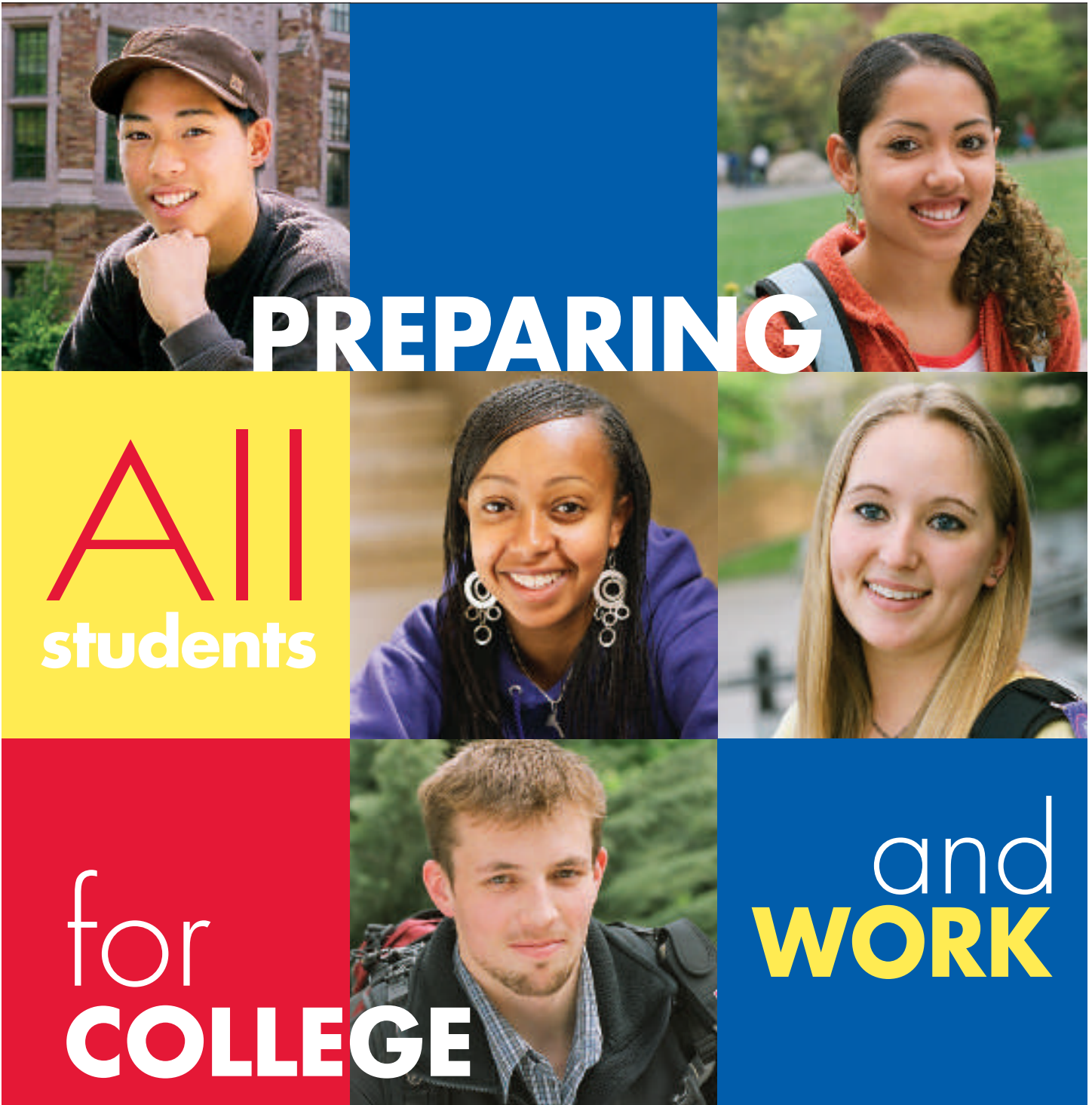


CELEBRATING FIVE YEARS OF THE WASHINGTON STATE ACHIEVERS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



WASHINGTON STATE  
*Achievers*  
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

A program of the Washington Education Foundation  
and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation



## **GOALS OF THE WASHINGTON STATE ACHIEVERS PROGRAM**

**Reduce financial barriers** for talented low-income students who are motivated to attend college

**Use nontraditional indicators** other than GPA and standardized test scores to select scholarship recipients with the potential to earn four-year degrees

**Develop a diverse cadre** of college-educated citizens and leaders

**Increase college enrollment** among all students from Achievers schools

# A Bold Endeavor to Inspire High Schools and Their Students

In today's challenging global economy, students need the same skills and knowledge to thrive in the workplace as they do to succeed in college. To prepare young people for these increased demands, all high schools must commit to high expectations for every student, a personalized, supportive learning environment and an engaging curriculum relevant to students' lives.

This is particularly critical in Washington state. Only about two-thirds of Washington students graduate from high school, and the state has one of the lowest four-year college entrance rates in the nation. Too many students who do go on to college are unprepared and need remedial courses when they begin. By supporting the redesign of 16 high schools, providing a college awareness curriculum in middle school, and giving scholarships and support to high potential, low-income students, the Achievers Program aims to give students both the means to attend college and the academic foundation to do well once they are there.

**Every student, regardless of ability to pay, deserves the chance to attend college. A college degree should not be a privilege. It should be a right for all students.**

— BOB CRAVES, CEO AND PRESIDENT OF THE WASHINGTON EDUCATION FOUNDATION

## MAKING COLLEGE POSSIBLE

To demonstrate that traditionally underperforming students can graduate from high school prepared for college and work, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation worked with the Washington Education Foundation and its partners to launch the Washington State Achievers Scholarship Program in 16 high schools. Since its inception, the Achievers Program has embodied four central components:

**High school redesign** — redesign work that enables schools to emphasize a college preparatory curriculum for all students, delivered in small communities that ensure a supportive learning climate

**Early college awareness in middle and high school** — helping students and parents understand college opportunities and admission requirements

**Scholarships** — funding for students from the lowest third of family incomes in the state

**Mentoring** — connecting students with college-educated adults from the community to support college goal-setting and planning

# Launching Achievers and High School Reform in 16 High Schools

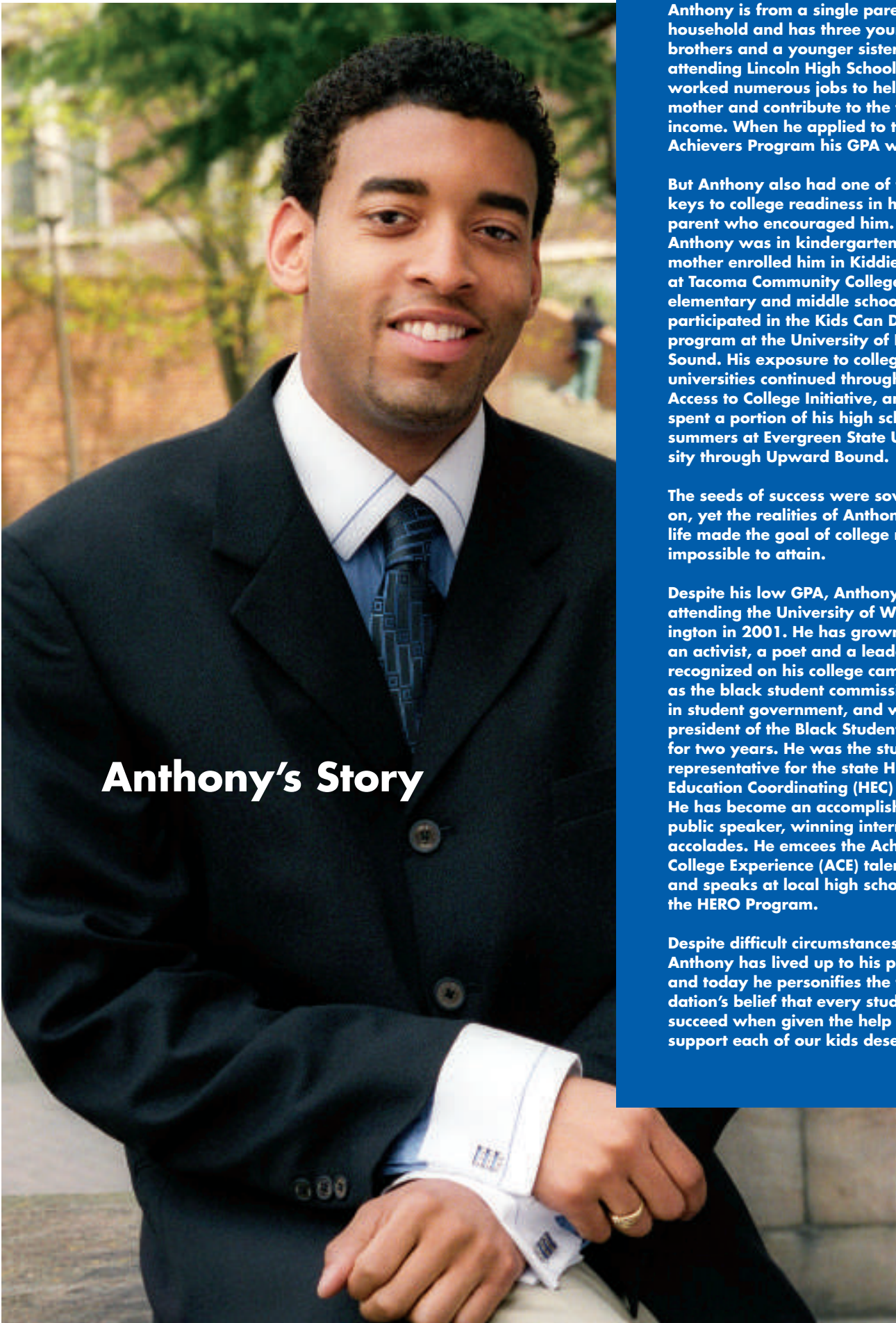
In December of 2000, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation invited Washington state public high schools with high percentages of low-income students to learn more about the program. In March 2001, the foundation selected 16 high schools — representing the diverse cultures and broad geographic landscape of the state — to commit to a high school transformation process and qualify students for the Achievers Scholarship Program. The schools were selected because their leaders and teachers had the passion, talent and commitment to accomplish positive change. That year, the Washington Education Foundation awarded scholarships to 1,000 juniors and seniors in those 16 high schools, creating the first two classes of the program.

## ACHIEVERS HIGH SCHOOLS (number of Achievers scholars, 2001–2006)

1. Cleveland High School, Seattle (222)
2. Clover Park High School, Lakewood (317)
3. Davis High School, Yakima (332)
4. Foster High School, Tukwila (234)
5. Henry Foss High School, Tacoma (456)
6. Kent-Meridian High School, Kent (303)
7. Kittitas High School, Kittitas (75)
8. Lincoln High School, Tacoma (366)
9. Mabton High School, Mabton (88)
10. Mariner High School, Everett (366)
11. Mount Tahoma High School, Tacoma (333)
12. Stevenson High School, Stevenson (108)
13. Tonasket High School, Tonasket (182)
14. Truman High School, Federal Way (53)
15. West Valley High School, Spokane (240)
16. Yelm High School, Yelm (220)



**Kendra McCord stands next to her best friend and roommate, Liz Lee. These two Achievers graduated from Henry Foss High School in 2002, and are now pursuing degrees in sociology. They have stuck together through high school and college, and today have nearly the same class schedule. Outside of school, Kendra works part time at the King County Jail tutoring inmates. Seventy-five percent of all inmates are high school dropouts and 80 percent have a reading level between the 3rd and 7th grades. Kendra is committed to reversing those statistics by helping others pursue their education despite great obstacles.**



## Anthony's Story

Anthony is from a single parent household and has three younger brothers and a younger sister. While attending Lincoln High School, he worked numerous jobs to help his mother and contribute to the family income. When he applied to the Achievers Program his GPA was 1.94.

But Anthony also had one of the keys to college readiness in his life: a parent who encouraged him. When Anthony was in kindergarten his mother enrolled him in Kiddie College at Tacoma Community College. In elementary and middle school, he participated in the Kids Can Do program at the University of Puget Sound. His exposure to colleges and universities continued through the Access to College Initiative, and he spent a portion of his high school summers at Evergreen State University through Upward Bound.

The seeds of success were sown early on, yet the realities of Anthony's life made the goal of college nearly impossible to attain.

Despite his low GPA, Anthony began attending the University of Washington in 2001. He has grown into an activist, a poet and a leader. He's recognized on his college campus as the black student commissioner in student government, and was president of the Black Student Union for two years. He was the student representative for the state Higher Education Coordinating (HEC) Board. He has become an accomplished public speaker, winning international accolades. He emceed the Achievers College Experience (ACE) talent show and speaks at local high schools for the HERO Program.

Despite difficult circumstances, Anthony has lived up to his potential and today he personifies the foundation's belief that every student can succeed when given the help and support each of our kids deserves.

David Chang graduated from West Valley High School near Spokane as class valedictorian. In college he's excelled at his studies, maintaining a 3.8 GPA while studying biochemistry. He hopes to one day go to medical school to become an oncologist.



# Five Years of Progress in the Achievers High Schools

As part of the Achievers Scholarship program, each of the 16 Achievers high schools committed to the redesign and reinvention of their schools, with the goal of preparing all students for success in college. The primary goal of this work is to raise achievement levels and college-going rates of students based on existing models of high-performing schools. This is not easy work. Most of these schools have graduation rates that match Washington state as a whole: Only two of three ninth graders in these schools will graduate from high school and only one of three ninth graders will graduate from high school ready for the academic demands of college.

To ensure their students are prepared to thrive after graduation, high school leaders and teachers committed to infusing their schools with the new 3Rs: Rigor, Relevance and Relationships.

**Rigor** — challenging curriculum

**Relevance** — offering coursework and projects that relate clearly to students' lives and aspirations

**Relationships** — fostering strong relationships between adults and students to create a college-going culture

Communities and school leaders have embraced the mission that “all students graduate from high school ready for college and work” to varying degrees. In some districts, such as Mabton, it has become the focus of their entire system, and there is reason to celebrate: In 2006, 98 percent of their seniors graduated from high school, and more than two-thirds applied to a four-year university, two-year college or technical education program.

While it is too early to measure student outcomes, most of the schools have made notable progress in fostering personalization – a key attribute in high-quality schools. Some schools reported higher attendance and improved interaction between students and teachers. Other schools have had a more challenging time coming to consensus on the means to achieve that goal.

As a group, the Achievers schools have increased:

**The number of students enrolled** in college preparatory classes

**The percentage of students passing WASL** reading and math exams

**A college-going culture** and college awareness across all student groups

**The number of students graduating** with the course requirements for admission to a Washington state four-year college

**The sense of empowerment** among many teachers to create and maintain a strong academic culture within their schools, and to ensure their students succeed in that culture

# Five Hundred New Achievers Scholarships Each Year

Every year since its inception, the Achievers Scholarship Program has helped 500 additional low-income Washington students attend college. The success of the program is due in part to college awareness efforts that begin in middle school, and to mentoring programs that continue into college.

Most Achievers scholars come from families whose incomes are in the bottom third in the state, and 60 percent are students of color. Many will be the first in their families to attend college. Many scholars have faced challenging circumstances and overcome great obstacles.

**“We’re proud of the accomplishments of our Achievers scholars. Their success proves that all of our young people – no matter their neighborhood or income level – have the ability to thrive in college and beyond.”**

— WILLIAM H. GATES SR.

## TOP 20 COLLEGES ACHIEVERS ATTEND (first five classes)

University of Washington	398	Seattle University	69
Eastern Washington University	172	Saint Martin’s University	59
Tacoma Community College	162	Evergreen State College	53
Washington State University	159	Edmonds Community College	47
Central Washington University	147	Clark College	39
Pierce College	133	Green River Community College	39
Pacific Lutheran University	124	Seattle Central Community College	39
Western Washington University	119	Whitworth College	35
Highline Community College	91	Gonzaga University	34
Yakima Valley Community College	73	University of Puget Sound	34



David Majak is a Dinka tribesman and one of the lost boys of Sudan. As an orphan, David survived lion attacks and militia gunfire, and made his way to a refugee camp in Kenya before starting a new life in America. He graduated from Henry Foss High School in Tacoma in 2003 and is adjusting to life at the University of Washington. With so many changes in the past few years, David’s transition has not been easy. But he’s grateful for the many people supporting him and encouraging him through the Achievers Scholarship Program.



## Shaonta's Story

Shaonta Allen says she wasn't supposed to make it. Raised by a single mom with three siblings, Shaonta had no means to go to college. Watching her two older siblings bounce back and forth between community college and work, Shaonta knew she wanted more.

In her first year at Cleveland High School, Shaonta enrolled in Upward Bound, a college preparatory program that brings high school students onto college campuses and gives them opportunities to experience college life. Through the program, she stayed in the University of Washington (UW) dorms, attending classes and meeting other students. Transferring to Kent-Meridian High School after her family moved to Kent, she fought to stay in the program.

"I struggled to have them keep me in the program," says Shaonta. "I took the bus two hours each day in the summer to make it to the UW campus and stay in Upward Bound."

Soon after, Shaonta learned about the Achievers scholarships, applied and was selected in the spring of her junior year. She worked hard to keep up her grades and made a good impression during her senior year. She founded the first black student union at Kent-Meridian and inspired others by being the only African American student in the top 10 percent of her class.

Today, Shaonta is a freshman at the UW, who aspires to earn a double degree in sociology, and law, societies and justice.

"Don't give up. If this is something you want, go after it. I wasn't supposed to make it," says Shaonta, "but I worked hard...dreams can become reality."

Tsz (Oscar) Ng moved from Hong Kong to the United States when he was 15 years old. He began his junior year at Cleveland High School in Seattle and adjusted to his new surroundings with the help of a few dedicated teachers.

"[There was] one person in high school who helped with bilingual students," said Oscar. "I could tell him what I have learned in the past, and he would suggest what classes to take...I got to take calculus and talk about what preparation I needed if I wanted to go to college."

Oscar had doubted he would get into a four-year college because of his language deficiencies, and wondered if he could excel once there. He was accepted on the condition that he take a few ESL classes. He credits his Achievers college mentor with making the transition possible.

"Knowing I had someone there to help was nice. And a lot of time you go in and talk and chat about different things," says Oscar. "You actually have someone you can go to. They direct you to resources. That connection, [it] makes you feel sort of special."

Oscar is now a fifth-year student finishing up a double major in business and computer science. He has been a peer mentor for the Achievers College Experience (ACE) program and has stayed involved in the Achievers network, helping other students like himself succeed at a four-year university.



## Oscar's Story

# Mentorship Is Essential

A touchstone of the Achievers Scholarship Program is its focus on helping students build relationships, both with adults and each other, and become advocates for themselves and their futures. Achievers scholars are selected during their junior year so that they may benefit from more than a year of in-school support from the College Preparatory Advisor and a designated “Hometown Mentor.” With the additional commitment from Achievers high schools to cultivate smaller learning communities and promote college awareness through curriculum and communications, all students are benefiting from increased personalization and support.

Washington Education Foundation staff work closely with their statewide team of dedicated College Preparatory Advisors, Hometown Mentors, and College Mentors to provide personalized support systems that ensure students enroll and succeed in college.

**College Preparatory Advisors (CPAs)** — Each of the 16 Achievers high schools has a CPA who provides daily support and guidance to Achievers scholars as they work toward the goal of enrolling in college. CPAs also provide early outreach to younger students (grades 8–10), encouraging college readiness and increasing awareness about the Achievers Program.

**Hometown Mentors** — Members of the local community meet regularly with students during their junior and senior years of high school and through the first two months of college, helping with decisions related to college selection, preparation and financial aid.

**College Mentors** — Each incoming freshman is assigned a volunteer mentor on campus for support during the first two years, when the risk of dropping out of college is highest.



**Diana Lopez is from Mabton, a tightly-knit community in the Yakima Valley. Mabton High School is 93 percent Hispanic and 80 percent of the students are on free and reduced lunch. Through the Achievers scholarship, Diana and many of her peers are able to obtain a college education. Now, whenever Diana goes back to visit, she speaks about her experiences and tries to help more students become interested in college.**

# Supporting Programs for Achievers High Schools and Achievers Scholars

**College Awareness Curriculum** — begins in 7th or 8th grade and continues through high school

**Achievers College Experience (ACE)** — a four-day, on-campus workshop that gives scholars the opportunity to experience campus life before they apply

**Higher Education Readiness Opportunity (HERO)** — helps young men grades 8–10 and underserved students in need of assistance

**College-Readiness Campaign** — builds a sustainable, long-term culture of readiness for college and career

**Community College Retention Activities** — helps Achievers scholars succeed in community college and then transfer to four-year colleges

**Achievers Scholars Alumni Association** — promotes leadership, professional development and graduate school attainment, and helps graduates “give back” through mentoring and other service opportunities

**Additional Partnerships** — include the Washington State Legislature, the Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Federal GEAR-UP program and the University of Washington Summer Honors Academy

**Gustavo Bravo and Edith Gonzalez graduated from Davis High School in Yakima in 2005. Classmates then and now, they are proud to attend college through the Achievers Program. Both are first generation college-goers, and Gustavo was the first in his family to graduate high school.**





**Ammara Hun is a senior majoring in American ethnic studies. She's an alumna of Foster High School in Tukwila and one day hopes to find herself back in the high school classroom, this time as a teacher.**

# Lessons Learned

The 16 Achievers high schools have developed a number of ways to inspire and prepare more students to go to college. Success requires strong school and district leadership with a common vision of high achievement for all students and a shared picture of the effective instruction and support necessary to help all students reach high standards. Their best practices provide a roadmap to create a culture of college and career readiness. Eight strategic elements emerge as critical factors:

**Academic Environment** — The school is mission driven, with excellent leadership and a culture of high expectations, providing supportive and inspiring relationships between adults and students.

**College and Career Preparedness** — A college and career awareness curriculum is integrated into required classes, starting in middle school and continuing through high school.

**Involved Parents** — The school recognizes that many parents believe college is unattainable for their children and works to overcome this barrier by involving parents in college and career planning.

**Engaged Community** — The school understands the cultural diversity of its community and uses effective strategies to communicate the importance of its college-ready mission to families and community members.

**District Level Support** — There is consistent support and guidance from education leaders in their school districts as high schools embark on the path of transforming themselves into institutions that prepare all students for success in college and work.

**Mentoring Is Key** — Adult advocates help students raise their academic aspirations, provide them with critical information about what it takes to be successful in college and support their application and transition to college.

**Affordability Matters** — When financial barriers to college are removed by making available adequate financial aid, the rate of admission to and graduation from four-year colleges for low-income students is greatly increased.

**Support in Community College** — Additional mentoring and intervention for students enrolled in community college helps them succeed academically and successfully transition to a four-year college.

## WHAT'S NEXT: BUILDING ON LESSONS LEARNED

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Washington Education Foundation are committed to the mission of preparing all students for success in college and career. We will continue to help the Achievers high schools and scholars demonstrate that the vision of college and work readiness for all students is a critical — and attainable — goal.

# The Need Is Real

Estimated number of students in Washington who don't go to college each year because of inadequate financial resources: **6,000**

Percentage of low-income students who earn a bachelor's degree: **9%**

Percentage of Achievers scholars expected to earn bachelor's degrees as a result of the Achievers Scholarship Program: **75%**

## TOGETHER WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Amount in scholarships awarded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Washington Education Foundation through the Achievers Program: **\$125 MILLION**

Total number of Washington state students who receive an Achievers scholarship each year: **500**

Number of students who will receive an Achievers scholarship: **5,000**

Total number of Achievers scholars expected to earn bachelor's degrees: **3,750**

Estimated average of scholarship assistance for each Achievers scholar: **\$25,000**

Percentage of Achievers scholars enrolled directly into four-year colleges in the fifth class (an increase of nearly 25% since the program's inception): **73%**

Average family income of Achievers scholarship recipients during the program's first year: **\$28,000**

Sources: 2003 census, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Washington Education Foundation



Through partnerships with local, state and community leaders, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Washington Education Foundation are committed to raising the high school graduation rate and helping all students graduate prepared for college, career and citizenship.

The Washington Education Foundation welcomes partnerships with other foundations, corporations, groups and individuals to manage scholarship programs to meet their objectives. Through 2007, approximately 1,000 students will have received bachelor's degrees from programs currently managed by the Washington Education Foundation.

## WASHINGTON STATE *Achievers* SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

425.416.2000 [www.waedfoundation.org](http://www.waedfoundation.org)



Photography by Susie Fitzhugh

In 2001, the Washington Education Foundation partnered with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to provide 5,000 college scholarships and mentoring for high potential, low-income students from 16 Washington public high schools.

Five years later, nearly 2,500 students have attended college through the Washington State Achievers Scholarship Program. While just nine percent of low-income students nationwide earn bachelor's degrees, 75 percent of Achievers scholars are expected to graduate from college. By the end of 2006, 400 Achievers scholars will have received bachelor's degrees.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation focuses on creating greater equity throughout the world. The foundation's education improvement efforts in the United States aim to raise graduation and college readiness rates for all high school students. Investments strengthen high schools and districts with an emphasis on the new 3 R's: academic Rigor, Relevant coursework, and strong, supportive Relationships between students and adults. The foundation also reduces financial barriers to higher education through scholarship programs.

**Paid for by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**