

From the Puget Sound Business Journal:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/seattle/blog/techflash/2016/07/8-000-grads-and-counting-issaquah-organization.html>

8,000 grads and counting: Issaquah organization works to fill the talent pipeline

Jul 8, 2016, 12:54pm PDT Updated: Jul 8, 2016, 1:44pm PDT

A Washington state education nonprofit just posted impressive numbers for its mentoring and scholarship programs.

The College Success Foundation, an Issaquah-based organization that operates state-wide, told the Puget Sound Business Journal on Friday that, as of the end of the 2015-2016 academic year, about 8,000 students in CSF programs have graduated from college since the program started in 2000.

CSF is a private, non-governmental group that helps create educational opportunities for underserved and low-income students.



BUSINESS JOURNAL PHOTO | ANTHONY BOLANTE
CSF CEO Yolanda Watson Spiva (far left) said in an interview that her education nonprofit is trying to break students out of poverty and provide educational opportunities.

CSF gets a lot of bang for its mentoring and scholarship buck. Out of those low-income students enrolled in CSF's programs, 97 percent graduate on time from high school, compared with only 70 percent for low-income students statewide. Among low-income college students in CSF programs, 62 percent graduate, versus 14 percent statewide.

The organization is helping develop a pipeline of locally grown talent to join the region's companies. Right now, Washington imports much of the new workers who are joining the area's companies. The CSF could help reduce the region's dependence on imports while giving locally educated students a chance at some of the top jobs.

CSF's Washington state students "overwhelmingly" attend colleges inside the state, Mary Theisen, a CSF spokeswoman said. CSF also runs programs in Washington, D.C.

Since those students remain in-state for their education, the mentoring and scholarship dollars attached to them contribute to Washington's economy.

"Investment in them is an investment in our state and communities," Theisen said.

Beginning in sixth grade, students in CSF programs get an introduction to colleges and careers and prepare for high school. Then they receive mentoring to help them in high school and through college.

CSF's reach is extensive, its numbers show. It supports 12,000 low-income students per year with scholarships, mentoring or both, it said.

Funded by private donations, Washington state contracts and federal grants, CSF awarded about \$170 million in scholarships between 2000 and 2014.

CSF's overarching goals include not just providing academic and financial support to individual students, but breaking students out of a cycle of low education and low incomes.

"Our ultimate mission is to disrupt generational poverty," Yolanda Watson Spiva, the CEO of CSF, said in an interview. [Click here to read the full interview and learn more about CSF's operations.](#)

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