

Summer 2023

WASHINGTON STATE
OPPORTUNITY
SCHOLARSHIP

#iamopportunity



**Connecting Washington
Students to Washington Jobs**



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We envision a Washington where all residents have access to our state's best jobs, and our companies have the diverse, local talent needed to innovate for a better world.



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Front cover:
Luis, Alisha and Rehema, Opportunity Scholars

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Above, left to right:
Sam and Sandy, Opportunity Scholars

BUILDING A BETTER WASHINGTON TOGETHER

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

In our state, postsecondary education is vital. Education is a passport to access our innovative and technology-driven economy. It's necessary to earn a living wage. The means to house a family. A disruptor of generational poverty.

And yet the **numbers are still stacked against students in our state.** We still have thousands too few people pursuing education after high school. The wage gap continues to grow, keeping those who've long been historically excluded from opportunity further away from the jobs of the future.

At WSOS, we show up every day and do this work because Washington can't wait.

The momentum is starting to shift. Last year, the cornerstone partners who made WSOS possible back in 2010 **renewed commitments totaling \$40 million:** \$15 million from Microsoft, \$10 million from Gary and Jennifer Rubens, \$10 million from Ballmer Group and \$5 million from The Boeing Company and The Boeing Charitable Trust. The impact of our program inspired giving from new partners, including the Think Forward and Bamford Foundations.

Longtime partners, including Central Washington University Foundation, Bristol Meyers Squibb, the BECU Foundation, Kaiser Permanente, and Battelle, have also renewed their commitments.

Like all gifts to WSOS, these funds are **matched dollar-for-dollar by the state, doubling their impact.** The Legislature's unwavering bipartisan support and commitment to the state-match promise make our impact possible.

Together, we've supported over 17,000 students who have received just over \$128 million since 2011.

We've been at this work for a decade and still have far to go. The pandemic exacerbated the barriers that students who need support the most face and wiped out much of the gains our sector had made in connecting our bright and talented students to a higher education pathway. We can't let the enormity of the challenge deter us.

Our Scholars are **brilliant and courageous.** Their stories are filled with resilience and visions for a better future. Their inspiration gives us hope and drives us forward.

It's our greatest privilege to join you in helping students focus on tomorrow, today.

In gratitude,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brad Smith".

Brad Smith
WSOS Board Chair,
Microsoft Corporation
Vice Chair and President



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kimber Connors".

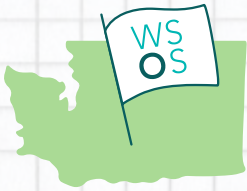
Kimber Connors
WSOS Executive Director

Follow Kimber on Twitter @KConnors_

WSOS will have dispersed more than **\$128.9 million to Scholars** across all scholarship programs by the end of the 2022-23 academic year.



Above, left to right: Rehema, Brian and Alem, Opportunity Scholars



Opportunity Scholars represent the vibrant diversity of Washington and contribute to its growth and innovation.

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

ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS, WSOS SCHOLARS ARE:

2/3
first-generation college students

~60%
women

7 in 10
students of color

100%
from low- to middle-income families

WSOS has helped launch the careers of more than:


1,000
engineers


1,100
computer scientists


700
scientists


1,100
health care professionals

OUR IMPACT

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

WSOS is the first public-private scholarship program dedicated to building lasting pathways to post-secondary education in high-demand STEM, health care, and trade careers for all Washington students.



The need

Washington students have **great potential** but are unable to pursue higher education due to financial barriers and systemic inequities. The Washington State Opportunity Scholarship (WSOS) **aims to break down these obstacles by offering pathways** for students to gain credentials that will help them secure family-sustaining, high-demand jobs where they can grow and innovate.

Our unique model

WSOS supports low-and middle-income Scholars to help them overcome obstacles toward achieving higher education. These supports include **financial assistance, career readiness training, and mentorship opportunities**. We offer flexible funding to enable students to pursue a wide range of eligible programs, including hundreds of certificates, associate, bachelor's, and graduate degrees at many Washington colleges and universities, both public and private.

Since its inception, WSOS has **created pathways for more than 7,400 Scholars to earn their bachelor's degree**, more than 500 to achieve a community or technical college credential and one to receive their graduate degree in nursing.

Opportunity Scholars are more likely to graduate, take on less debt and earn more than their peers. Once in the workforce, graduates from the Baccalaureate Scholarship (BaS) earn double what their family made just five years into their career.



Left to right: Opportunity scholars Ronalyn, Emanuel, Chena and Gage.

Our community and technical college recipients **earn three times what their families made** after just one year.

Washington benefits from WSOS by having a more educated workforce and increased economic opportunities, contributing to the state's overall economic growth and development.

WSOS' support has helped more than:



14,500

Baccalaureate
Scholars



2,000

Career & Technical
Scholars

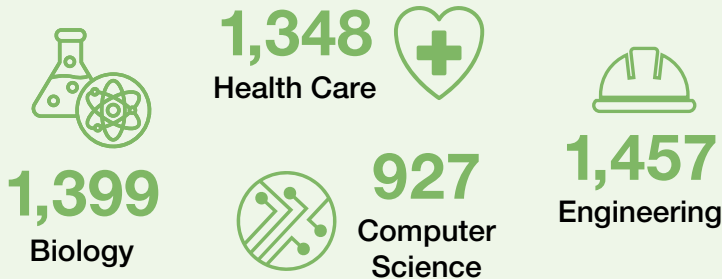


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Graduate
Scholars

BACCALAUREATE (BaS)

DEGREES EARNED PER INDUSTRY

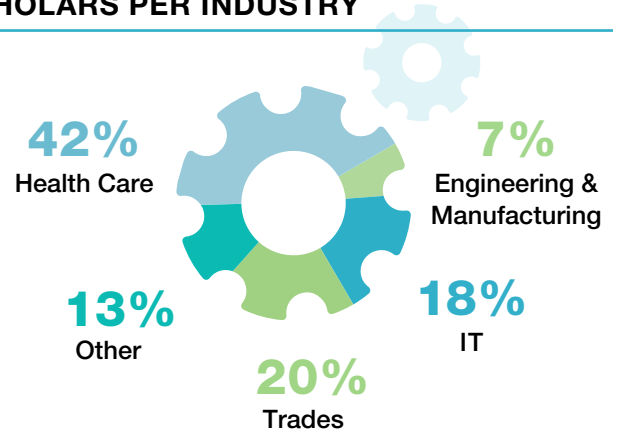


5 years after graduating, BaS recipients earn:

An average salary of **\$90K** **2x** what their family made when they entered college

CAREER & TECHNICAL (CTS)

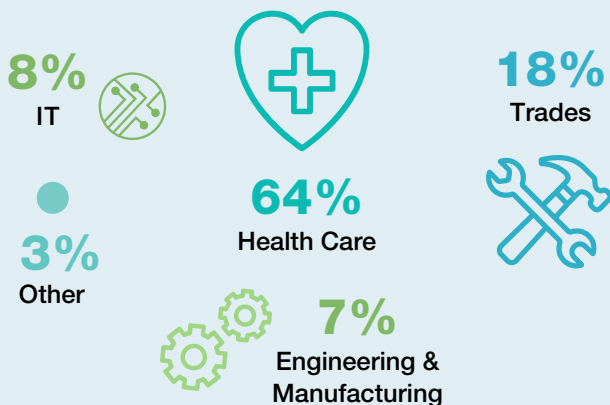
SCHOLARS PER INDUSTRY



The CTS program is growing!
Cohort 4 was our largest group so far with **1,215 Scholars**.

RURAL JOBS (RJI)

SCHOLARS PER INDUSTRY



GRADUATE (GRD)

SCHOLARS PER FIELD OF STUDY



Eligible programs include either a Master of Science (MSN) or Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP).

Legislative Spotlight:

Milestone bill ensures WSOS' lasting impact

This year, WSOS collaborated with the Legislature to pass **House Bill 1289, a significant milestone** for our program.

The bill gives our Board of Directors the flexibility needed to administer WSOS effectively while establishing a clear process to secure a dollar-for-dollar state match on every private dollar raised.

We owe a debt of gratitude to **State Representative Julia Reed of the 36th Legislative District (Seattle), who played a pivotal role as the bill's prime sponsor.** Her leadership ensured unanimous support at every significant vote in the House and the Senate. This **bipartisan support** showcases the Legislature's unwavering dedication to WSOS—a program that benefits taxpayers, industries, and students throughout Washington.

Thanks to the collective efforts of WSOS and the Legislature, we are thrilled to **continue making a lasting impact on the lives of students** and the future of Washington's workforce.

“ This bill ensures WSOS has a bright long-term future so that students and families—particularly those historically excluded from access to higher education—can count on this program to launch careers in our state's leading industries,” said Rep. Reed.



Key Figures Attend HB 1289 Signing Ceremony: Legislative Assistant Julia Lain, Lobbyist Cindi Holmstrom, WSOS Programs Director Johnathan Luster, and Rep. Julia Reed (top left to right) join Gov. Jay Inslee (center bottom).



OpportunityTalks 2023

The OpportunityTalks breakfast, held on April 28, 2023, was a huge success! With the attendance of more than 500 generous individuals, **the event raised over \$755,000 in donations.** We are extremely grateful for the support of everyone who attended and contributed to the event's success!

Earth Alliance CEO Brady Walkinshaw (top left) and Flying Fish Partners Co-Founder & Managing Partner Heather Redman (not pictured) took charge as emcees for the event. The breakfast provided an opportunity for Scholars and guests to interact at their tables.

Mentor Spotlight:

Microsoft's Douglas Lepar shares his insight with Scholars

WSOS mentors play a crucial role in the success of Opportunity Scholars.

These individuals help Scholars identify career goals, connect them with professionals in their field and offer guidance from their own experiences.

Microsoft Director of Operations Program Management Douglas Lepar heard about WSOS' mentorship program **Skills that Shine** from a colleague who volunteered for the program and suggested Douglas might be a good fit for their mentee, who was interested in a tech career.

As a **first-generation college student**, Lepar knew how it felt to navigate the complex college system. With 15 years of experience in the workforce, he was able to offer his mentees some guidance as they completed their career paths.

“I've been so impressed and humbled by the [students] I have seen who, thanks to this incredible program, have managed to juggle all those things while still thriving, growing, and engaging,” Lepar said.



DOUGLAS LEPAR

Douglas Lepar is a Director in the Microsoft, Consumer Sales Organization.

In his free time, he enjoys being with his family and computer gaming.

We have repeatedly heard from Scholars that mentors provide emotional support and encouragement to reach their goals. Through mentorship, Scholars gain **valuable professional development experiences** ranging from interview practice, resume review, and financial information.

To date, WSOS has matched more than 9,000 scholars with mentors.

The success of WSOS is reflected in the scholarships and professional development support provided to Scholars. **Mentors are crucial in helping guide and enhance Scholars' career readiness skills**, ensuring a smooth transition from college to career. Volunteering as a mentor can significantly impact a Scholar's life to help them succeed when they graduate.

Make your impact

Become a mentor

Join our Skills that Shine program by mentoring Scholars. The StS mentorship program engages industry partners to guide and enhance Scholars' career readiness skills, ensuring a smooth transition from college to career.

» To learn more, scan the QR code or visit waopportunityscholarship.org.



Become a Corporate Partner

Share internship and job opportunities to help Scholars gain valuable professional experience and kickstart their careers! Consider hosting lunch and learn sessions, industry-specific career panels, office site tours, or essay review events to engage with Scholars and contribute to their success.

» To learn more, scan the QR code or visit waopportunityscholarship.org.



SCHOLAR STORIES



AGAINST ALL ODDS:

JoAnna's Incredible Journey from Homelessness to a College Graduate

Opportunity Scholar JoAnna Edwards' story is one of determination.

Born in Eastern Washington, she faced a tumultuous childhood in Seattle, in and out of foster homes and experiencing homelessness.

As a teenager, she only went to school to get a meal and had no interest in learning. But years later, as an adult and a mother, she was dissatisfied with her life. "I was tired of watching other people accomplish great things," Edwards said.

While scrolling on social media, she came across an advertisement for financial aid that sparked an interest in going to school.

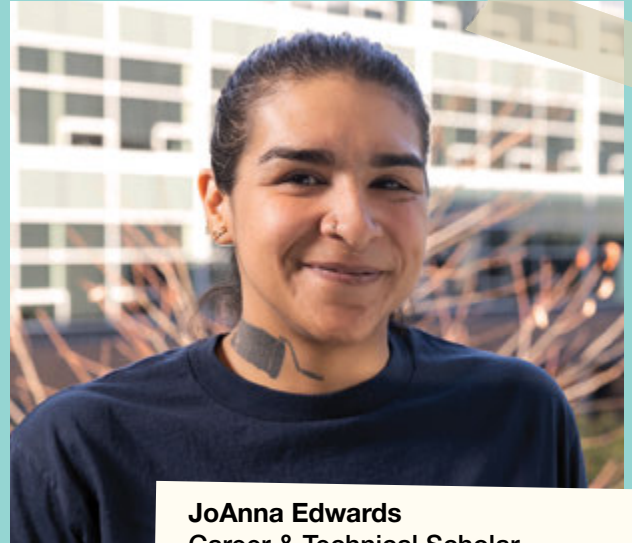
"I never really thought about going to school," she admits. **"But I thought, 'if I can fix cars, that is a skill that will never leave me. It is a skill I can pass down to my kids.'"**

Today, Edwards' perspective on education has completely changed. She now thirsts for knowledge and is pursuing a degree in automotive technology from South Seattle College.

Thanks to her hard work and support from the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship, **Edwards is making her dreams a reality.**

She has found a fulfilling career in a male-dominated industry and is able to support her family. Her story showcases her remarkable strength in pursuing an education and thriving, despite facing obstacles at every turn.

Her inspiring story serves as a powerful example of the **life-changing impact that education can have.**



JoAnna Edwards
Career & Technical Scholar
Majoring in Automotive Technology
South Seattle College

"When I won the scholarship it was monumental for me. It gave me the opportunity I was never afforded as a child in the system."

The scholarship really changed my ability to provide for my family, pay my tuition and for the things I needed," she said. "Without that I would never have made it through. To be able to walk away with a degree without any debt is great, I cannot thank WSOS enough."



WATCH:
Learn more about JoAnna's story!



HANSON OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP

“Receiving the Hanson Opportunity Scholarship meant a lot to me. It helped me follow my dreams of going to college and not having a lot of student loans. Growing up, my family was less fortunate than others, and college seemed to not be feasible.

“With the help of this scholarship and others I received, the idea of college became more reachable.”

— Kayla Trapp, Tacoma
BaS Scholar | Biology, Central Washington University



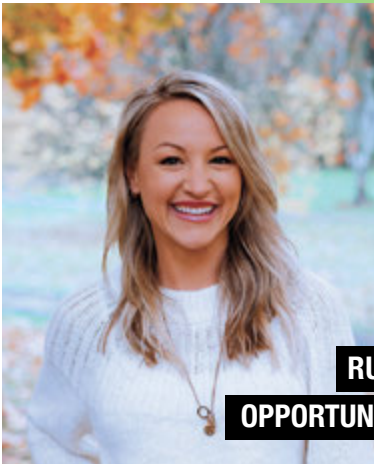
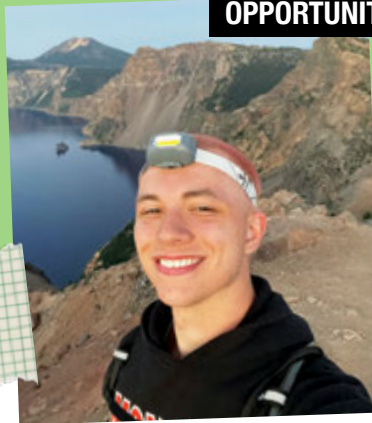
THINK FORWARD FOUNDATION

OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP

“This scholarship allows me to focus more on my studies rather than how I will pay for them.

It gives me a greater chance of doing what I thought was impossible, which is becoming a researcher and graduating with a doctorate.”

— Dalton Blackwell, Monroe
BaS Scholar | Biology
University of Washington - Seattle



RUBENS

OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP

“I’m a single mom of a five-year-old boy, and [even] being a medical assistant and a surgical tech, it is hard to make ends meet. This [scholarship] will provide us a lifestyle that will fit into our budget.”

— Laura Rochester, Puyallup
CTS Scholar | Nursing, Pierce College

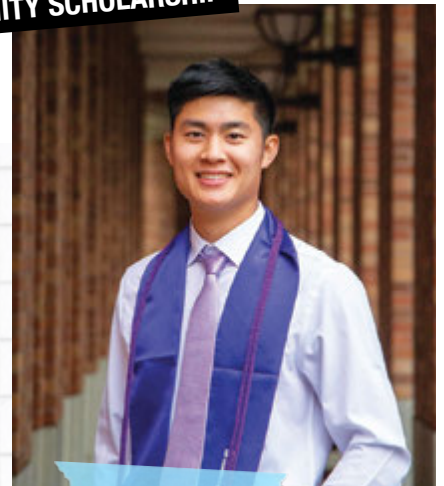
KAISER PERMANENTE

OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP

“Getting this scholarship meant that these organizations believed in me and invested in my path to success.

It showed me that they not only cared about their own success, but had the generosity and consideration to give to those in need.

— Colby Tong, Auburn
BaS Scholar | Computer Science
University of Washington - Seattle



Donor Spotlight:

Q & A with BECU

The BECU Foundation returned for its fifth year as a corporate investor, supporting **over 17 new Scholars** for a total of **136 Scholars** since our partnership began.

BECU staff have also joined as volunteers to read applicant essays. New this year, BECU is promoting WSOS' application cycles through its website and digital communications.

Why is BECU passionate about WSOS and increasing access to higher education?

Data shows that postsecondary education correlates with greater lifelong earning potential. Inspired by these studies, the BECU Foundation partnered with WSOS to help **provide access to education** and support degree completion. Through our partnership, we **offer financial assistance and support hands-on educational opportunities** that stem beyond the classroom. We hope our scholarships lead to long-term success and financial well-being for our BECU Opportunity Scholars.

What aspects of WSOS interest BECU the most?

The BECU Foundation values the variety of fields and pathways that WSOS supports. Supporting more than one educational path **recognizes the various ways of learning and succeeding in life**. The level of resources provided to students makes it possible to achieve high quality work, and it fosters the self-confidence needed to complete their educational journey. The Foundation and WSOS are aligned in reducing the root causes of inequity.

Why is it important for BECU to support Washington students, including BECU members?

Many Washington students are at risk of not completing their credentials due to financial hardship. The BECU Foundation supports financial empowerment, which starts the journey to financial freedom.



The BECU Foundation is a private charitable foundation that awards scholarships to qualified students, creating positive change in key communities. Since 1995, the Foundation has awarded more than \$3.5 million in scholarships to more than 1,305 students. The Foundation extends the credit union philosophy of people helping people by offering educational support to members and their families.

“ We are dedicated to increasing financial access, improving financial education, helping individuals increase their earning power, and strengthening our communities' financial health.

With financial health, students can seize opportunities and build financial resilience, or the ability to withstand life events that impact income, assets, and future plans. By supporting partners that **align with this vision**, we can have an impact that supports Scholars' financial well-being.

What do you wish others knew about WSOS?

WSOS is more than just a scholarship program. Scholars trust WSOS to be there when hardships arise, and many face barriers that can take an emotional toll. **WSOS can be the resource students turn to for support** to overcome hurdles on their education pathway.

2022 – 2023 Partners and Sponsors

Thank you for supporting our mission
and your commitment to making a
difference in our communities.

Cornerstone Partners



Partners and Sponsors



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Bamford Foundation

Battelle

Benaroya Research Institute

Car Pros

Century West Engineering Corp

Chronosphere

College Success Foundation

Costco Wholesale

Degrees of Change

DocuSign

Fred Hutchinson Cancer
Research Center

Frontstream

Group14 Engineering, PBC

Hargis Engineers

Institute for Systems Biology (ISB)

Kaiser Permanente

King County Water and Land
Resources Division

McKinstry

More in Common Alliance

MultiCare Health System

NanoString Technologies

Oracle

Outpace Bio

Parametrix, Inc.

Pier 70 Ventures

PNNL

Premier, Inc.

Providence St. Joseph Health

Result Key LLC

Seattle Children's Research
Institute

Seattle Colleges

Seattle Colleges Foundation

Sellen Construction

University of Washington Bothell

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of External Affairs

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of Pharmacy

Virginia Mason Franciscan Health

Washington Forest Protection
Association

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Association