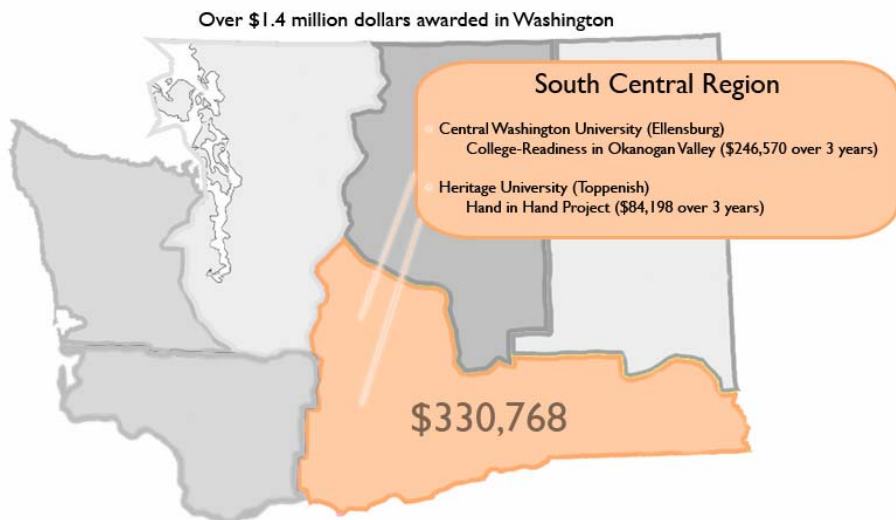


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2007 College Spark Community Grants



College Spark announces grants for South Central Washington

SEATTLE – College Spark Washington today announced that it will provide \$330,768 in grants aimed at boosting college-readiness and graduation rates among low-income students in South and Central Washington.

The grants from College Spark, a nonprofit foundation that promotes access to post-secondary education for underserved students, will benefit students at Central Washington University in Ellensburg and Heritage University in Toppenish.

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

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Heritage University will receive \$84,198 over three years to support development of the Hand in Hand Project, a mentoring model intended to increase the number of low-income community college students transferring to four-year institutions. The project includes weekly mentoring sessions with low-income Heritage University students and some scholarship support.

The two 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 200,000 residents of South Central 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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