

Issue: Student Success and Achievement

Author(s)/Sponsor(s): Josie Ellison, Patrick Eckroth

Endorsements:

2) Please fill out a Strategy Chart.

### **Previous Proposals:**

1) Describe the Issue (what is the problem & what is the solution):

The success of Western students depends not only on the resources and support they receive inside the classroom, but also is very much dependent on the resources and support made available to them outside the classroom. In order for students to be successful on our campus, we need to look at them holistically and ensure that we're providing them with ample resources to aid in their progress while at Western. Unfortunately, as funding at our institution is limited, we do not have the resources available to fully ensure student success from a holistic standpoint. First-generation, low-income, and students of color need more academic advising and tutoring support to guarantee their success and graduation from Western and Western needs the resources to recruit and retain a more diverse group of students to our campus. Students with disabilities, whether they be physical, mental, or emotional, need to be provided more counseling, professional health services, and other disability resources.

In order to fully support and ensure student success from a holistic standpoint, Western needs increased funding to offer better services for Western students who face unique challenges while attending our university. It is important we set every student up for success by providing them with resources to support them both inside and outside of the classroom. As of now, Western has limited ability to provide all the services Western's diverse range of students need. The Student Success package being lobbied on by the administration, with the addition of a few services, would help provide the various resources and services Western students need to ensure their success.

In order to demonstrate Western's needs for greater student resources We've included some statistics below.

#### *Academic Advising Services:*

Graduations Rates After Four Years: 2009 -

All students: 39.5%

Black/African American: 24.5%

Latino/Latina: 35.4%

White: 40.8%

Source

70% of students who enter WWU as first year students are still undeclared at 90 credits  
WWU Academic Advising Center and Student Outreach Services will have to provide support for approximately 7, 000 Students

Source

### *WWU Tutoring Center*

Demand for Tutoring Center (TC) services has increased by nearly 200% over the past six years without adequate increases in resources.

[Source](#)

### *Increased Recruitment and Retention of Students of Color:*

Demographics:

Students of Color- 22.3%

Latino/Latina - 6.7%

Black/African American - 1.5%

White - 75.5%

[Source](#)

### *Support for Students who are Homeless*

Because of the lack of data collected around this issue, the number of students this would affect is unknown. Regardless of the number of students it would serve, this service would still significantly increase access to WWU for students who cannot afford housing.

[HB 2024](#)

### *Mental Health and Counseling Services*

Available data suggests that suicide occurs at a rate between 6.5 and 7.5 per 100,000 among college students. According to Western's Office of Survey Research, personal health/mental health is cited as one of the top 3 reasons students leave WWU. Additionally, the WWU Counseling Center and Student Health Center have seen a continually growing trend in both the number of students seeking mental health services and in the severity of the mental health needs.

[Source](#)

3) Please explain briefly how/if this issue meets the following qualifications:

1. Is it winnable?

Yes. Student success is key to a university's reputation and degree-completion rate, both of which have significant influence on the future of the Western, funding included. Everyone goes to college to succeed, if there are no resources for support services, students of color, and other students who are underrepresented, dropout at higher rates. This makes this an incredibly winnable issue not only because the administration will align with most of this proposal, and the unified front we create down in Olympia is an incredible tactic to convince legislators of the importance of these issues, but also because it's an easily justifiable expense and has obvious and immediate impacts for students.

2. Does it directly impact and improve students' lives?

Absolutely. Many students need access to support services, whether it be veterans' services, disability resource services or counseling services. Access to these resources is essential for students to be able to know they have a place to get help when they need it and to improve their quality of life. In order for students to be able to focus on school and their careers, they must first know that there are resources available to ensure their quality of life and mental health, which are prerequisites to other aspects of life like careers and grades and participating in extracurricular activities. Knowing these resources are available will impact and improve students' lives exponentially.

3. Does it have a clear target?

Yes, there are a couple potential targets depending on whether legislation is in the house/senate and at which stage in the process it's at. This could also potentially include some targets in more policy oriented committees depending on how implementation of these issues is worked out.

Rep. Hans Dunshee (D): Chair of the House Appropriations Committee.

Rep. Bruce Chandler (R): Ranking minority member, House Appropriations Committee

Rep. Frank Chopp (D): Speaker of the house

Sen. Mark Schoesler (MCC): Senate Majority Leader.

Sen. Andy Hill (MCC): Senate Ways and Means chair.

Sen. Hargrove (D): Ranking member Ways and Means

4. Does it build a measurable amount of power?

Yes- the deeply personal implications of some parts of this proposal lend it a lot of authority, it is easy to find a student on campus that has been negatively affected by this lack of resources, and numbers means power in student organizing.

5. Does it have a clear and realistic time frame?

Yes. This issue gained a lot of traction in the house last year and was even included in its first budget, this issue has a lot of support for being a reasonable increase in services request, it is incredibly well justified and most legislators support that. The specific time frame is difficult to map out at this time because it's unsure how the state legislature will deal with supplemental budgeting this year.

6. Does it have a state organizing and lobbying angle?

Absolutely, the increase in funding can be easily marketed as a maintenance to campus services, many legislators feel as though Western is already serving its students well because of our relative position in the state, however relative good is not absolute good, and WWU can always be doing more, especially to support marginalized communities on campus like students of color. Western's current policies and funding level while they are better than some places in

the state, are still failing students of color, students with disabilities, queers students, and other marginalized communities.

7. Could students build a diverse campus coalition around this issue?

Yes, this issue also disproportionately affects already marginalized identities, if you already have the societal pressure of systemic oppression like racism it is that much harder to overcome the barriers to success at institutions like WWU.

8. Is it likely to be debated and acted upon by the Legislature in the next year?

Yes- As I mentioned above it received a lot of traction in the legislature last year and will likely come up again depending on status of a supplemental budget and potential new allocations to higher education. This year is also an election year and Higher Ed is becoming more and more an election issue, this will motivate legislators to take on a champion of higher ed role and we should use this desire to our full advantage.

9. Will it strengthen and expand efforts within Western?

Yes, this issue brings together a large portion of campus for something that is very deeply felt by many students, this increase in potential partners for this issue is a critical step in developing Western's organizing and advocacy efforts.

10. Can you provide background information and the current context of the issue?

Since the great recession in 2008 Higher education has taken serious cuts in state funding, while some of this was made up for by drastic increases in tuition there were still departments that took large cuts in order for WWU to remain functional- many of these were student support offices. This means that not only were the worst of the tuition increases carried by already marginalized students but once those students got to campus they were also the hardest hit by the lack of resources available. This is perpetuating incredibly problematic systems of oppression that this proposal hopes to begin to address.

11. What creative and/or innovative tactics could we employ to engage the media and excite new students around this issue?

In advocating for increased funding for student services, we have the exciting opportunity to not only educate students about the resources that are available for them on campus, but also to highlight the important work that has already been done in those offices. A creative tactic might be to encourage students to, if they feel comfortable, talk about how those services have empowered them.

We also have the opportunity to talk realistically about student retention and struggles that students (particularly students of marginalized identities) currently face despite the presence of

student services. Another thing too that might be able to excite new students around the issue would be to launch grassroots educational campaigns that talk about institutional marginalization and privilege in an accessible way- perhaps many folks who would think themselves removed from the issue of student services + student retention on-campus could realize the ways in which those issues impact them.