



STUDENT EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANT (SEAG)

SEPTEMBER 2023

"I need money for my study materials like textbooks, transportation, and things I need for my clinical lab (stethoscope, etc.). I think this will go a long way in helping me to keep in school [... and] in helping get other materials I need for my nursing program."

— Student, SEAG Pierce College

Responding to Increasing Need

For many students, the challenge of going to college extends beyond class lessons, exams, and homework. Half of community and technical college students also face basic needs insecurity, including access to food, housing, child care, health care, and technology. For students of color, low-income students, and first-generation students, the need is even greater.¹ When faced with an inability to meet their basic needs, students are less likely to complete their classes and stay enrolled in college.

Thanks to legislation passed in 2019 by the Washington state Legislature, students at 26 of Washington's 34 community and technical colleges can receive basic needs support through the Student Emergency Assistance Grant Program, or SEAG. With this help, 91% of students completed the quarter in which they received SEAG funding — students stayed enrolled in college, continuing with their classes because of SEAG's emergency support.²

Emergency Funding, Support

Through SEAG, students experiencing an unforeseen emergency or situation affecting their ability to stay enrolled in their classes can receive temporary monetary support and referral to on- and off-campus resources.

To ensure students get the help they need without having to fill out unnecessary and burdensome paperwork — which often leads to them not pursuing help at all — SEAG is low barrier.

SEAG support prioritizes emergency aid and it's flexible, which means students can use funding for a variety of purposes.

Colleges follow up with all students — regardless of whether or not they received SEAG support — at 10-day and 45-day intervals to see how well funding and referrals met students' needs. Using information from those check-ins, colleges can refer students to additional resources, if necessary.

Supporting Students in Need

Under SEAG, colleges must respond to a student's request for support within four days. During that time, colleges verify the student's financial aid award. Because SEAG funding is limited, college staff look for financial aid and emergency funding sources to supplement SEAG.

Students requesting SEAG funding were six times more likely to identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC). Sixty-two percent of students who received funding in the 2021-22 school year identified as BIPOC, while the population made up 42% of students enrolled in community and technical colleges.

SEAG also disproportionately served women — 66% of people funded were women, compared to 53% of students enrolled — and students over the age of 25 — 71% of students, while people in that age group made up 56% of community and technical college enrollment.⁴

CONTACT INFORMATION

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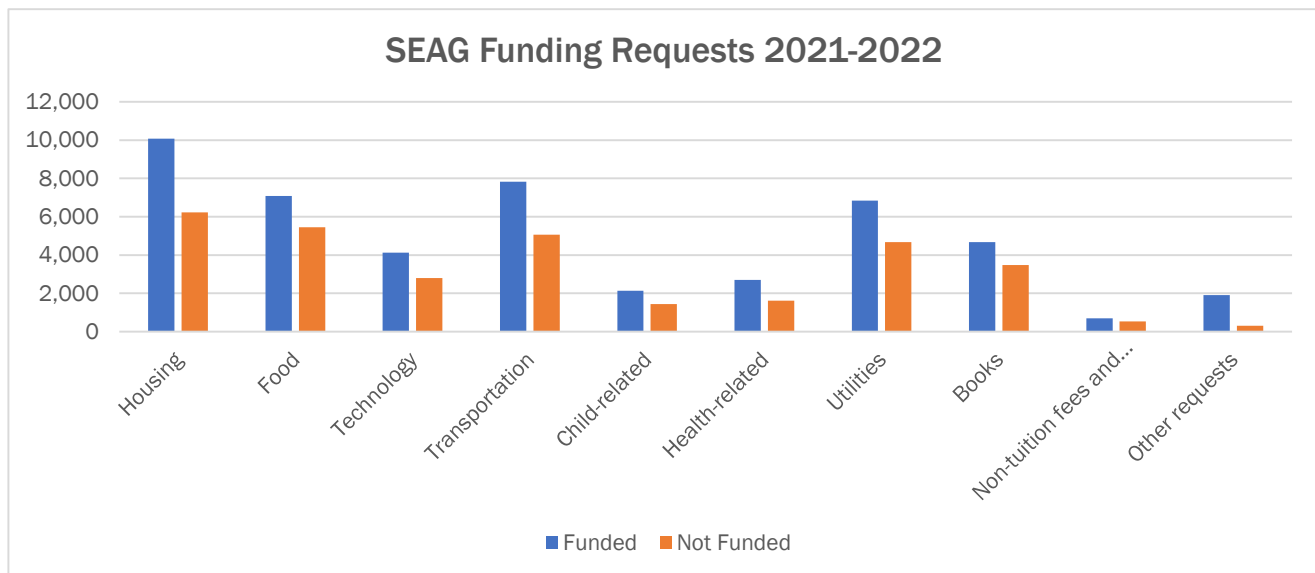
Ongoing State Support

Recognizing growing need among Washington’s community and technical college students, the Washington state Legislature in 2019 established SEAG as a pilot allocating \$750,000 for the 2019-21 biennium. Seeing its value, the Legislature increased funding to the program in the 2021-23 biennium to \$8 million, maintaining that level of funding for the 2023-25 biennium.

Colleges apply to the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the program’s administrator, for funding. Colleges accept student applications and distribute funding and resource referrals to students. In the 2019-21 biennium, 16 colleges received grants. With the additional funds allocated in the 2021-23 biennium, 26 colleges received grants.

Meeting a Variety of Needs

In the 2021-22 school year, students made requests for emergency funding in the following categories. SEAG, in addition to other sources of funding, helped fulfill needs, but thousands of requests remained unfunded. The chart below shows the number of requests funded and the number of requests not funded during that year.⁵



Why weren’t all requests funded?

SEAG funding is flexible and may be used for a variety of purposes, but funding is limited. To address shortfalls, most colleges also turned to emergency funding sources in addition to SEAG to fulfill student needs. The 2021-22 school year brought with it unprecedented levels of student need because of the COVID-19 pandemic, further straining college support. Fortunately, emergency funds temporarily increased during the pandemic with the influx of federal funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES), Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA), and American Rescue Plan acts. Colleges, however, quickly allocated the additional funding. Unfortunately, colleges anticipate added strain on SEAG funding during the 2023-24 school year with federal relief funding exhausted and as the costs of food and other necessities remain high.

1. Washington Student Achievement Council and Western Washington University. “Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students. Washington Student Experience Survey: Findings Report. January 2023. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023.BasicNeedsReport.pdf>
- 2-4. Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. “2SHB 1893 Student Emergency Assistance Grant (SEAG) Program Legislative Report.” Dec. 1, 2023.
5. SBCTC Data Warehouse.