



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
— OFFICE OF GOVERNOR BOB FERGUSON —

**EXECUTIVE ORDER 25-08**

**ESTABLISHING THE *WASHINGTON COMPLETES FAFSA* CAMPAIGN**

**WHEREAS**, Washington is committed to providing a quality education for all students, helping them to achieve their highest potential; and

**WHEREAS**, all Washingtonians deserve the opportunity to pursue higher education, a registered apprenticeship, or other technical training to earn postsecondary degrees or certifications that allow them to achieve personal goals and obtain meaningful employment; and

**WHEREAS**, Washington is projected to generate 1.5 million job openings across key sectors, and approximately 75% of those job openings will require education and credentials beyond high school. The Washington Business Roundtable projects a shortfall of nearly 600,000 skilled workers by 2032, including a deficit of 301,000 workers with bachelor's and advanced degrees, 67,000 with associate degrees, and 228,000 with certifications, apprenticeships, and other training credentials; and

**WHEREAS**, students and families cite affordability as their biggest barrier to enrolling in college or pursuing a training credential; and

**WHEREAS**, Washington state remains the most generous in the nation for state-based financial aid through Washington College Grant (WA Grant); and

**WHEREAS**, even though nearly half of Washington households qualify to receive financial aid through WA Grant, Washington consistently ranks in the bottom five states for completion of financial aid applications; and

**WHEREAS**, completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the first step a student must take to determine their eligibility for numerous federal, state, and institutional aid and scholarship programs, such as the federal Pell grant, the WA Grant, the College Bound Scholarship, and the Washington Opportunity Scholarship; and

**WHEREAS**, students and families who do not complete their financial aid applications leave money on the table, while students who complete their financial aid application unlock greater access, affordability, and success in postsecondary education and training; and

**WHEREAS**, the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) is a cabinet-level state agency charged with increasing educational attainment and managing the state financial aid programs; and

**WHEREAS**, supporting students, families, and educators requires a collaborative effort that includes schools, local communities, and organizations working together to help students complete their financial aid applications; and

**WHEREAS**, my administration is committed to promoting access to financial aid and increasing the number of Washington students who complete and submit the FAFSA;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, Bob Ferguson, Governor of the state of Washington, by the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the statutes of the state of Washington, do hereby order and direct the following:

**1. Establishing a *Washington Completes FAFSA* Campaign**

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) shall carry out a *Washington Completes FAFSA* Campaign to increase the number of Washington students who complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) during their senior year of high school.

**2. Creating a *Washington Completes FAFSA* Advisory Board**

- a. WSAC shall consult with the Governor's Office to create a statewide *Washington Completes FAFSA* Advisory Board to provide recommendations regarding all *Washington Completes FAFSA* Campaign activities, including local and statewide events, training, and marketing, and to monitor statewide progress toward the annual goal.
- b. WSAC shall invite the following representatives to participate as members of the *Washington Completes FAFSA* Advisory Board:
  - A high school counselor;
  - Two to five student leaders;
  - A high school principal;
  - A representative of district superintendents;
  - A representative from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI);
  - Three representatives from higher education:
    - one from a public four-year college or university,
    - one from a community or technical college, and
    - one from an independent, not-for-profit college or university;
  - A representative of a community-based organization that works with students and families on college counseling; and

- A representative from the Washington philanthropic community.
- c. WSAC shall strive for diversity on the *Washington Completes FAFSA* Advisory Board, and shall include representatives from diverse communities in different geographical areas of Washington, including underserved communities.
- d. WSAC shall coordinate and consult with other youth advisory boards and youth groups to amplify student voices on the *Washington Completes FAFSA* Advisory Board.
- e. By November 15, 2025, WSAC shall appoint and convene the *Washington Completes FAFSA* Advisory Board for its initial meeting.

### **3. Establishing a statewide financial aid goal**

- a. In consultation with the *Washington Completes FAFSA* Advisory Board, WSAC shall establish a statewide FAFSA completion goal for each academic year, starting with 2026-2027. Thereafter, WSAC will set annual goals to track progress in increasing FAFSA completion rates.
- b. WSAC shall identify schools and districts with the lowest FAFSA completion rates to track progress.

### **4. Support for Washington schools and school districts**

- a. WSAC shall develop and execute a plan to support school districts, schools, and local partnerships to meet the statewide FAFSA completion goal set for the school year.
- b. WSAC shall provide technical assistance and tools to support schools to set up their own local goals to increase FAFSA completion.

### **5. Relentless focus on real-time outcomes and data**

- a. WSAC shall continue to publish its FAFSA Completion for High School Seniors dashboard to track statewide, district, and individual school progress on FAFSA completion rates.
- b. The dashboard shall continue to be disaggregated by income levels to track progress or identify gaps for low-income students accessing federal or state-based financial aid.
- c. WSAC shall update the dashboard weekly to enable districts to track progress toward FAFSA completion rate goals.

## 6. Coordinating with community partnerships

- a. WSAC shall ensure that community partners already working to increase FAFSA completion rates are integrated into the *Washington Completes FAFSA* Campaign, that free training and resources are made available to all schools, school districts, and interested community partners, and that WSAC's AI-assisted chatbot, OtterBot, is leveraged to provide cost-effective support for students and families as they complete a FAFSA application and pursue a postsecondary pathway.

## 7. Annual reporting of progress

- a. By October 31, 2026, and annually thereafter, the *Washington Completes FAFSA* Advisory Board shall submit a report of its annual progress and actions for the coming academic year to the Governor.

This Executive Order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law. Provisions of this Order are not intended to alter any existing collective bargaining agreements. This Order is not intended to confer and does not confer any legal right or entitlement and shall not be used as a basis for legal challenges to any rule or any other action or inaction of the governmental entities and employees subject to it.

This Order shall take effect immediately.

Signed and sealed with the official seal of the state of Washington on this 19th day of September, AD, Two Thousand and Twenty-Five, at Renton, Washington.

By:

/s/

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Bob Ferguson  
Governor

BY THE GOVERNOR

/s/

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Secretary of State