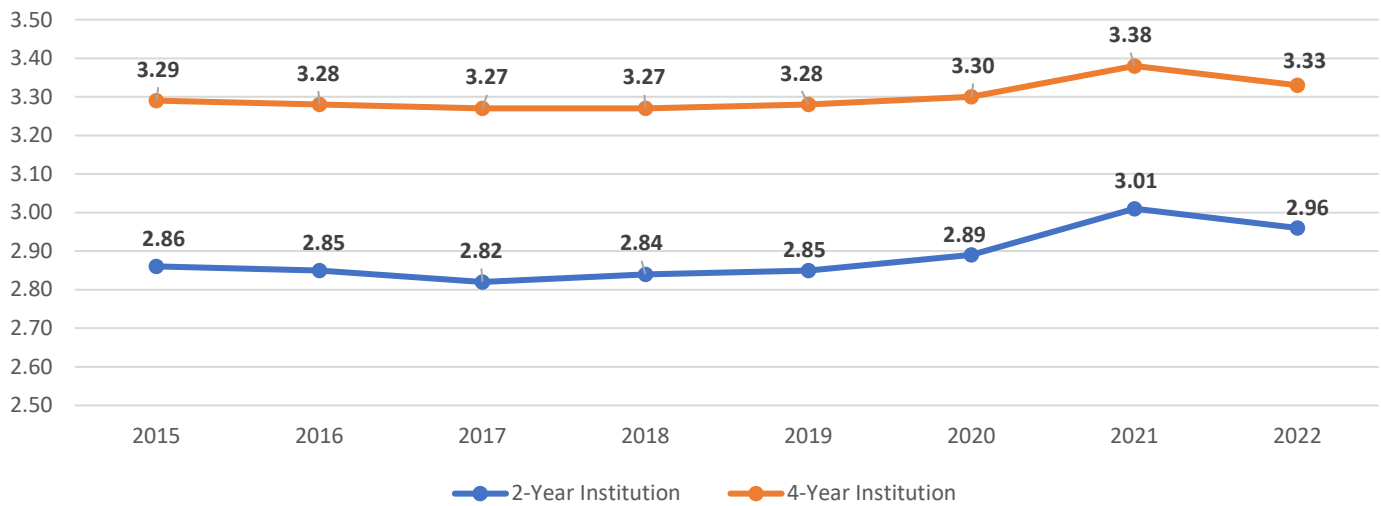


Source: WSAC analysis of Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) data.

Note: Persistence is defined as a student enrolling in any WA postsecondary institution for a second year immediately following their entry into postsecondary. A student's postsecondary cohort year is the spring year of postsecondary enrollment after high school graduation. College Bound Scholarship Recipients are students with at least one College Bound Scholarship award.

Figure 12 shows the average high school GPA for CBS Recipients in postsecondary institutions by sector for the academic years 2015-2022. The average high school GPA for CBS Recipients attending four-year institutions ranged from 3.29 in 2015 to a peak of 3.38 in 2021 before dipping to 3.33 in 2022. During this same period, the average GPA for CBS Recipients attending a two-year institution ranged from 2.86 in 2015 to a peak of 3.01 in 2021 before dipping to 2.96 in 2022. For both groups, the average GPA for CBS Recipients was substantially higher than the 2.0 minimum.

Figure 12: Avg. High School GPA for CBS Recipients by Postsecondary Cohort Year and Sector



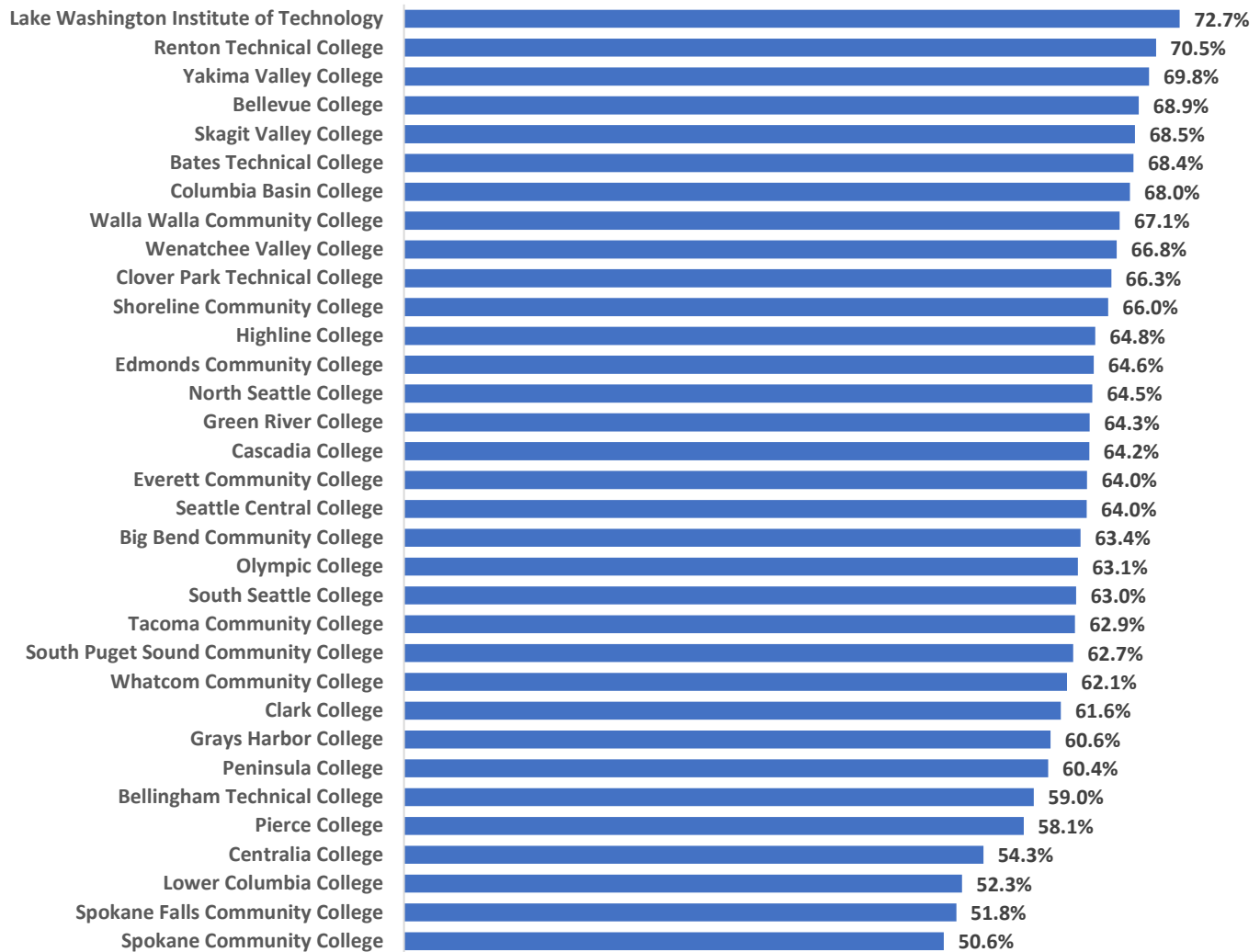
Source: WSAC analysis of Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) data.

Note: A student's postsecondary cohort year is the spring year of postsecondary enrollment after high school graduation. College Bound Scholarship Recipients are students with at least one College Bound Scholarship award.

Figure 13 shows the retention rates for public two-year and four-year institutions, which is defined as the percentage of CBS Recipients who enrolled for a second year at the same postsecondary institution. Retention rates are higher at four-year institutions, ranging from 68 percent to 92 percent. Retention rates at two-year institutions range from 50.6 percent to 72.7 percent.

Figure 13: Retention Rates of CBS Recipients at Public Two-Year and Four-Year Institutions in Washington for Academic Years 2015-2022

Two-Year Institutions



Four-Year Institutions



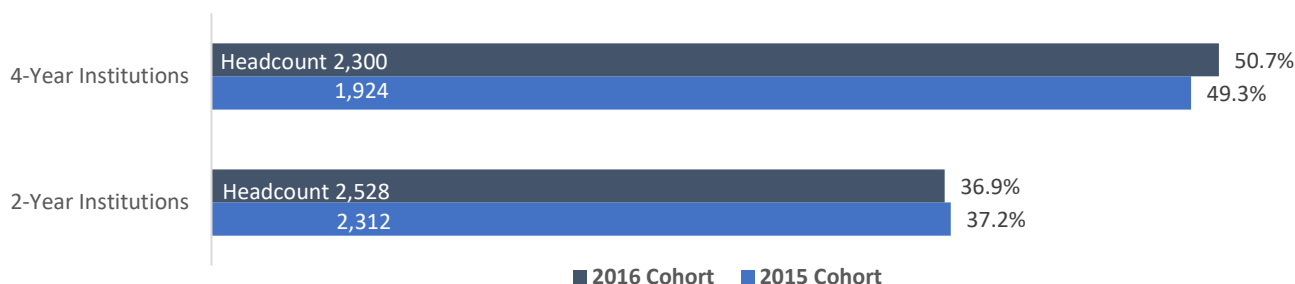
Source: WSAC analysis of Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) data.

Note: Retention is defined as a student enrolling in the same WA postsecondary institution for a second year immediately following their entry into postsecondary. A student's postsecondary cohort year is the spring year of postsecondary enrollment after high school graduation. College Bound Scholarship Recipients are students with at least one College Bound Scholarship award.

CBS Recipients Earning Postsecondary Credentials

Many CBS Students are taking advantage of the program, pursuing postsecondary education after high school graduation, and earning key credentials (see Figure 14). In the 2015 CBS cohort, 49.3 percent of the students at four-year institutions earned a postsecondary credential within six years of graduating high school. In the 2016 cohort, 50.7 percent earned a credential. In the two-year sector, 37.2 percent of CBS Students in the 2015 cohort and 36.9 percent of 2016 cohort earned a credential.

Figure 14: Postsecondary Credential Completion Rates for CBS Recipients Conferred within 6 Years by Postsecondary Cohort Year

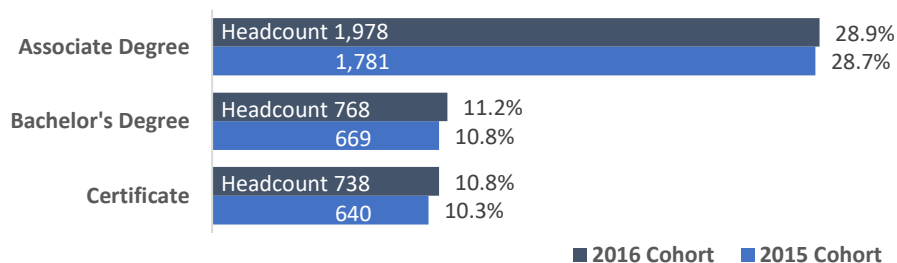


Source: WSAC analysis of Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) data.

Note: Postsecondary credentials include any award conferred to a student by a WA public institution. A student's postsecondary cohort year is the spring year of postsecondary enrollment after high school graduation. CBS Recipients are students with at least one College Bound Scholarship award.

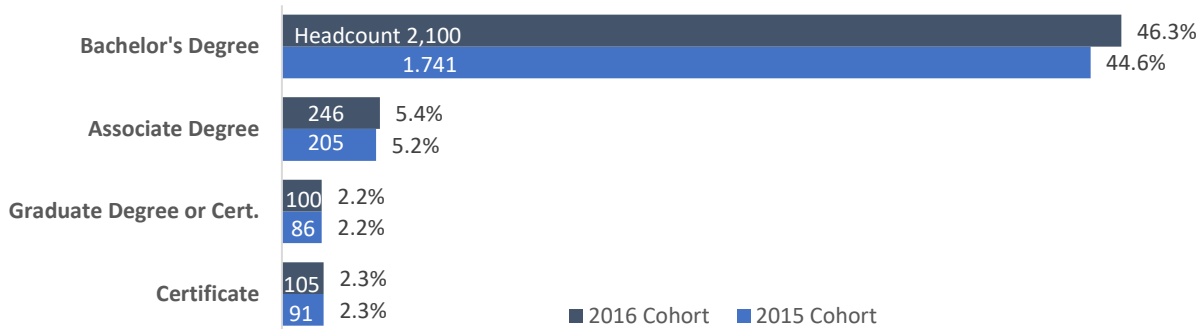
The next two figures show the distribution of types of credentials completed in the two-year and four-year sectors. In two-year public institutions, nearly 29 percent of CBS Students from the 2015 and 2016 cohorts completed an associate degree, while around 11 percent earned a bachelor's degree and over 10 percent earned a postsecondary certificate (see Figure 15). In four-year institutions, nearly 45 percent of CBS Recipients from the 2015 cohort and over 46 percent of CBS Recipients from the 2016 cohort earned a bachelor's degree (see Figure 16). In addition, among the CBS Recipients from each of the 2015 and 2016 cohorts attending a public four-year institution, about 5 percent earned an associate degree, over 2 percent earned a graduate degree or graduate certificate, and about 2 percent earned an undergraduate certificate.

Figure 15: Postsecondary Credential Completion Rates for CBS Recipients Conferred within 6 Years at WA Public Two-Year Institutions by Degree Type and Postsecondary Cohort Year



Source: WSAC analysis of Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) data.

Figure 16: Postsecondary Credential Completion Rates for CBS Recipients Conferred Within 6 Years at WA Public Four-Year Insitutions by Degree Type and Pstsecondary Cohort Year



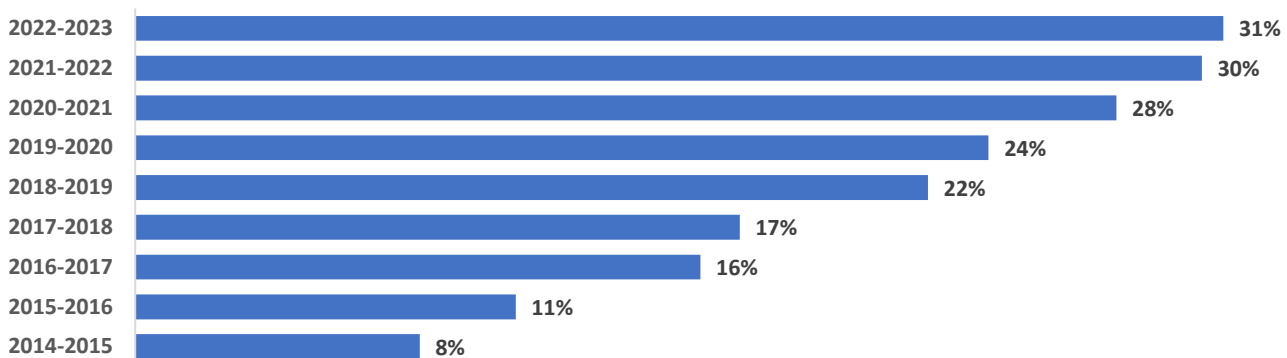
Source: WSAC analysis of Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) data.

Note: Postsecondary credentials include any award conferred to a student by a WA public institution. A student's postsecondary cohort year is the spring year of postsecondary enrollment after high school graduation. College Bound Scholarship Recipients are student with at least one College Bound Scholarship award.

Reasons CBS Postsecondary Students Lose Eligibility

A number of College Bound Scholarship Recipients become ineligible to receive the scholarship in an academic year (see Figure 17). Some reasons for ineligibility are temporary and may only apply to a specific year, and other cases ineligibility may be permanent. Reasons for temporary eligibility include a Median Family Income (MFI) that exceeded the MFI cutoff for that year, not having filed a FAFSA or WASFA, not enrolling in college, not meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress at the institution, or not qualifying as a Washington State Resident in a given academic year. Reasons for permanent ineligibility include a student enrollment exceeding the five-year eligibility window or receiving the CBS Scholarship for 8 semesters or 12 quarters. In future years, due to the extension of the CBS eligibility timeframe to six years (SB 5904 in 2024), the numbers of recipients losing eligibility because they have timed out is likely to decrease.

Figure 17: Percentage of CBS Recipients at WA Public Institutions Who Lost Eligibility by Academic Year

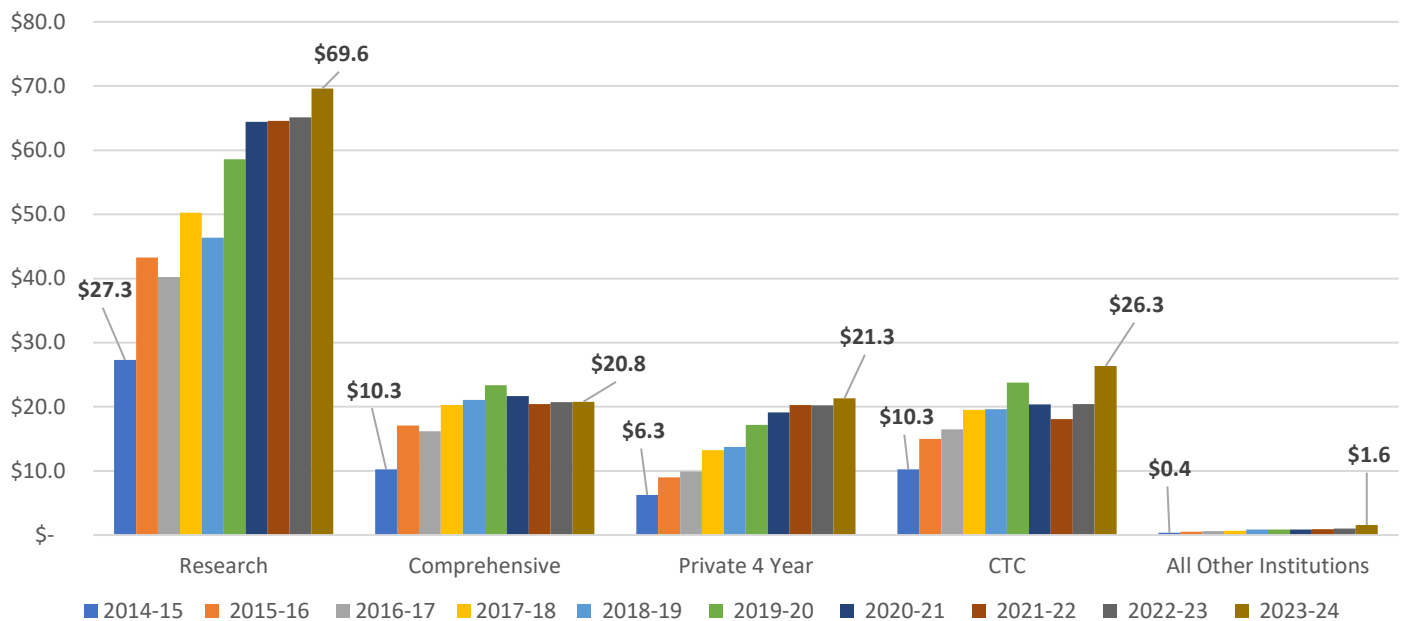


Source: WSAC CBS program administrative data.

Paying for the CBS program

To cover the cost of the program, the postsecondary institution the student is planning to attend assembles an award package, incorporating all the grants and scholarships the student may have. Typically, award packages begin with a full Washington College Grant (WCG), and prior to 2019 with a full State Need Grant (SNG). Packages also incorporate any other applicable state aid programs. Only after taking all these other funding sources into account are CBS funds then used to make up any difference that might remain to meet the state’s aid commitment to CBS Students. Figure 18 shows the total SNG and WCG funds that were used for awards to CBS Recipients from 2014-15 to 2023-24. They are broken out by sector, including research universities, comprehensive universities, community and technical colleges, four-year private nonprofit universities, and all other institutions. Expenditures from SNG and WCG funding sources to support CBS Recipients have grown significantly during this period. For example, SNG and WCG award expenditures in the research university sector expanded from 27.3 million dollars in 2014-15 to 69.6 million dollars in 2023-24. SNG and WCG expenditures in the other sectors have also grown considerably.

Figure 18: SNG/WCG Awards to CBS Recipients (in millions) by Sector and Academic Year

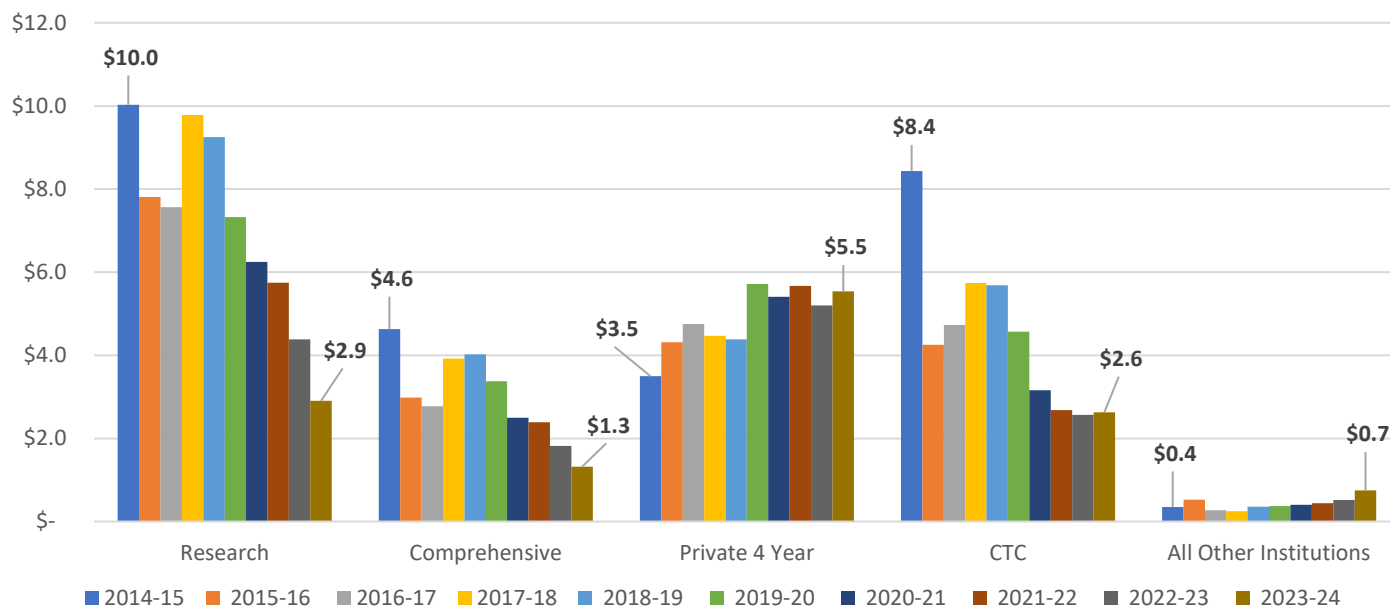


Source: WSAC WCG and CBS program administrative data.

Note: SNG refers to the State Need Grant, which was renamed as the Washington College Grant (WCG) in 2019, with funding beginning in the 2020-21 academic year.

On the other hand, expenditures from CBS funding have declined over this period (see Figure 19). Expenditures from CBS funds in the research university sector decreased from 10.0 million dollars in 2014-15 to 2.9 million in 2023-24. Similarly, in the community and technical colleges, CBS fund expenditures declined from 8.4 million dollars in 2014-15 to 2.6 million in 2023-24. The significant decline beginning in 2019 is not surprising, coinciding with the creation of the WCG as a guaranteed funding source, providing more of the state’s CBS commitment to students than the SNG.

Figure 19: CBS Awards to CBS Recipients (in millions) by Sector and Academic Year



Source: WSAC CBS program administrative data.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Overall, the College Bound Scholarship program is a key state financial aid program in the effort to connect with low-income students in middle school, which is a critical stage in their education journey, and encourage and assist them to continue their education beyond high school. It combines financial aid with effective communication strategies to provide CBS Students with the tools they need to succeed. It advances more equitable education opportunities for historically underrepresented student groups by addressing college financial access barriers. Engaging with low-income students and encouraging their pursuit of higher education is crucial to reaching Washington’s statewide attainment goal of 70% of residents aged 25-44 earning a credential of value to allow them to compete for living-wage jobs.

The introduction of automatic enrollment in CBS for qualified high school students in 2021 was an effective policy change that has substantially increased access to the program. Postsecondary enrollment in the first year after high school graduation, persistence, and credential completion rates were rising rapidly for CBS Students until seeing downturns in the wake of the pandemic. Postsecondary institutions in Washington began to show early signs of positive enrollment trends in fall 2023 after three years of pandemic-induced decline (Washington Student Achievement Council, March 2024). If this trend continues, we are likely to see an upturn in enrollments, persistence, and completions for CBS Recipients.

To further support our attainment goals, WSAC provides a statewide infrastructure for increasing postsecondary access and enrollment for College Bound students, families, and the communities in which they live. In this infrastructure, WSAC seeks to support high school students in culturally and regionally responsive ways, especially those enrolled in College Bound. WSAC intentionally built and continuously adapts this infrastructure so that it is responsive to ongoing changes in financial aid systems, postsecondary institutions, and the communities where learners live. WSAC provides resources, training, and tools to partners, educators, and advocates to promote financial aid application completion and a college going culture. Through these efforts, WSAC is connected in various ways to nearly every middle and high school in the state to advance the College Bound program.

References

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