



Associated Students of
Western Washington University
Viking Union 530 – MS 9106
516 High Street, Bellingham, WA 98225
360-650-4648
as.wwu.edu

Sabah Randhawa, President
516 High Street
Bellingham, WA 98225

President Randhawa,

We are writing you on behalf of the Associated Students (ASWWU) leadership, representing our constituency of all students at Western Washington University to express support for the creation of a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) as part of the President’s Cabinet. We would like to begin by thanking your administration for the partnership we have developed in accomplishing important diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work over the past year. Within the ASWWU, some of this important work has included the creation of WWU’s inaugural Black Student Coalition and active planning for a Black Student Cultural Space; both initiatives being direct requests made in June 2020 by WWU’s Black Student Organizations (BSOs). Additionally, we have been dedicated to a robust collaboration between ASWWU and WWU lobbying efforts to establish a traditional, Coast Salish Longhouse on our Bellingham campus; this initiative stems from demands made by WWU’s Native American Student Union (NASU). We look forward to the continued partnership with your executive team on this important work.

As we have eagerly supported DEI initiatives on campus, we have recognized the cyclical pattern of student groups, commonly comprised of a majority BIPOC students, having to assemble demands from the university to move the needle on campus-wide DEI work. In our opinion, this process is an unsustainable path for change and one that has exhausted generations of students. As a result, we have explored the methods of peer-institutions to accomplish structural, anti-racist change. From this, we have noted that all other public universities in Washington include an individual at the Vice Presidential or executive level to oversee DEI work at their respective institution. [Similarly, it appears appointment of CDOs and senior administrators who focus on university DEI work has been adopted by several institutions of higher education.](#) We believe that creating a similar position at WWU is critical to creating a community that “...sees equity, justice, inclusion, and diversity as fundamental principles for authentic engagement” ([WWU Strategic Plan, Goal #4](#)). A CDO would be an active contributor to our co-creation of DEI initiatives and expedite the historically siloed approach we have observed at the executive level.

We understand that all university community stakeholders must be active in the work to advance DEI; however, a coordinated and centralized approach to the change ahead will be pivotal in shifting the burden away from student groups to approach our institutions and reveal their interconnected traumas. Without a CDO, the responsibilities of advancing DEI initiatives often



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becomes additional work for our BIPOC colleagues. This work is often uncompensated, can be traumatizing, and leads to racial fatigue. Instead, we hope to work with you to equip a CDO and their team to proactively identify and address institutional shortcomings and build effective partnerships to provide inter-divisional solutions.

We are aware of current financial constraints of the university as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in student enrollment. We are also aware that the creation of this position and team would require dedicated revenue. However, if our community is committed to advancing anti-racist work and addressing systemic inequities, we must find creative solutions to resource this position and acknowledge the role it will assume in advancing commitments laid out in our strategic plan. We are also confident the contributions of a CDO will intentionally invite prospective BIPOC students to choose WWU as a place to pursue their degree, valuing their safety alongside their academic and personal success.

We hope this letter can serve as a starting point for continued dialogue and discussion. We are committed to working with you, in good faith, to provide all WWU students with a transformative and equitable college experience. In the interest of demonstrating stakeholder interest, we have also included some testimonials provided by current WWU students and alumni on why they believe having this position would support their academic and personal success. Please feel free to reach out to us to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Abdul Malik Ford ASWWU President ASWWU Executive Board, Chair	Sargun Handa ASWWU Senate Pro Tempore ASWWU Student Senate, Chair
Ranulfo Molina ASWWU Vice President for Diversity Ethnic Student Center Executive Board, Chair	

- cc: John Meyer, Chair, Board of Trustees
 Melynda Huskey, Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services
 Brent Carbajal, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
 Rich Van Den Hul, Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs



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Stephanie Bowers, Vice President for University Advancement
Donna Gibbs, Vice President for University Relations and Marketing
Paul Dunn, Chief of Staff and Secretary to the Board of Trustees

Appendix I: Student testimonials in support of a CDO position at WWU
[Insert testimonials/figures/key points here]