

Associated Students of Western Washington University



Photo Credit: Sabrina Romano

2015-2016 Legislative

The Associated Students of Western Washington University (ASWWU), the recognized student governance organization on campus, represents and protects the interests of 14,950 Western Washington University students. The ASWWU exists to ensure student representation in decisions that impact students; support leadership development; provide resources, activities, and information for students; and provide opportunities for students to organize themselves around their special interests, in order to further achieve the mission of the university and complement classroom education. Our five Legislative Priorities are:

- 1. New and Dedicated Revenue for Higher Education*
- 2. Voter Access*
- 3. Funding for Carver Academic Facility*
- 4. Support for Survivors of Sexual Violence*
- 5. Student Success*



Associated Students of Western Washington University 2015 Legislative Agenda

ASWWU LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

New and Dedicated Revenue

ASWWU recognizes that low tuition, fully funded state financial aid, and providing funding to state institutions of higher education is a priority to students. We set out to recommend politically feasible sources of revenue generated from closing existing tax loopholes, creating new sources of tax revenue, or increasing existing taxes and dedicating that revenue to funding higher education.

- Close the extracted fuel exemption in the state tax code that would generate between \$41 million and \$63 million per biennium.
- Double the estate tax, which would only affect approximately 300 people a year and could generate an estimated \$160.3 million for the 2013-2015 biennium.
- Allocate revenue from the possible expiration of the B&O tax incentive for R&D firms, which is estimated to generate \$114 million in the 2013-15 biennium.
- Additional tax exemptions we recommend closing include agricultural procedures, international banking facilities, investment income of nonfinancial firms, B&O tax for insurance agents, and fertilizer and chemical spray.
- Sources of new revenue could potentially come from the new cannabis tax. It is estimated in that over the next five years, as much as \$349,341,000 could be generated into the state's general fund.
- Prioritize enough new and dedicated revenue in a way that will allow for the university to set lower tuition.

Voter Access

ASWWU believes that everyone should have access to voting. The current laws make it difficult for students to register to vote or update their mailing addresses. Making voter registration more accessible will increase the amount of students and young people participating in elections. Recently, these policies have gained widespread support by county auditors and election officials. ASWWU advocates for:



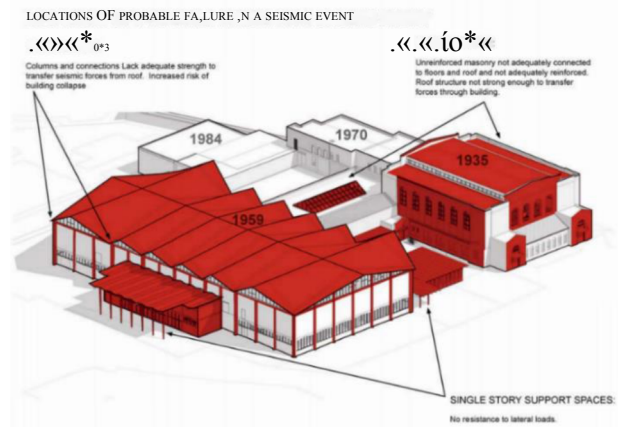
- Extending the voter registration deadline until 11 days prior to the election and in-person on the day of the election.
- Allowing 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote as part of the Motor Voter system currently in place. This would allow them to register to vote when they are at the Department of Licensing getting their license or renewing it.
- Creating educational and accessible programs for voters to learn more about what and who they are voting for.



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Funding for Carver Academic Facility

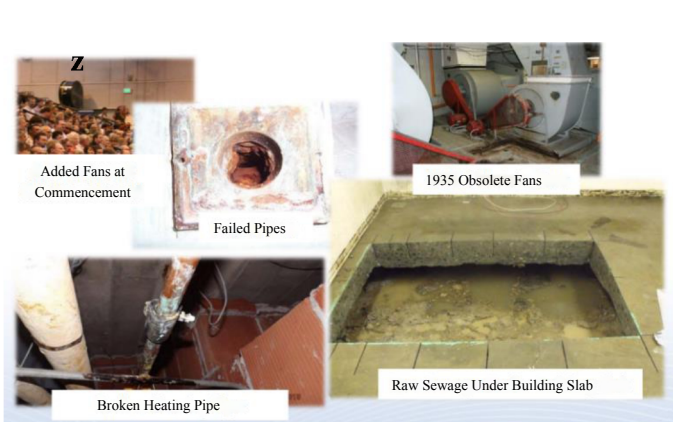
ASWWU and WWU Administration stand together to recognize that funding the renovation project for Carver Academic Facility is imperative for student safety and provides an opportunity to make WWU's campus more sustainable. Students value Carver as both an academic classroom and an athletic complex that is an integral part of the student experience at WWU. Students deserve to learn in a safe classroom and will not pay an extra fee to complete the renovation. If it was fully student-funded it would cost each student \$4,882.94. The state has already invested \$7.3 million in design and \$73 million more is required for the renovation.



* Keeping this project on the requested timeline is essential. Action has been delayed for several years already and further inaction on this safety issue is unacceptable.

- Models show that in the event of seismic activity significant portions of the Carver Academic Facility are subject to catastrophic failure, which would almost certainly result in fatalities and other injuries if the building was occupied at the time.
- The building has additional health and safety issues, including inadequate ventilation, broken heating pipes, and raw sewage seepage.

- Carver is currently not in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Carver is home to Physical Education, Health, and Recreation (PEHR), which is the largest department at Western. The needs of PEHR are not currently being met by the facility.
- The Carver Gym portion of the facility is the largest enclosed space in Whatcom County and is one of the most visited facilities on campus. It hosts WWU athletic events, graduation ceremonies, and many other WWU functions. In addition, Carver is an important facility to the Whatcom County community, hosting events such as local high school graduation ceremonies and youth athletic programs.





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Support Survivors of Sexual Violence

The ASWWU is concerned about the vastly under-reported instances of sexual violence on our campus. We strongly believe that with increased funding at the state level, more students will be able to access support and legal services with the confidence that their needs will be met. Increased support for survivors will create a healthier campus and community environment, and will help students who are survivors of sexual violence complete their education with fewer roadblocks. ASWWU advocates for:

- Dedicated funding specifically for increased counseling services, including specialized personnel, resources, and staff training to better equip the university to respond to sexual violence and involved parties.
- New and supported legislation that closes the gaps between current protection and support services and the actual needs of survivors of sexual violence.
- The development and implementation of a mandatory training program for all faculty and staff who interact with students in a supervisory, administrative, or academic capacity. This training program must include: education on how to use inclusive language that doesn't place blame on survivors or make assumptions, refer students to the available services on and off campus, encourage students and explain how to report encounters of sexual violence at the university level and beyond, create a safe space in the environment for students who have survived sexual violence.
- Giving direction to the Washington Student Achievement Council with assessing the effectiveness of current codes of conduct at universities in Washington state in regards to sexual harassment and sexual assault in concordance with RCW 28.B.10.030

Student Success

ASWWU believes that student success is dependent not only on the support students receive while in the classroom, but is largely dependent on the resources made available to students outside of the classroom. ASWWU and WWU Administration stand together in supporting an increase in funding for services that are vital to student success in Washington's public universities and colleges. We acknowledge that:

- Additional academic advising and tutoring services are necessary to ensure success for students of color, first-generation students, and other marginalized students.
- Regardless of a student's gender identity, there is a need for increased financial support for survivors of sexual assault and trauma.
- Mental health and counseling services are currently being utilized at a higher rate than in the past, and need to grow in order to provide sufficient services for students. The number of students seeking counseling for 'severe' psychological problems jumped from 16 percent in 2000 to 39 percent in 2012.
- Many other services on campuses, such as individualized disability accommodations and specific support services for other marginalized groups, are essential to properly supporting students as they move through their college education. In the last few years Disability Resources for Students has seen a 77-percent growth in the amount of students who qualify for services.



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From the Associated Students Board of Directors

Dear Legislator,

It is with great pride and respect that we present our 2015 Legislative Agenda on behalf of the Associated Students of Western Washington University (ASWWU). This document has been crafted with great care to inclusively and accurately represent the opinions and wishes of all 14,950 Western Washington University students.

This year, we have focused on building the future and ensuring the success of WWU students. Our five priorities reflect this goal. First, we are requesting that new and existing sources of revenue be dedicated to higher education. We understand the tuition setting authority currently rests with the universities, however we firmly believe that the best form of financial aid is lower tuition. This can only be achieved by new and/or dedicated sources of revenue. Investment in higher education is necessary for a sustainable model in which current and future generations have the opportunity to acquire the tools needed to build a strong future for Washington. Second, every student that has the ability, should have the opportunity to engage in the political process, By making voter registration more accessible it will give students the chance to voice their opinion in decisions that are affecting them. Third, we are requesting funding to renovate Carver Academic Facility. Students should be learning in classrooms that are safe, accessible, and have adequate resources. Fourth, we support increased funding and support services for survivors of sexual violence. It is important that survivors of sexual violence have a safe and healthy campus space to ensure that they can be successful. Fifth, we acknowledge the importance of the retention of students of marginalized identities at WWU. We are asking the Washington State Legislature to invest in services that will help these students thrive.

Thank you for taking the time to review our ASWWU Legislative Agenda. We appreciate all the hard work you do for students, and hope you will join us in building the future for Washington State. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

The ASWWU Board of Directors

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