



For Immediate Release –May 19, 2011

College Spark grants nearly \$1.2 million to boost college readiness and graduation rates for low-income students in Washington

College Spark Washington announced grants totaling \$1.199 million to thirteen organizations in the state to support college access and retention for low-income students.

The transition between high school and college can be challenging for any student, but is especially difficult for students whose families are not familiar with the process of applying for and enrolling in college, or students who do not have family support. Community-based organizations, schools, and colleges all play important roles in helping students prepare for and succeed in college, and many are developing innovative ways to reach students most in need of support and help them along their path toward a college degree.

For seven years College Spark has been providing grants to build the capacity of the programs and organizations that support college success for low-income students. Four of this year's grantees focus on increasing the college readiness of low-income middle and high school students, five focus on helping students succeed once they get into college, and four support both readiness and retention strategies. Among other strategies, grantees are engaging students through service learning and leadership training, and assessing what impact these variables have on student success. Grantees are also increasing the use of data to guide program planning and for piloting program modifications designed to increase access to services in cost effective ways.

Together, all grantees promote College Spark Washington's mission to help low-income Washington students become college-ready and graduate from college.

Recipients of 2011 College Spark grants:

Community Colleges of Spokane (Spokane) – \$117,000 over three years to expand the Student Transition Information Project for improving the quality of data available to K-20 educators and for helping educators use the data effectively and immediately to improve college preparation and access.

Green River Community College (Auburn) – \$100,000 over two years to establish the Master Achiever Center (MAC) to increase retention and degree/credential completion of low-income I-BEST students by connecting them with support services to help them move toward a two- or four-year degree.

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North Seattle Community College (Seattle) – \$159,000 over two years to collaborate with Seattle Central Community College and Seattle Vocational Institute to expand orientation strategies for low-income students to include COMPASS Test prep and career guidance along with an extended version of the College 101 program.

Northwest Indian College (Bellingham) – \$128,473 over three years to work with Heritage High School in Marysville to improve reading for low-income high school students through a variety of strategies, and raise students' awareness about and preparation for college. The interventions include training for high school and college staff on vision testing, standard reading curriculum and new web-based tools for improving student reading and comprehension.

Northwest Leadership Foundation (Tacoma) – \$31,900 over one year to develop and assess a scaled down version of the Act Six program in order to create an intervention that could reach a much greater number of students than the current model.

Pacific Lutheran University (Tacoma) – \$57,380 over two years to construct an academic support structure to provide low-income students with resources to help overcome barriers to success and increase their likelihood of staying in college to graduation.

Seattle Education Access (Seattle) – \$103,600 over two years to expand college readiness and outreach services to south King County and to conduct an external evaluation of the services provided to low-income homeless and formerly homeless youth.

Seattle Goodwill Industries (Seattle) – \$100,000 over two years to transform the Summer Youth Training and Outdoor Skill Building Program for high-risk youth into a year-round program with a major focus on college-readiness. The program helps students develop the knowledge, skills and motivation to succeed in school while teaching the value of community service.

Walla Walla Community College (Walla Walla) -- \$31,100 over one year to expand a pilot program that uses student- and advisor-friendly web tools to show students how close they are to receiving a degree, certificate or other academic milestone.

Washington Campus Compact (Bellingham) -- \$100,000 over one year to partner with five colleges in the state to assess a strategy to increase the percentage of low-income students completing degree programs by enrolling work study college students in Students in Service (SIS), a part-time AmeriCorps program. Students will participate in learning communities, individualized advising, leadership training and reflection activities, along with community service.

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Washington State University (Pullman) -- \$86,017 over three years to expand the Critical Literacies Achievement and Success Program (CLASP) that is showing success helping low-income students learn how to interact with college faculty to build writing skills and improve the students' chances of successfully passing English 101 other classes.

Washington State University (Pullman) -- \$99,999 over three years to form the *Washington State Educational Access Coalition for HB1079 Students*, a coalition of faculty and staff from colleges, universities and other interested organizations around the state, to assess the services that are available to support non-United States citizens who are attending or may attend college through Washington State House Bill 1079; and to educate families, providers, and policymakers about the issues facing these students in higher education.

YMCA of Snohomish County (Everett) – \$85,000 over three years to establish the YMCA Youth Development Center on Casino Road in South Everett. The Center will enhance college readiness for low-income middle and high-school students by providing the Minorities Achievement Program, drop-in center support and the Code Teen summer program.

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College Spark funds programs in Washington state that help low-income students become college-ready and complete their degrees. Our grantees include community organizations, technical and community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, other educational institutions, and public agencies.

For more information about College Spark, go to www.collegespark.org.

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