

# Transforming systems in pursuit of equitable outcomes

Learning insights from the Cradle to Career Network

GRADUATE TACOMA | TACOMA, WASH.

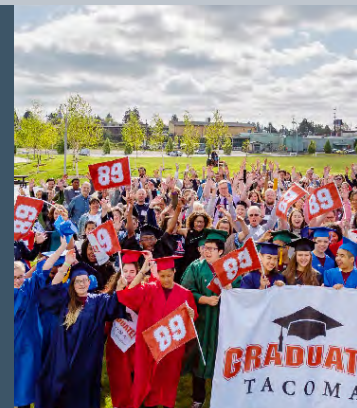
## OUTCOMES



Postsecondary enrollment

## SYSTEMS INDICATOR

Financial barriers to postsecondary enrollment



## RESULTS

- Nearly 10,000 students experiencing poverty annually estimated to now access funding for postsecondary options through partnership advocacy for legislative policy change.
- More than 250 students positively impacted by youth-led tactics of high school influencers promoting financial aid application completion.

Graduate Tacoma in Tacoma, Wash., is one of the 17 partnerships that made tangible progress in shifting all four components of systems transformation — policies, practices, resources and power structures — in service of driving equitable cradle-to-career outcomes. The partnership is working on improving postsecondary outcomes by addressing gaps in access to funding for postsecondary options, especially among families experiencing poverty, who are also disproportionately families of color. In Tacoma, postsecondary enrollment rates have stalled at around 48%, with notable disparities along lines of racial identity and household income. The partnership is working to ensure that paths to college for students experiencing poverty become permanent state policy, and uses a bill tracker that's a one-stop reference point for all bills with any cradle-to-career intersections.

One major policy win came through the Tacoma College Support Network, convened by Graduate Tacoma. This network supports the school district with outreach for and sign up of the College Bound Scholarship, which provides postsecondary funding

for income-qualified students. In 2021, the network successfully advocated for [a state-level policy shift which automatically opted students in to the scholarship](#). This shift positively impacts the more than 10,000 students statewide who miss this opportunity annually due to barriers to completion which make sign-up particularly difficult for students for whom English is not their first or home language, as well as for first-generation college-going students.

The Tacoma College Support Network also launched a pilot in the 2020-2021 academic year that supported five high school senior students of color in serving as postsecondary funding influencers for their peers. These influencers created their own outreach strategies for sharing information on federal and state funding (FAFSA and WASFA, respectively), and partnered with college access staff in implementing the strategies. As a result of this pilot effort, more than 255 students received information about FAFSA/WASFA and the importance of completion in accessing college funding.