

Associated Students of Western Washington University



Legislative Agenda 2016

Student Success, Voter Rights & Access, Support for Survivors of Sexual & Domestic Violence, Civic Education in Public K-12, New & Dedicated Revenue for Higher Education



Student Success

The ASWWU recognizes that students need support beyond the classroom in order to succeed. Student services at WWU are overburdened; this lack of access affects all of campus but has a disproportionate effect on the recruitment and retention of marginalized communities.

- The WWU counseling center currently cannot meet demand; students are often pushed off campus, have to wait long periods of time to see a counselor, or face other barriers to receiving support. If students have their mental health needs met they will be able to better focus on their academic success.
- The amount of students requesting disAbility resources has grown 77% since 2009. Without these accommodations students cannot learn, and the currently underfunded system causes many students to go without accommodations for far too long each quarter
- Academic advising and tutoring services are necessary to ensure success for students of color, first-generation students, and other marginalized students. The demand for these services has increased significantly without adequate increases in resources, reducing the overall capacity and quality of the services.
- Students' primary needs like housing and food should never be a barrier to accessing higher education. We support state funding for the university to provide services at no cost to students who are currently homeless.

Voter Rights and Access

ASWWU believes that voting is a right and recognizes that many communities do not have the access they need in order for this to be true. Current laws make it difficult for students to register to vote or update their mailing addresses. We believe the following recommendations will increase the amount of students and young people participating in elections.

- Implementing the Washington Voting Rights Act to address the systemic exclusion of marginalized identities, especially people of color, from the political process.
- Creating accessible educational programs for voters to learn more about what and who they are voting for.



- Extending the voter registration deadline to allow more time for students to register to vote, as well as allowing in-person registration on election day.
- Allowing 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds to preregister to vote at the Department of Licensing as part of the Motor Voter system.
- Requiring landlords to provide a voter registration form to a new residential tenant when the lease is signed.
- Eliminating the poll tax by including prepaid postage on ballot return envelopes. This barrier, while it may seem small, is large not only in impact but in implication.

Support for Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence

The ASWWU is concerned about the vastly under-reported instances of sexual violence on our campus. We strongly believe that with increased funding at the state level, more students will be able to access support and legal services with the confidence that their needs will be met. Increased support for survivors will create a healthier campus and community environment, and will help students who are survivors of sexual or domestic violence complete their education with fewer roadblocks. We advocates for:

- Legislation closing gaps between current protection and support services and the actual needs of survivors of sexual and domestic violence through dedicated funding to increase counseling services. This includes specialized personnel, resources, and staff training to better equip the university to respond to sexual violence and involved parties.
- The development and implementation of a mandatory training program for all university faculty, staff, and administration. This training program must include education on how to create a safe environment for students who have survived sexual violence and use inclusive language that does not make assumptions or place blame on survivors
- We support the clarification of both the reporting process and available support services for survivors of sexual and domestic violence at the university level and beyond.
- Giving direction to the Washington Student Achievement Council with assessing the effectiveness of current codes of conduct at Washington state universities in regards to sexual harassment and sexual assault in accordance with RCW 28.B1.10.030.



Civic Education in Public K-12

The ASWWU recognizes the integral role that the K-12 system in Washington state plays in preparing students not just for higher education but to be engaged in the state's economy and democracy. The overall lack of participation by young people in the political process is often characterized by access, not apathy. We believe the solution to this problem involves a deeper understanding of the function and process of the Washington State government. ASWWU is advocating for the following:

- Changes in curriculum that focus on ways in which citizens can get involved in their government because when young people are given the tools to become civically engaged, they do.
- Teaching skills to help students know how to: register to vote, access information to evaluate candidates and policy proposals, lobby their local, state, and federal representatives, and more.

New and Dedicated Revenue

ASWWU recognizes that decreasing tuition and fully funding financial aid are critical issues for students. The lack of funding for higher education disproportionately affects marginalized communities, including people of color, first generation students, and more. Therefore, we recommend these politically feasible, less regressive sources of revenue, which push Washington State towards greater equity in access to higher education.

- Our recommendations include closing the extracted fuel exemption, a capital gains tax, limiting real estate excise tax exemptions, and increasing the estate tax.
- While reducing tuition does benefit the students of Washington State, it should not come at the expense of financial aid programs for those who need it most or be subsidized by graduate or out-of-state tuition.
- We are requesting that some revenue be dedicated to higher education to ensure the continuity of State funding for universities and to prevent cuts to higher education like those that happened during the last recession.



This is
where
the
letter
from y'all
goes!



