

A young man with short dark hair, wearing a white ribbed sweater, is shown from the chest up. He is holding a dark book with a white spine. The background is a stylized, high-contrast image of a mountain range with a bright yellow sky and dark brown mountains. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

Expanding Access and Opportunity

The Washington State Achievers Scholarship

Prepared by:

**The Pell Institute for the
Study of Opportunity in
Higher Education**

for the

**Bill & Melinda
Gates Foundation**

and the

**College Success
Foundation**

About The Pell Institute

The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education conducts and disseminates research and policy analysis to encourage policymakers, educators, and the public to improve educational opportunities and outcomes of low-income, first-generation, and disabled college students. The Pell Institute is the first research institute to specifically address the issues impacting educational opportunity for this growing population. To examine these issues, the Pell Institute conducts independent research in three areas: access, success, and innovation.

The Pell Institute, named for Senator Claiborne Pell (RI-D), who served in the U.S. Senate from 1961 to 1997, is sponsored by the Council for Opportunity in Education.

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In 2001, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched the multi-year, multi-million dollar Washington State Achievers Scholarship program. Concerned about disparities in college participation for low-income students in the state of Washington versus their wealthier peers, the Gates Foundation partnered with the College Success Foundation (CSF), formerly the Washington Education Foundation, to provide scholarships to eligible low-income students to attain a four-year postsecondary degree. The program targets juniors in 16 Achievers High Schools, which have high levels of low-income students and are implementing school redesign. Approximately 500 students each year receive financial support to help pay for college, and mentoring and other assistance to assure their preparation for and participation in postsecondary education. By 2015, more than 5,000 low-income students will have received scholarship assistance to attend college.

Through six cohorts, 3,340 Achievers Scholars have been selected as high school juniors. Of this group, 3,010 have received the scholarship, with the remainder either not fulfilling eligibility requirements (such as completing high school) or choosing to attend a non-eligible college, frequently a four-year institution out of state. This report synthesizes the findings of research conducted on the Washington State Achievers program through Summer 2006.

Major Research Findings

- *Achievers Scholars' enrollment in two-year institutions has decreased over the course of the Washington State Achievers program.* Enrollment levels in the two-year sector have dropped substantially since Cohort 1, when over 53 percent of the Achievers Scholarship recipients enrolled in community colleges. In Fall 2005, only 28 percent of Cohort 5 enrolled in community colleges. Conversely, enrollment in the four-year sector has grown over the five cohorts, particularly in public four-year colleges and universities, increasing from 47 percent to 72 percent.
- *Receiving the Achievers Scholarship has a positive effect on students' enrollment in college.* Receiving the Achievers Scholarship increased a student's college enrollment probability by nearly 14 to 19 percentage points (depending on the cohort), controlling for family background, school characteristics, aspirations, and educational experiences in high school.
- *A majority of Achievers Scholars start on the direct path to the baccalaureate by enrolling in four-year institutions.* Almost two-thirds of Achievers Scholars (62 percent) enrolled in four-year institutions compared to only 27 percent of low-income students nationally (NCES, 2001).
- *The Achievers Scholarship program is enabling more minority students to participate in postsecondary education.* Over half (59 percent) of Achievers Scholars from Cohorts 1 through 5 are minority students. Comparative data from the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board suggest that the Achievers Scholarship program is attracting minority students at a rate higher than normally would be participating in postsecondary education in Washington.
- *Achievers Scholars have higher degree attainment rates than low-income students do nationally.* As of August 2006, 178 of the Cohort 1 Achievers Scholars have completed a four-year degree, or approximately 36 percent of the inaugural group who were selected as Achievers and who would have started college in the Fall of 2001. In comparison, 15 percent of low-income students nationally had completed a bachelor's degree after five years. Furthermore, 23 percent of Achievers Scholars were still enrolled or currently active in the program but not enrolled. Therefore, it is anticipated that 59 percent of this first cohort will graduate. This compares to 32 percent of low-income students nationally. (NCES, 2001).
- *Many Achievers Scholars overcome significant obstacles to graduate from high school and enroll in college.* A frequently shared trait among Achievers Scholarship recipients is overcoming challenging circumstances, including illness among parents and family members to shouldering major responsibilities as a caregiver for multiple generations. The perseverance that

the Achievers Scholars have shown in facing these obstacles has served them well in graduating from high school and enrolling in college.

- *Hometown Mentors and College Mentors help Achievers Scholars successfully transition from high school to college.* Overall, satisfaction with the mentors was high—nearly three-quarters of the Achievers Scholarship recipients who were surveyed said they were satisfied with the Hometown Mentor program. Both the Hometown Mentors and the College Mentors were most frequently cited as helping Achievers Scholars make the transition from high school to college.
- *Achievers Scholarship recipients borrow less frequently, and take on less debt, than non-recipients.* Receiving the scholarship had an impact on borrowing for Achievers Scholars. They borrowed at lower percentages than their counterparts who did not receive the scholarship, and received Federal Pell Grants at higher percentages in their freshman year. However, nearly the same percentage of recipients and non-recipients worked for pay, and worked approximately the same number of hours on average per week.
- *Transfer is common among Achievers Scholars, with more than one-third having changed institutions since they enrolled.* By their third year in college, approximately 37 percent of enrolled Achievers Scholars from Cohort 1 had transferred or were in the process of transferring to a different college or university. Nationally, 31 percent of low-income students transfer (NCES, 2001). Nearly two-thirds of these students cited wanting to attend a four-year institution as their primary reason for transferring. The reasons with the next highest responses were academic (15 percent), financial (8 percent), and family (7 percent).
- *Achievers Scholars are engaged academically, in and out of the classroom.* Approximately 70 percent of the Achievers reported working with other students and discussing readings outside of the classroom at least once a week. Only 25 percent of low-income students nationally reported that they often studied or worked on class projects with other students (NCES, 2001). In addition, at least one-third of Achievers Scholars from Cohort 3 have chosen majors in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields, equivalent to the total percentage of annual degree recipients in these important fields.


- *Achievers Scholars are involved in their community and leadership activities.* About 62 percent of enrolled Achievers Scholars participated in a community service activity at least once during the academic year, compared to only 31 percent of low-income students nationally (NCES, 2001). Approximately 14 percent of Achievers were involved in leadership activities. For Achievers Scholars, working with students and faculty on academic issues such as studying and creative projects is associated with holding a leadership position.

Impact of the Washington State Achievers Program

The multi-faceted Washington State Achievers program was created on the premise that financial barriers to college frequently work in combination with academic and non-academic issues to prevent low-income students from participating in postsecondary education, particularly at the four-year level. As the research to date demonstrates, several key aspects of the program are producing results:

- The Achievers Scholarship makes a college education at a four-year institution more affordable, and therefore a reality for the low-income students who participate.
- Long-term, persistence and degree attainment for Achievers Scholars should increase as the impact of additional components is realized in later cohorts.
- Achievers Scholarship recipients are borrowing less and working less than those who do not receive the scholarships.
- Mentors are making a difference in the lives of Achievers at both the high school and college level.

While the success of the 5,000 Achievers is the most immediate goal, it is in achieving the long-term goal of improving the college preparation and participation of *all* low-income students in Washington that will ultimately determine the success of the Washington State Achievers program.



Higher education is [a] key that opens doors of opportunity for our youth. With the Washington State Achievers Program, we hope to inspire these students to pursue their dreams, accomplish great things and make a real contribution to their community.

William H. Gates, Sr., Co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on the announcement of the inaugural class of Washington State Achievers Scholars, June 27, 2001

With these words, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched the multi-year, multi-million dollar Washington State Achievers program in 2001. Concerned about disparities in college participation for low-income students versus their wealthier peers, and mindful of the ever-increasing importance of a postsecondary degree, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation partnered with the College Success Foundation (CSF), formerly the Washington Education Foundation, to provide scholarships to eligible low-income students to attain a four-year postsecondary degree. The program targets juniors in 16 Achiever High Schools, which have high levels of low-income students and are implementing school redesign. Approximately 500 students each year receive financial support to help pay for college, mentoring and other assistance to assure their preparation for and participation in postsecondary education. By 2015, more than 5,000 low-income students will have received scholarship assistance to attend college. This report synthesizes the findings of research conducted on the Achievers Scholarship program through Spring 2006.

The need for the Washington State Achievers program is evidenced by Washington's low rates of college enrollment. Compared to the best performing states—which enroll more than half of their 19-year-olds—approximately 31 percent of 19-year-olds in Washington enrolled in college in 2004 (Mortenson, 2006). In fact, according to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education's report card on the states and higher education *Measuring Up 2006*, the state of Washington was among the worst in the West in postsecondary participation, receiving a C-. The state's performance in this area has declined over the decade (NCPPE, 2006).

Research and Evaluation Plan for the Washington State Achievers Program

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has established a detailed research plan that includes data collection from multiple sources, and involves several partnerships examining different aspects of the program. The following groups have produced the research and other information that form the basis of this report:

College Success Foundation (CSF),
formerly the Washington Education Foundation

National Opinion Research
Center (NORC)

The University of Washington
Beyond High School Project

Fouts & Associates

William Sedlacek,
University of Maryland
College Park

Edward St. John,
University of Michigan

SRI International

Supporting documents and reports for this synthesis can be found on the NORC website: <http://www.norc.org/gatesscholars>. A complete list of the research questions, theory of change, study designs, and methodology reports can also be accessed.

Liliya Svintozelsky

Liliya moved with her family to the United States from the Ukraine when she was starting the 10th grade. Always a strong student, learning English while maintaining good grades was a challenge for her in high school. She had always wanted to go to college, and she knew that to succeed in her desired field of medicine, she had to excel. Even as a young child, her parents were supportive of her educational goals.

With the support of teachers, and assistance from the ESL department, Liliya was able to navigate the college admissions process. In fact, Liliya considers “mastering the English language” as her greatest achievement in high school. After graduating, she started at Pierce Community College, and later transferred to Seattle Pacific University.

On campus, she was happy to connect with students that had the same values, a commitment to hard work, and who took school seriously. The Achievers Scholarship program staff and mentors helped her to navigate academic difficulties she encountered, guiding her to resources and boosting her self confidence. The Achievers Scholarship reduced the financial barriers to college for her, and she did not have to borrow to pay for her education until graduate school.

Liliya has always been involved in extracurriculars, though most of them have been focused in her community. While in high school, she worked with her church as a Sunday schoolteacher, and volunteered as a translator for other recent immigrants, including helping register the children of immigrants for school. She feels that these activities helped her succeed, since they helped her develop the “attitude that everything worth doing is worth doing well. I knew I had to do everything perfectly.”

Liliya is now enrolled in the graduate pharmacy program at Washington State University—she applied three times before she was accepted, but she persevered. She had been accepted at out-of-state schools, but the desire to stay close to her family and the lower in-state tuition were deciding factors. When she finishes the graduate program, she hopes to work in a hospital pharmacy, where “I can see the difference I’m making.” While retail pharmacists may earn more money, she prefers working in the hospital so she can develop relationships with the patients. That is more important to her than making money.

Liliya sums up her experience with the Achievers Scholarship by saying, “The scholarship has made me ready for the rest of my life. In the long run, the scholarship will help me make an impact on people through the profession... I hope to make the people who made this scholarship possible for me... proud through my future contributions to our society.”

Design of the Washington State Achievers Program

Financial barriers to college often work in combination with other academic and non-academic issues to prevent low-income students from participating in postsecondary education, particularly at the four-year level. Recognizing this, the Washington State Achievers program is multi-faceted and combines financial support, mentoring, and other approaches such as early college awareness and high school reform.

One of the primary goals of the Washington State Achievers program is to encourage school redesign that facilitates high academic achievement and increased college enrollment among all students at the selected high schools. This goal is the focus of the efforts at the 16 Achievers High Schools with significant low-income student populations.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation provides support to the participating high schools for school redesign, as well as grant funding to the College Success Foundation (CSF) to provide the student scholarships. CSF has two primary responsibilities.¹ First, it is responsible for selecting the scholarship recipients and providing the program's administrative functions. Second, CSF is charged with implementing and managing a college planning support program for students once they receive scholarships during their junior year of high school. The support program features mentors who are available to assist scholarship recipients in high school and in college.

Other goals of the Achievers Scholarship program are addressed through the work of CSF. They are:

- To identify and reduce financial barriers to college for talented, low-income students who have overcome difficult circumstances and who are motivated to attend college;
- To provide mentoring to ensure academic support is available to students once they are enrolled in college;
- To develop a diverse cadre of college-educated citizens and leaders in Washington State.

Eligible low-income students who attend one of the 16 participating high schools can receive the Achievers Scholarship annually for up to five years. Achievers Scholars have the option to use the balance of their scholarship eligibility while enrolled at one of the approved in-state two-year or four-year (public or private)

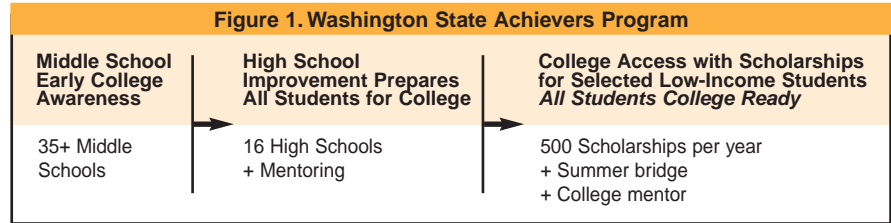


Table 1. Achievers High Schools

High School	% Free and Reduced Lunch (2004)
Cleveland High School	61%
Clover Park High School	52%
Davis High School	63%
Foss High School	46%
Foster High School	53%
Kent-Meridian High School	54%
Kittitas High School	29%
Lincoln High School	61%
Mabton High School	87%
Mariner High School	46%
Mount Tahoma High School	50%
Stevenson High School	34%
Tonasket High School	57%
Truman High School	38%
West Valley High School	37%
Yelm High School	33%

Source: College Success Foundation.

¹ As the Washington State Achievers program has evolved, so too have the responsibilities of CSF. For example, CSF is now more involved in pre-application, early outreach responsibilities that precede the scholarship selection. In addition, CSF has launched the new HERO program that will target student populations to increase their participation in the Achievers Scholarship program. However, for the purposes of the program results that are presented in this report, the primary responsibilities listed are the most relevant.

institutions for their first two years of college, and then they may use the scholarship at an out-of-state institution. In 2006-07, the maximum scholarship amounts are \$4,350 for attending two-year community colleges, \$7,000 for four-year publics, and \$9,700 for four-year independent and out-of-state colleges. In addition, recipients may apply for a leave of absence and re-enroll within a year after they address family or personal challenges.

Eligibility for the Washington State Achievers program includes:

- Attending and graduating from one of the 16 Achievers High Schools;
- Actively working to prepare academically for college, as well as demonstrating academic potential through a commitment to classroom work and assignments;
- Planning to obtain a four-year college degree, although recipients can attend a two-year institution, as long as they are enrolled in a program or on a track that will lead to a bachelor's degree. The scholarship cannot be used for enrollment in technical/vocational programs;
- Planning to attend an eligible public or independent college or university located in the state for at least the first two years of college (students can attend an out-of-state institution beginning when they have junior standing);
- Coming from families who have and will continue to have annual income that is in the lowest one-third of the state of Washington family incomes and have low or modest family assets.

The financial eligibility criteria takes into account if the parents' income has been consistently below targeted income levels for the given family size,² or if there have been recent decreases in the parents' income due to extenuating circumstances such as health issues, divorce, or death, etc., with no expectations that the income level will improve while the student is in college. Additional flexibility is considered for students whose family will have more than one sibling in college. Finally, the family's assets are also considered.

A notable feature of the Achievers Scholarship selection process is that students are not selected on the basis of academic performance in high school (GPA) or on pre-college entrance exams. There is a greater interest in identifying students who have the most potential to benefit from a college education but who are less likely to attend given financial barriers, lack of college experience, and other social and cultural issues. Their status as low-income students may stifle their expectations of postsecondary education, either through thinking it is not possible, or limiting their expectations to two-year or technical/vocational institutions. As a result, significant emphasis is placed on analyzing the non-cognitive skills of applicants, including: positive self-concept; realistic self-appraisal; preference of long-range goals to short-term or immediate needs; ability to navigate social systems; availability of a strong support person; demonstrated community service; successful leadership experience; and knowledge acquired in a field (Sedlacek, 2004).

Applicants submit written applications, including student essays and teacher recommendations. These applications are evaluated based on non-cognitive skills in relation to the life circumstances the students have faced, the rigor of the high school curriculum they have chosen, and the promise they show to reach the academic/career goal they articulate. Program staff seek to ensure equal participation from across the 16 high schools—if some schools are under-represented in the initial pool, targeted efforts are made to include more qualified applicants from these high schools. The pool is then narrowed, with the remaining group invited to participate in an interactive day-long workshop, during which applicants participate in large group interviews. Their interactions are observed and scored based on non-cognitive skills according to a system designed by Deborah Bial, president and founder of the Posse Foundation of New York City (Bial, 2004).

Recipients are selected in the spring of their junior year, and participation begins with attendance at the Achievers College Experience (ACE) between their junior and senior years of high school. By the start of their senior year, students are matched to a Hometown Mentor.

² CSF has a schedule of income eligibility per family size. For the selection of the most recent cohort, Cohort 7, the schedule ranged from a maximum of \$33,900 for a family of two to \$67,400 for a family of seven. For each additional family member beyond seven, an additional \$1,500 is added to the income total. For the median family size of Achievers Scholarship recipients, four, the maximum family income is \$49,900.

Estimating the Eligible Population for the Washington State Achievers Scholarship Program

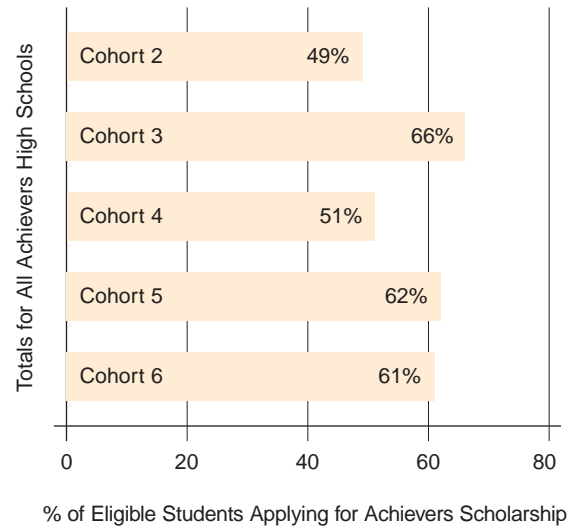
One way in which the College Success Foundation (CSF) has assessed the impact of the program is to observe if applications for the scholarship increase as more students become aware of the program. Given the overall goal of increasing college participation for all low-income students in the state of Washington, larger numbers of applicants would be one indicator of at least increased awareness and aspirations for college.

CSF has estimated the number of potential students the Washington State Achievers program could reach using the number of students eligible for free and reduced lunch at participating high schools. For example, in the 2004-05 school year, there were nearly 9,000 students at the Achievers High Schools who were eligible for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch program. Approximately 2,250 juniors at these schools would be eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch. However, it is important to note that there are many students whose family incomes exceed the eligibility for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch program who still qualify for the Achievers Scholarship. Including these students would bring the estimated number of eligible juniors to 2,500 each year. Approximately 1,100 applied in Fall 2004.

Figure 2 demonstrates the percentage of applicants compared to the potential eligible students defined only by eligibility for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

At the end of the selection process, 586 students were chosen as recipients in Cohort 6 in March 2005.³ These numbers demonstrate that although a significant number of students are being helped, the need for the Washington State Achievers Scholarship program remains substantial.

Figure 2. Juniors Applying for the Achievers Scholarship



NOTE: "Eligibility" in this graph refers to the broad measure of students eligible for free and reduced lunch. This is not a strict measure of all students in Washington who would meet the specific requirements of the Achievers Scholarship program. Data for Cohort 1 are not included as they were seniors at the time of selection.

Source: College Success Foundation.

This process varied slightly in the first year of the program (2001), when due to the timing of the initial program implementation, two cohorts—a group of seniors and a second cohort of juniors—were selected in June 2001, late in their final year of high school for the first cohort of seniors. The application period for the third cohort of awardees opened to high school juniors in September 2001, with scholarship decisions announced in March 2002. All subsequent cohorts have been selected on this cycle. The third cohort of awardees was the first group to attend an ACE summer program.

Washington State Achievers Program Components

- **Achievers High Schools**—The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has provided resources to 16 high schools in

Washington that serve substantial numbers of economically disadvantaged students. These schools are targeting improvements in teaching and learning, boosting student performance and preparing all graduates for college.

- **Hometown Mentors Program**—Once selected, Achievers Scholars are paired with Hometown Mentors, members of the recipients' communities who value higher education and take an active role in helping youth be successful in their lives. Hometown Mentors support Achievers Scholars from the spring of their junior year in high school through their first two months in college through meetings and information sharing about college admissions and financial aid.

³ Each year, more than 500 students are selected as Achievers; however the number who actually enroll and use the scholarship is closer to 500. Some students do not end up enrolling in college, while others may opt to use their scholarship at a college or university that does not participate in the program, frequently one located outside of Washington. While exact information is not available, CSF estimates that 2 to 3 percent of those selected as Achievers Scholars forfeit the scholarship to enroll in out-of-state institutions.

Figure 3. Timeline of Washington State Achievers Program Elements

June 2001	June 2001	March 2002	March 2003
First cohort of Achievers Scholars selected as graduating seniors; College Mentors provided.	Second cohort of Achievers Scholars selected at end of junior year of high school; Hometown Mentors arranged for senior year.	Third cohort of Achievers Scholars selected; Achievers College Experience (ACE) summer program added.	Fourth cohort of Achievers Scholars selected; Early college awareness in middle schools, small learning communities in high schools integrated.

■ **Achievers College Experience (ACE)**—After they are selected and prior to their senior year in high school, Achievers Scholars participate in the four-day ACE Program in the summer. Held on a college campus, the purpose of ACE is to provide new Achievers Scholars with the information and resources that they will need to be successful college applicants and the opportunity to experience campus life. Achievers Scholars attend workshops about college admissions and paying for college, as well as the ACE College Resource Fair, which allows them to interact with admissions and recruitment officers.

■ **College Mentor Program**—Achievers Scholars are required to participate in the college mentoring program on their campus during their freshman and sophomore years. CSF works with participating colleges to identify mentors on campus. The mentors function as a resource to help students with their transition to college life. Achievers Scholars are required to meet with their mentors at least once a month.

At the onset of the program, Achievers Scholars were supported by the provision of the College Mentors as they graduated from high school and entered college. Subsequent cohorts have received more support, as additional components have been added (See Figure 3).

Demetrius Forte

A variety of influences pushed Demetrius to aspire to college, but in his mind, there was never a doubt that he was going to go. Although his parents did not attend college, they were a major force behind his belief in the importance of college and his desire to do well in high school.

Demetrius was very active in high school, taking a challenging course load of Advanced Placement classes, working part-time, and being heavily involved in extracurricular activities ranging from Junior ROTC to football and track to volunteer activities. Strong in math, he thought he would major in the subject when he went to college. He was accepted to the U.S. Naval Academy—an accomplishment he is still very proud of—but the thought of attending college on the other side of the country did not appeal to him. When he received the Achievers Scholarship, it became possible to afford college in Washington, so he enrolled in Central Washington University.

For Demetrius, the transition was somewhat difficult as he adjusted to being away from his family. Once he met people and made friends, it became easier. As an African American, he was aware of

the limited diversity on campus, less than he had experienced in his high school, but he never felt that it created problems or held him back. Instead, he used his experiences at college to develop his interest in business and gain a clearer understanding of what he wants to do in life.

In 2005, Demetrius graduated from Central Washington University with a degree in Business Administration and is working in the retail industry while he gains experience and gets ready for graduate school. One important way in which the Achievers Scholarship has had an impact on him is that he did not have to take out large loans for his undergraduate education. Having only a limited amount of undergraduate debt will make it easier for him to borrow to pay for an MBA. Being a member of the initial Achievers Scholars' cohort has meant a lot to him, and he is very aware of the long-term effects it will have on his life as he moves towards his future. "I am definitely not the same person I was when I was in high school [or] when I [first] went to college. I feel college made me grow up."

Since the first cohort was selected in 2001, 3,340 Achievers Scholars have been selected in six cohorts, with the goal for the program of 5,000 total. Of this group, 3,010 have received the scholarship, with the remainder either not fulfilling eligibility requirements (such as completing high school) or choosing to attend a non-eligible college, frequently a four-year institution out of state. In Cohorts 1 through 5, nearly 90 percent—2,453 of 2,754—of the Achievers Scholarship recipients have been enrolled in college in Washington at some point.

Across the cohorts, the percentage of Achievers Scholarship recipients who are female has remained fairly consistent: with the exception of the initial cohort, approximately 60 percent are female. In terms of race/ethnicity, the cohorts have become more diverse over time (See Table 2).

Painted Sky Warrior

Coming from a rural community, Sky was motivated early on to learn. After being home schooled, he tested at a gifted level when he entered traditional school. Despite being bright, he frustrated his teachers by not applying himself. He would do just enough to get by. A science teacher made him reexamine his attitude, just after telling him that colleges and universities would want to see someone who had goals and accomplished them, not someone who did the bare minimum.

Other factors motivated him to do well, such as a real interest in history—"it's important to know how the world came to be"—competition for grades with friends, and encouraging teachers. He didn't know much about the college application process before he applied for the Achievers Scholarship, but after being encouraged by several teachers, he applied and was selected. He chose to attend Washington State University (WSU).

On the road to college, financial, legal, and family obligations challenged him. Having spent time in jail as a minor, he is grateful for the Achievers Scholarship experience to help him get his life back on track. The adjustment to college was difficult, and it wasn't until he became involved in WSU's Multicultural Student Center and the Native Center that he felt he began to make friends that understood him. With help from Achievers Scholarship program staff and faculty, he has changed to a major that he is better suited to, and is getting better grades.

Sky is involved on campus, even helping to start the Achievers Club of Excellence. They are working with the new Achievers Scholars that come on campus, a great resource since WSU is a popular destination for Achievers Scholars. He has helped to foster a sense of community among the Achievers Scholars on campus.

An International Business Management major, Sky is ambitious. He hopes to run for student body president, and if he wins, he would become the first Native American president at his university. He has worked hard to make sure the Administration takes students' concerns into account. After college, he hopes to go on to study either law or attend graduate school, ultimately creating his own international business consulting firm. His priorities for his efforts include: "Curb corporate corruption and greed; end corrupt leadership and governments; and [promote] worldwide enlightenment of the population" around issues such as education.

Sky is appreciative of his participation in the Achievers Scholarship program. Beyond providing him with the financial means to attend college, he is proud to be a member of the Achievers family. As an alum of the program, he intends to always give back and help future Achievers Scholars. The experiences he has had and the people he has met because of his involvement in the program are invaluable to Sky, saying it has "provided an opportunity for me to go somewhere with my life that I don't know if I ever would have otherwise."

Table 2. Race/Ethnicity and Gender of Achievers Scholarship Recipients

Cohort 1	Total	Racial Group as % of Total	% Female
Asian/Pacific Islander	125	23%	69%
Black	75	14%	55%
Hispanic	84	15%	61%
Multiracial	28	5%	79%
Other	18	3%	44%
White	218	40%	72%
Total	548	100%	67%
Cohort 2	Total	Racial Group as % of Total	% Female
Asian/Pacific Islander	109	19%	55%
Black	76	13%	62%
Hispanic	65	11%	63%
Multiracial	50	9%	60%
Other	17	3%	53%
White	253	44%	61%
Total	570	100%	60%
Cohort 3	Total	Racial Group as % of Total	% Female
Asian/Pacific Islander	98	18%	52%
Black	108	19%	59%
Hispanic	75	13%	57%
Multiracial	44	8%	68%
Other	18	3%	6%
White	215	39%	72%
Total	558	100%	60%
Cohort 4	Total	Racial Group as % of Total	% Female
Asian/Pacific Islander	110	20%	59%
Black	90	16%	51%
Hispanic	90	16%	52%
Multiracial	41	7%	76%
Other	19	3%	84%
White	210	38%	66%
Total	560	100%	61%
Cohort 5	Total	Racial Group as % of Total	% Female
Asian/Pacific Islander	87	15%	63%
Black	70	12%	56%
Hispanic	100	18%	70%
Multiracial	56	10%	61%
Other	16	3%	44%
White	242	42%	66%
Total	571	100%	64%

Source: College Success Foundation.

Data collected from the Achievers Scholars show that the median family income is \$25,284 with a median family size of four. Achievers Scholars are mostly first-generation college-going students. Approximately 5 percent are considered “undocumented” students, and about 10 percent of the recipients are independent students or from the foster care system.⁴

Upon graduating from high school and starting college, the typical Achievers Scholar has no children, and receives a Pell Grant. Achievers Scholars frequently work off-campus, most often in a job that is unrelated to their field of study. Many reported working in order to support their family. Achievers Scholars expect that they will earn at least a college degree, and family members encourage them to stay in college and do well.

⁴ First-generation refers to students whose parents have not earned a college degree. Undocumented refers to the immigration status of the students, most frequently meaning that they are the children of immigrants not legally registered in the country. Independent status refers to the classification of students in the federal financial aid system—a student is considered independent if they are age 24 or older, married, single with dependents of their own, veterans, or in graduate school; all other students are considered dependent. Similarly, individuals in the foster care system are considered adults when they reach the age of 18.

Education Aspirations of Achievers Scholars

The overwhelming majority (95 percent) of enrolled Achievers Scholars expected to complete at least a bachelor's degree. Close to 56 percent planned to earn an advanced degree and 20 percent expected to earn a first professional or doctoral degree. Overall, female Achievers Scholars were more likely than males to believe that they would earn at least a bachelor's degree, with 97 percent of females and 91 percent of males expecting that would be the case. Not surprisingly, those who were not currently enrolled had lower educational aspirations than their enrolled counterparts.

Receiving the Achievers Scholarship has a positive effect on students' enrollment in college.

Receiving the Achievers Scholarship increased a student's college enrollment probability by nearly 14 to 19 percentage points (depending on the cohort), controlling for family background, school characteristics, aspirations, and educational experiences in high school. Increases in advanced-level course taking in high school also had an impact on enrollment—taking advanced courses in high school improved a student's college enrollment probability by more than 16 percentage points.

Achievers Scholarship recipients were enrolled at higher rates than non-recipients in public four-year colleges, 41 percent versus 20 percent, and private four-year colleges, 26 percent compared to 14 percent. In Cohort 4, substantially higher percentages of Achievers Scholarship recipients (65 percent) enrolled in four-year colleges when compared to non-funded Achievers Scholars⁵ (29 percent) and non-applicants (22 percent).

Achievers Scholarship recipients were more likely than non-funded Achievers to attend college full-time. Almost 94 percent of enrolled Achievers Scholars from Cohort 1 were attending college full-time. This is substantially higher than the national average for all undergraduate students—40 percent attended full-time (NCES, 2004).

A majority of Achievers Scholars start on the direct path to the baccalaureate by enrolling in four-year institutions.

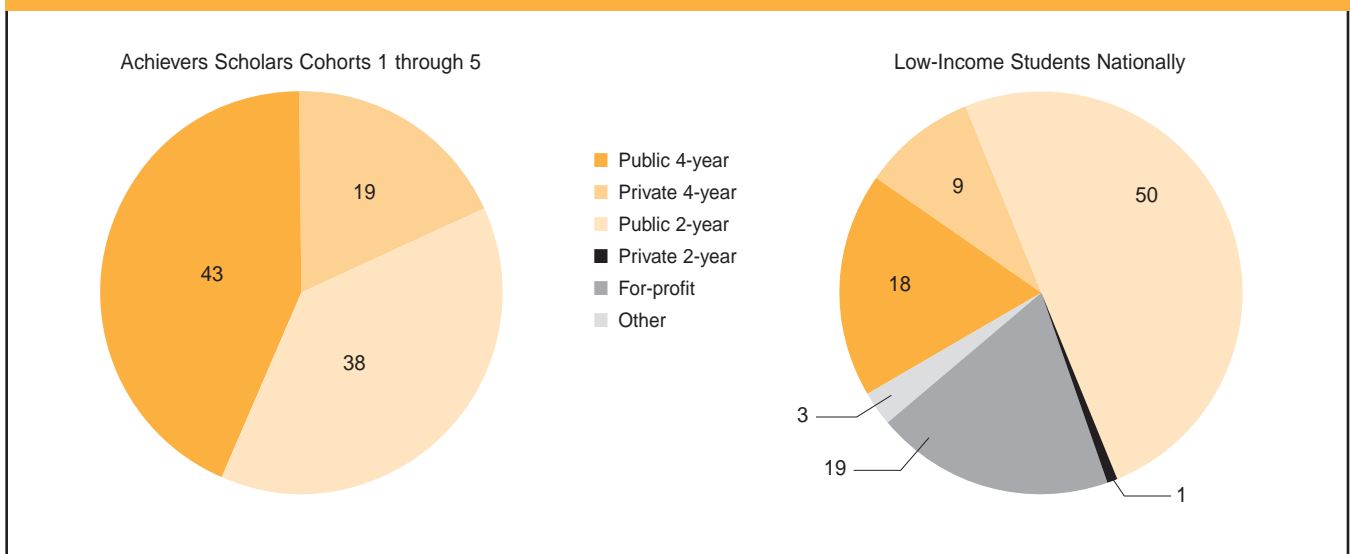
Almost two-thirds of Achievers Scholars—62 percent—have enrolled in four-year institutions. Forty-three percent enrolled in public four-year institutions, and 18 percent enrolled in private four-year colleges and universities. Nationally, low-income students enroll in smaller percentages in the four-year sector—18 percent at public four-years and 9 percent at private four-year institutions, while 50 percent attend public two-year institutions (NCES, 2001).⁶

The largest numbers of Achievers Scholars from Cohorts 1 through 6 have attended the University of Washington (328), followed by Eastern Washington University (162), Washington State University (132), Central Washington University (128), and Western Washington University (108). In the private four-year sector, the top five institutions among Achievers Scholars are Pacific Lutheran University (105), Seattle University (64), Saint Martin's University (52), University of Puget Sound (31), and Seattle Pacific University (30). As previously mentioned, Achievers Scholars in their junior and senior year can attend out-of-state institutions: from Cohorts 1 through 5, approximately 32 Achievers Scholars chose to transfer to an out-of-state institution. While students enrolled in institutions ranging from Oregon to California to Georgia to New York and New Jersey, only one institution had more than one Achievers Scholar attending, Portland State University.

⁵ Non-funded refers to individuals who qualified for the Achievers Scholarship, but did not actually receive the award due to either attending a non-eligible postsecondary institution or failing to meet some other eligibility requirement. Non-applicants refers to students from Achievers High Schools who did not apply for the Achievers Scholarship program.

⁶ The remaining 23 percent attend for-profit and other types of institutions, which Achievers Scholars are not eligible to attend.

Figure 4. More Achievers Scholars Start on the Direct Path to the Baccalaureate Degree



Source: College Success Foundation; NCES, BPS:96/01.

Participants in the focus groups expressed how important the scholarship was to them. Approximately half of the students said that without the scholarship, they would not have gone to college. One student noted that the military was “my only option, my parents didn’t have the money to pay for [college], so it was either scholarship or military.” The other common option for these students was to “just [get] a job and start working.”

Achievers Scholars’ enrollment in two-year institutions has decreased over the course of the program.

On average, 38 percent of all enrolled students in Cohorts 1 to 5 attended two-year institutions. However the enrollment levels in the two-year sector have dropped substantially

since the initial cohort, when 53 percent of the Achievers Scholarship recipients enrolled in community colleges. In Cohort 2, the percentage dropped by 10 points to 43 percent, and in Fall 2005, only 28 percent of Cohort 5 enrolled in community colleges. Conversely, enrollment in the four-year sector has grown over the five cohorts, increasing from 46 percent to 72 percent.

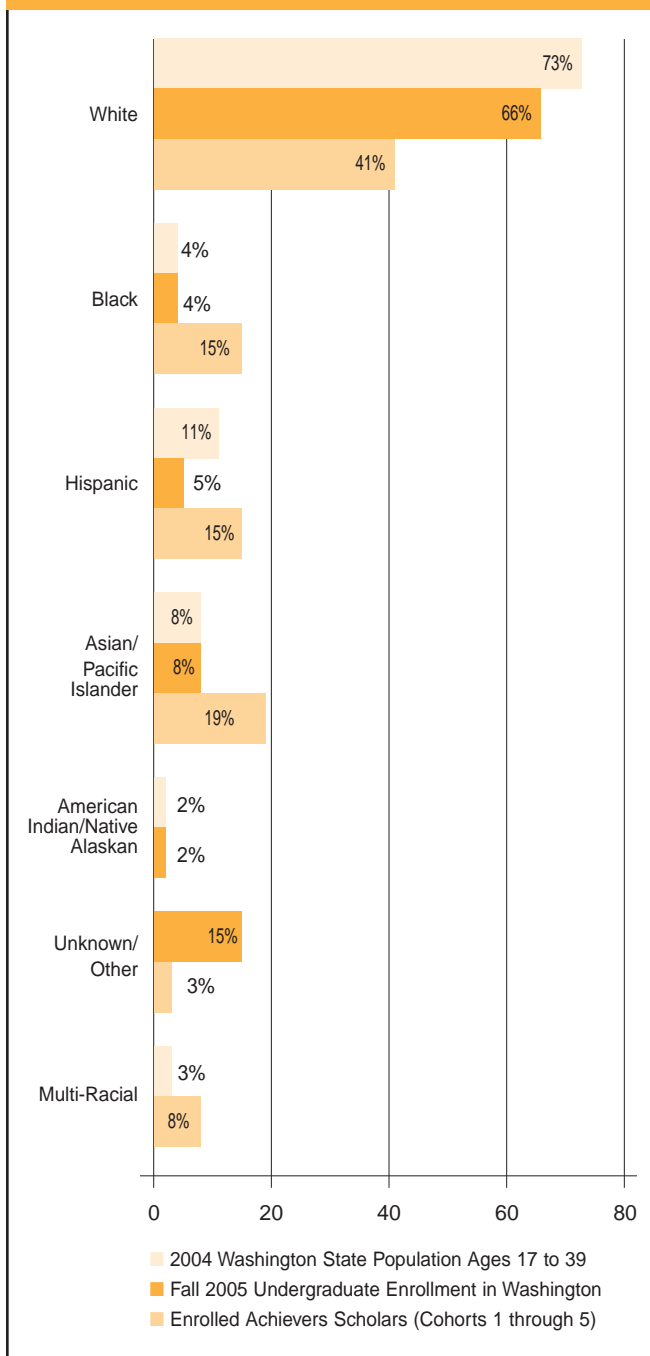
Some of the initial community college enrollment—and subsequent drop-off—can be attributed to the lack of time and planning that the first Achievers Scholarship recipients had, as well as the greater exposure to and awareness of postsecondary options at the four-year level that each subsequent cohort has received.

Table 3. Greater Initial Enrollment in Four-Year than Two-Year Institutions for Achievers Scholars (Cohorts 1 through 5)

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5
Highest Number of Achievers Scholarship Recipients Enrolled in All Postsecondary Institutions	501	487	473	494	480
Achievers Scholarship Recipients in Public Four-Year Institutions as a Percentage of Total	37%	42%	40%	46%	48%
Achievers Scholarship Recipients in Private Four-Year Institutions as a Percentage of Total	9%	15%	21%	22%	24%
Achievers Scholarship Recipients in Two-Year Institutions as a Percentage of Total	53%	43%	39%	31%	28%

Note: Totals may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: College Success Foundation.

Figure 5. Achievers Scholars Are Racially Diverse



Source: HECB; College Success Foundation.
 Note: American Indian/Native Alaskan data included in Other for Achievers Scholars. State population data do not use Unknown/Other category. For Fall enrollment data, Unknown/Other includes Non-Resident Aliens.

The Achievers Scholarship program is enabling more minority students to participate in postsecondary education.

Data presented by the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board (2006) provide some comparisons in terms of the current and projected race/ethnicity of the state, as well as the undergraduate enrollment in Washington (See Figure 5). These data suggest that the Achievers Scholarship program is attracting minority students at a rate higher than normally would be participating in postsecondary education in Washington.

Many Achievers Scholars overcome significant obstacles to graduate from high school and enroll in college.

In total, through Fall 2005, 2,453 of the 2,754 Achievers Scholarship recipients (nearly 90 percent) in Cohorts 1 through 5 have been enrolled in college at some point.

A telling picture emerges from the focus groups and interviews of the recipients in high school and as they navigated the transition to college. Overall, the Achievers Scholars were conscientious students in high school, with many reporting that they took advanced placement or honors courses and all but one detailing the importance of one or more teachers who encouraged them to consider and prepare for college. A frequently shared trait among Achievers Scholars is overcoming challenging circumstances, from illness or death among parents and family members to shouldering major responsibilities as a caregiver for multiple generations. The perseverance that the Achievers Scholars have shown in facing these obstacles has served them well in graduating from high school and enrolling in college. In some cases, they have used negative experiences as a motivator to do well, as in the case of one Achiever, Seth:

“I was actually told once that I was never going to succeed in anything I did. I was never going to go anywhere, and that was only in fifth grade.” Of the teacher’s comment, Seth said: “That has been another thing, if it wasn’t for her telling me that and me being, ‘I am going to show her someday.’...I’d like to go back and [show her] ‘I’m getting my master’s right now. I am still going.’”

Hometown Mentors and College Mentors help Achievers Scholars successfully transition from high school to college.

The Hometown Mentor program has been helpful to the Achievers Scholarship recipients as they navigate the pre-college and postsecondary transition. The expectation is that all Achievers Scholars participate in the mentoring program, although the frequency and intensity of the interaction varies. Overall, satisfaction with the mentors was high—nearly three-quarters of the Achievers Scholarship recipients who were surveyed said they were satisfied with the Hometown Mentor program.

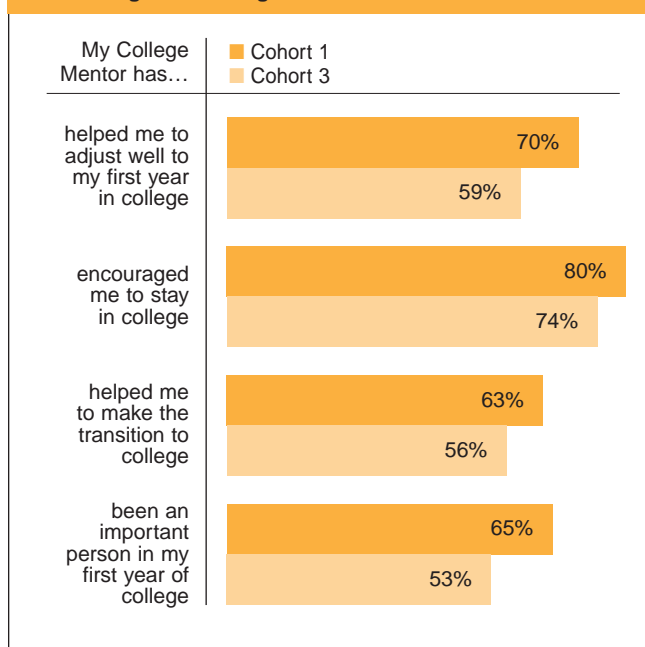
Both the Hometown Mentors and the College Mentors were most frequently cited as helping Achievers Scholars make the transition from high school to college. For example:

Oscar's college mentor really helped him acclimate to the campus. "Mostly he helped me with getting to the right resources. When I was deciding about the dorm, he talked with me. Once I decided I had problems, he made some calls. Knowing I had someone there to help was nice. And a lot of [the] time you go in and talk and chat about different things that make your thinking go better, just to talk it through with him. Sometimes he is not giving any advice, you are just there talking it out."

When Liliya arrived at her institution, it was the first time she had been away from her family and did not know where anything was. The College Mentor coordinator and fellow Achievers Scholars helped acclimate her, however. "I got a real warm welcome from the Achievers program. I got to know many people and I met my mentor. It was real comforting feeling that there was someone on the campus that I can go [to who can] give me some valuable information and guide me and listen to me. I even asked them where the grocery stores [were]. It didn't even have to do with school."

The majority of Achievers Scholars surveyed report that their College Mentor was important in helping them transition to college and persist.⁷

Figure 6. College Mentors Make a Difference



Source: NORC.

Achievers Scholarship recipients borrow less frequently, and take on less debt, than non-recipients.⁸

At least in their freshman year, receiving the scholarship had an impact on borrowing for Achievers Scholars: they borrowed at lower percentages than their counterparts who did not receive the scholarship, and received Federal Pell Grants at higher percentages, too.

The data presented in Tables 4a through 4d provide more information about how Achievers Scholars are paying for college in addition to receiving the Scholarship funds. These tables reveal some interesting trends among the Achievers Scholars:

- It appears that changes are occurring across cohorts of Achievers Scholars, with lower percentage of students in Cohort 1 borrowing than in Cohort 3, but lower percentages of students in Cohort 3 are working than did in Cohort 1. While the percentage of students who receive Pell Grants are high in both groups, there has been a slight decrease from Cohort 1 to Cohort 3.

⁷ The slight decline in responses between Cohort 1 and Cohort 3 may reflect the increased resources that have been made available to subsequent Achievers Scholars. The College Mentors may have been more vital to participants in Cohort 1, as they were the only program resource in addition to receiving the scholarship funds. In comparison, participants in Cohort 3 had the additional resources of participating in the ACE Program, having a Hometown Mentor while in high school, and a longer time in the program prior to enrollment in college.

⁸ For the financial aid and work information, non-recipients means students who applied for the Achievers Scholarship, but were not selected and did not receive it. Starting in Cohort 3 (2003), there were enough students in this group to allow a meaningful comparison group for those students who applied for the Achievers Scholarship and received it.

Table 4a. Percent Working for Pay, Having a Loan This Academic Year, and Receiving a Pell Grant By Freshmen Population

		2001 Achievers Scholarship Recipients	2003 Achievers Scholarship Recipients	2003 Achievers Scholarship Non-recipients
Currently Work for Pay	Yes	59%	46%	52%
	No	41%	54%	48%
Have Loan This Academic Year	Yes	19%	35%	40%
	No	81%	65%	60%
Received Pell Grant from Current School	Yes	74%	70%	62%
	No	29%	30%	38%

Note: Based on currently enrolled students. Having a loan this Academic Year was derived from the reported loan amount for the current academic year. Percents are weighted. Source: NORC.

Table 4b. Mean Work Hours Per Week By Freshmen Population

		Work Hours Per Week		
		2001 Achievers Scholarship Recipients	2003 Achievers Scholarship Recipients	2003 Achievers Scholarship Non-recipients
Currently Work for Pay	Yes	22.5	20.9	23.6
	No	0.0	0.0	0.0
Have Loan This Academic Year	Yes	15.6	11.3	10.2
	No	13.5	9.0	13.9
Received Pell Grant from Current School	Yes	12.9	9.5	8.8
	No	16.7	10.2	18.4

Note: Based on currently enrolled students. Means are weighted. Source: NORC.

- Work is an important issue for all students, with substantial concern about the number of hours that students are working. Research has demonstrated that working up to 15 hours a week can have positive impacts on retention for students, but once a student begins to work 15 to 20 hours a week, it becomes an impediment to retention (King, 2006). Both cohorts of Achievers Scholars would fall into this more harmful range, although there is a decrease in the number of hours worked from Cohort 1 to Cohort 3, resulting in a favorable comparison to non-recipients in that same year. Achievers Scholars are working less than low-income students nationally, as 75 percent of low-income students nationally work, with 34 percent working 1 to 20 hours. Approximately 20 percent work 21 to 34 hours, and 20 percent work 35 hours or more (King 2006).⁹
- Achievers Scholars who borrow work a higher mean number of hours per week, although there is a substantial difference between the means for Cohort 1 and 3. In addition, as would be expected, Pell Grant recipients work fewer hours per week than non-Pell recipients, and have a lower mean number of hours worked per week from Cohort 1 to 3.

⁹ In this national data, low-income refers to dependent students from families with less than \$30,000 in income.

Table 4c. Median Amount of Loans This Academic Year By Freshmen Population

		Total Amount of Loans this Academic Year		
		2001 Achievers Scholarship Recipients	2003 Achievers Scholarship Recipients	2003 Achievers Scholarship Non-recipients
Have Loan This Academic Year	Yes	\$2,600	\$2,625	\$4,000
	No	0	0	0

Note: Based on currently enrolled students. Medians are weighted. Source: NORC.

Table 4d. Mean Amount of Loans This Academic Year By Freshmen Population

		Total Amount of Loans this Academic Year		
		2001 Achievers Scholarship Recipients	2003 Achievers Scholarship Recipients	2003 Achievers Scholarship Non-recipients
Currently Work for Pay	Yes	\$678	\$1,795	\$1,668
	No	\$551	\$1,187	\$2,706
Have Loan This Academic Year	Yes	\$3,250	\$4,160	\$5,313
	No	0	0	0
Received Pell Grant from Current School	Yes	\$512	\$1,336	\$2,765
	No	\$1,006	\$1,813	\$1,019

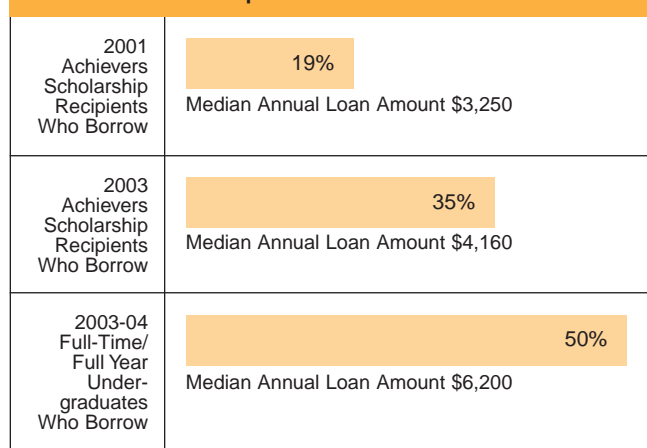
Note: Based on currently enrolled students. Means are weighted. Source: NORC.

Tables 4c and 4d show small trends in the loan amount that Achievers Scholars receive.

- There has been a slight increase among the mean loan amount from Cohort 1 to Cohort 3, and the mean loan amount is substantially lower than for non-recipients of the Achievers Scholarship (Table 4c). This increase is even larger as shown in Table 4d, with greater jumps between the two cohorts.
- However, on a positive note, Achievers Scholars who receive Pell Grants continue to have smaller mean loan amounts than both their Achievers peers who don't receive Pell Grants, and than non-Achievers recipients.

While there are overall trends among the Achievers Scholars in terms of borrowing and working, there are variations based on the type of college that they attend. For example, being enrolled in a private college increased the likelihood that the Achiever would be working for pay. Similarly, while receiving the Achievers Scholarship meant that Achievers Scholars were likely to borrow less, if they attended a private college, they were likely to have higher levels of debt.

Figure 7. Borrowing Among Achievers Scholars Compared to National Data



Source: NORC; Berkner and Wei, 2006.

The overall conclusion regarding Achievers Scholarship program's impact on how Achievers pay for college is that receiving the scholarship indicates that recipients are more likely to have lower levels of debt. In addition, the trend towards increased enrollment in the four-year sector, away from the two-year sector suggests that the scholarship is helping to make a four-year institution more affordable.

However, given the amount of the maximum award and the cost of college, particularly at private colleges, Achievers Scholars still need to work and accrue debt to participate in postsecondary education.

From the focus groups and interviews, Achievers Scholars describe how receiving the scholarship had an impact on other aspects of paying for college. One Achiever, Missy, described the Achievers Scholarship as helping to motivate her to attend college as well as providing the economic support to remain in school during the hard times:

“This May I will have a degree and I won’t have any loans to pay back. It’s a clean start.” Missy also said the financial support and feeling that someone believed in her enough to pay for her college tuition made her feel confident enough to enter and complete college. When asked what it has meant to her to be an Achievers Scholar she replied: “I am an Achiever. I guess that realizing someone took a chance on me, invested in me. I am a pretty risky investment on long-term gains. There are no short-term gains here. That someone took an investment. I didn’t feel worthy; it’s easier to believe in yourself when someone else believes in you.

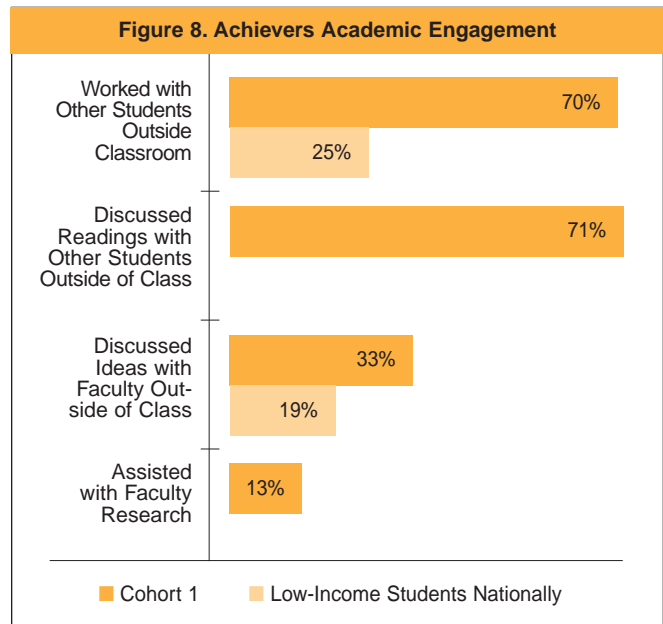
Another Achiever, Sky, also noted, “If it wasn’t for the scholarship, there’s no way I would’ve made it here. Being here and having to realize that I’m not able to work hardly at all and that everything costs so much money. I would’ve been taking out tens of thousands of dollars worth of loans every single year here. There’s no way I would’ve been able to be here at all.”

Transfer is common among Achievers Scholars, with more than one-third of the Achievers Scholars having changed institutions since they enrolled.

By their third year in college, approximately 37 percent of enrolled Achievers Scholars from Cohort 1 had transferred or were in the process of transferring to a different college or university. Nationally, 31 percent of low-income students transfer (NCES, 2001). Nearly two-thirds of these students cited wanting to attend a four-year institution as their primary reason for transferring. The reasons with the next highest responses were academic (15 percent), financial (8 percent), and family (7 percent).

Achievers Scholars are engaged academically, in and out of the classroom.

Approximately 70 percent of the Achievers Scholars reported working with other students and discussing readings outside of the classroom at least once a week, while more than 30 percent discussed ideas from readings or classes with faculty outside of the classroom at least once a week. In addition, Achievers Scholars were more likely than non-funded Achievers Scholars to indicate that at least one faculty member had taken an interest in them. Comparable national data show lower rates of academic engagement for low-income students: only 25 percent of low-income students nationally reported that they often studied or worked on class projects with other students, while 19 percent said they often talked with faculty about academics outside of class (NCES, 2001).¹⁰



NOTE: Percentages indicate response of “at least once a week.” Comparable national data are not available for “discussed with other students outside of class” and “assisted with faculty with research.” Source: NORC; NCES, BPS: 96/01.

Achievers Scholars are making progress in terms of their career development as well. For example, among Cohort 3, more than 70 percent of Achievers Scholars had made an early decision regarding their major. Research literature suggests that this is an important prerequisite to career planning and getting the most out of college as preparation for a career (Brown & Associates, 2002). Even if the major changes, or is an individually constructed major, this is a positive outcome.

¹⁰ These data are from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Survey that is conducted by the National Center of Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. For this analysis, students with family incomes of under \$25,000 were asked to respond on the frequency of the particular activities using never, sometimes, and often.

In addition, Achievers Scholars are getting involved in other ways on campus that will have an impact on their post-college careers. Acceptance into graduate school and advancement in certain academic fields is frequently tied to extracurricular activities. Frequently low-income students engage in these activities at lower rates than their counterparts, due to the need to work to pay for their education. As Liliya, an Achiever who is pursuing a career in pharmacy, said

“Since I don’t have to worry about the financial part, it allowed me to use my talents and develop new ones to pursue my future goals. It’s allowed me to not only focus on my studies, but [has] given me the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities here on campus without having to struggle financially. I have joined a number of organizations here on campus such as the Professional Pharmacy Students Association and Kappa Psi Pharmaceutical Fraternity.”

Enrollment in the STEM fields

Of particular interest for the Achievers Scholarship program is the pursuit of degrees in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, or STEM, fields, where disadvantaged students, particularly minority students, have historically been underrepresented. Among the Cohort 3 Achievers Scholars, nearly one-third (32 percent) had chosen a major in the STEM fields. In comparison, approximately 32 percent of bachelor’s degrees awarded in 2000 were in the STEM fields (National Science Foundation, 2004). The fact that the participation of low-income students in these fields is equivalent to the percentage of degree recipients each year suggests that Achievers Scholars are a model of success in raising participation in the STEM fields.

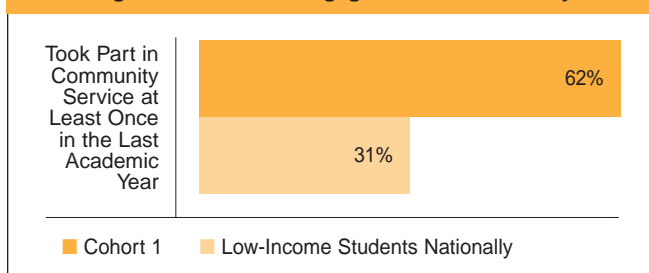
Achievers Scholars are involved in their community and leadership activities.

About 62 percent of enrolled Achievers Scholars participated in a community service activity at least once during the academic year, compared to only 31 percent of low-income students nationally (NCES, 2001). Approximately 14 percent of Achievers Scholars were involved in leadership activities.

Other findings about Achievers Scholars leadership activities include:

- Achievers Scholars from minority groups were more involved in leadership activities than White Achievers Scholars, 18 percent versus 10 percent.

Figure 9. Achievers Engaged in the Community



NOTE: Percentages indicate response of “at least once in the past year.”
Source: NORC; NCES, BPS: 96/01.

- For Achievers Scholars, working with students and faculty on academic issues such as studying and creative projects is associated with holding a leadership position. Getting involved in academic and community activities is more likely to put students on the path of leadership opportunities, as well as making them more likely to succeed in college. These associations did not hold for non-Achievers Scholars.

In the focus groups and interviews, several students talked about how involvement with Achievers Scholars and the scholarship allowed them freedom from financial and time pressures to volunteer, provide leadership, and see themselves as leaders:

Leslie noted, “Now that we have our college paid for, we’re able to put our time and money into other things, like volunteering.”

Because he is such a supporter of the Achievers Scholarship program, Oscar said he now leads tours and hosts students for a day. “For example, for the people who are [in the] first year in the [Achievers] program. I talk with them in terms of what classes to choose, passing [on] advice [on] what professors to choose, what classes to take. I consider myself not a leader, just helping to get others set up, like a mentor role. In general I talk to a lot of students; sometimes they come by and ask me what classes to take. In that respect I feel like I am kind of a leader.”

Achievers Scholars have higher retention and degree attainment rates than low-income students do nationally.

As the first cohort of Achievers Scholars begins to graduate, they are outperforming the national rates for degree completion. As of August 2006, 178 of the Cohort 1 Achievers Scholars have completed a four-year degree, or approximately

36 percent of the inaugural group who were selected as Achievers Scholars and who would have started college in the Fall of 2001 (See Table 5). Using national data from the U.S. Department of Education's Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) longitudinal study, it is possible to offer a point of comparison for the Achievers Scholars degree completion rates. According to BPS data, 15 percent of low-income (defined as \$25,000 or less) had completed a bachelor's degree after five years. In this national study, 17 percent were still enrolled but had not earned a degree, and an additional 23 percent had attained a two-year or associate's degree (NCES, 2005). In Cohort 1, 36 percent of Achievers Scholars had earned a four-year degree, yet 23 percent were either still enrolled or not currently enrolled, but still active in the Achievers Scholarship program, meaning they had obtained a leave of absence and intended to return to college (See Figure 11). Two-year degree attainment was not measured for Achievers Scholars.

Five years for the completion of the degree is becoming more the norm, with the federal government and other entities using six years as their period of measurement. Realistically the next two years should see a substantial increase in the degree completion percentages for both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2. As more Achievers Scholars move through the program, there are other indicators that these degree completion rates will continue to improve:

- The decreased enrollment in the two-year sector and the subsequent increased enrollment in four-year institutions as the Washington State Achievers Scholarship program evolves means that more Achievers Scholars are starting their quest for the bachelor's degree on the most direct route.
- The introduction of additional treatments—the Hometown Mentors, the ACE program, and the early college awareness efforts—should improve the preparation and therefore performance of subsequent cohorts of Achievers Scholars.

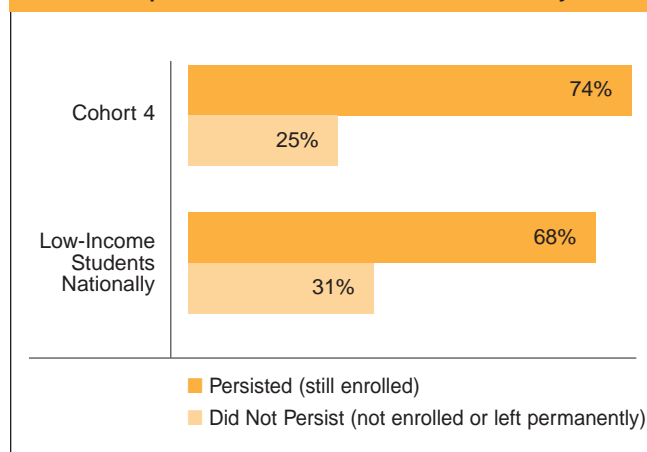
Another way to look at the performance of Achievers Scholars is to examine their persistence compared to all low-income students nationally. For example, after two years, 74 percent of Achievers Scholars who enrolled in Fall 2004 had been continuously enrolled through Spring 2006 (See Figure 10). In comparison, of all low-income students who first enrolled in a postsecondary institution in Fall 1995, 68 percent were still enrolled two years later in Spring 1997 (NCES, 2005).

Table 5. Enrollment, Retention, and Degree Completion for Cohorts 1 to 5 (as of August 2006)

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3 ¹²	Cohort 4	Cohort 5 ¹³	Total
Earliest Start Date	Fall 2001	Fall 2002	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	
Highest Enrollment to Date	501	487	473	494	480	2,435
Number Who Have Four-Year Degrees	178	90	4	0	0	272
Number Currently Enrolled or Currently Active but Not Enrolled	117	240	350	422	471	1,600
Current Cohort Retention Rate ¹¹	58.8%	67.6%	74.8%	85.4%	98.1%	76.9%

Source: College Success Foundation.

Figure 10. Two-Year Persistence of Achievers Scholars Compared to Low-Income Students Nationally



NOTE: Cohort 4 data include all Achievers Scholars who enrolled in college in Fall 2004 and were continuously enrolled through Spring 2006. National comparison group uses BPS data; low-income are defined as having income under \$25,000 who enrolled in non-profit two-year and four-year colleges and universities in Fall 1995, and were still enrolled or had attained an associate's degree as of Spring 1997.
Source: College Success Foundation; NCES, BPS: 96/01.

¹¹ The current cohort retention rate includes those Achievers who have graduated, those enrolled in college, and those not enrolled in college, but still active in the Achievers Scholarship program.

¹² There is one additional recipient in Cohort 3 who could yet start college at some later date.

¹³ There are an additional 15 recipients in Cohort 5 who could yet start college at some later date.

Table 6. Comparing Degree Attainment by Where Students First Started ¹⁴				
Started at a Two-Year Public	Attained a Four-Year Degree	Currently Enrolled ¹⁵	Not Enrolled, but Still Active ¹⁶	No Longer Enrolled
Cohort 1	17%	21%	5%	56%
Low-Income Nationally	3%	14%	NA	52%
Started at a Four-Year Public	Attained a Four-Year Degree	Currently Enrolled ¹⁵	Not Enrolled, but Still Active ¹⁶	No Longer Enrolled
Cohort 1	56%	17%	3%	23%
Low-Income Nationally	34%	27%	NA	30%
Started at a Four-Year Private	Attained a Four-Year Degree	Currently Enrolled ¹⁵	Not Enrolled, but Still Active ¹⁶	No Longer Enrolled
Cohort 1	58%	14%	4%	24%
Low-Income Nationally	48%	17%	NA	28%

NOTE: Totals for low-income students nationally do not add to 100 percent, as approximately 23 percent of this group had attained an associate's degree. This is not measured for Achievers Scholars.

Source: College Success Foundation; NCES, BPS: 96/01.

Table 6 demonstrates the differences in retention and degree attainment by the institutions that Achievers Scholars first attended. The highest degree attainment rate among Achievers Scholars has occurred at private four-year institutions. At private and public four-year institutions combined, Achievers Scholars who first attended any four-year institution account for 74 percent of all BAs attained. At all institutions, Achievers Scholars have higher degree attainment than the national rate. It is important to note though that the Achievers Scholars data do not include associate's degree attainment, as the goal for Achievers Scholars who enroll at a two-year institution is to transfer to a four-year institution to attain a bachelor's degree. Approximately 37 percent of Achievers Scholars transfer.

Motivation of Achievers Scholars

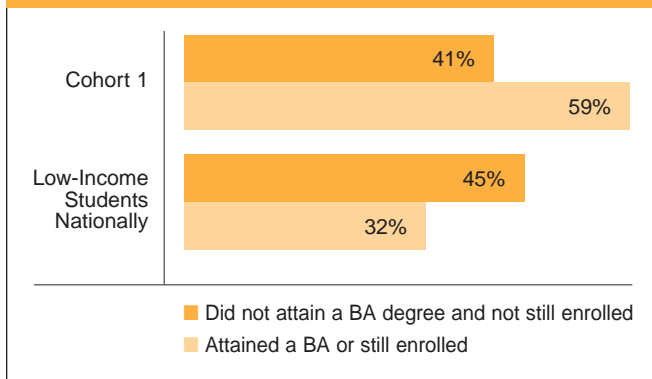
One theme that emerged from the focus groups and interviews was the role that the Achievers Scholarship program played in motivating recipients.

Being selected as an Achiever gave many of them more self-confidence, providing them with a drive to finish, and creating a sense of duty/obligation to pay back. Some of the Achievers Scholars comments:

John: "People are paying for you to go here. So I need to show their investment has been a wise one."

Sky was extremely grateful, saying, "[I]t was the greatest gift I could have gotten, especially at that time in my life. I've always felt very, very thankful for it... I'm here doing my best, achieving, getting my education. In a sense I still do and still will, even when I graduate, feel in some way obligated to the people that provided for that."

Figure 11. Five Years Out, Achievers Scholars Persisting, Completing BA at Higher Rate than National Comparison



NOTE: For the Cohort 1 data, attained a degree or still enrolled includes Achievers Scholars who are not currently enrolled but are still active in the program. In the national data, attained a degree or still enrolled includes attainment of bachelor's degree only, although approximately 23 percent of this group had attained an associate's degree. Attainment of an associate's degree is not measured for Achievers Scholars.

Source: College Success Foundation; NCES, BPS: 96/01.

¹⁴ Totals may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding. Percentages of students completing an associate's or other degree besides bachelor's degree not included in national data.

¹⁵ This refers to any degree-granting postsecondary institution, not necessarily the institution at which the student first enrolled.

¹⁶ Achievers Scholarship recipients can apply for up to one year's leave of absence and still be considered active in the program.

Impact of the Washington State Achievers Program

The multi-faceted Washington State Achievers program was created on the premise that financial barriers to college frequently work in combination with academic and non-academic issues to prevent low-income students from participating in postsecondary education, particularly at the four-year level. As the seventh cohort prepares to graduate from high school and enter college, the research demonstrates that several key aspects of the program are producing results:

- The Achievers Scholarship makes a college education at a four-year institution more affordable, and therefore a reality for the low-income students who participate.
- Long-term, persistence and degree attainment for Achievers Scholars should increase as the impact of additional components are realized by later cohorts.
- Achievers Scholarship recipients are borrowing less and working less than those who do not receive the scholarships.
- Mentors are making a difference in the lives of Achievers Scholars at both the high school and college level.

The Achievers Scholarship program continues to evolve. With future Achievers Scholars receiving support through 2015, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the College Success Foundation remain committed to identifying and adding the necessary support that will allow Achievers Scholars to thrive and succeed in higher education.

While the success of the 5,000 Achievers Scholars is the most immediate goal, it is in achieving the goal of significantly improving the college preparation and participation of all students in the 16 Washington Achievers High Schools that determine the next level of success of the Washington State Achievers program: ultimately improving the college preparation and participation of *all* low-income students in Washington state.

Seth Sather

As long as he can remember, Seth always had the goal to attend college to become pastor. A hard worker who participated in many activities, he was going to be the first in his family to attend college.

His experiences in high school altered his course from the ministry to political science. Despite changing his career goals, he still enrolled in Whitworth College, which he describes as a devout Christian college. He received his bachelor's degree from Whitworth College. He felt he didn't quite fit in with the student body, and though he might not make the same choice if he had it do over, Seth feels that the interactions and experiences he had on campus have made him what he is today, helping to form his own world view and his own political beliefs.

The Achievers Scholarship provided the financial aid and other support Seth needed to get into college and complete his degree. The sense

that other people believed in him and supported him is invaluable to Seth. In addition, the impact of being an Achievers Scholar does not end with him. His younger siblings have followed him into college, with two out of the three also being selected as Achievers Scholars.

In graduate school now at Evergreen State College, Seth is enrolled in a Master's in Public Administration program. He hopes to eventually get his Ph.D and work internationally, perhaps even in the Peace Corps. He can see himself teaching outside the U.S., focusing on political science and conflict resolution.

In Seth's opinion, becoming an Achievers Scholar has enabled him to create opportunities for his life. Free from financial limitations, the Achievers Scholarship has helped him decide a future for himself as he seeks to make a place for himself in the world.

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