

Community-Driven Model Removes Barriers to College for Washington Students

Washington state education department supported College Success Foundation in expanding their programming to prepare low-income students to thrive in college

OLYMPIA, WA, USA, December 15, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has long partnered with College Success Foundation (CSF), a Washington-based organization that supports students identified as low-income in preparing for and graduating from college. CSF's most recent data show their work is making an impact for students across Washington.

In the 2021–22 school year, students participating in CSF's programs graduated at a rate of 95%, as compared to a 4-year graduation rate of 75.3% for all Washington students identified as low-income in the Class of 2022. Additionally, CSF reports that 61% of students participating in their program enrolled in college within one year after completing high school, a higher rate than the statewide figure of 50%.

CSF's programs continue to serve increasing numbers of students in Washington's public schools. Approximately 2,700 students participated in CSF programs during the 2020–21 school year. In the 2022–23 school year, with an investment by OSPI from the



Chris Reykdal, State Superintendent of Public Instruction



James Dorsey, President and CEO of College Success Foundation

agency's federal emergency pandemic relief funds, CSF was able to serve more than 20,000 students from 28 public high schools.

"With OSPI's portion of emergency relief funds, we made targeted investments in initiatives and programming that had demonstrated positive outcomes for our students," said State Superintendent Chris Reykdal. "CSF builds on the foundational work of our school districts, and they are a critical partner in our ability to support each and every student to thrive."

Participating students engage in college readiness activities emphasizing high school success, college knowledge, and career exploration through the school-based Rally for College (RFC) initiative. Launched in January 2022, RFC provides community-specific solutions, such as culturally informed college tours, to students and families who face systemic barriers to postsecondary pathways. RFC helps students feel prepared for high school, college, and career transitions by providing one-to-one college advising, family engagement opportunities, and financial resources.

"This partnership has enabled us to support even more of our young people, particularly those who have been most severely impacted by the pandemic and longstanding inequities in our communities," said James Dorsey, President and CEO of College Success Foundation. "Every student should have access to a college degree, and our programming has demonstrated effectiveness in eliminating many of the barriers that prevent students from that opportunity."

The Washington College Access Network (WCAN), led by CSF in partnership with OSPI, provides additional financial tools to educators so that students have all the information they need about scholarships and the FAFSA application. CSF has also engaged parents and caregivers in the college journey by hosting in-person and virtual workshops to enhance their ability to support their children in postsecondary planning.

OSPI is committed to supporting community-based organizations like CSF that work in partnership with their local schools to provide all students with the opportunity to pursue and complete postsecondary education. For the upcoming 2024 Legislative Session, OSPI has submitted a [budget request for continued funding of these programs](#).

Approximately 70% of jobs in Washington require a postsecondary credential, but only 55% of high school graduates in Washington secure such a credential within 8 years of graduation. To better prepare students to contribute to the state's economy, OSPI's budget request would support programs that increase student readiness for postsecondary education and provide services for students transitioning into those pathways.

OSPI's budget request would provide continued funding for the RFC initiative, which has been supported by temporary federal funding that expires by fall 2024.

About College Success Foundation

College Success Foundation is a national nonprofit that coaches and supports students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to prepare for and graduate from college as transformational leaders in order to forge a just and equitable society. CSF serves students in public middle schools and high schools and colleges throughout Washington state and the District of Columbia. Learn more at collegesuccessfoundation.org.

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