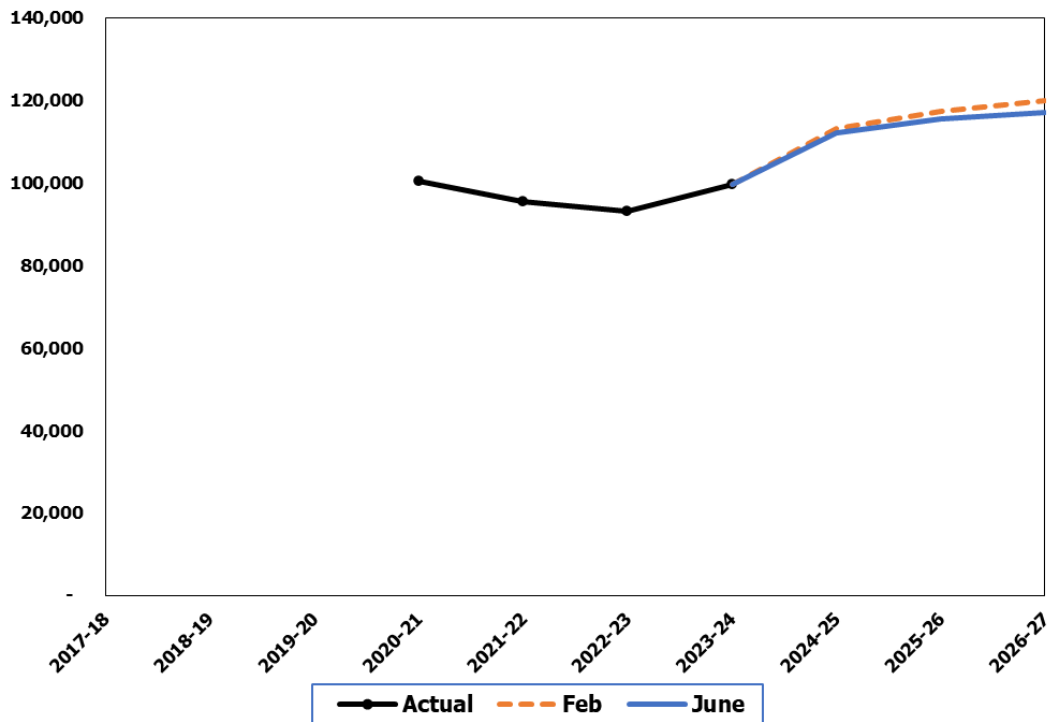


Washington College Grant

Caseload Forecast Council
June 11, 2025

Washington College Grant Enrollment (Academic Year Total Headcount)



The Washington College Grant (WCG) provides eligible students with financial aid awards based on public tuition rates for use at public and private participating institutions of higher education in Washington State. Certain registered apprentices may also qualify for funds. The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) administers the WCG. This caseload was established through HB 2158 (Chapter 406, Laws of 2019); it was not an entitlement before 2020-21.

Forecast Comparisons (Academic Year Totals)

Academic Year	Feb-25 Forecast	Jun-25 Forecast	Feb to Jun Difference	Percent Difference
2024-25	113,267	112,006	-1,261	-1.1%
2025-26	117,320	115,408	-1,912	-1.6%
2026-27	119,840	116,960	-2,880	-2.4%

Compared to February, the June 2025 forecast is 1,261 students or 1.1 percent lower for the academic year 2024-25 and, on average, 2,396 students or 2.0 percent lower for the 2025-27 Biennium. The main reasons are updated actuals and enrollment changes from passage of SB 5785 (Chapter 395, Laws of 2025), which ends the grant for private for-profit institutions and reduces the grant for non-profit four-year institutions, effective in the 2026-27 school year.

Forecast Contact:
Paula Moore
360-664-9376
paula.moore@cfc.wa.gov

Tracking the Current Forecast

Academic Year	Feb-25 Forecast	Actual	Variance	Percent Variance
2024-25	113,267	112,006	-1,261	-1.1%

Actuals for 2024-25 academic year are tracking 1.1 percent below the February forecast. CBSP data updates occur four times per year. The June forecast uses lag adjusted data to account for students delaying enrollment until spring and/or summer term. Final year data is available with the November forecast cycle.

Academic Year Caseload Change

	Academic Year	Caseload	Change from Prior Year	Percent Change
Actual	2020-21	100,427		
	2021-22	95,337	-5,090	-5.1%
	2022-23	93,093	-2,244	-2.4%
	2023-24	99,611	6,518	7.0%
Forecast	2024-25	112,006	12,395	12.4%
	2025-26	115,408	3,402	3.0%
	2026-27	116,960	1,552	1.3%

The WCG became an entitlement during the 2020-21 year when COVID-19 reduced demand for higher education. The 2021-22 year followed with a significantly improved labor market, which also lowered demand for higher education, and enrollment continued to decline another 5.1 percent. During the 2022-23 year enrollment picked up at the Community and Technical Colleges (CTCs) and private two-year colleges, particularly among older adult students. The year-over-year decline halved to 2.4 percent. By 2023-24 enrollment increased by an additional 6,518 students, or 7.0 percent year-over-year as a softening labor market brought back both younger and older students to the CTCs.

The 2024-25 year brought a 12.4 percent growth rate, as participation in higher education is increasing and more students are eligible due to revised formulas for financial aid. The formula most impacted older independent students who have children.

Passage of SB 5785 is forecasted to reduce the WCG caseload as it eliminates the grant for private for-profit institutions and reduces the grant amount for non-profit four-year institutions. These changes go into effect in 2026-27 for WCG and 2027-28 for students also participating in the College Bound Scholarship Program. Financial aid offices are required to coordinate the awards when packaging. The forecast does assume a portion of students will shift from private to public sector programs due to affordability.

The 2025-26 school year is expected to grow 3 percent year-over-year, recognizing that some students will start to change their enrollment behavior if the funding substantially changes part way through their studies. The 2026-27 school year will only grow 1.3 percent as the students in the for-profit private programs will no longer be eligible to receive the WCG.

Forecast Contact:
Paula Moore
360-664-9376
paula.moore@cfc.wa.gov

Apprenticeships

The June 2025 forecast for WCG apprenticeships for 20204-25 is 2,697, which is on par with the February 2025 forecast of 2,685. Modest reductions are made to the forecast for the 2025-27 Biennium, which assumes 4,567 for 2025-26, followed by 5,320 for 2026-27 due to slowing construction employment, as forecast in March by the Economic and Revenue Forecast Council. The February 2025 forecast had assumed 4,607 in 2025-26 and 5,413 in 2026-27. WSAC has partnered with a third-party servicer to increase participation in the WCG-apprenticeship program. The CTCs will also start servicing grants in the 2025-27 Biennium.

Risks to the Forecast

The apprenticeship component of the forecast is a new program, with significant risk regarding expansion and growth. For example, in June the 2023-24 forecast assumed 1,833 would participate, but due to service provider delays, the actuals came in at 836. While these delays have been addressed, other implementation issues could impact future growth.

Further shifts in the economy (labor market, inflation) could also impact the forecast. The demand for higher education financial aid is often cyclical with the labor market—enrollment often declines when there is a strong demand for labor and increases when unemployment rises.