

Opportunity Scholarship and Opportunity Expansion Programs

2019 JLARC STUDY

In 2011, the Legislature created the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship (WSOS) and Opportunity Expansion Programs to help make college more affordable and increase bachelor's degrees in high-demand fields. The legislation also directed a JLARC review (ESHB 2088).

WSOS complies with statute and provides scholarships to low- and middle-income students pursuing high-demand STEM and health care degrees

WSOS HAS RECEIVED

\$175 million total

in private donations and state matching funds since FY 2012.

WSOS HAS AWARDED

21,000 scholarships

to **more than 10,000** Opportunity Scholars between academic years 2012-13 and 18-19.

OPPORTUNITY EXPANSION PROGRAM

WSOS provided 3 grants to university programs before the funding mechanism expired. All 3 programs have since secured future financial support.

WSOS has spent \$14 million on non-scholarship costs. Per statute, WSOS reports the amount it pays to its nonprofit program administrator each year, which only reflects a portion of the overall non-scholarship costs.

Compared to their peers, Opportunity Scholars pay less out of pocket, borrow less, and are more likely to return to school

OUT OF POCKET COSTS

The net price of college for a student and their family.

OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARS	\$11,062
PEERS	\$14,244



Likely more affordable

Lower out of pocket costs indicates college is more affordable.

STUDENT LOANS

Percentage of students who took out federal, institution, or private loans each year.

OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARS	45.1%
PEERS	63.0%



Likely more affordable

A lower percentage of students taking out loans indicates fewer students must borrow to attend college.

RETURN TO SCHOOL

Percentage of students who return to school between their first and second year.

OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARS	96%
PEERS	89%



More likely to graduate

Students who return to school between their first and second year are more likely to graduate.

Note: JLARC staff identified key affordability metrics because there is no single definition of college affordability.

Source: JLARC staff analysis of data from the Office of Financial Management's (OFM) Education Research and Data Center (ERDC).

WSOS's annual legislative reports contain required information. WSOS could improve annual reporting with state data.

WSOS does not currently have access to state financial aid or employment information that would improve legislative reporting in the future.

LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. WSOS should develop and implement a plan to coordinate with state agencies such as the Office of Financial Management's Education Research and Data Center, the Washington Student Achievement Council, and the Employment Security Department to provide additional information in its annual legislative report.
2. WSOS should include its overall non-scholarship costs, including the total cost to administer the Opportunity Scholarship program, in its annual legislative report.

The complete report is on the JLARC web site: www.leg.wa.gov/jlarc

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