



Associated Students of Western Washington University

2012 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.



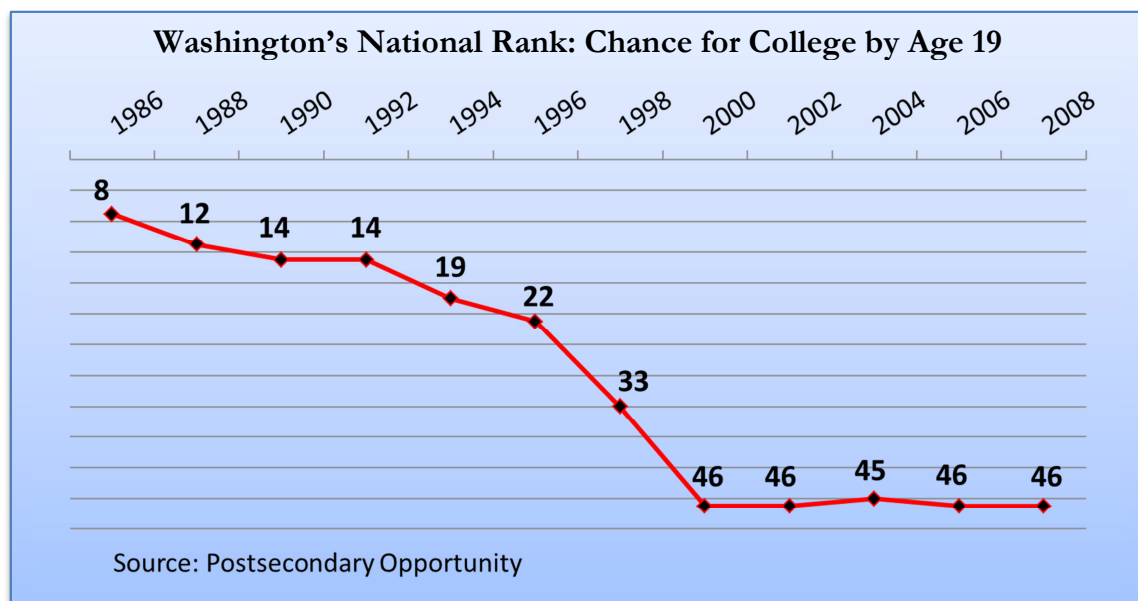


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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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 the 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.



*"If it was not for financial aid (grants), getting an education would not have been an option. Going to Western has made a difference in my life and now I can make a difference in others."
-Tom Barkholz*



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**FROM THE ASSOCIATED STUDENTS PRESIDENT AND
VICE PRESIDENT FOR GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

Dear Colleagues:

On behalf of students at Western Washington University, we are pleased to present to you the Associated Students of Western Washington University (ASWWU) Legislative Agenda. This annual statement of policy principles and positions guides our student advocacy on current and developing legislative matters regarding WWU students, Washington State higher education institutions, and the overall state of higher education. In short, this document represents the voices of 14,842 current students at WWU, as well as those yet to enroll.

This difficult supplemental budget, coupled with the state's divestment in higher education throughout the past two decades, makes it extremely challenging for students at WWU to be successful. The deleterious cuts made to WWU's operating budget are resulting in unsustainably high tuition, decreased access to essential academic support services, larger class sizes, expansion of already overwhelming debt burdens, and the consolidation and elimination of world-class academic programs. More critical to WWU students is that the legislature maintains affordability for our most vulnerable students by maintaining funding for financial aid, particularly the State Work Study program.

At no point in the history of our state or of our country has access to affordable and quality public higher education been more important or pressing. Washington State stands at the precipice of opportunity. Support for higher education is critical at this juncture, and it will require a courageous commitment on the part of our leaders to seize the future for our students and for our state.

ASWWU urges policymakers to fulfill their constitutional commitments to WWU students and their families, as well as to our state. We look forward to working with you to ensure that public higher education remains an unwavering right of every individual. Laying the foundation for individual and state economic prosperity through the investment in public higher education is in the enduring preeminent interests of all of the citizens of Washington

Sincerely,

Anna Ellermeier
AS President

Iris Maute-Gibson
AS VP for Governmental Affairs



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PRIORITY LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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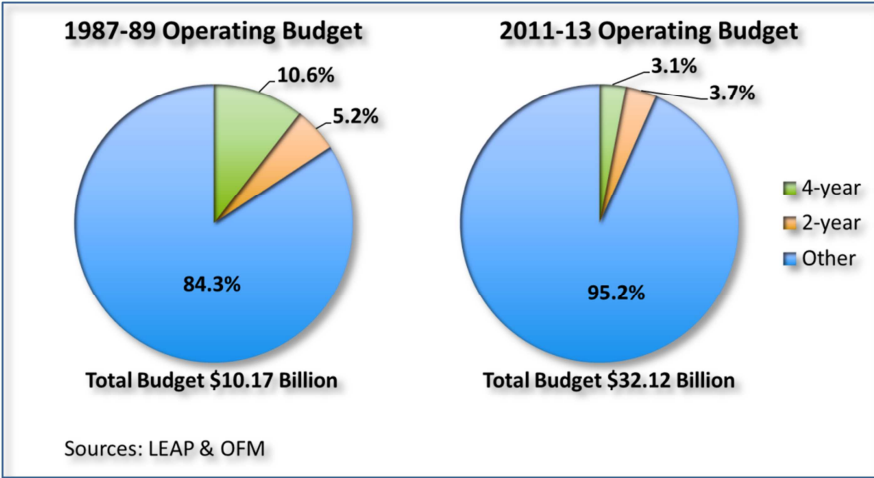
INVESTMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

ASWWU Affirms that it is vital that the state focuses on the value of supporting higher education as an essential state service. Students have borne the burden of continued inadequate funding of institutions of higher education.

“To attend public two- and four-year colleges in Washington, students and families pay more than the U.S. average as a portion of family income.”
Source: Nat’l Center for Public Policy and Higher Education

- Support the increase of state funding for higher education as a policy and supplemental budget priority. Oppose further deleterious and disproportionate cuts to operational funding of Western Washington University.

“If I did not have financial aid I would not be in college, unless I took out loans to cover every cent of it...If I did not have work study I would have to work a job that is not as flexible around my changing schedule and understanding of homework needs. Work study is not a want, but a need.”
-Emily Granston, Current WWU student and State Work Study Recipient



AFFORDABILITY

ASWWU believes that our state must have a reinvigorated and strengthened investment in need-based aid programs that facilitate increased access to public higher education opportunities in Washington State. We will pursue legislation and funding that ease economic barriers for students to attend and succeed at WWU.

- Oppose further unsustainable and irresponsible reductions to all forms of financial aid.
- Prioritize advocacy for legislation and funding that increases access to State Work Study.
- Support sufficient funding legislation to sustain the value of State Need Grant awards by ensuring appropriations for eligible, yet underfunded students.



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STUDENT VALUES LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

ACCESS AND ATTAINMENT

ASWWU defines access as ensuring that all individuals who wish to pursue a higher education have the opportunity to do so, regardless of their socioeconomic, demographic, geographic, or academic backgrounds.

- Actively Promote the passage of The DREAM Act at the state and federal; encouraging Washington to provide eligibility for in-state tuition rates to qualified students without proper documentation.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND STUDENT REPRESENTATION

The ASWWU recognizes the inherent value achieved from including the student voice and vote in all decisions, which affect students as current participants, and stakeholders in our system of public higher education, especially in the current budgetary atmosphere where students and their families are burdened with greater responsibility to fund these state institutions.

- Support the appointment of a voting student member on every community and technical College Board of trustees or regents.
- Support efforts that retain and improve student representation and membership in all planning for the future of higher education.
- Support legislation that grants student fee autonomy to students, including but not limited to the Services and Activity (S&A), health, student building, technology, and recreation fees. Per RCW 28B.15.014, we support Washington State Auditor, Brian Sonntag's language that we need to "ensure charges to restricted student activity funds are for the express purpose of funding student activities and programs."
- Support student review and student approval of mandatory course fees.

QUALITY STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The ASWWU seeks to ensure a fulfilling college and academic experience for all university students.

- Support legislation and funding that improves student campus safety and ability to respond to emergencies on campus.
- Support legislation that strengthens anti-bullying and harassment legislation and oversight measures.
- Support legislation and funding that improves accessibility for students with disabilities by enhancing on-campus resources and services, and by improving the physical accessibility of campus.
- Support increased funding of campus childcare programs through fully funding the state matching grant system as detailed in RCW 28B.135.010 administered to institutions of higher education.
- Support funding to increase access to affordable and quality healthcare on campus.



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DIVERSITY

The ASWWU recognizes that diversity is imperative for an optimal learning environment that prepares students for future career success and work in a global society by enhancing social development and self-awareness, promoting critical thinking, and broadening perspectives.

- Support measures that keep tuition accessible for a diverse student body, underrepresented students.
- Support measures that restrict university tuition setting authority to ensure tuition increases are matched with increases in financial aid funding.
- Support measures encouraging active recruitment and retention of a highly qualified and diverse student body, faculty and staff as well as the appropriations that ensure it.
- Support legislation that mandates a holistic review of applicants in the admission process, while taking into account race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, ability, and socio-economic conditions.
- Support legislation that allows students to participate in government institutions; predominantly public higher education.

ENVIRONMENT

The ASWWU is “dedicated to fostering environmental consciousness on campus. We are committed to fostering person-earth awareness, systems thinking and action. We believe environmental stewardship is a thread that weaves purposeful, passionate communities.” (AS Environmental Center Mission)

- Oppose the proposed coal terminal at Cherry Point because of its potential for harmful impacts to the global and local environment, the local economy, community health, social equity, and the WWU community.
- Encourage the legislature to enable higher education institutions to become carbon neutral, and affirm a commitment to the development and use of renewable and sustainable energy technologies.
- Support legislation that requires minimization of environmental impact due to the construction of new state buildings and raises LEED certification requirements for all new state buildings.
- Support legislation that incentivizes recycling and composting programs at all public higher education institutions.
- Support local control of universities with regard to green energy programs, with specific attention to student input.
- Support a state mandate that food service contractors for state institutions of higher education serve food grown sustainably within Washington State or a reasonable distance when available.
- Support providing students with viable transit services, and encouraging sustainable transportation practices.



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FACULTY

The ASWWU asserts that dedicated, diverse, faculty are the cornerstone of a quality higher education experience.

- Support legislation that promotes student review of all faculty for evaluating teaching effectiveness and ability to be taken into account in faculty decisions.
- Support increases in faculty salary in the form of a full funding commitment by the State, and not as an increase in student costs.
- Support legislation that provides for full time faculty positions to be tenure track.

STUDENT DEBT

The ASWWU asserts that as student loans are increasingly being used to keep up with the rising rates of education, as well as a disincentive for continued higher education, it is essential that the attainment process be accessible to a diverse population of students.

- Assert that funding the State Work Study Program and University Operating budgets will provide access to wrap around services for students seeking financial counseling.

REVENUE

Acknowledge that if the state utilizes solely their current revenue sources any expenditures in one part of the budget is funding which will be cut from other areas in a way, which will immediately and adversely affect students in the other aspects of their lives as jobholders, family members, parents and holistic human beings living as participants in our city, state, and nation.