

Unmet basic needs data to drive change for Washington's students

Unmet basic needs represent a significant barrier to students' success and Washington's state goal of 70% postsecondary attainment. State, regional and institutional data on unmet basic needs can help Washington more effectively tackle basic needs barriers to postsecondary attainment by:

- Increasing awareness of the true scale of basic needs insecurity, particularly in communities and education sectors where it may be "invisible" or counter to popular perception.
- Pointing to disparate impacts in particular student populations through the lenses of student status, race/ethnicity, veteran or employment status, etc.
- Serving as an advocacy tool for data-driven solutions on campus, regional and state levels.

Washington Basic Needs Survey: Fall 2024

Postsecondary Basic Needs Act ([2SHB 1559](#) 2023) requires a state-level survey on postsecondary basic needs prevalence and resource access in Fall 2024:

By the beginning of the 2024-25 academic year, the Washington student achievement council must collect and disseminate results of a student survey developed by the student achievement council, in collaboration with the state board for community and technical colleges and an organization representing the presidents of the public four-year institutions of higher education, to assess food security, housing security, and access to basic economic supports. Results from the survey may be used by the institutions of higher education and the tribal college. Existing survey tools may be used for this purpose.¹

To complete this requirement, WSAC will work with SBCTC and community and technical colleges to administer the *Washington Student Experience Survey (WSES basic needs survey)* with all public institutions in Fall 2024. In contrast to the 2022 administration of this survey, the 2024 survey will be centralized and streamlined through SBCTC in partnership with lead institutional partner Western Washington University. **With this change, institutional research teams will not need to field the survey.**

Survey Roles:

- **WSAC** will work with CTCs and baccalaureate partners to confirm the survey and plan.
- **The lead partner institution, Western Washington University**, will complete the IRB review for the survey. WWU will centrally administer the survey and provide analysis and findings of the survey.
- **SBCTC** will partner with WWU to securely manage data. SBCTC will ensure access to individual survey data sets for each community and technical college.
- **CTC staff and student leadership** will promote student survey participation in Fall 2024.

Survey timeline:

- **Spring 2024:** Institutions receive information about the survey and can provide feedback.
- **Fall 2024:** WWU partners with SBCTC to administer the survey directly to students. Colleges promote student awareness and participation in the survey.
- **January 2025:** All institutions will receive their survey data sets, and state report will be published.

¹ In addition, the statute for the **Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness** grant program [ESSB 5702](#) also requires institutions to do annual census surveying on students' food and housing insecurity, and this state survey fulfills this requirement.

Survey instrument

The *Washington Student Experience Survey* (WSES) was developed by a team of Washington institutional partners and consultants in 2021, and fielded in 2022 ([Survey findings report](#)). The instrument used in 2022 will be streamlined and slightly shortened for 2024, maintaining these qualities:

- **Comparable:** A common instrument across the state, aligned with the [Hope Center for College, Community and Justice's](#) #RealCollege survey on key basic needs questions, allows Washington institutions to understand their basic needs data in relation to regional, state and national data.
- **Essential:** It includes a limited set of validated questions focused on food security, housing security and homelessness, childcare access, healthcare access, and use of college/community resources and public benefits.
- **Geared to identify disparate impacts:** Demographic disaggregation will increase understanding of the prevalence of basic needs insecurity across different student populations. This allows institutions, regions and the state to better understand impacts on particular student groups to inform strategic planning.

Benefits to colleges

On an institutional level, data on unmet basic needs prevalence will help colleges:

- Increase institution-wide awareness and understanding of students' basic needs barriers and engage campus and community partners in solutions.
- Better inform institutional strategic planning for targeted, coordinated support toward students' retention and completion, as well as inform opportunities for regional and state collaboration.
- Provide data to drive investment and grant opportunities from local, state and national partners.

On a state level, data will be used to inform state policy makers of needs and drive change in our state to support all students, which is intended to bolster local and institutional efforts.

For more information

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Information about Washington Student Supports for Basic Needs: <https://wsac.wa.gov/student-supports>