

Associated Students of Western Washington University

2012 Federal Legislative Agenda

Legislative Mission: The Associated Students of Western Washington University, the recognized student governance organization on campus, advocates measures that protect the institutional integrity that fosters a student's personal growth and prepares them to make a positive contribution in our society.





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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Western Washington University Associated Students' Legislative Agenda, rooted in an unwavering commitment to preserving higher education opportunities for current and future students at Western Washington University, is articulated through the following foundational values:

- **Higher education is a public good that provides significant benefits to individuals and the state of Washington.** Increased public funding to higher education is necessary in order for our state to continue to receive significant and lasting societal gains. These include tangible returns through economic productivity and increased tax revenues, but even more fundamentally, through the promotion of an enlightened citizenry and greater social cohesion and inclusion.
- **The opportunity to pursue higher education is the right of every individual, regardless of financial resources.** Stable operating and financial aid funding, as well as policy changes are requisite components for actualizing this ideal.

Our Federal Legislative Agenda, recommended by Legislative Affairs Council and adopted by the Associated Students Board of Directors includes the following:

1. Protecting College Affordability through access to Federal Financial Aid
2. Tyler Clementi Higher Education Anti-Harassment Act (S 540 & H.R. 1048)
3. Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act
4. For-Profit College Accountability (S. 2032)

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Associated Students of Western Washington University 2012 Federal Legislative Agenda

Pell Grant and Stafford Loan

The Associated Students Board of Directors upon recommendation by Legislative Affairs Council finds:

Federal financial aid programs, while integral to the educational success of many students, still do not meet the needs of students in many crucial aspects. The changes made in the FY2012 omnibus bill were unwise and inconsiderate to the situations of students and recent graduates seeking to obtain a degree for the betterment of themselves and their nation, weakening, not strengthening, federal financial aid programs. In addition, the Pell Grant program, which is the foundation of federal postsecondary financial assistance for students from low-income families, has already not kept pace with the rising costs of a college education and the program has been plagued by funding shortfalls that complicate the federal appropriations process and threaten the efficacy of the program. It is for these reasons that we strongly advocate for the changes made in the FY2012 omnibus bill to be repealed, and expansions made to federal financial aid, including:

- Placing the "automatic zero" eligibility for the maximum Pell Grant award back to annual parental incomes of \$32,000 instead of \$23,000.
- Returning student eligibility for the Pell Grant program to 18 semesters.
- Maintain the maximum Pell Grant at \$5,550 per year or increase the maximum award in recognition of the increasing costs of students.
- Reintroduce the grace period on Stafford Loans from the William D. Ford Direct Loan Program and expand the period to 12 months after graduation instead of automatic repayment, mindful that the average college graduate will need 9-12 months to find a job in the current economic climate.



Associated Students of Western Washington University 2012 Federal Legislative Agenda

Tyler Clementi Higher Education Anti-Harassment Bill

WHEREAS, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students report higher rates of harassment than their peers; and

WHEREAS, according to the WWU 2012 Student Climate Survey, LGBT students on Western's campus are more likely to report discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity than at peer institutions, and are 132% more likely to report being harassed in the last twelve months on campus than non-minority students; and

WHEREAS, bullying and harassment can lead to long-term psychological, academic, social, and physical consequences including increased absences, depression, feelings of isolation, and difficulty focusing; and

WHEREAS, this bill would require all institutions of higher education receiving federal funds to put in place a policy prohibiting the harassment of students based on perceived or actual race, color, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, sex, or gender identity; and

WHEREAS, this bill would require that colleges and universities make students explicitly aware of this policy as well as give them guidelines on how to utilize this policy; and

WHEREAS, this bill would recognize cyber bullying as harassment, thereby acknowledging that bullying exists beyond campus and face-to-face interactions; and

WHEREAS, no student should be denied the right to enjoy a campus free of hate or discrimination because of whom they love or how they identify; and

WHEREAS, it is one of the paramount duties of the Associated Students is to foster and support an inclusive climate on our campus for every student at Western; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Associated Students supports the Tyler Clementi Higher Education Anti-Harassment Bill as a means to ensure that all college students have access to a safe learning environment.



Associated Students of Western Washington University 2012 Federal Legislative Agenda

Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minor Act (DREAM Act)

The Associated Students Board of Directors upon recommendation by Legislative Affairs Council Finds:

- The DREAM Act will amend the Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 and will extend eligibility to undocumented youth for a six-year conditional path to citizenship that requires completion of a college degree or two years of military service.
- Students without proper documentation of citizenship qualify for the DREAM Act if they:
 - Enter the United States before the age of 16.
 - Earn a high school diploma, General Equivalency Diploma, have been admitted to an institution of higher education, or serve two years in the U.S. military.
 - Live in the United States five years prior to the enactment of this legislation.
 - Display good moral character, generally meaning student has no criminal record.
- The DREAM Act will provide a pathway to citizenship for students without proper documentation who have either enrolled in or completed a degree in higher education or participated in the United States military.
- The DREAM Act will repeal measures that penalize states for providing students without proper citizenship documentation with in-state tuition.
- In 2003, Washington State passed HB 1079 allowing anyone, including undocumented immigrants, who attended and graduated from high school in the state to get in-state tuition. Several other states have adopted similar pieces of legislation.
- The DREAM Act will make qualifying students eligible for federal loans and work-study.
- Academic and personal merit should be the key factors in determining a person's ability to earn a degree not their race or citizenship status.
- The DREAM Act will make the United States more competitive in the global economy allowing young people to live up to their fullest potential and contribute to the economic growth. Undocumented students have the possibility to positively contribute to the development of national infrastructure and should be encouraged to stay in the United States.
- The DREAM Act will have important economic benefits such as cutting the deficit by \$1.4 billion and increase government revenues by \$2.3 billion over the next 10 years and adds between \$1.4 to \$3.6 trillion in taxable income to our economy.
- The Associated Students of Western Washington University Legislative Affairs Council Resolve:
 - To actively promote the passage of DREAM Act.
 - To encourage both houses of Congress and the President to enact the DREAM Act



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Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minor Act (DREAM Act)

The Associated Students of Western Washington University Board of Directors and Legislative Affairs Council,

Acknowledging that many youth in public schools consider the US their home and will likely remain in the country without obtaining legal immigration status,

Taking note that many of these students achieve academic excellence,

Conscious that the ineligibility of these students to work and receive financial aid prevents some from completing a college degree,

Calling attention to the ability of college graduates as they enter the workforce to contribute to the economy and society,

Recognizing that the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (hereon referred to as the DREAM Act) as a federal bill would amend the Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, permitting states to determine state residency for entry into higher education and adjusting the status of qualifying students without proper documentation of citizenship,

Reaffirming that students without proper documentation of citizenship qualify for the DREAM Act if they have:

- a. entered the US before the age of 16;
- b. earned a high school diploma or GED, or have been admitted to a two or four year institution of higher education;
- c. resided in the US for five years before the date the legislation is enacted;
- d. display good moral character, having no criminal record since entering the US,

Welcoming the DREAM Act provision of a pathway to citizenship for students without proper documentation of citizenship in institutions of higher education or the military,

Expressing their support that the DREAM Act will make qualifying students eligible for federal loans and work study,

Welcoming that the DREAM Act will repeal Section 505 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, which penalizes states for providing students without proper documentation of citizenship with in-state tuition,

Calling attention to HB 1079 passed by the Washington State Legislature in 2003, which allows anyone, including undocumented immigrants, who attended and graduated from high school in the state and lived in the state at least three years, to pay the in-state tuition rate at public colleges and universities,

Reaffirming that academic and personal merit should be the key factors in determining a person's ability to earn a degree from WWU,

Mindful that the DREAM Act will increase the accessibility and affordability of higher education across the nation for students without proper documentation of citizenship,

Noting with concern that the DREAM Act should use the language of "students without proper documentation of citizenship" rather than "undocumented students,"

Fully aware that state legislation of the DREAM Act is limited and that federal law supersedes state law in areas such as obtaining citizenship,



Associated Students of Western Washington University 2012 Federal Legislative Agenda

NOW, THEREFORE RESOLVE that the Associated Students of Western Washington University Board of Directors and Legislative Affairs Council:

- Fully support the passage of some DREAM Act policies as state legislation, urging specified access to financial aid to students without proper documentation of citizenship;
- Strongly encourage US Congress and the President to enact federal policies included in the DREAM Act;
- Call upon WWU students, faculty, and administration to support national and state level initiatives that support students without proper documentation of citizenship at WWU;
- Recommend reference to undocumented students as students without proper documentation of citizenship;
- Affirm their support for further efforts to make higher education accessible to all; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be sent to the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House delegation representing Washington State, as well as President Barack Obama.



Associated Students of Western Washington University 2012 Federal Legislative Agenda

For-Profit College Accountability

The Associated Students of Western Washington University Board of Directors upon recommendation by the Legislative Affairs Council Finds:

- For-profit colleges play a key role in America's higher education system by providing flexible alternatives to traditional post-secondary education.
- For-profit colleges report hundreds of millions of dollars in profit every year. The majority of this profit comes from federal financial aid dollars.
- Students from for-profit colleges account for half of the federal loan defaults, measured in dollars.
- In 2008, profits from the 16 largest for-profit schools amounted to \$2.7 billion.
- In 2009, the Department of Education allocated \$4.3 billion in Pell Grants and \$19.6 billion in Federal loans and financial aid to students attending for-profit colleges.
- The 90/10 rule caps the percentage of revenue received by for-profit colleges from the Department of Education at 90%.
- 550 colleges received more than 80% funding from federal aid dollars and 1,000 received at least 70%
- In August 2010, a U.S. Government Accountability Office investigation into for-profit colleges raised concerns about possible fraudulent and unethical behavior.
- The "gainful employment" rule will require for-profit institutions to be transparent about their degrees' ability to provide employment opportunities to graduates relative to the cost of the degree. The Department of Education is set to enact this rule in June 2011.

The Associated Students of Western Washington University Board of Directors upon recommendation by the Legislative Affairs Council Resolve:

- Increased regulations and oversight of the for-profit college industry are critical to ensuring the accountability of federal financial aid dollars.
- Congress should support efforts of the Department of Education to increase regulations of the for-profit college industry including the enactment of the "gainful employment" rule and the continuation of the 90/10 rule.
- Include non-Title IV funds in the 90% of Federal funding that for-profit colleges are able to receive, as well as Stafford loans.