



Washington Student Achievement Council

Weekly Bulletin

Washington State GEAR UP

Issue: September 1-5, 2025

WA State GEAR UP Program Updates

- **Customizable [Quarterly Family Newsletters](#).** These templates provide college and career readiness information for 7th—12th-grade students and are available in *Arabic, Chinese, English, Korean, Marshallese, Punjabi, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese*.
- **Match Tip:** Many colleges will donate pennants or other college swag to your program upon request. The value of these donations can be submitted as match on a Goods and Services form. The donor (college) must sign and document the value. Receipts are preferred, if available.
- **[NGUW Toolkit](#).** Mark your calendar for the nation's largest celebration of all things GEAR UP! [National GEAR UP Week](#) will take place from Sept. 22-26, with the theme "Planting Seeds, Growing a Nation." Get ideas and tips on how to celebrate National GEAR UP Week in your school!

Financial Aid Updates

- **Sign Up! [12th Year Campaign](#).** This campaign includes the American College Application Campaign and College Goal Washington (Financial Aid Filing). Sign up to receive free training, printed materials, and other resources.
- **Virtual Financial Aid Nights for Seniors & Juniors:** Learn about the types of financial aid offered to you and receive support on taking the first step to applying. [Sept. 30, 5:30 PM](#) and [Nov. 19, 5:30 PM](#). **Parents/guardians:** [Sept. 25, 5:30 PM](#) and [Nov. 18, 5:30 PM](#)
- **[FSA Launches Beta Version of FAFSA Ahead of Schedule](#).** The Department of Education has begun beta testing the 2026-27 FAFSA form, which will officially open for all students on Oct. 1.
- **[FAFSA 2026–27: Preview Now Available](#).** Kick off the FAFSA season with our ready-to-use PowerPoint and PDF, which include screenshots, step-by-step guides, and updates for the 2026–27 form. Ideal for staff training and student support, it covers dependent, independent, and provisionally independent scenarios, as well as correction situations. Pro Tip: Have students create FSA IDs early to ease the process!

Student Recruitment & Outreach Events

- **Opportunity! [Join the Youth Co-Design Team to help shape the 2025 Youth Advocacy Summit in Spokane](#).** Earn \$200 while developing your leadership and advocacy skills. Looking for HS and college students from Eastern WA! Hosted by LEV, AWSL, and Gonzaga. Involves 3-4 virtual meetings and one in-person event. Due Sept. 5
- **[Fall PNACAC College Fairs:](#)** Thurston County Fair – Oct. 13 (SMU) and Pierce County Fair - Oct. 16 (TCC).
- **[Fall NACAC College Fairs:](#)** Virtual and in-person events. Dates: Sept. 14 (Virtual), Oct. 9 (Performing and Visual Arts, Seattle), Oct. 12-13 (PDX), Oct. 15 (Spokane), Oct. 17-18 (Seattle), Oct. 19 (Virtual), and Nov. 9 (Virtual).
- **[My Journey](#).** ACT hosts free virtual events to help students and families navigate the college admissions process. Topics include college knowledge for parents and college pathways for athletes. Aug. 27- Oct. 15, 4:30 PM. [Download Event Poster \(PDF\)](#).

Optional Professional Development

- **On-Demand LEV Podcast: [Culturally Responsive Teaching](#).** Learn how culturally responsive teaching supports students in the classroom, how best to embed equity into education in Washington state, and more.
- **[Fall Counselor Virtual Workshops](#).** By College Board. Attend free professional development webinars tailored for new and experienced counselors to access timely resources and updates on College Board programs and services. Various times and dates: Aug. 26-Sept. 11.
- **[WCHSCR Fall Counselor Tour](#).** Sept. 8 (ECC), Sept. 9 (UWB), Sept. 10 (CPTC), Sept. 11 (CBC), Sept. 12 (EWU), Sept. 16 (Virtual).
- **[NCAN National Conference](#).** Sept. 8-10, New Orleans, LA.

- **Webinar:** [Developing College Essays: Supporting Students in Telling Their Story](#). By NACAC. Free for NACAC members, \$50 for nonmembers. Sept. 10, 10 AM.
- **Webinar:** [Supporting Unaccompanied Students](#). By SchoolHouse Connection. Sept. 17, Noon.
- **Webinar:** [Expanding College Access with the Common App](#). By SchoolHouse Connection. Sept. 30, 10 AM.
- **Discussion Lab:** [Launching Family Engagement this School Year](#). NCCEP Discussion Labs provide an opportunity for GU staff to share, learn, and collaborate on problem-solving together. Sept. 18, 11 AM.
- **GEAR UP West**. Oct. 26-28, Portland.
- **Virtual:** [2026 National GEAR UP Academy](#). Feb 2–6, 2026

Resources

- **WAGU Featured Resource:** [College, Armed Services, & Opportunity Pennants](#). Download these college and armed services pennants to display around your school or office.
- **Student Resources from ACT.** Explore grade guides, study strategies, and planning tools to help move forward with confidence, including [How to Secure the Perfect Recommendation Letter](#).
- **17 Brain Breaks Tailored for High Schoolers.** As high school students navigate more rigorous academic tasks and denser curricular material, the occasional 3-to-5-minute break delivers a wide range of benefits.
- **Update on the 988 LGBTQIA2S+ Youth Subnetwork Shutdown.** Read the press Release from the Washington State Department of Health [here](#). Other resources for LGBTQIA2S+ teens and young adults include: [LGBT National Hotline](#), [Trans Lifeline](#), [The Trevor Project](#), and [Crisis Text Line](#).

In The News

Need help crafting a GEAR UP story for local media? Explore [NCCEP's tools](#) and don't forget to [Share Your GEAR UP Good News](#).

- [How AI Is Changing—Not 'Killing'—College](#)
- [DEI Was The Compromise, Not The Solution](#)
- [A New School Year Starts At Harvard As Students Live With Lingering White House Threats](#)
- [Students Can't Get Into Basic College Courses, Dragging Out Their Time In School](#)
- [Parents Navigate Back To School Amid Fears Of ICE And Federal Crackdowns In Washington](#)
- [More Students Head Back To Class Without One Crucial Thing: Their Phones](#)
- [Opinion: My Students Fulfill The Promise Of Higher Education Every Day, But Their Future Is In Jeopardy](#)
- [Higher Ed Joins March On Wall Street To Defend DEI Programs](#)
- [Class Of 2026: Already Worried About Jobs After College](#)
- [These Federal Programs Help Low-Income Students Get To And Through College. Trump Wants To Pull The Funding](#)
- [How Process Checklists Support Student Writing Skills in the Age of AI](#)

Scholarships & Opportunities

Find more opportunities at: <https://gearup.wa.gov/educators/scholarships>.

- **Free and Safe:** [Get Schooled Essay Review](#). Submit your personal statement, supplemental college application essays, and scholarship essays for feedback. They provide actionable suggestions and feedback within one week.

Scholarship	Brief Description	Due
Home Depot Path to Pro Scholarship	A \$2,500 scholarship is available to students attending an approved trade-related program (Carpentry, Electrical, HVAC, Plumbing, or Construction Management) at an accredited two-year institution.	9/30
Scholarship Poetry Contest	Open to all U.S. HS students. The applicant must submit an original poem of 20 lines or fewer. Up to \$500.	9/30
Coca-Cola Scholars Scholarship	(\$20,000) - High school seniors with a minimum 3.0 unweighted GPA may apply on our website in August of their senior year until the September 30 deadline. Each year, 150 Coca-Cola Scholars are selected to receive a \$20,000 scholarship.	9/30
Dr. Pepper Tuition Giveaway	(\$2,500-\$100,000) - Make and submit a video that helps us get to know you. Tell us about your academic goals, professional aspirations, or even personal dreams. Your video will be judged on the following four criteria: career goals, need for tuition assistance, impact of tuition assistance, and overall presentation quality and delivery. It must be 60 seconds or less and in MP4, MOV, or WMV format. Be passionate, be creative, be you.	9/30
Don't Text and Drive Scholarship	(\$1,000) - Complete the application form, including a 140-character message about texting while driving. The top 10 applications will be selected as finalists.	9/30

	The finalists will be asked to write a full-length essay of 500 to 1,000 words about texting while driving.	
Shout It Out Scholarship	(\$1,500) - In 250 words or fewer, submit an online written response to the question: "If you could say one thing to the entire world at once, what would it be and why?"	9/30
WSOS Career & Technical Scholarship (CTS) 101	This scholarship provides up to \$1,500 per quarter, every quarter, toward eligible associate degrees, certificates, or apprenticeships at eligible community or technical colleges. CTS funding can also be used at two apprenticeship sponsors, AJAC Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeships and Evergreen Rural Water. Search the sponsor name in the eligible programs list . WSOS can cover costs beyond tuition, such as housing, transportation, food, and more.	10/16
NCWIT Award for Aspirations in Computing	For 9th - 12th-grade students, it recognizes their computing-related achievements and interests, encouraging them to pursue their passions.	10/28
U.S. Bank Scholarship Program	Complete a series of Financial Genius for Life online learning modules for a chance to win. \$2,500-\$20,000	10/30
Voice of Democracy Scholarship.	(\$35,000) The Voice of Democracy audio-essay program offers high school students a unique opportunity to express themselves through a democratic and patriotic-themed recorded essay. The national first-place winner receives a \$35,000 scholarship paid directly to the recipient's American university, college, or vocational/technical school.	10/31
Zombie Apocalypse Scholarship	(\$2,000) - In 250 words or fewer, submit a response to the question: "Imagine that your high school or college has been overrun with zombies. Your math professor, the cafeteria ladies, and even your best friend have all joined the walking dead. Flesh out a plan to avoid the zombies, including where you'd hide and the top-five things you'd bring to stay alive."	10/31



The opinions expressed in these articles do not necessarily represent those of Washington State GEAR UP, the Washington Student Achievement Council, or the Department of Education. You should not assume endorsement by these entities.

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