

RUNNING START

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Jump-start on college

Every year, tens of thousands of Washington's high school juniors and seniors decide they're ready for college-level work. Thanks to Running Start, they can show it.

The Washington state Legislature created Running Start in 1990 as a way for students to earn dual high school and college credit, tuition free. The program began as a pilot in the 1992-93 school year. Now students can take classes at all 34 community and technical colleges, Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, Washington State University and Northwest Indian College.

The vast majority of students take Running Start at community and technical colleges.

A true college experience

Running Start students have the same responsibilities as every other college student: they enroll, attend class, do homework, take tests, and are graded with the same expectations as their classmates. They can attend full- or part-time, and, upon successful completion of a college-level course, receive high school and college credit.

Running Start students also receive the same level of academic and support services from their college as any other student — in addition to support services offered by their high school. At their college, students can find tutoring, receive reasonable accommodations from disability support offices, participate in clubs, and get advice from a counselor at no additional cost to them or their families.



Photo courtesy of Bellingham Technical College.

Eligibility

To take part in Running Start, the student's school district and selected college first decide whether the student is ready for college-level work. The student must be in 11th or 12th grade and take any placement tests required by the college.

Once admitted to the college, students may enroll in any class the college offers, as long as prerequisites are met. In order to get credit for high school courses, the high school must determine whether the college course meets its requirements.

Savings for families, taxpayers

Running Start students and their families can save hundreds or even thousands of dollars on the cost of a college education. Students attend college tuition-free, only paying for books, class-based fees and transportation to and from their college.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Ruben Flores
Policy Associate, Student Services
p: 360-704-3929
e: rflores@sbctc.edu

A full-time community or technical college Running Start student saves about \$4,000 in tuition¹ and over \$3,000 in room and board². This allows students to use those savings or future financial aid eligibility for additional years college.

Students from low-income families are eligible for financial assistance from their selected college or university, and some colleges help with transportation.

The program's advantages extend to the state and taxpayers, too. Just as students get a "two-for-one" deal — earning credits that apply to both high school and college — so do taxpayers and the state, saving about \$5,600 per student each year³. The state's investment in that student basically goes twice as far.

Growing popularity

Since its pilot year, Running Start's popularity continues to grow. At Washington's community and technical colleges, the program saw a 52 percent enrollment increase over the last 10 years, from 17,327 students in the 2007-08 school year to 26,303 students in the 2016-17 school year. That's a jump of 20,207 full-time equivalent (FTE) students. Now almost 15 percent of Washington's public high school students participate in Running Start.⁴

Ready for success

Running Start students are serious and well-prepared for the rigors of college. Students generally take two to three classes a quarter and pass nearly all of them — an average 91 percent course pass rate.⁵

Running Start students' success stand out: 3,130 students in 2016-17 school year graduated with their high school diploma and an associate degree. That's 20 percent of the students enrolled. About 15 percent of students finish their associate degree within a year or two of graduating from high school. Thousands of others — 25 percent — earned at least a year of college credit to apply to future higher education.⁶

How does the funding work?

Running Start students are K-12 students, funded with basic education dollars. Running Start does not have its own appropriation — the money follows the student.

The student's basic education funds first go to the school district, which then divides it between the high school and college depending on the student's course load at each institution.

For a full-time Running Start student, the school district is allowed to keep seven percent of the funding for administrative purposes while the college receives the other 93 percent.

When crafting their budgets, school districts and colleges alike project their Running Start enrollments for the following school year.

What are the funding levels for colleges?

The state funds each full-time Washington state resident community and technical college student at about \$5,800 for the 2018-19 school year. Combined with tuition, the college receives about \$9,100 for each student. That amount changes depending on whether the student qualifies for tuition waivers.

The state funds non-vocational Running Start students — most of the students enrolled in the program — at \$8,135 for the 2018-19 school year. With 7 percent retained at the district level, that means colleges receive \$7,566 for a full-time Running Start student.⁷

That's a difference of \$1,534 in funding between a college-enrolled non-Running Start student and a Running Start student. The costs to the college are the same.

Higher education for students, and for Washington

Running Start students save time and money, and stretch the state's educational investments further. These motivated students hit the ground running into college. As more bright minds in our state receive higher education, we all move ahead.

Sources

1. Full-time resident lower division community and technical college tuition for the 2018-19 school year is \$4,027.
2. Washington Financial Aid Association estimates dependents living with parent room and board cost to be \$3,270 for the 2018-19 academic year. https://www.wfaa.org/docs/students/1819_StudentBudgets.pdf
3. SBCTC budget office estimate based on FY19 state allocation by 2016-17 state FTE.
- 4-6. DuPree, D. (2018, March 6). Running Start Participation and Success. Retrieved May 9, 2018, from <https://www.sbctc.edu/resources/documents/colleges-staff/research/research-briefs/running-start-participation-success-research-brief-18-1.pdf>
7. SBCTC Operating Budget office analysis, May 2018.