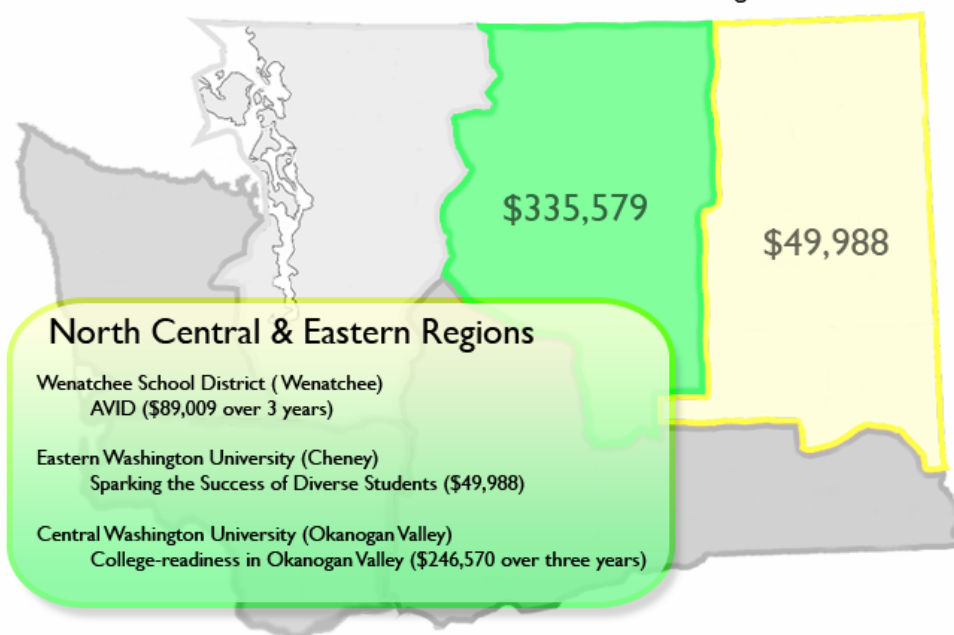


*For Immediate Release
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2007 College Spark Community Grants

Over \$1.4 million dollars awarded in Washington



College Spark announces grants for North Central & Eastern Washington

SEATTLE – College Spark Washington today announced that it will provide \$385,567 in grants aimed at boosting college-readiness and graduation rates among low-income students in North Central and Eastern Washington.

The grants from College Spark, a nonprofit foundation that promotes access to post-secondary education for underserved students, will benefit students at Eastern Washington University in Cheney, students working with Central Washington University in the Okanogan Valley, and students in the Wenatchee School District.

“Studies show that students whose parents have a college education are more likely to pursue and succeed in higher education themselves. Success in higher education has a remarkable way of ending the cycle of poverty,” said Ned Lange, chairman of the College Spark board.

Central Washington University will receive \$246,570 over three years to pair college students as mentors/tutors with students in seven low-income school districts

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in the **Okanogan Valley**. Services will be provided throughout the school day, in after-school programs, through distance tutoring and at special events.

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.

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.

The three grants are among 19 College Spark announced today, totaling over \$1.4 million. Since 2005, the organization has awarded over \$3 million in Community Grants. Funding for this year’s grants was made possible by an arrangement with Northwest Education Loan Association (NELA) www.nela.net and USA Funds www.usafunds.org, two nonprofits dedicated to assisting students with financial aid services for higher education.

More than 250,000 residents of North Central and Eastern Washington are living on incomes of less than 200% of the poverty level, or roughly \$40,000 annually for a family of four, according to U.S. Census data. The grants provided by College Spark support programs aimed at increasing educational opportunities and success for students in low-income families.

“It is our hope that our grant funds will help foster innovative strategies that substantially increase the percentage of low-income students graduating from college in Washington,” College Spark’s Executive Director, Christine McCabe said.

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