

Winter 2022

#iamopportunity

A DECADE OF IMPACT

Celebrating 10 years of WSOS



EDUCATION FOR ALL

Join in our collective celebration of all we've accomplished together in the last decade in the pages that follow. The numbers speak for themselves.

WE ARE CHANGING LIVES.



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1414 31st Ave. South, Ste. 302, Seattle, WA 98144
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Left:
Kyle, Cellular & Molecular Engineering, Opportunity Scholar Alum
Jasmine, Bioengineering, Opportunity Scholar Alum

Front cover:
Alejandra, WSOS mentee
Mireya, WSOS mentor
Bunji, Mechanical Engineering, Opportunity Scholar Alum

10 YEARS OF IMPACT

A letter from WSOS Board Chair Brad Smith & Executive Director Kimber Connors

Dear friends,

Thank you for being a partner in our work to expand educational opportunity in Washington state. It's been 10 years since we came together as a coalition of public servants and industry leaders to build the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship—a first-of-its-kind program to help students facing barriers to higher education and employers struggling to hire talent aligned with market demands.

Together we've taken an unproven idea and created outcomes that have exceeded even the boldest dreams of what our visionaries thought possible.

Ten years ago, our Scholars filled classrooms and libraries, pouring into their studies with dreams of bright futures and hope for what lay ahead.

Today, our Scholars fill hospitals as doctors and nurses. You'll find them at the cutting-edge of science and technology as coders, mathematicians, biologists and environmental scientists. They are engineering in every sector from medicine to manufacturing, agriculture to aerospace.

Together, we changed lives.

We hope you'll join in our collective celebration. We broke the cycle of poverty for many low-income families. We made college possible for students most likely to be left

behind. We provided our region's employers with the talent they needed. And we diversified our state's leading industries so they better represent our communities.

To our Cornerstone partners—Microsoft, Boeing, the Rubens Family Foundation and Ballmer Group—who took a leap of faith and invested in a program that could be but wasn't yet: thank you.

To every donor, large and small, who has contributed since 2011: thank you.

To those who've spent hours mentoring our students, promoting our scholarships or helping a student apply: thank you.

To those who've helped a Scholar launch their career by hiring them or opening your network: thank you.

It takes a village to do this work. To change lives. To change an economy. Your support makes this possible.

The 10-year anniversary of this organization is a milestone to be celebrated by all. And it also comes at a time when uncertainty still looms as we try to move past a global pandemic and the destruction laid in its wake. We know our state, our economy and our communities need WSOS more than ever to connect Washington students to Washington jobs.

We believe the future can be better. Join us.



Kimber Connors

Kimber Connors
Executive Director

Follow Kimber on
Twitter @KConnors_



Brad Smith

Brad Smith
WSOS Board Chair
President and Vice Chair
Microsoft Corporation

Our impact, by the numbers



BACCALAUREATE (BaS)



13,186

Scholars (and counting!)



6,196

Graduates to date

GRADUATES PER INDUSTRY



1,199
Biology



1,147
Health Care



719
Computer Science



719
Engineering

5 years after graduating, BaS recipients earn:

An average salary of
\$90K



2x what their family made when they entered college

CAREER & TECHNICAL (CTS)



1,239

Scholars (and counting!)

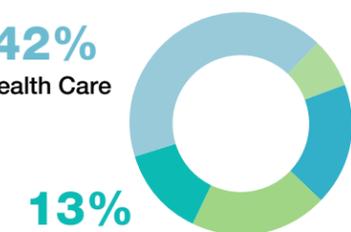


280

Graduates to date

SCHOLARS PER INDUSTRY

42%
Health Care



7%
Engineering & Manufacturing

13%
Other

20%
Trades

18%
IT

Compared to those who were nearly selected, within two years of applying, CTS recipients are:

10% more likely to enroll in a community or technical college



2x as likely to have earned a credential

OUR IMPACT

Our mission is to build pathways into high-demand jobs for Washington students.

The need

Washington has one of the highest concentrations of STEM jobs in the nation, and our economy is poised for continued growth. We are renowned for innovation in aerospace, computer science, biotechnology, online retail, medical research, health care and agriculture technology.

But there aren't enough Washingtonians with the skills and training required to compete for these jobs. We need to provide better access to higher education for Washington students to develop the workforce that can take these industries to the next level.

Our solution

In 2011, top leaders in state government, industry and education came together to build a new model for workforce development.

WSOS was created to remove financial barriers for students from diverse backgrounds and create pathways into high-demand, high-paying jobs. We do this by providing scholarships as well as comprehensive support services.

Who we serve

We create a college-to-career pipeline for those who are often furthest from opportunities in these fields, including women and students of color.



Paula, Electrical Engineering, Opportunity Scholar Alum
**Photos were taken prior to 2020 and mask mandates*

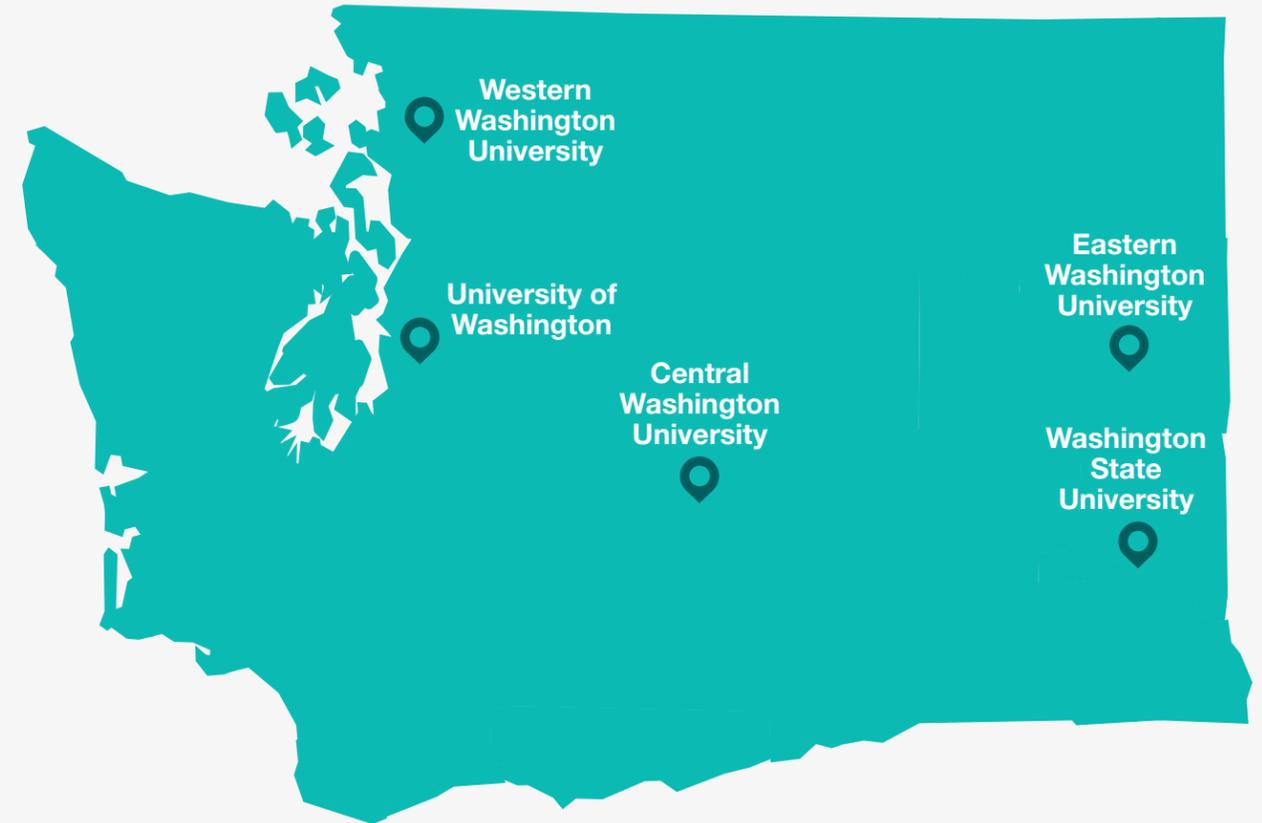
Our Scholars identify as:

71% first-generation college students

72% students of color

56% women

We are creating a more diverse & equitable workforce across Washington.



Our state's workforce challenge requires solutions that meet local needs, and we support Scholars from every county and legislative district in Washington.

Graduates per school

- 2,872** University of Washington
- 1,059** Washington State University
- 229** Central Washington University
- 321** Eastern Washington University
- 362** Western Washington University

Scholarship Spotlights

BACCALAUREATE

We support students in over 170 high-demand programs at more than 60 eligible institutions.

Our flagship scholarship program is now supporting our 10th cohort of Opportunity Scholars.

Our scholarships go beyond tuition. Dollars are flexible and can be used to pay for other critical cost of attendance needs like transportation, childcare, food and lodging.

Meet Hannia Larino, one of our Baccalaureate Opportunity Scholars

“I was born in Mexico but grew up in Federal Way, WA. Recently, I transferred to the University of Washington-Tacoma and will major in Biomedical Sciences. Since middle school, I have had a passion for animal welfare, and I plan to pursue a career as a veterinarian.

I found out about WSOS through a biology professor. In addition to participating in the Skills that Shine Mentorship Program, I have interned at my college’s Diversity Film Festival, an annual event that celebrates cultural diversity through independent films.

As a leader on campus, I have participated in a quarter-long Identity, Culture, and Community Leadership Training through the Office of Student Engagement. I also volunteer at the Humane Society of Tacoma and Pierce County. Most recently, I completed a summer internship at a small animal hospital in Kent, WA.”

“WSOS has provided me with resources I otherwise would not have had as a first-generation student.

The financial support in addition to the connections I have made, particularly with my mentor, have been a motivating factor to continue my education and pursue my dreams.”



Hannia Larino
Biomedical Sciences,
Opportunity Scholar

CAREER & TECHNICAL

We know not all high-demand jobs require a bachelor’s degree. We support students in more than 2,000 trade, health care and STEM programs at the state’s 34 community and technical colleges. These students are pursuing apprenticeships, certificates and associate degrees.

Launched in 2019, now supporting our third Cohort of Scholars.

“I want to give back to my community and be a beacon of light to others so they can have the motivation to go for their dream regardless of their income level, age, gender or ethnic background.”

— **Mary Saray**
Computer Programming & Web Development,
Opportunity Scholar

RURAL JOBS

WSOS ensures those who are farthest from a community and technical college have access to the training that leads to a high-demand job in their rural community.

More than tuition, these scholarships pay for things like travel to distant campuses as well as laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots to enable distance learning.

The Rural Jobs Initiative (RJI) started in 2020 with the Legislature’s interest in supporting rural students.

“Being a disabled, single mom from a very poor, rural community is hard enough. Trying to get an education on top of that... it just means everything in the world to have this opportunity.”

— **Vanessa Davis**
Chemical Dependency Studies,
Opportunity Scholar

GRADUATE

The newest scholarship in our portfolio supports students pursuing advanced degrees to become nurse practitioners in medically underserved areas. The Graduate Scholarship (GRD) offers two eligible degree programs: Doctor of Nurse Practitioner (DNP) and Master of Science in Nursing (MSN).

The need for qualified professionals who can provide primary care as well as mental health services is even more necessary in a post-Covid world.

The inaugural cohort of this new scholarship program began in 2021.

“As I step into my practitioner role, I will do my best to give back to this community. I am a firm believer in paying the help forward.”



Mosiah Wilson
Psychiatric Mental Health
Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP),
Opportunity Scholar

Graduate Scholars are meeting the needs of patients statewide.

“There is a great need for more advanced health care providers across our state, and these amazing Scholars are poised to meet that need in the areas where it is most crucial.”



Genevieve Geiger
Graduate Program Manager
WSOS

Eight highly qualified Opportunity Scholars were selected to represent the pilot Graduate cohort. Scholars intend to work for two years after graduation in a Medically Underserved Area (MUA) or Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA).

The Scholars are already working as RNs in a range of settings from the Homeless and Street Outreach team at Neighborcare’s Pike Place Market clinic to Sea Mar Community Health Centers’ Opioid Use Disorder clinic in Concrete, WA.

Timeline: 10 YEARS OF IMPACT



2011

The Washington State Legislature creates a new public-private partnership to support students pursuing bachelor's degrees in STEM and health care called the **Washington State Opportunity Scholarship**.

Boeing and **Microsoft** each invest \$25 million and become the first WSOS Cornerstone Partners.



2012

Our first cohort of Baccalaureate Scholars is selected.



2014

The first-ever **OpportunityTalks Breakfast** fundraising event is held, featuring **Gov. Christine Gregoire** (above).

2015

A mentorship program is launched in collaboration with Boeing, later known as **Skills that Shine**.



SKILLS THAT SHINE

The **Rubens Family Foundation** invests \$20 million and joins WSOS as a Cornerstone Partner.



Microsoft donates another \$10 million. **Steve and Connie Ballmer** donate \$11 million and become Cornerstone Partners.

2018

Legislation expands the high-demand credentials eligible for WSOS funding beyond bachelor's degrees.



SCHOLAR LEAD

The **Scholar Lead** program is launched, designed to leverage peer mentoring to improve persistence outcomes in the BaS program.

2019

Our first cohort of Career and Technical Scholars are selected.



Founding Executive Director Naria Santa Lucia departs and new **Executive Director Kimber Connors** (below) is hired.



An audit by the Joint Legislative Review Committee demonstrates the WSOS model leads to strong, positive outcomes for Washington students.

2020

The COVID-19 pandemic begins and WSOS staff transition to remote work while moving all student supports and programming virtual.



Our first cohort of Rural Jobs Initiative Scholars are selected.

The first fully virtual OpportunityTalks Breakfast is held, featuring comedian **Trevor Noah**, Opportunity Scholar **Michelle To** and WSOS Board Chair & President and Vice Chair of Microsoft, **Brad Smith** (above).

2021

Our first cohort of Graduate Scholarship recipients are selected.



Gary and Jennifer Rubens, Microsoft and Boeing all recommit to WSOS with \$10, \$15 and \$5 million recommitment donations, respectively.

City of Seattle becomes the first municipal, county or tribal partner to take advantage of the matching partnership opportunity.



WSOS crosses milestone of disbursing \$100 million to students in scholarship supports.

Thanks to our 2021 OpportunityTalks Breakfast sponsors:

Cornerstone Partners

Microsoft
The State of Washington
Boeing
The Rubens Family Foundation
Ballmer Group

Presenting Sponsors

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Seattle Central College
University of Washington STARS
University of Washington Office of External Affairs
Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP CREATED WSOS

Public leaders saw opportunity and took a leap of faith in 2011.

Then as is still true today, Washington was at the forefront of cutting-edge technology and research across many sectors. Yet a leaky and underfunded higher education pipeline was leaving Washington’s businesses without the supply of local, diverse talent they needed to grow and thrive.

That’s when elected officials took an interest in a new concept proposed by a small group of private sector leaders who wanted to create opportunity for students while building the workforce necessary to keep Washington’s economy strong.

- Maximize the resources available to support students.
- Create opportunities for those furthest from education.
- Incentivize students to pursue living-wage jobs in fields our economy needs to grow and thrive.
- Invite both the private and the public sector to have a shared stake in the solution.

Innovation paid off.

“Without this partnership in 2011, so many things we’ve been able to accomplish since would not have been possible. Companies can invest in something that’s beneficial to them and to our state. It’s a constructive relationship. **Instead of arguing as Democrats or Republicans, we asked, what can we do together to invest in our students and our economy. The answer was WSOS.**”

– Speaker Emeritus Frank Chopp, Democrat, 43rd legislative district, Seattle

Since our inception, the strong, bipartisan support of the Legislature has resulted in a dollar-for-dollar match totaling millions. Elected officials from across the state and both sides of the aisle see it as a smart investment in students and the future of our economy.

“Above all else, WSOS creates access. I’ve seen the value it brings to the lives of constituents in my district and the excitement it generates when students get access to opportunity and education. Particularly for first-generation college students, this public-private partnership makes their dreams possible. **It makes all the difference for our students.**”

– Senator Shelly Short, Republican, 7th legislative district, Addy

Ever since then-Governor Christine Gregoire signed WSOS into legislation, elected officials have continued to hone, refine and expand the program to meet the ever-changing needs of our state and regional economies.

“Washington is fortunate to have so many strong living-wage jobs, and we need to connect people into those careers with equity for BIPOC communities and rural communities. The ability to not just support bachelor’s degrees but also community college credentials up to graduate degrees illustrates the program’s power to evolve and meet the needs of our skilled trade, STEM and health care economies,” said Tim Probst, who led the effort to champion the original WSOS legislation while representing the 17th legislative district.

Our state, our economy and our students still need WSOS, perhaps more than ever. We’re so grateful the Legislature still trusts us to deliver.

Q&A WITH BETH JACKSON

WSOS supporter & mentor and Principal Research Scientist at Battelle

What inspires you to give to Washington State Opportunity Scholarship?

My dad grew up in a time and place when equity and inclusion were not widespread values. He was the first person in his family to attend college which was possible only through an ROTC scholarship. His graduation was followed by military service that included active duty in a war zone alongside fellow service members who did not look like him but shared many of his challenges and dreams.

As a result of these experiences, he became deeply invested in the principle of equal opportunity for everyone, an ideal my mom shared. **They knew that education was a key building block toward that goal.**

In supporting WSOS, I feel I am supporting their vision for the future which has become my own.

You have attended the OpportunityTalks Breakfast a few times now; what is your favorite memory?

I have attended since 2016, and it’s always a pleasure to sit next to a Scholar and get to know them as a person. On at least two occasions, I have bumped into Scholars that I’ve mentored, and they were eager to catch me up on their lives. I’m happy to report that we still keep in touch, and I get to see how their careers, and lives, are progressing!

What feels good about giving to WSOS?

I feel great about supporting WSOS because **our contributions have a direct and lasting impact on the lives of the students receiving scholarships**, and as a social scientist, I understand intimately the many downstream effects of a college degree on career opportunities, financial security, health and social function.



Beth is a social scientist and an avid runner with many full & half marathons under her belt. She has mentored six Opportunity Scholars.

What would you tell others who are considering supporting WSOS?

It’s dead easy—make a contribution and then envision the good it does. If, like me, you had to pay your own way through college, remember how much a few extra dollars meant when you had an unforeseen expense or your relief each time you figured out how you would cover tuition for the quarter.

“A unique aspect to supporting WSOS is actually non-monetary, in that you also have the opportunity to mentor one or more of these Scholars and see for yourself how they are making the most of the Opportunity Scholarship.”

Now for the hard questions: What has been your pandemic hobby? Does pineapple belong on pizza?

During the pandemic, I did two out of three of the cliches. I adopted a rescue puppy and a sourdough starter—I’m still training them both.

And yes! Pineapple goes great with Spam!