

Moving students up in the world

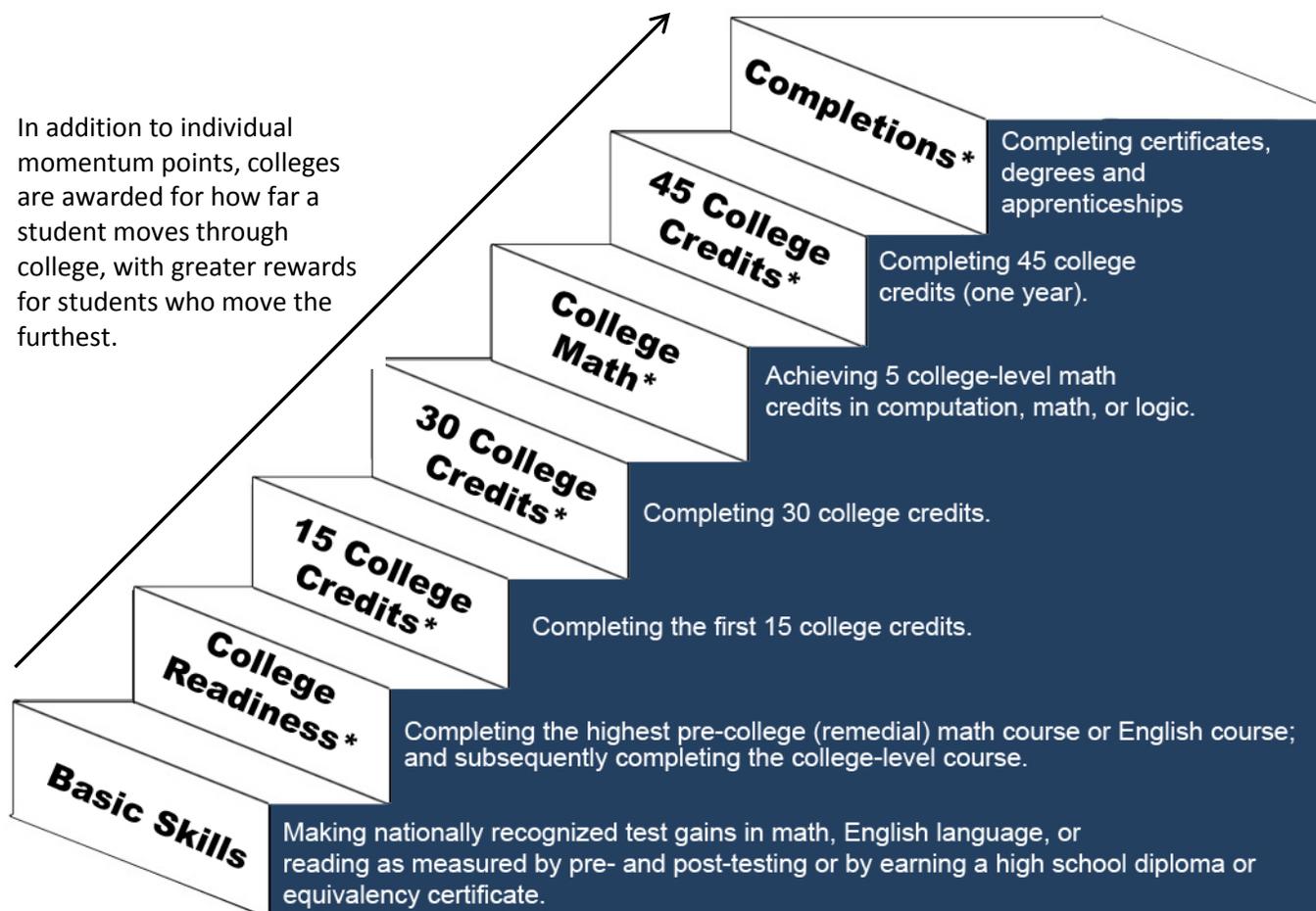
Washington's nationally renowned Student Achievement Initiative rewards community and technical colleges for moving students further and faster in college and improving student success. Colleges earn a portion of their funding based on results, not just enrollments. They earn points and funding when students reach key academic momentum points, such as finishing college-level math, completing the first year of college, and earning a degree or certificate. The goal is to propel students to and through the "tipping point" – the level of education that means the difference between struggling in a low-wage job and having a career that leads to a better life.

The Student Achievement Initiative was launched in 2007. Improvements in the 2013-2014 school year place new emphasis on student retention and completion, as illustrated below.

How are momentum points calculated?

Points are awarded each time a college student reaches one of the following momentum points. Financial awards are distributed each fall.

In addition to individual momentum points, colleges are awarded for how far a student moves through college, with greater rewards for students who move the furthest.



*If the student reaching this momentum point started in basic skills, an additional point is awarded.

Successful results

The Student Achievement Initiative has been a successful performance-funding tool since it began. In the midst of historic budget cuts to higher education, the number of degrees and certificates completed at Washington's community and technical colleges increased by 46 percent between 2007 and 2012.¹

Summary of improvements effective 2013-2014 school year

- **Moving students past basic skills and into college:** The new approach recognizes that students who have below high-school level math, reading and English language skills have a more challenging educational journey. Under the new approach, basic skills students who reach academic milestones are awarded one point more than other students who reach the same levels.
- **Developmental education emphasizes college readiness:** Points are awarded after students complete the highest level of pre-college (remedial) classes in reading and math, rather than when they complete each individual class in a sequence. This shifts the focus from the number of classes taken, to the highest level of knowledge gained. It also allows colleges to blend courses or advance students to the next level when the students are ready, without fear of losing points. An extra point is awarded if a student completes a college-level math or English class within the same year as completing a pre-college class.
- **Getting students to a second year:** The new system adds another momentum point: achieving one year of college (45 credits) in a professional-technical field or for university transfer.
- **Showing steady progress:** Students who increase their achievement from one year to the next qualify for an additional point.
- **Completions:** College completion is emphasized in the awarding of performance funds.

1. Source: SBCTC data warehouse.