

THE COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS'

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF THE WASL IN ADMISSIONS

January 17, 2003

Washington's public baccalaureate institutions are committed to continue our partnership with OSPI, the SBE, the HECB and other interested parties to improve K-12 teaching and learning. We join secondary school educators in encouraging high school students to achieve the highest degree of preparation for both college and work careers. Performance on the WASL is one of the ways this is demonstrated.

There are several ways, at this time, that the public baccalaureate institutions are prepared to use the WASL:

- (1) Public baccalaureate institutions that offer Running Start will join the community and technical colleges to identify how WASL scores may be used to establish Running Start eligibility and course placement.
- (2) Public baccalaureate institutions intend to use WASL scores to identify promising college students, similar to the way we now use the PSAT.
- (3) All six public baccalaureate institutions have agreed to consider WASL scores among the criteria in some of their merit scholarship selection processes beginning 2005, if scores can be provided electronically.

Within the last month, the Council of Presidents was approached by the Superintendent of Public Instruction with a request to commit to using the WASL as a factor in college admissions before 2008. Provosts have spent the ensuing time discussing the implications of making such a commitment. The public baccalaureate institutions are committed to work diligently with their K-12 partners and the HECB to address the concerns that have been identified in those discussions so that, if possible, we may accelerate use of the WASL as a factor in college admissions:

1. University faculty worked with high school faculty to define the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) that form the basis for the Certificate of Mastery (COM). With the leadership of HECB staff, we have identified the additional subject competencies that must be mastered after the COM if students are to successfully begin their college studies. The COM learning requirements, combined with post-COM subject competencies represent the equivalent of the minimum high school core requirements needed for admission to any of the state's public baccalaureate institutions. We need strong assurances from the OSPI and other interested parties that this is a shared principle and that we will work together to ensure its implementation.
2. OSPI will need to develop a mechanism for providing official WASL scores to our admissions officers so that we are able to make appropriate use of those scores in the admissions process.
3. Standards consistent with a high stakes test must be developed for the administration of the WASL in order to ensure the integrity and equity of the results.
4. As with standardized tests, the existing data show an alarming achievement gap between white and ethnic minority students. We need to work together to ensure that ethnic minority students are not discouraged or disadvantaged if the WASL is to be incorporated in college admissions.

Once we are able to address all of these important issues, individual institutions can begin to use the WASL as one factor among others in the admissions process. The Council of Presidents is fully aware of the need to move quickly to address these issues, and we are committed to work with our K-12 partners and other interested parties to do so.