



## University of Washington Named First National Banner Unified Champion College in Washington State

*National recognition highlights University of Washington's commitment to inclusion*

**March 26, 2026 – SEATTLE** – The University of Washington has been named a National Banner Unified Champion College by Special Olympics Washington, becoming the first college in Washington state to earn this prestigious national recognition.

The National Banner designation is awarded to institutions that demonstrate excellence in implementing the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools (UCS) model, built on three key components: Unified Sports, Inclusive Youth Leadership, and whole campus engagement. Colleges receiving this distinction meet rigorous national standards and show a strong commitment to creating environments where students with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) learn, lead, and compete together.

National Banner status represents the highest level of achievement within the UCS program. To qualify, colleges must demonstrate participation in Unified Sports, create inclusive leadership opportunities, and engage the broader campus community in promoting respect, belonging, and acceptance.

The University of Washington's recognition marks an important milestone for higher education in Washington state. While several K–12 schools across the state have earned National Banner status, UW is the first college in Washington to achieve this distinction. Through Unified Sports programming, inclusive student leadership opportunities, and campus-wide engagement efforts, UW has built a culture that promotes dignity, opportunity, and shared experiences for all students.

Special Olympics Washington plans to celebrate the recognition with a National Banner presentation on April 17 at the University of Washington basketball game as part of Special Olympics College Challenge Week.

Special Olympics Washington partners with schools and colleges across the state to implement UCS programming as a strategy to reduce bullying, increase belonging, and build more inclusive communities.

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### About Special Olympics Washington

Special Olympics Washington provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for thousands of children and adults with I/DD, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community. Learn more at [SpecialOlympicsWashington.org](https://SpecialOlympicsWashington.org).

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