

# **Official Coalition of Home and Offline Individual Choice and Equity (CHOICE) Demands:**

## **I. Why CHOICE Formed:**

- A. COVID-19 cases are at an all time high. Variants like Omicron, Delta, and now BA.2 are surging throughout the world and country<sup>1</sup>, leaving many faced with long lasting symptoms, hospitalization, and death. Even if COVID-19 has not affected us personally, it has impacted our family, friends, and loved ones. While COVID-19 is at this all time high, and at its most contagious, Western Washington University has remained open and indifferent.
- B. Western has made *some* effort to open conversation with students and faculty promising honesty and open communication. However, the transparency and consistency that has been promised to us is lacking. Not only this, but there is a clear rhetoric being spread across administration, staff, and some faculty: everyone is going to get COVID-19, it's just a matter of when. This isn't true, nor does it have to be. At what point can we look at Western's impact on the greater community, the surge of cases, and student and faculty concerns and decide that it is enough?
- C. Deeply disappointing stories from our peers are emerging left and right, ones that detail professors that can't, or won't, accommodate the needs and worries of students. Some examples come from students with children who have cancer,

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<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/01/28/the-new-bapoint2-omicron-subvariant-is-already-circulating-in-half-of-u-s-states.html>

students who caught COVID-19 in spite of taking every precaution available; disabled students, students of color, and low income students. All of these cases show instances of a disproportionate impact when being infected with COVID-19. This is amplified by a lack of support and investment from Western's administration. Students have spoken up and waited for action that hasn't come. When the action did come in deciding to move classes online for two weeks, students were notified less than 12 hours before the deadline to get a full refund. This decision limited what little control students already had over their education. Western has also returned to mostly in-person learning, while the three other colleges in Whatcom county have remained mostly online<sup>2</sup>. Below, we are including our demands, along with additional details to help the university take action. These demands are non-negotiable. We expect the short term demands to be started immediately, and long term goals to follow directly thereafter.

## **II. Changes to class structure:**

- A. We, the students of CHOICE, want to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment for all people on campus. Professors should be supported by Western administration in any way necessary so they are able to provide an online option for every classroom. Some courses may require OWLs and hiring more technology assistants in the classroom but some less interactive classes may only need a lecture to be recorded or even an asynchronous online class with an optional lecture for those who prefer in-person teaching. These online options should not be provided only for lectures and seminars but also for labs,

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<sup>2</sup> [BTC Class Stats](#), [NWIC Class Stats](#), [WCC Class Stats](#), [BTC Covid Updates](#), [WWU Class Stats](#)

presentations, quizzes and exams. Furthermore, we demand that no instructor regardless of need should be denied the right to teach their class remotely during this deadly pandemic. Faculty should not have to apply to the department or the administration as a whole in order to be allowed to teach online. They should merely have to inform the department prior to classes being published so they can be posted accordingly and nothing more. In-person attendance should not be required for anyone until there is no longer any risk regarding COVID-19. We will not accept some or minimal risk, we will only accept in-person requirements when there exists absolutely no risk to the health and well-being of students.

### **III. University Policy and Action:**

- A. We demand that as long as Western has their doors open during this pandemic, safety policies on campus will be strictly enforced in a timely manner. The main thing that needs to be addressed is the lack of enforcement of mask policy throughout all of campus. Multiple groups of people are lounging in common spaces, many times less than six feet apart without masks or wearing them improperly. Concrete steps need to be taken to protect students from others who do not abide by social distancing and masking rules. It has been proven that the efficacy of certain masks are decreasing as new variants spread<sup>3</sup>, meaning that social distancing is important now more than ever. This issue is not about preference, it is about the health and safety of our community. We all love our community and choose to pay WWU for the opportunity to learn here, however our health does not seem to be of importance anymore. That is why we have

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<sup>3</sup> [Source](#)

come together. We are not going to stand for these conditions any longer. We deserve a choice and protection the same as any other student, yet we are looked over as statistics.

## **IV. What You Need to Do:**

- 1. Western will take the fears and concerns of their students seriously, and treat us with the dignity and respect we deserve.** As human beings, we deserve to be treated with empathy and understanding about our concerns and anxieties about school during a pandemic. As students who pay for our education at Western, we deserve for our health and safety to be prioritized over Western's bottom line. We deserve to be treated fairly and to have the administration be transparent and straightforward with all of us about decisions that affect us.
- 2. Administration will work with faculty to support online learning options and accommodations for every in-person class effective immediately.** All aspects of the classroom experience, including tests, labs, and presentations are to be included. Students' grades or academic standing will not be negatively impacted if they do not show up for in-person class. This gives the power back to each student to decide which option for learning will enable them to get the education they deserve, in the method that suits them best. This can only be possible with the support of administration for professors though, and ideas for this support are outlined below.
- 3. To facilitate this transition, and provide adequate support to faculty, staff, and students, administration will provide the necessary training, technology, and resources needed to make multimodal learning options available for all.** How this works will vary depending on the needs of the class, but we are recommending a mixture of the following: recording lectures, hosting in-person socially distanced classes with a simultaneous online stream via Zoom, loaning

computers and equipment to students who need it, and hiring and training additional staff to operate synchronous online systems and installing additional OWL systems.

- 4. Faculty and staff will be fairly compensated for the additional training and resources that this transition will require.** We expect that there will be negotiation between the administration and the faculty union to ensure there is equitable compensation.
- 5. No member of faculty will be denied the right to teach their class remotely, nor will they have to jump through hoops to do so.** For the rest of winter quarter, all faculty will be able to teach online if they choose to, beyond the two weeks established in the United Faculty agreement for winter quarter. For spring quarter and *henceforth*, faculty will not need to apply to their department or the administration as a whole in order to be allowed to teach online. Instead, faculty will inform their department prior to classes being published so their classes can be posted, planned, and supported accordingly.
- 6. Finally, from here on out, Western will do a better job supporting, funding, and training the Disability Access Center and its staff.** Even before COVID-19, Western's DAC was understaffed and inaccessible. There are countless stories of dead naming, failing to contact students who are seeking accommodations for weeks after they applied, and little to no clarity on what paperwork is *needed* for accommodations. These issues could be fixed with better funding, sensitivity training, an updated website and format for requesting accommodations, and more personnel to help students who have COVID-19, have disabilities or are immunocompromised, or otherwise feel unsafe attending in-person instruction.
- 7. Western will diligently enforce pandemic safety guidelines indoors regardless of county, state, or federal officials lifting the mask mandate.** With the rise of BA.2, the continuation of

Omicron cases, and the physical and mental health of people with underlying conditions, mask mandates should remain on campus in Western. Since students returned to campus in the fall, there have been numerous instances of individuals not wearing masks in shared indoor spaces; wearing masks improperly in classes, and not adhering to social distancing guidelines. These should continue to be enforced as long as COVID-19 presents a threat to public safety, as well as consequences for anyone who does not follow them indoors.

- 8. Provide all students, staff, and faculty with CDC recommended personal protective equipment, specifically KN95 or K95s.** So long as Western is expecting students to meet for in-person classes and campus activities in any capacity, we demand that Western provide all members of the Western community with proper PPE.

## **Other Notes and Proposed Budget and Wages**

### Technology Assistants:

Proposed Wage \$18/hr<sup>4</sup> with at least 175 student workers on retainer to help work with professors for online and hybrid modalities.

### Note Takers:

Proposed wage of \$15/hr<sup>5</sup> with at least 100 student workers on retainer for when students cannot go to in person classes due to illness or accommodations.

### Disability Awareness Training for DAC Staff:

Allocation of \$1,500 to go towards training for all DAC staff through NWADAC<sup>6</sup>, the Northwest Americans with Disabilities Center, with emphasis on Assistive Technology, Telecommunications, Reasonable Accommodations, Education, Disability Language and Etiquette, and Effective Communications.

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<sup>4</sup> [Average Wage of Technology Assistants](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Average Wage of Note Takers](#)

<sup>6</sup> [NWADAC Site and Info](#)

Owls Technology for Every Instructional and Community Building on Campus:

The most cost effective bundle that is compatible with most rooms on campus is the Lecture Hall Owl Bundle which is compatible with Zoom, Microsoft Teams. This would be best for large lecture halls like the ones in Fraser, Bond, Parks and Arntzen Hall with the option to disconnect the two owls via Bluetooth for smaller sized classes that still would require one Owl device. This plan will require one Owl Lecture Hall system, or two Owls, for the Viking Union, for more inclusive and accessible forums and campus events, two bundles for Academic West, Arntzen, Bond, and Miller Hall, one system for the Biology Building, SMATE, Morse Hall, Communications Facility, the Environmental Studies Building, Fairhaven Academic Building, Fraser Hall, Humanities, Parks Hall, and one for Old Main. In total, 19 Owl Lecture Hall systems with 38 Owls on campus — excluding those already in classrooms — will have an estimated cost of \$39,000.

<b>School Name</b>	<b># of Face to Face Classes</b>	<b># of Online Classes</b>	<b># of Hybrid Classes</b>	<b># of Classes F2F as a Percent<sup>7</sup></b>
<b>WCC</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>1168</b>	<b>647</b>	<b>84/1899 4.4%</b>
<b>BTC</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>18/916 1.96%</b>
<b>WWU</b>	<b>2338</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>2338/2913 80.3%</b>

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<sup>7</sup> [BTC Class Stats](#), [NWIC Class Stats](#), [WCC Class Stats](#), [BTC Covid Updates](#), [WWU Class Stats](#)



## **Footnotes:**

1 [COVID-19 BA.2](#)

2 [BTC Class Stats](#), [NWIC Class Stats](#), [WCC Class Stats](#), [BTC Covid Updates](#), [WWU Class Stats](#)

3 [Source](#)

4 [Average Wage of Technology Assistants](#)

5 [Average Wage of Note Takers](#)

6 [NWADAC Site and Info](#)

7 [BTC Class Stats](#), [NWIC Class Stats](#), [WCC Class Stats](#), [BTC Covid Updates](#), [WWU Class Stats](#)

## **SIGNATURES**

**Below is a list of students who have written, organized, contributed, and consulted for the creation of this list of demands based on the concerns and stories of over 800 students, staff and faculty at Western Washington University.**

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