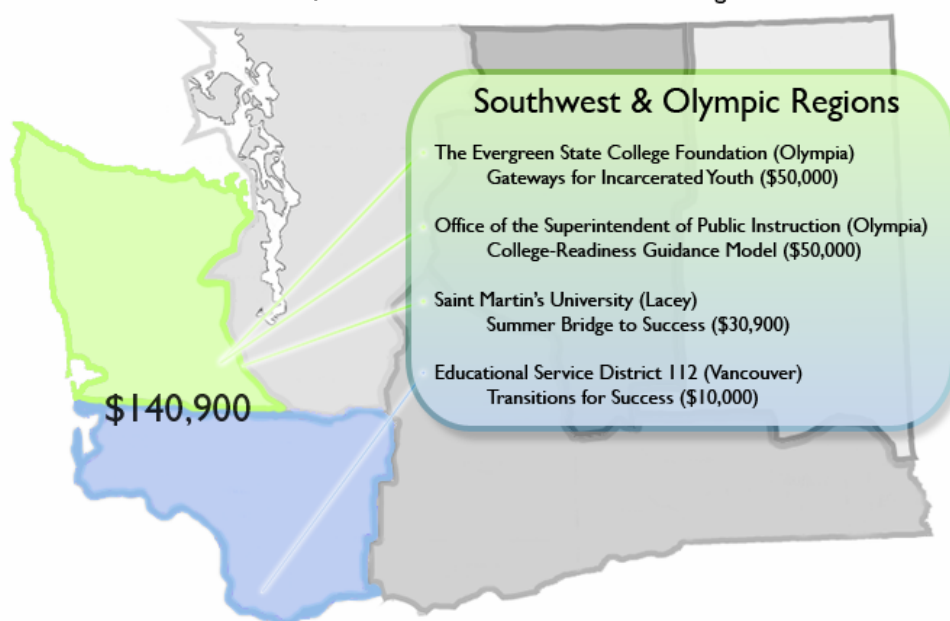


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2007 College Spark Community Grants

Over \$1.4 million dollars awarded in Washington



College Spark announces grants for Southwest and Olympic Regions of Washington

SEATTLE – College Spark Washington today announced that it will provide \$140,900 in grants aimed at boosting college-readiness and graduation rates among low-income students in the Southwest and Olympic regions of Washington.

The grants from College Spark, a nonprofit foundation that promotes access to post-secondary education for underserved students, will benefit students through The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Saint Martin's University in Lacey, and Vancouver's Educational Service District #112. In addition, a grant has been made to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, based in Olympia, which will benefit students throughout the state.

"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.



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.

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.

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.

The four 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 in the Southwest and Olympic regions of 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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