

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Degrees of Change awarded five-year, \$3.4 million grant from College Spark Washington to help 1,000 low-income students successfully transition to college, earn degrees and give back to their communities

TACOMA, WA - Degrees of Change announced it was awarded a five-year, \$3.4 million grant from College Spark Washington to help more low-income students stay on track and graduate from college while inspiring them to use their degrees to give back to their communities. The Together through College project aims to serve 1,000 students from four Washington communities as they attend public two- and four-year colleges across the state.

Many low-income and first-generation students begin college without a support network of friends or family members familiar with college life. This reality can create a sense of isolation when students encounter the inherent challenges of a new college environment and it contributes to substantially lower degree completion rates for students from these groups.

Together through College will utilize a cohort-based model in which students graduating from the same community and heading off to the same college are grouped together to receive a range of services including peer and adult mentoring, college readiness and academic supports, help in navigating college-based services, and leadership training. The model calls on a collaborative effort between community-based organizations and colleges to improve the success of local college students.

"A key feature of cohort-based programs is that participating students develop a close network of peers who provide mutual support and accountability," said Tim Herron, president of Degrees of Change. "This program helps students develop a sense of purpose that incorporates the goals of earning a college degree and giving back to their communities."

Together through College extends the proven success of Act Six, the flagship initiative of Degrees of Change. For the past 13 years, local community organizations across the country have utilized the Act Six model to support cohorts of underrepresented students at private colleges as they earn their degrees and return home as leaders in their communities. The new project extends this success to greater numbers of students at a wider range of colleges and universities.

"We support organizations and ideas that are making progress on postsecondary persistence and completion rates for low-income students," said Christine McCabe, executive director at College Spark Washington. "Degrees of Change and its community partners have shown evidence of effectiveness and a track record of success with innovative and bold strategies."

Recruitment for the first cohorts of Together through College scholars begins in the fall of 2016.

TO COLLEGE AND BACK. TOGETHER.

We help communities and colleges equip students to learn together through college and lead together back home.

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Degrees of Change is a national not-for-profit organization founded and based in Tacoma, Washington that helps communities and colleges develop networks of diverse, well-educated, mission-minded leaders by sending students to college together in cohorts while empowering them to grow as leaders, complete their degrees, and connect their talents and efforts to make their home communities more vibrant and equitable. In doing so, DoC increases success in higher education among students who have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education, particularly low-income students, students of color, and first-generation college students. Learn more at degreesofchange.org.

College Spark Washington funds programs across Washington state that help low-income students become college-ready and earn their degrees. Grantees include community-based organizations, K-12 schools and districts, community and technical colleges, four-year colleges and universities, educational nonprofits, and public agencies. College Spark began supporting access to higher education in 1978 and, since 2005, has awarded more than \$45 million to college readiness and degree completion programs throughout the state. Learn more at collegespark.org.