

NORED Facts

Demand Issues

Washington's population will grow from 5.9 million in 2000 to 8.3 million in 2030. Washington's population is expected to pass 7 million by 2015. The majority of this population increase will occur among groups traditionally under-represented in higher education.

College education now viewed as necessary as a portal to middle class. Next generation of higher education will be larger, more diverse and disadvantaged, and more interested in higher education because they have fewer education alternatives.

The demand for affordable places in college and the need for a close association with the state's economic growth needs, coupled with an uncertain capacity to pay for them, focuses attention on how the state manages its colleges and universities.

Lack of Participation, Degree Attainment

In 2000 42 percent of Washington's high school graduates enrolled in higher education some time, somewhere. In 2002, only 37 percent did. Three percent of Washington adults enroll part-time in some form of postsecondary education. The average nationwide is 5.4 percent.

In Washington about 30 percent of adults have a bachelor's degree or higher. This places the state 36th nationally.

Funding and Affordability Issues

Affordability is an issue. The average amount a student must borrow to go to college in Washington is 18 percent higher than it is in the most affordable states. Funding capacity is an issue. State revenues are contracting and competition among public programs is increasing.

Education and Economic Growth

There is a close association between higher education and economic growth. Washington's economic potential is rated second only to that of Massachusetts on the New Economy Index. Policies that promote technological innovation and improve education can boost a state's innovative capacity and create a more dynamic workforce.

European Competition

Forty-five nations are now committed to the creation of the European Higher Education Area – a region of shared academic standards in which the universities will play a central role in promoting Europe's culture and development. Participants include all 25 members of the European Common Union, which is trying to become the most competitive, knowledge-driven economy in the world by 2010. The objectives include the synchronizing of degree structures with the first degree cycle of three years culminating in the bachelor's degree, and a second cycle for master's and doctoral degrees.

Global Challenge States

Nine comparison states were selected to help establish metrics for where Washington is, where it needs to go, and for measuring its progress (or regress). The group includes the top eight states on the New Economy Index plus Minnesota and North Carolina.

GCS	Overall Rank	College Degrees by Age Group		
		25-64	25-34	Rank
Massachusetts	(1)	49	49%	(2)
Washington	(2)	44	37%	(8)
California	(3)	38	41%	(10)
Colorado	(4)	44	46%	(6)
Maryland	(5)	46	47%	(5)
New Jersey	(6)	47	49%	(4)
Connecticut	(7)	45	48%	(3)
Virginia	(8)	43	44%	(9)
Minnesota	(13)	51	53%	(1)
North Carolina	(26)	37	38%	(13)

The chart above shows that while Washington ranks 2nd on the New Economy Index, it ranks eighth among the GCS in terms of the percentage of its residents who have earned a college degree. Further, Washington residents between 25 and 34 hold significantly fewer degrees proportionally than does the population 25-64. This lack of degree attainment among younger residents spells problems for future economic development.

Degree Attainment

Washington ranks x nationally in terms of overall degree attainment among the population 25-64. This overall level of degree attainment is pushed upward by the large number of associate degrees attained in Washington.

However, Washington ranks 36th in the percentage of its population who hold bachelor’s or advanced degrees. Many more Washington residents need to earn bachelor’s and advanced degrees if the state is going to achieve its potential in the global economy.

Currently, it takes four FTEs to produce one bachelor’s degree. If this ‘efficiency’ measure continues, how many more students will need to participate to increase bachelor’s degree production.

About 83% of Washington residents between the ages of 20 and 24 hold a high school diploma or equivalent. Washington trails its comparison states except for North Carolina. Many have high school completion rates of 90% or more. It also trails the national average, which is about 86%.