



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

Opportunity Scholars
(pictured from left to right):
ANALICIA, SALMA

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All data in this report is from November 2023

WELCOME LETTER FROM WSOS BOARD CHAIR BRAD SMITH & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KIMBER CONNORS

Over the past 12 years, Washington State Opportunity Scholarship (WSOS) has made a remarkable difference in the lives of more than 18,000 students and has helped build stronger communities across Washington.

When we launched WSOS as the nation's first public-private scholarship program, we were dedicated to creating new pathways to postsecondary education for historically excluded Washington students. That's exactly what we've done.

Opportunity Scholars have received more than \$150 million to help them pursue careers in science, technology, health care, and trade fields.

Our scholarship programs recognize and support the talent and perseverance of a diverse student population—those from rural areas, low- to middle-income families, and communities of color.

Our innovative model provides more than just financial aid, with mentoring and other supports to help increase students' opportunities for success. Positively changing the trajectory of these students' lives today can help change the course of our state's future.

Still, more Washington students need support from WSOS. Over the last four years, we unfortunately have only been

able to provide scholarship funds to approximately half of eligible applicants. It's disheartening to have to say no to highly qualified and motivated students who want to pursue credentials and build careers in fields our state desperately needs.

WSOS needs your help to rise and meet this challenge. Imagine the difference we could make if WSOS could support all eligible students who apply.

According to research conducted for the Washington Roundtable, 72% of all jobs in Washington state will require postsecondary training or credentials by 2031.

Credential attainment in our state currently falls far short of that target—and the gap is especially acute among the students WSOS supports.

Students need our help to reach their potential, build rewarding careers, and contribute to a more vibrant community. We thank you for being a partner in our work and hope that you will continue to build a brighter tomorrow for Washington by investing in WSOS today.



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

BRAD SMITH
Chair, WSOS Board of Directors
Vice Chair and President, Microsoft Corporation



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

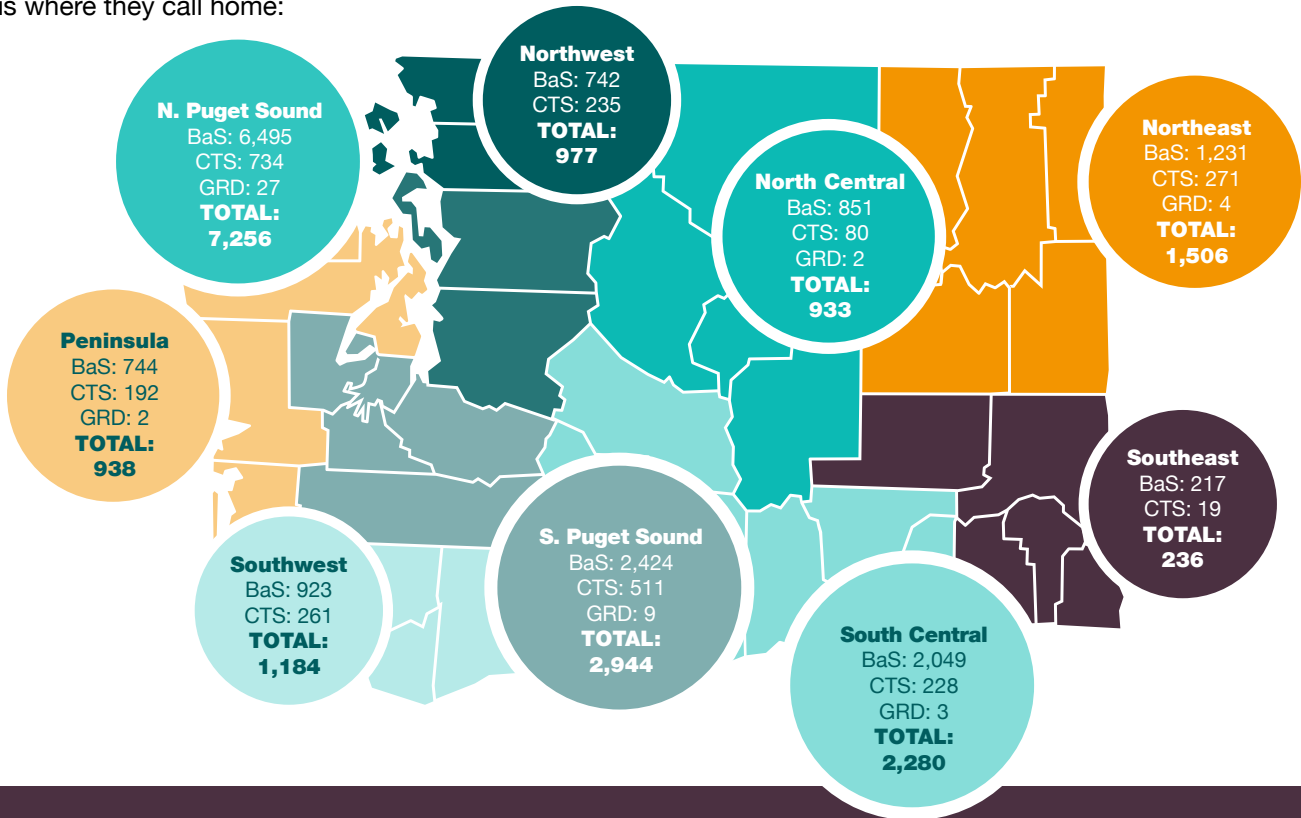
KIMBER CONNORS
Executive Director, WSOS

OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARS SERVED



WSOS GRADUATES ARE FROM EVERY REGION & COUNTY

Since the Baccalaureate Scholarship was created in 2011, the Career & Technical Scholarship in 2019, and the Graduate Scholarship in 2020, we have served 18,254 Opportunity Scholars from all corners of Washington state. Here is where they call home:



Since 2011, we have disbursed over **\$150 million** in scholarship funds to Opportunity Scholars throughout Washington!

IMPACT OVERVIEW

For over a decade, WSOS has built pathways to high-demand, living-wage careers in Washington state, which uniquely focus on the needs of students who have been historically excluded from opportunity.

Because of the success of our flagship Baccalaureate Scholarship (BaS) program, created in 2011, the Washington State Legislature entrusted WSOS with new areas of impact, expanding our support beyond bachelor's degrees. Today, we support students pursuing apprenticeships, certificates, and associate degrees through the Career & Technical Scholarship (CTS) and students pursuing advanced nurse practitioner degrees in our Graduate Scholarship program (GRD).

Rural students are uniquely positioned for success through the GRD program and the CTS program. GRD supports students who intend to provide health care to medically underserved areas of the state, increasing the number of medical practitioners and available health care professionals in these areas. The Rural Jobs Initiative, a program within the CTS program, offers increased funding to address the unique barriers facing rural communities and technical college students to launch them into high-demand jobs in their rural communities.

100%
of Opportunity Scholars are
low- to middle-income

65%
of Opportunity Scholars
are students of color

54%
of Opportunity Scholars
identify as women

62%
of Opportunity Scholars are
first-generation college students

32%
of Opportunity Scholars
are from rural counties

The average age of a Baccalaureate Scholar is **20**, a Career & Technical Scholar is **32**, and a Graduate Scholar is **36**. Across all scholarships, the average age is **24**.

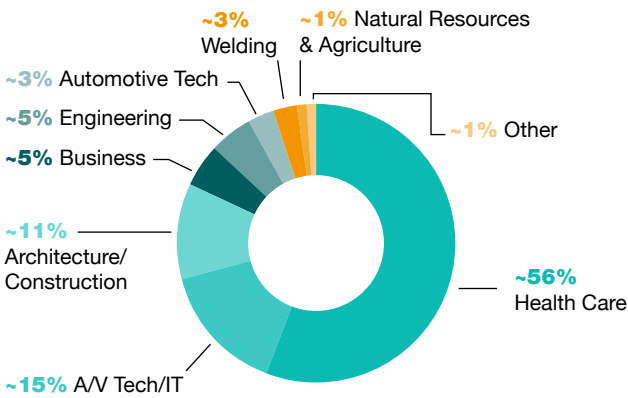
“ The most helpful part of the WSOS program was knowing that someone willingly offers this assistance to many students across the state, in hopes that they work towards achieving their academic and career goals. Knowing that someone’s money was being invested into my future has been a motivator through my academic journey.



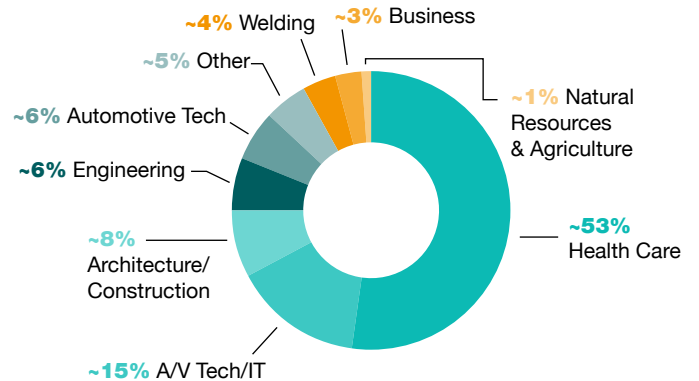
FRANCISCO
Baccalaureate Scholarship
Agricultural Teacher Education

CAREER & TECHNICAL SCHOLARSHIP

Current Scholars by major or field of interest:

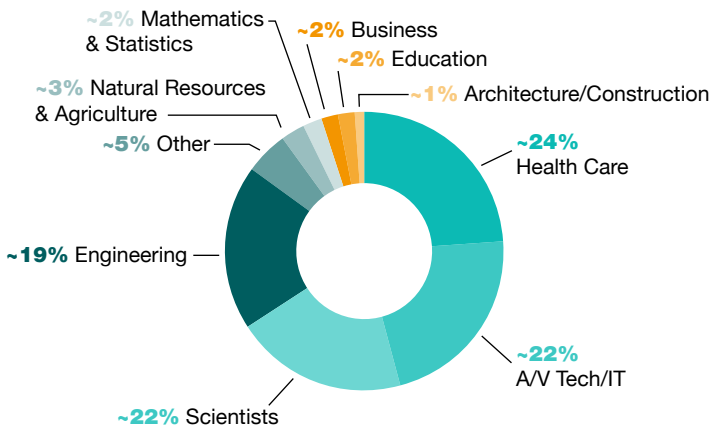


Alums have graduated into the following fields:

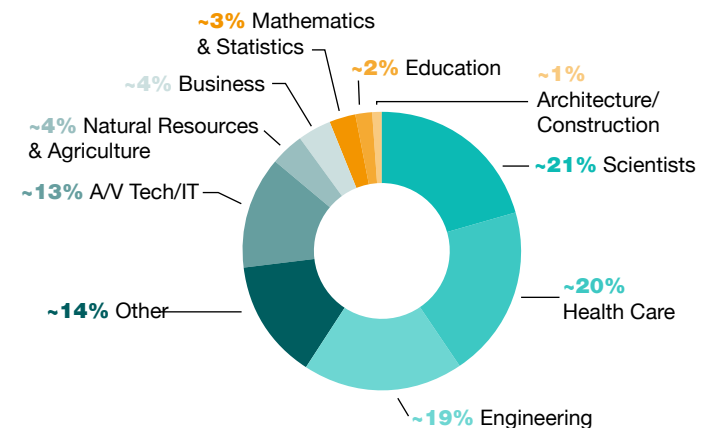


BACCALAUREATE SCHOLARSHIP

Current Scholars by major or field of interest:



Alums have graduated into the following fields:



Rural Jobs Initiative highlights.

Top five institutions attended:

16%
Bellingham
Technical College

15%
Grays Harbor
College

14%
Yakima Valley
College

12%
Spokane
Community College

9%
Peninsula
College

Top three programs pursued:

29%
Nursing

19%
Medical Technician/
Assistant

11%
Medical Support
Services

85 Opportunity Scholars have graduated from the RJJ since the first cohort in 2020.

LEGISLATIVE SPOTLIGHT

The Washington State Legislature created the Rural Jobs Initiative (RJI) in 2018. Thanks to the generous support of Brad Smith and Kathy Surace-Smith and the continuing support of Gary and Jennifer Rubens, we were able to support our first cohort of Scholars in 2020.

RJI was created to address the unique barriers facing rural communities and technical college students. The program makes it easier for residents farthest from Washington's community and technical college campuses to earn a credential that will help them get a high-demand job in their rural community.

Rep. Mike Chapman, a Democrat representing Washington's 24th Legislative District and the Olympic Peninsula, sponsored the bill because he saw the insurmountable higher education barriers facing too many of our state's rural students. He crafted the program to open doors to economic opportunity while encouraging students to pursue jobs their communities need.

"This program is encouraging students to pursue the credentials that are critically needed in their hometowns," said Rep. Chapman. "Connecting residents to training and education pathways that lead to strong jobs in their rural communities is invaluable to both the people and businesses that call these places home; it's a win-win for students and employers."

"Community colleges are a vital connection between students and the jobs that fuel our economy," said Sen. Matt Boehnke, a Republican representing the eighth legislative district including the Tri-Cities. "Careers in the trades and STEM are growing in all corners of Washington, not just in urban populations. This program provides important pathways to these opportunities, connecting our beautiful rural cities and towns to strong jobs and living wages."

Learn more about the most recently selected Opportunity Scholars in the Rural Jobs Initiative (Cohort 3):

- **65%** identify as women, and **84%** identify as first-generation college students.
- Scholars come from **20** of Washington's **31** eligible rural counties.
- Their median household income is **\$21,139**.
- **61%** are pursuing education and training in the health care industry, **16%** in the trades, **11%** in information technology, **5%** in engineering/manufacturing, and **7%** in other industries.
- **58%** are over the age of **30**, and **84%** are over the age of **23**.

“WSOS has allowed me to be a present father in my children’s lives while pursuing school and my career. Being financially supported through my schooling has motivated me to keep going. I will be forever grateful for this scholarship and opportunity.”

JAIME
Career & Technical Scholar
Rural Jobs Initiative recipient
Chemical Dependency Specialist
Yakima Valley College

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

BRISTOL MYERS SQUIBB



Why are you passionate about WSOS' mission?

As a Washington resident and business leader, I am deeply concerned about the pandemic's impact on student learning and ongoing declines in enrollment in our state's public colleges and universities. I'm optimistic about the future, but we need to act now to ensure our students are ready for the opportunities that lie ahead. At Bristol Myers Squibb, our teams in Washington discover, develop, and deliver innovative cell-based therapies and biotherapeutics to treat serious diseases. We believe business also has a role to play in supporting the future careers of our young people. Bristol Myers Squibb has invested in STEM education across the state so that students—especially those from groups underrepresented in STEM—can explore and pursue diverse and growing opportunities in STEM-related fields.

Teri Foy, Senior Vice President, Cancer Immunology and Cell Therapy Thematic Research Center and Seattle Site Head at Bristol Myers Squibb

Why is it important for you and Bristol Myers Squibb to support WSOS?

One can't ignore the data showing the positive impact WSOS is having in our communities—from the incredible outcomes for the Opportunity Scholars who have higher graduation rates than their peers to the economic development benefits it provides to our state.

WSOS is one of a kind in the broad level support it provides. One way is in how the program offers funds so that students can use their scholarships for things like paying for the costs of driving a car to and from school, high-speed internet, and other costs associated with their studies.

A second is in providing both peer and industry mentorship opportunities. Many of these students are the first in their family to pursue postsecondary education but despite not having family members to provide insights into habits for success from their own college experiences,

these students tend to graduate at higher rates than their peers. It's this thoughtful support that leads to these outcomes and has provided opportunities for our scientists and leaders to connect directly with these amazing students.

At Bristol Myers Squibb and in the larger business ecosystem in Washington state, we have a high need for specialized talent, whether that be in the life sciences, technology, or aerospace industries. Opportunity Scholars provide a key pipeline of diverse local scientists, technologists, and engineers who are well prepared to contribute to the innovative industries that are a key part of the state's ecosystem. And there is simply nothing more important to the future of our state than investing in the next generations of bright minds.

Alison Fitch, Director, Cancer Immunology and Cell Therapy Thematic Research Center, Strategy & Operations and Seattle STEM Engagement Lead

What is your most memorable experience working with WSOS?

Throughout my time at Bristol Myers Squibb, I've been lucky enough to interact with Opportunity Scholars in an engaging virtual panel, at the inspiring OpportunityTalks event, and most memorably, while leading a lab tour through our Seattle research facilities. Being a young scientist myself, I really identified with the awe I saw in some of the Scholars as they donned the same lab coats, gloves, and safety goggles our own scientists use while we conduct life-changing research. I saw their enthusiasm grow as they engaged in meaningful conversations, eagerly seeking guidance and insights to shape their own journeys. By the end of the day, I was fulfilled knowing we had accomplished our overarching goal of engaging with WSOS: providing support for Scholars so that they continue to be curious and make a positive impact on our world.

Arman Naderi, Senior Associate Scientist, Cancer Immunology and Cell Therapy Thematic Research Center and WSOS Volunteer



SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

NINA MEI

Nina Mei is a first-generation college student and one of the first Opportunity Scholars accepted to two scholarships through WSOS: the Baccalaureate Scholarship, where she received her bachelor's degree in nursing, and the Graduate Scholarship, where she is pursuing a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP).

“ I learned about the importance of education from my parents, as they did not have the opportunity to pursue higher education in China and instead had to work to support their families. Because of this, I decided to attend college at Seattle University and pursue nursing.

WSOS helped me afford my undergraduate education and complete a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at Seattle University.

After graduating from Seattle University and passing my nursing licensure examination, I took my first job as a registered nurse at a skilled nursing facility. I went on to gain experience in a primary care clinic part-time while starting a one-year hospital residency program in an orthopedics unit. After completing the residency program and becoming a skilled nurse, I worked as a float nurse in various medical-surgical units. Through these various experiences, I realized my passion lies in primary care and preventative care, so I became determined to become a family nurse practitioner.

The Graduate Scholarship will help me afford my graduate education and complete a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree at the University of Washington.

I am not sure yet where the future will take me, but I have a special place in my heart for vulnerable populations who face barriers to accessing health care, such as those who are low-income, in medically underserved areas, or minority groups. It is so important to have health care providers who can reflect and understand their patients, and it would be my honor as a family nurse practitioner.”

“ WSOS has been an amazing mentorship program for me to build connections with other students taking similar career paths as me. This program provided me with a strong foundation to succeed throughout my last four years of college.



MAI
Baccalaureate Scholarship
Clark County, WSU Vancouver
Neuroscience



LEONARDO
Baccalaureate Scholarship
Chelan County, WSU Pullman
Mechanical Engineering

“ The most helpful part of the scholarship is pairing me with a mentor that already works in the industry because I can ask for advice, we can solve problems together, and I’m able to network with other professionals.

“ As a first-gen student, this scholarship isn't just a Band-Aid – it's a superpower. It lets me aim past the bills and stretch towards the stars. It's the fuel for my professional ambitions and the rocket booster for my community impact.



JOHNSON
Career & Technical Scholarship
Pierce County, Green River College
Cybersecurity and Networking



ROSA
Graduate Scholarship
Pierce County, Pacific Lutheran University
Family Nurse Practitioner

“ WSOS has been a great experience. I really appreciate the thoughtfulness of the program with not only helping pay for school with the scholarship but also defraying travel costs with the stipend. I also appreciate the support with check-ins and professional development opportunities.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

JULIE GARDNER, AVANAIDE

Why do you choose to volunteer and partner with WSOS?

I choose to volunteer and partner with WSOS because I am passionate about supporting students and helping the next generation achieve their goals in a non-prescriptive way. My favorite thing about volunteering with WSOS is seeing the tangible impact it has on the lives of the Scholars.

What have been your other favorite things about volunteering with WSOS?

My favorite thing about volunteering with WSOS is the interactions and engagements I've had with the team itself. I've been able to co-create trusting partnerships with WSOS staff, ideate on new ideas to present to the students, continually learn about the transformation of the organization, and feel close to the organization as a whole.

Why is WSOS important for Washington students, businesses, & communities?

WSOS is important for Washington students, businesses, and communities because it provides opportunities for education and professional development, which can lead to a brighter future for all. It is committed to establishing an equitable pathway for future trade, STEM, and health care workers and provides opportunities for younger generations to continue to follow their visions for the lives they'd like to build.

Make your impact

Become a Volunteer Essay Reviewer

Each student applying for a scholarship writes short-answer essays as part of the application process. By signing up as an essay reviewer, you'll help carefully review each essay and help select the next generation of Washington leaders!

To learn more about this opportunity, scan the QR code or visit waopportunityscholarship.org.



Become an Industry Partner

You can host a lunch and learn for your community to learn about WSOS and ways to engage! Become a WSOS Industry Partner to help provide Scholars with career development opportunities and industry exploration including industry-specific career panels, office site tours, and applicant essay review events.

To learn more, email development@waopportunityscholarship.org.

DONORS & PARTNERS

Thank you to our partners and supporters for your generous contributions in 2023! Donors are included at their lifetime giving support level. The incredible impact we have shared in this report would not have been possible without our community's support.

CORNERSTONE PARTNERS (\$5 MILLION+)



VISIONARY PARTNERS (\$1 MILLION+)

BECU Foundation
Brad Smith and Kathy Surace-Smith
The Connell Family

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Providence St. Joseph Health

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Amy and Pete Hanson
Jim and Janet Sinegal

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Research Institute

Seattle Colleges
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Bothell
University Of Washington
Office of External Affairs
Washington Forest
Protection Association
Washington State
Hospital Association

COMMUNITY & INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Thank you to our community and industry partners who help connect their networks with Opportunity Scholars. With their help, we've paired hundreds of Scholars with mentors and created industry-specific opportunities for Scholars to engage and explore career pathways and industry opportunities in Washington state.

Accenture
Alpine Immune Sciences, Inc.
Avanade
Benaroya Research Institute

Cambia Health Solutions
DocuSign
King County Public Health

King County Water and
Land Resources Division
Outpace Bio
Premier, Inc.

Thank you to all the schools, organizations, and individuals who have helped promote WSOS and our applications in 2023! If you're interested in partnering with WSOS to promote the scholarship to your community, email info@waopportunityscholarship.org.