

ASPIRE



MENTORSHIP FOR POSTSECONDARY ACCESS & CAREER SUCCESS

ABOUT ASPIRE

EWU Aspire is a near-peer mentoring program designed to connect underrepresented and underserved high school students with EWU undergraduate mentors along shared educational and vocational passions. Leveraging a near-peer mentorship model, high school mentees receive critical information and inspiration about how to best navigate their postsecondary and career pathways. Undergraduate mentors share their personal experiences, guidance, support, and encouragement.

LEVERAGING EXPERTISE TO REALIZE DREAMS

Near-Peer Mentorship

Partnering with a mentor who is close in age has significant benefits for high school students. With an empathic and approachable connection, mentors can quickly build a foundation of trust, which is essential for navigating complex and sensitive conversations. A near-peer mentor's collective knowledge, insight, and empathy can help guide high school students as they navigate the difficult college admittance process. As mentors share their major and career experiences, mentees can envision themselves in that field/industry and have the confidence to pursue their dreams.

Purpose & Meaningful Engagement

Undergraduate mentors build confidence and a greater understanding of their industries through personal reflection and the sharing of their experiences with near-peer mentees. By engaging with mentees in the community, mentors can directly influence talent pipelines and the makeup of their professional community, allowing them to be more invested in their post-secondary institutions and industries. This level of involvement in their future demonstrates the value of community service and encourages the development of a professional that is engaged and empowered to be actively invested in the wellbeing of their community.

Community-In-Waiting

To expand educational opportunities and reduce inequity in higher education for low-income or underrepresented youth, it is not enough to simply enroll students in college; it is necessary to ensure every effort is made to promote equity and provide a welcoming and nurturing atmosphere that gives students the necessary tools to be successful. Mentees who choose to attend EWU will have a community-in-waiting and can become a mentor, completing the cycle of impact. Mentees that attend another state or regional institution will be connected with services and support at their new institution to ensure they complete their degree program.

REGIONALLY RESPONSIVE

Eastern Washington is a vast region made up of rural, suburban and urban communities. According to Washington STEM, the top regional industries and jobs include healthcare, life sciences, business and finance, engineering, information technology as well as trade professionals. All of these professions require a postsecondary education credential. By 2030, it is projected 82% of high-demand, family-sustaining wage jobs available in the region will require a postsecondary credential and almost half of these jobs will be STEM or STEM literacy-based occupations. Unfortunately, many K-12 students within the region are not equitably or adequately prepared to respond to the demand, with only 40% of the 2019 high school cohort projected to be on track to attain postsecondary credentials. This poses a significant economic impact on the region's growth and expands existing equity gaps for underserved and underrepresented populations.

URGENT IMPACT

In order to dramatically address the region's postsecondary enrollment and career readiness, EWU Aspire will focus its program on serving low-income, first-generation and students from rural and diverse backgrounds who too often do not see higher education as a realistic option. In partnership with K-12 schools, nonprofit practitioners, and the business community, EWU Aspire will focus on the key outcome metrics required for the vitality of our region's students, families, and industries.

- Increased Success in **Achieving a Family-Sustaining Wage Career** for all students.
- Increased **Postsecondary Access and Enrollment** for participating mentees and school partners.
- Increased **Retention and Degree Completion** for undergraduate mentors.

VALUES

We believe that all students have the right to pursue the postsecondary pathway that aligns best with their personal and professional passions, ensuring they achieve their career and life goals. **Postsecondary pathways include 2-Year, 4-Year, and Apprenticeship programs**, supporting the best-fit for an individual's career aspirations. The EWU Aspire program embodies the true mission of a public university, enhancing access to higher education for all K-12 students within the region - regardless of where they attend.

HOW IT WORKS

Through consistent school-based mentoring sessions, community postsecondary events, and virtual advising, mentors support mentees through critical milestones on their college and career journey.

CAREER & MAJOR EXPLORATION



Discovering the range of majors and careers that align with their passion and academic strengths.

FINANCIAL AID ADVISING



Submitting the FAFSA, WAFSA, and scholarship applications to eliminate financial barriers.

COLLEGE-FIT & ACCESS



Learning about different postsecondary pathways (apprenticeship, 2-year, 4-year) and submit corresponding applications. This process centers the mentee's personal and professional goals.

