



*For Immediate Release – June 6, 2007*

**College Spark grants \$1.4 million to boost state’s graduation rate  
Money targets low-income students in Washington**

**SEATTLE** – Statistics tell a sad story of missed opportunity among Washington students.

Of every 100 ninth-graders statewide, only 68 finish high school and just 15 graduate from college, according to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. For low-income students, the numbers are even worse.

In an effort to reverse the trend, College Spark Washington today announced that it will provide more than \$1.4 million in grants to 19 organizations and educational institutions statewide. The funds will support programs aimed at helping low-income students become college-ready and earn degrees.

“We know the job market is competitive for kids with college degrees. Most low-income kids can’t even compete for those jobs because they don’t have the higher education they need,” said Ned Lange, chairman of the College Spark board.

College Spark sold its student loan operations in 2004, creating a \$120-million endowment used to fund programs supporting college access and success for Washington low-income students.

“It is our hope that through our Community Grants Program, College Spark can help Washington become a leader in innovative strategies that substantially increase the percentage of low-income students enrolling in and graduating from college,” said Christine McCabe, College Spark’s executive director.

Since 2005, the organization has awarded 57 Community Grants, totaling more than \$3 million. Funding for this year’s grants was made possible by an arrangement with Northwest Education Loan Association (NELA) [www.nela.net](http://www.nela.net) and USA Funds [www.usafunds.org](http://www.usafunds.org), two nonprofits dedicated to assisting students with financial aid services for higher education.

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Recipients of this year's awards include:

- **Antioch University** (Auburn) – \$36,040 for academic supports to help students at the Muckleshoot Tribal College pass the tests required to become a certified teacher.
- **Center for Native Education at Antioch University** (statewide) – \$190,860 over two years to support the formation of a coalition including Antioch and six community colleges. The coalition will provide support to schools participating in the Early College for Native Youth program. Funding will be distributed to the following community college partners:
  - Everett Community College (Everett)
  - Olympic Community College (Shelton campus)
  - Olympic Community College (Bainbridge Island campus)
  - Skagit Valley College (Mount Vernon)
  - Spokane Falls Community College (Spokane)
  - Whatcom Community College (Bellingham)
- **Central Washington University** (Ellensburg) – \$246,570 over three years to pair college students as mentors/tutors with students in seven low-income school districts.
- **Eastern Washington University** (Cheney) – \$49,988 to research issues affecting low-income and first generation students at Eastern Washington University and to identify interventions to increase retention rates among those students.
- **Educational Service District 112** (Vancouver) – \$ 10,000 to participate in an evaluation project assessing mentoring models that pair college students with low-income middle and high school students.
- **Heritage University** (Toppenish) – \$84,198 over three years to support development of a mentoring model aimed at increasing the number of low-income community college students transferring to four-year institutions.
- **Northwest Leadership Foundation** (Tacoma and Spokane) – \$30,000 to conduct an evaluation of the Act Six program which aims to increase the retention and completion rates of selected students attending Whitworth College in Spokane, WA.

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- **NW Educational Service District 189** (Anacortes) – \$54,542 to fund a program assisting low-income migrant students and their families to develop goals and plans for postsecondary education.
- **Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction** (statewide) – \$50,000 to develop a college readiness guidance model aimed at promoting rigorous coursework and increasing the number of low-income students who graduate from high school and enroll in college without needing remediation.
- **Saint Martin's University** (Lacey) – \$30,900 to expand a program that orients students and families to college resources, introduces students to faculty and peer mentors, and promotes reading, writing and critical thinking skills to help ease the transition to college.
- **Seattle Education Access** (Seattle) – \$80,000 over two years to double the number of students served annually to 160, build the organization's fundraising capacity, and increase the amount of time spent coaching, advising and providing academic tutoring for each student.
- **Seattle University** (Seattle) – \$98,328 over three years to fund a project matching college students with low-income, first-generation middle and high school students in King County to provide ongoing mentoring and tutoring.
- **Technology Access Foundation (TAF)** (Seattle) – a \$50,000 grant to increase support to TAF alumni enrolled in college, increase capacity of the Higher Ed Bound program, and support activities around integrating the program into a future TAF Academy.
- **The Evergreen State College Foundation** (Olympia) – \$50,000 to build a rigorous evaluation system within Gateways for Incarcerated Youth—an initiative aimed at reducing juvenile recidivism rates through education—to assess program effectiveness and support long-term sustainability.
- **University of Washington Foundation** (Renton, Seattle & Tukwila) – \$60,000 over three years to further develop a mentoring program matching UW students with first-generation and low-income high school students. Mentors will provide tutoring, assist with college and financial aid applications, and coordinate college visits and campus events for students and parents.

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- **Washington MESA** (statewide) – \$100,000 to expand services aimed at lengthening student participation and increasing the number of MESA seniors entering college and to implement an evaluation plan to gauge program effectiveness.
- **Wenatchee School District** (Wenatchee) – \$89,009 over three years to implement a college-readiness program aimed at raising academic achievement through rigorous coursework, mentoring, college exposure activities, parent support, individual tutoring and weekly classes on test taking, study skills, career planning, college-readiness and confidence building.
- **Western Washington University** (Bellingham) – \$75,000 to fund a program to re-engage low-income students who have left WWU and are 40 credits or less away from degree completion. Services include assistance with re-enrollment, financial aid and scholarships, mentoring and other supports.
- **YMCA - Snohomish County** (Everett) – \$20,000 to implement the Minority Achievers Program (MAP) at North Middle School. The college-readiness program includes assistance with homework, college admissions and financial aid; college and university visits; mentoring and career exploration; parent support and involvement; scholarships; and a summer camp designed to expose minority and immigrant youth to science careers.

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For more information about College Spark, go to [www.collegespark.org](http://www.collegespark.org)

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