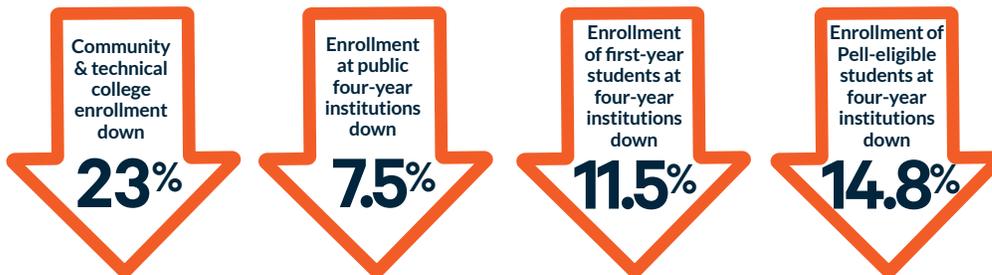


INCREASING POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT AMONG WASHINGTON STUDENTS CASE STUDY: THE PROMISE OF AUTOMATIC ADMISSIONS

Employers will create 373,000 net new jobs in Washington state by 2026, with the anticipated annual growth rate in job creation set to outpace the nation. Seventy percent of these jobs are expected to require or be filled by workers with a postsecondary credential—such as a degree, apprenticeship, or certificate. But our state is facing a crisis in credential attainment.

Our young people, particularly young people of color and those from low-income backgrounds, have not been able to enroll in college and career pathways as planned.

FURTHER, THE PANDEMIC HAS DRIVEN ALARMING DROPS IN POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT:



OUR GOAL:

By the high school class of 2030, 70% of Washington students—overall and within each racial and ethnic group—will complete a postsecondary credential by age 26. Based on estimates for the high school class of 2019, less than half—just 43%—of Washington high school students will hit that benchmark. That number could erode for those high school cohorts affected by the pandemic.

WE MUST DO BETTER FOR WASHINGTON STUDENTS.

Strategies already underway can make up half the distance in enrollment gains needed to hit our goal of 70% credential attainment by the high school class of 2030. Getting the rest of the way will require new thinking, transformed systems, and an unrelenting effort to meet the needs and aspirations of Washington students, particularly Black, Hispanic, Latino/a, and Native American and Indigenous students and students from low-income backgrounds.

Our 2022 case study series will profile a range of opportunities that should be considered as stakeholders across Washington—educators, institutions, policymakers, employers, and families alike—work to remove barriers and support students on their best-fit pathways to a credential.

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EXAMPLES OF AUTOMATIC ADMISSIONS PROGRAMS NATIONWIDE:

- #1 ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY** offers guaranteed admission to students transferring from a community college with a minimum GPA (2.0 GPA for AZ residents and 2.5 GPA for nonresidents).
- #2 UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS** offers assured admission to first-year students with a 3.25 high school GPA or an SAT score of 1060/ACT score 21+. Transfer students are assured admission with 24+ transferrable credit hours and a GPA of 2.5 or higher.
- #3 FLORIDA'S TALENTED TWENTY** program saves a spot at one of Florida's 12 state colleges for any Florida public high school student who graduates in the top 20% of their high school class and meets minimum eligibility criteria (includes submitting SAT or ACT score, though no minimum score is required, and students must meet completed minimum high school course requirements required for all university admission).

WASHINGTON GUARANTEED ADMISSIONS PILOT:

To spur enrollment, the state's public four-year institutions (via the Council of Presidents) in partnership with the Washington Student Achievement Council have launched a guaranteed admissions pilot (GAP) to more effectively connect with students who are not planning to continue their education or training after high school. Through this program, five of Washington's public four-year postsecondary institutions are partnering with at least 55 school districts during the 2021-22 school year to offer guaranteed admissions to Washington public high school seniors who have a high school GPA of at least 3.0 (2.5 for Evergreen State College) and complete minimum course requirements needed for college entry. These students receive admission decisions sooner than most who apply via the regular admission process.

Washington postsecondary institutions such as WSU and EWU also are implementing local admissions agreements, such as dual acceptance into a community college and local university at the same time and guaranteed admission for Pell-eligible students.

The success of these efforts should be measured by how effectively they drive up total postsecondary enrollment among students who had not planned to continue their education beyond high school.



PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY AUTOMATIC ADMISSIONS PILOT:

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed an increasing need to improve recruiting and pursue innovative enrollment strategies at Pacific Lutheran University. Enrollment declines at community colleges impacted the number of students transferring to PLU, prospective students were no longer able to visit college campuses to explore their options, and many students were deferring postsecondary plans. To help tackle these challenges, PLU launched an automatic admissions pilot program in partnership with the Bethel School District during the 2020-21 school year. The Bethel School District serves more than 20,000 K-12 students in southeast Pierce County—66% of whom are students of color and 51% are from low-income households—and PLU had a keen interest in fostering college-going behavior in their own back yard.

"I didn't think I could get in and it is so expensive, but this process and getting my letter cut through these misperceptions."

-PLU Student
Automatically Admitted

THE PROCESS:

Bethel High School counselors encouraged high school seniors to complete a simple declaration of interest form to be submitted to PLU. PLU then reviewed interested students' profiles, including GPA, activities, and interests. Students selected for automatic admission received an offer signed by PLU and the Bethel School District, indicating to students that both institutions believed they could and would succeed at the collegiate level.

EARLY RESULTS:

PLU offered admission to 26 high school seniors via the automatic admissions program during the 2020-21 school year. Twelve enrolled at PLU and started classes fall 2021. More than half of the 26 students did not previously have plans to attend education beyond high school, but learning more about PLU helped them see their potential and understand how to pay for tuition.

CONCLUSION:

Automatic admissions efforts can build a bridge into post-high school education for students who had not planned to enroll by easing the admissions process and helping students see they belong. The design of the effort and careful focus on students who are not otherwise intending to pursue a post-high school credential—such as Idaho's program and PLU's pilot effort—are critical to driving enrollment gains.

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1. Illinois 2019 Direct Admission Conference. The Idaho Report. 2019.

2. The Texas Ten Percent Plan's Impact on College Enrollment. Education Next. 2014. Journal Vol 14 No. 3.

3. The Texas Ten Percent Plan's Impact on College Enrollment. Education Next. 2014. Journal Vol 14 No. 3.

4. Illinois 2019 Direct Admission Conference. The Idaho Report. 2019.