

Breaking the cycle of poverty, helping low-income college students succeed

SEPTEMBER 2018

Who's attending community and technical colleges in King County?

44% people of color

28 median age

1/3 employed

23% are parents

Benefits Hubs are available at:

Bellevue College
Green River College
Highline College
Seattle Central College
Shoreline College
South Seattle College

Type of degrees being pursued:

Auto Body Technician
Aviation Maintenance
Dental Assistant and Dental Hygienist
Carpenter
Machinist trainee
Software engineer



United Way of King County

CURRENT STATE

Our local college campuses look very different than they used to. This is not about nostalgia and changing technology. This is about tents popping up along the perimeter of campus—because 9% of students are homeless. This is about students sitting through classes hungry—because 36% do not know where their next meal will come from. It's about determined, motivated students not graduating because they aren't making ends meet—71% of students who drop out of community college do so in order to make money.

Seattle has the highest concentration of college students living below the poverty line when compared to cities of similar size. It impacts graduation rates and significantly lowers the number of people who go on to break the cycle of poverty.

Students from high-income families who enter college are now six times more likely than students from low-income families to graduate. People of color are disproportionately impacted by poverty.

OUR APPROACH

Education is one of the best tools to break the cycle of poverty. With so many college students struggling, we're connecting them to services through Benefits hubs to help them stay in school and graduate. And we're meeting them where they are: on campus.

United Way's Benefits Hubs offer financial coaching, assistance for students applying for benefits and financial aid, free tax preparation and food pantry-type support.

We've combed the country for best practices in this area, surveyed students, met with college leaders and piloted the program at four local colleges. College campuses are embracing the additional on-site support. They know that helping students meet their financial challenges will increase completion rates.

Services Offered

- Emergency financial grants of up to \$1,000
- Financial education, coaching and savings opportunities
- Assistance applying for financial aid
- Access to public benefits
- Tax preparation
- Emergency food
- Emergency housing resources (including Streets To Home)
- Legal services
- Transportation
- Child care

Critical Support to Staying in School



“

It's really hard—essential needs like food and housing become your priority. Trying to maintain enrollment in college is a miracle. The people I know doing that are strong, intelligent and resilient.”

~ Jay,
student at Seattle Central College

HOW IT WORKS

Easy-to-access. Benefits Hubs are placed in prominent, convenient locations on campus and are open a variety of hours.

Relatable on-site staff. They are staffed by a talented group of 18 AmeriCorps members. Services are offered in multiple languages and members of the team have often had similar experiences.

Variety of Services. The type of services are resonating with students and word-of-mouth has helped drive participation.

TAKING IT TO SCALE

The Benefits Hubs model has already expanded from the pilot program on four campuses serving 400 students to six campuses serving 4,000 low-income students in the 2017-18 school year.

Our team is working with campuses to expand the Benefits Hub model, collaborating with a variety of campus departments and standardizing the Benefits Hub offering.

Leverage. We're leveraging federal resources by using AmeriCorps members on-the-ground.

Influence. We'll work with legislators to influence policy that supports college persistence and completion rates.

Effective. We know that financial challenges are the number one reason low-income students drop out of college. By removing these barriers, we'll see higher completion rates.

YOU + UNITED WAY

With your support, we can serve 10,000 students in the 2018-19 school year. We need to raise \$2 million, continue to build partnerships with colleges, deploy 20 more AmeriCorp members and invest in community-based organizations.

Benefits Hub has the potential to be a signature anti-poverty strategy in our community and we hope you'll join us.

