

**ASWWU Legislative Agenda Draft
2021-2022**

Anna Corinne Huffman
ASWWU Director of Legislative Affairs
AS.OCE.Director.LegislativeAffairs@wwu.edu

Ankur Handa
ASWWU Vice President of Governmental Affairs
ASVP.Gov@wwu.edu

Email: as.oce.director.legislativeaffairs@wwu.edu or asvp.gov@wwu.edu with questions, clarifications, or further ideas. If there is something you would like included that is within the scope of the state legislature, contact us to expand on the idea and share with LAC.

Table of Contents

- Centering Equity at WWU
- Meeting Basic Needs
 - Basic Needs Survey and Grant
 - Student Health Insurance Study
- College Affordability and Student Loan Forgiveness
 - Student Loan Buy Down Program
 - Washington College Grant Equity Grants
 - Simplify Student Aid Awards
 - Graduate Student Aid
- Environmental Justice and Campus Sustainability
 - Addressing Lead in Drinking Water
 - Transitioning to a Clean Energy Heating System
 - Establishing Dining Partnerships with Local and Regional Farmers
- Behavioral Health and Wellness
- Supporting Survivors of Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence and Title IX Compliance
- Statewide Student Association
- Civic Engagement and Voting Rights
 - Transparency in Voting Pamphlets
 - Support of Ranked-Choice Voting
- Divesting from Prison Labor
 - Repeal RCW 39.26.250

Centering Equity at WWU

The ASWWU intends to center equity in each issue area of our 2022 ASWWU Legislative Agenda. Our agenda seeks to promote student-identified and community-driven initiatives to guide our advocacy efforts when speaking with Washington state legislators and other state leaders. The ASWWU recognizes that all students deserve to feel safe and supported throughout their higher education journeys. Our campus must do more to create environments that are safe, accepting, and inclusive for all students. In order to meet these goals, it is instrumental that we work to center equity in each of our issue areas. The ASWWU recognizes that students have often championed and led discussions in the advancement of students' needs and rights; however, this work should not rely entirely on the labor of students. Our university, state, and the wider community must also work to ensure that students are supported through equitable funding and resources. The ASWWU requests that the Legislature address the many barriers that prevent students from completing their education and achieving their goals. This must include support for BIPOC students, LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, undocumented students, and other underrepresented students.

Western Washington University is in support of [Washington Roundtable's goal of 70%](#) of Washington high school graduates earning a post-secondary credential by 2030. In order to meet this goal, the Legislature, university, and wider community must commit to centering equity

on our campus. ASWWU commits to centering equity, and this commitment is reflected in the following issue areas and legislative priorities.

Meeting Basic Needs

The ASWWU acknowledges the need to address basic needs insecurity amongst students at Western and other public higher education institutions in the state. Ensuring that students are able to access basic needs, including quality housing and healthy, affordable food options, will help assist students in achieving their educational goals. Securing students' basic needs is also consistent with the Washington Roundtable's goal of 70% of Washington high school graduates pursuing additional education and training. Meeting students' basic needs is the first step in assisting students in meeting their goals.

- The ASWWU recognizes the prevalence of food and housing insecurity amongst Western students; however, the extent to which basic needs insecurity impacts students is largely unknown. We ask that the Washington Legislature establish a biennial Basic Needs Survey modeled after [HB 1893 \(2019\)](#) that collects data regarding food and housing insecurity and other financial insecurities.
 - With this information, we ask that an emergency and need-based assistance program be established for four-year institutions. Similarly to HB 1893 (2019), this assistance program would help to provide students with the resources they need to succeed. The fund would require that institutions collect and provide data regarding how many of their students experience food and housing insecurity. Up-to-date, comprehensive data will allow the legislature and other leaders to make targeted investments in student success in the future.
- Students need access to preventative healthcare and affordable healthcare options. This is necessary for students' academic success and physical well-being; however, lack of insurance is a barrier to ensuring that students are receiving the care they need.
 - We ask that the Washington Legislature pass the \$200,000 budget proviso that will allow for a student health insurance study. This study will gather information regarding how many students are uninsured in Washington state. In the future, this will aid in the development of targeted programs to ensure that all students have access to adequate healthcare coverage.

- Basic Needs Survey

- Health Insurance Enrollment- 200,000 budget proviso

- Dorms- only serve dinner in dining hall- accessibility on campus (meals)

College Affordability and Student Loan Forgiveness

The rate of tuition and fee increases across Washington state serve as barriers to students seeking to obtain a higher education. The ASWWU is committed to ensuring college affordability in efforts to increase college completion rates and retention, while also reducing debt imposed on college graduates in our state. Working to ensure that college aid is distributed in an equitable way is key to increasing higher education enrollment and completion.

- Student Loan Buy Down
- WCG Equity Grants for students w MFI of 50%
- Simplify Student Aid Awards
- Graduate Student Aid awards

Environmental Justice and Campus Sustainability

The ASWWU acknowledges the need to promote and establish sustainable practices and processes on our campus. We recognize that the quality of our built and natural environments impacts student health and long-term well-being. Environmental justice work is directly tied to equity work, the success of students, and the long term sustainability of our campus. By taking steps to decarbonize Western's built environments and invest in clean energy solutions, the state would be taking steps to meet the [goal of carbon neutrality](#) by 2050.

- There is no federal law requiring public universities to test their drinking water for lead concentration. Recently, Western Washington University has established plans to [test for lead concentration](#) in drinking sources; however, this process has been on hold due to the pandemic. According to the university, any water sources equal or over the action level of 15 parts per billion (pub) will be put out of service. Last year, [HB 1139 \(2021\)](#) was passed that establishes standards for public schools to take action to address lead in their drinking water.
 - We ask that the Legislature expand HB 1139 (2021) to cover public higher education institutions, including community colleges, technical colleges, and universities. [The Bill](#) encourages districts to take action and apply for grants when the "lead test reveals elevated lead levels, which are lead levels above five parts per billion". This is a more stringent requirement that Western is currently pursuing. By expanding HB 1139 (2021) to cover higher education institutions, the legislature would be taking action to ensure that students are ...
- Currently, most of Western Washington University's are heated by an on-site boiler system. These.... More recently, the campus' engineering building has transitioned to...
 - We ask that the Legislature support investments in Western Washington University's transition to a clean energy heating system. The Bellingham Port is working to establish a heating district on the waterfront to... If Western is...
- Western students have expressed an interest in establishing a [self-operated dining system](#). Currently... Additionally, Washington state farmers and agriculturists have experienced financial losses due to the pandemic. The ASWWU is interested in establishing stronger partnerships with...
 - We ask that the Legislature support investments and...

- WWU Heating District

- Expand [HB 1139](#) to include higher education institutions in the state

- Reducing waste- zero-waste

- Sustainable farming initiative

Behavioral Health and Student Wellness

Mental health services at Western, and other Washington public universities, lack the funding and resources to support the needs of all students. Limited mental health resources works as a barrier that prevents students from securing the support they need. The lack of funding for support has led to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide amongst students. The ASWWU commits to working to secure increased funding for mental health services. This will help ensure that students are healthier and better equipped to focus on their education and future.

- Expanded support for mental health and wellness
- BIPOC mental health support
- Look into the cost of on-campus resources
- Sustainable Drug Policy

Supporting Survivors of Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence and Title IX Compliance

All students deserve a safe educational experience free of harassment and assault; however, many individuals, including women and LGBTQ+ students, experience disproportionate rates of sexual harassment and violence on college campuses. The ASWWU seeks to increase access to specialists that are well-equipped to handle sexual assault cases in a sensitive and trauma-informed manner. We recognize the need for stronger accountability on our campus against perpetrators of assault and harassment. More broadly, we also seek to increase awareness of Title IX policies and procedures, mandatory reporting, and resources on our campus. Clearer paths to reporting, increased understanding of on-campus resources, and stronger accountability measures is instrumental in working to address the threat of sexual assault at Western and at other campuses in Washington.

- In order to address
 - Accountability on Profs
 - UW Tacoma Proposal

Statewide Student Association

Student-led representation and advocacy on the campus, community, and state levels is incredibly valuable, and the ASWWU seeks to continually bolster student power. Administrators at Western, and at other institutions, have created complex fee approval systems and processes that stand in the way of student fee autonomy. Therefore, we seek to establish a structure that will ensure student autonomy in fee usage, advocacy efforts, and political action. This will help secure stronger, more robust, student-led legislative advocacy at Western and our fellow Washington state public higher education institutions.

- Student Fee Autonomy
- Levy WSA fees
- Boost student statewide advocacy and awareness

Civic Engagement and Voting Rights

The ASWWU recognizes the value of student engagement in the civic and political processes in our communities, state, and beyond. Providing and maintaining clear paths to engagement with local and state officials have never been more important for students. Therefore, we seek to establish and expand paths to civic engagement, while also expanding voting rights and processes. Accessibility to our leaders helps ensure that students' voices are heard, and this is instrumental when discussing student-centered policy issues. The ASWWU also acknowledges that expanding voting rights and improving electoral processes will help ensure that student voices, and other historically marginalized groups, are well represented in our communities and state.

- In order to strengthen voter turnout, electoral transparency, and voter education, it is important to... ASWWU believes that transparency and accuracy would help increase voter turnout, encourage civic engagement, and bolster trust in the electoral processes.
 - We ask that the Legislature reintroduce HB 1473 (2021) to set requirements... This would require that candidate statements in official voter pamphlets are "..."
- Plurality voting currently... In contrast, ranked-choice voting is connected to...
 - We ask that the Legislature support legislation that promotes ranked-choice voting and

- Ranked-choice voting

- HB 1473- transparency in voters pamphlets

Divesting From Prison Labor

Many students at Western are interested in establishing a sustainable, self-operated dining system on campus; however, administrative objectives and other restrictions have prevented this from happening. More broadly, Western students and students across the state have lobbied administration to divest their campuses from prison labor. Currently, [RCW 39.26.250](#) requires public institutions to give preference to goods and services associated with a prison labor work program.

- We ask that the Washington Legislature repeal RCW 39.26.250. This will allow our universities the ...

Additional Topics?

- <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1477&Initiative=false&Year=2021>

-