

## EQUITY & DIVERSITY

# Wenatchee Valley College Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan

**Partner** Wenatchee Valley Community College  
**Team** Shannon Davidson, Michelle Hodara,  
Marbella Uriostegui, Ming Yin



Wenatchee Valley College, a two-year, federally designated Hispanic-Serving Institution in Washington state, partnered with Education Northwest to develop [a strategic plan focused on diversity and equity](#). The college, which serves students on two campuses in Wenatchee and Omak, is located on the ancestral lands of the Colville Confederated Tribes and serves a student body that is 55 percent people of color and 44 percent Latinx. College leaders wanted to build upon the success of its thriving diversity, equity, and inclusion center.

The strategic plan would guide the college's equity work from 2022–24, inform an internal investigation of opportunities to better serve Wenatchee's diverse student body, and meet the requirements of Washington's 2021 Senate Bill 5194—which requires community colleges to have such plans as well as other equity measures.

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## Facilitating a strategy to promote equity

Education Northwest staff members facilitated a series of meetings of a strategic planning committee made up of members of the college faculty and staff. In these meetings, the committee developed a vision for the plan and the essential elements it should achieve. They chose four focus areas—students; staff, faculty, and administrators; systems and culture; and community partnerships—and outlined key priorities for each area.

Education Northwest then offered feedback on the plan to help the committee produce a final version, which is now posted on the college's website. With the strategic plan in hand, Wenatchee Valley College engaged Education Northwest to collect and review data from students and faculty about their experiences with its programs and policies through the lens of the plan's focus areas. This process helped the college put the new plan into action to improve outcomes for its students.

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## Using data to identify strengths and inequities

Education Northwest researchers presented the findings of this review in April 2023. We conducted a series of focus groups with students and members of the college's faculty and staff to learn more about their perceptions of equity-related supports and challenges at Wenatchee Valley College. In addition, we looked at outcomes for 6,201 first-time students who started at the college between summer 2017 and spring 2022. We compared data across student groups to identify any patterns of systemic inequities, with a particular focus on early momentum metrics—such as passing English and math in the first year, persisting from the first to the second year, the number of credits acquired in the first term, and completion rates—indicators that can predict student completion.

One somewhat surprising finding related to a program at the college that allows high school students to earn college credit—sometimes even earning an associate degree as they graduate high school. The data showed that these students outperformed other students on the early momentum metrics we analyzed. The data showed that students with Pell Grants, who are eligible to participate in special programming to receive extra support and resources, were also doing well.

On the other hand, data for the student population overall showed common disparities among racial, ethnic, and other groups. Overall, the data suggest that the supports some Wenatchee students receive through special programs or financial aid are working and could be productively expanded to others. The findings from this investigation, which address each of the strategic plan's four focus areas, can guide the college as it moves forward on its journey to a more equitable educational environment for all learners.