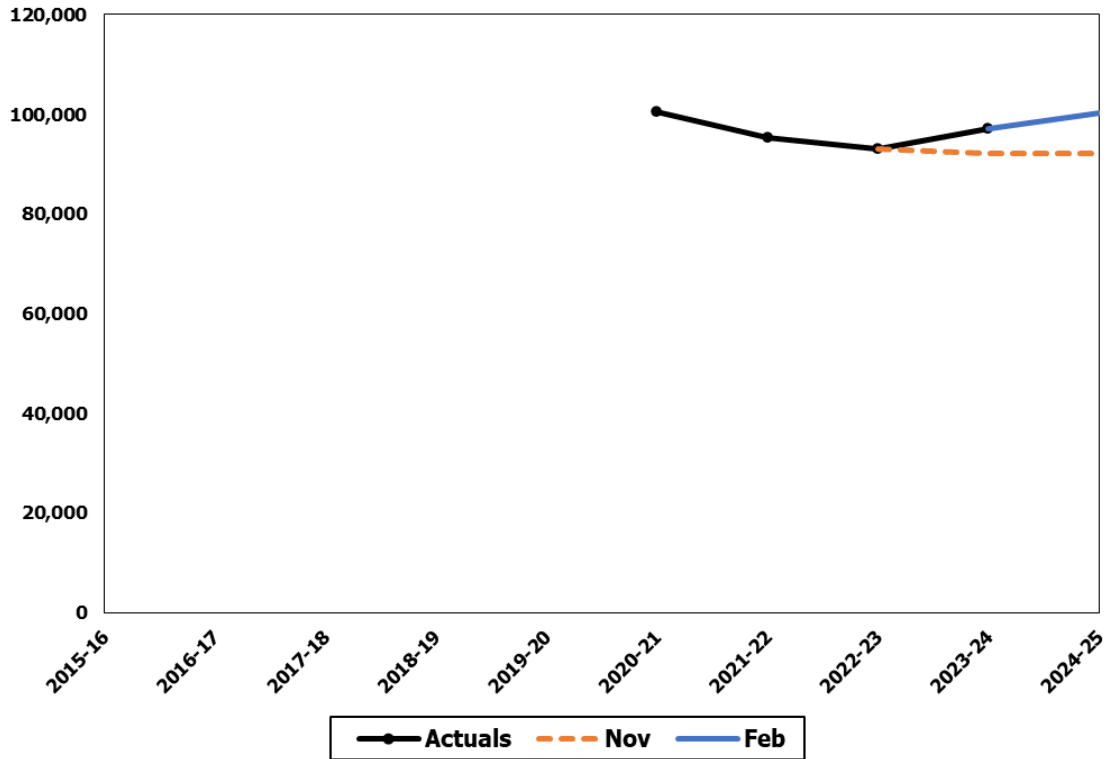


Washington College Grant Enrollment (Academic Year Headcount)



Starting in the 2020-21 academic year, the Washington College Grant (WCG) provides all eligible students with financial aid awards based on public tuition rates. WCG can be used at public and private participating institutions of higher education in Washington State. A grant is also offered to certain registered apprentices. The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) administers the WCG. This caseload was established through HB 2158, passed during the 2019 legislative session. Previously, the program was not an entitlement.

Forecast Comparisons (Academic Year Averages)

Academic Year	Nov-23 Forecast	Feb-24 Forecast	Nov to Feb Difference	Percent Difference
2023-24	92,082	97,131	5,049	5.5%
2024-25	92,165	100,156	7,991	8.7%

The February 2024 forecast is, on average, 6,520 students or 7.1 percent higher than the November 2023 forecast for the 2023-25 Biennium.

Tracking the Current Forecast

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Fall Term	Nov-23			Percent
Headcount	Forecast	Actual	Variance	Variance
2023-24	67,909	71,701	3,791	5.6%

Actuals for Fall Term of the 2023-24 academic year are tracking 5.6 percent above the November forecast. WCG data updates occur four times per year. The February forecast compares enrollment for Fall Term compared to the November forecast. The forecast model relies on Fall Term to estimate the year’s overall enrollment as a portion of students defer enrollment until spring and/or summer term.

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%
Forecast	2023-24	97,131	4,038	4.3%
	2024-25	100,156	3,025	3.1%

The WCG became an entitlement during the 2020-21 year when COVID-19 impacted 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 and private two-year colleges, particularly among older adult students. The year-over-year decline halved to 2.4 percent. Improved enrollment in Fall 2023 reversed the pattern of decline. The increase was driven by growth at the Community and Technical Colleges, both in younger students and older students. The 2023-24 forecast assumes an additional 4,038 students, or a 4.3 percent year-over-year increase. A slightly lower growth rate is assumed in 2024-25, with 3.1 percent year-over-year growth. By the end of the 2024-25 year, enrollment is projected to be near 2020-21 levels, matching enrollment during the first year of the pandemic.

Apprenticeships

The WCG forecast assumes a 36 percent increase in enrollment for registered apprenticeships. The February 2024 forecast for WCG apprenticeships is 750 for 2023-24 and 1,500 for 2024-25, an increase from November which had assumed 600 for 2023-24 and 1,050 for 2024-25. WSAC has partnered with a third-party servicer to increase participation in the WCG-apprenticeship program.

Risks to the Forecast

Risks to the WCG forecast are high, as it is a new forecast. 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. The apprenticeship component of the WCG is also a new program and forecast, lacking historical data.

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