

# ASWWU LEGISLATIVE AGENDA 2019-2020 DRAFT

Approved by AS Legislative Affairs Council 12/2/2019

To be seen at the AS Executive Board and AS Student Senate Meetings 12/6/2019

## College Affordability and Student Loan Forgiveness

The ASWWU recognizes that the increasing cost of education is a barrier for students from low and middle income families. Western appreciates the funding allocated to students in the Washington College Grant through HB 2158, and believes all students who qualify for the grant deserve the funds promised to complete their higher education. Additionally, Western is concerned about the 800,000+ student loan borrowers in the state who collectively owe over \$24 billion in student loan debt.

- Ensure that the Washington College Grant is fully funded in line with [HB 2158](#), now the Workforce Education Investment Act
- Expand student loan forgiveness programs in Washington State

## Support for Undocumented Students

The ASWWU is disturbed by the lack of resources and support available for undocumented students in higher education across the state. Washington is 1 of 19 states that extends in-state tuition through the state legislature and 1 in 7 states that allow undocumented students to receive state financial aid, but these students still face many obstacles in higher education. Within the current political climate, undocumented students, staff, and faculty are at risk of losing DACA status. Further, there are currently no protections for undocumented people on Washington State campuses which can lead to physical and mental health issues, poor academic performance, low retention rates, or even being separated from their families due to the threat of ICE on campus. In addition to supporting undocumented students in their higher education and career endeavors, we see it important to encompass and support the undocumented community as a whole.

- Require in depth protocols for universities that prioritize undocumented student safety, modeled off of [AB-21 in California](#)
- Support the Washington Student Association ask to implement a state-funded student loan program for undocumented students to access
- Close the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma by revoking its business license due to the number of severe health and safety violations that have occurred there under the ownership of the GEO Group, which is responsible for poor conditions, human rights violations, hunger strikes, mental health crises, and deaths

## Funding for Ethnic Studies

The ASWWU strongly believes that Western's institutions and its offerings of academic programs must represent the historically marginalized communities of Washington State. The academic programs of Western demonstrate consistent gaps in perspectives from populations that endure systemic and social marginalization, particularly communities of color. Underrepresented students do not see their histories and experiences reflected in their school system, nor do they have faculty and mentors who share similar backgrounds and experiences. Drawing from UC

Berkeley, Ethnic Studies is the critical and interdisciplinary study of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity, with a focus on the narratives by and from people of color within and beyond the United States. The Coalition for Ethnic Studies at WWU has worked to build support for Ethnic Studies on Western's campus through conversations and forums with key administrators and the student population to discuss visions for curriculum, structure, student support, and funding. With the recent passage of SB 5023, concerning K-12 public school Ethnic Studies curriculum, recent education graduates are now required to teach Ethnic Studies, yet have no contact with the specific curriculum in higher education.

- Allocate \$550,000 (\$1.05 million per biennium) to fund five tenure track faculty with expertise and experience in critical ethnic studies to structurally support adopting an Ethnic Studies program at WWU

### **Mental Health and Wellness**

The ASWWU believes that mental health care and wellness services are vital resources for students in higher education. On both Western's campus and campuses across the state, several roadblocks stand in the way of accessible mental health services. The counseling centers on Washington State public university campuses remain extremely understaffed, leading to long wait-lists and lack of care.

- Support the Minor Works ask to expand existing mental health counseling space at WWU to increase access to current mental health services
- Support a plan for a future integrated health and wellness center on Western's campus, including a new building to co-locate WWU wellness services such as ADCAS, CASAS, the Student Health Center, and the Counseling Center
- Establish a statewide study to research current access to coverage for reproductive, mental, dental, vision, and general healthcare for Washington students.

### **Environmental Protections and Climate Justice**

The ASWWU recognizes that the state of Washington ought to provide environmental protections that encompass all pillars of social and environmental sustainability to ensure the healthy and safe future of the residents of Washington State. While the state of Washington goes beyond national standards of sustainability, more environmental protections are necessary in order to mitigate the effects of climate change and set a standard in the United States.

- Establish a low carbon fuel standard in Washington State by supporting a new version of HB 1110.
- Provide funding for Department of Ecology pre-adjudication work by a new version of HB 1051.
- Support a statewide ban on single use plastic bags through the passage of SB 5323 and HB 1204.
- Set targets for greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles in Washington State to below 1990's emissions levels

### **Support for Survivors**

The ASWWU is concerned with the frequency of sexual violence on college campuses and how often these instances go unreported. We believe that, as a whole, we have a responsibility to alleviate the burden faced by survivors of sexual assault as much as possible. We leave the burden entirely on survivors if we don't advocate on behalf and in support of them. Increased

funding at the state level will permit universities to implement stronger and more effective support programs for survivors, creating campuses where survivors can complete their education with fewer roadblocks.

- Support a new version of HB 1002 to modify the definition of rape in the third degree by removing the requirement for the "lack of consent" to be "clearly expressed by the victim's words or conduct"
- Allocate resources so that specialized personnel, resources, and training for staff members can be implemented at universities leading to an improved ability to respond to sexual violence and involved parties.
- Develop and implement a mandatory, state-wide training program for all university faculty, staff, and administration
- Require universities & colleges to conduct a sexual assault campus survey to assess the prevalence of this issue on an institutional level, to keep record of all credible instances/complaints against university faculty & staff, and to maintain Obama-era guidelines for the preponderance of evidence standard in Title IX investigations.
- Support and pass a new version of [SB 5395](#), or its companion bill, [HB1407](#) creating an improved and expanded Healthy Youth Act (RCW [28A.300.475](#)) mandating comprehensive, medically and scientifically accurate, and age appropriate sexual health education that stresses affirmative consent in the K-12 public school curriculum in Washington State

## **Dedicated Revenue**

The ASWWU recommends implementing progressive, reasonable sources of revenue. Expanding supports to address the basic needs of students, providing support for marginalized or nontraditional students, and making college education more affordable are all crucial to the success of students.

- A portion of Governor Inslee's proposed Capital Gains Tax equal to at least 15% of the total revenue gained, or \$500 million, be dedicated to Higher Education
- Increase HB 2158's Section 74's cap on "advanced computing businesses" surcharge
- Lowering the minimum value of an estate to qualify for the Estate Tax
- Removing some exemptions from the Real Estate Excise Tax
- Closing the First Time Mortgage Lenders tax loophole
- Closing the Extracted Fuel Exemption
- Tax Washington State Lottery Winnings
- Close Tax Loopholes for Food Processors