The Associated Students of Western Washington University (ASWWU) represents and protects the interests of 14,950 Western Washington University students. Our three priorities are:

1. Student Debt
2. DREAM Act
3. For-Profit College Accountability
STUDENT DEBT

We believe that $1.2 trillion of student debt is detrimental to economic growth nationwide. Higher education should be accessible to all students, regardless of socioeconomic class. Accumulation of debt should not be a barrier to higher education. Student debt has quadrupled in the last decade proving the necessity for the following reforms:

• Maintain low interest rates and increase deferment period on all loans for all students to ensure a sustainable and reasonable repayment process.

• Increase funds to the federal work study program in order to foster student professional development and college affordability.

• Increase assistance and transparency of loan repayment processes to ensure student awareness and accountability.

• Reauthorize the Higher Education Act in order to ensure students have access to financial aid. We believe the HEA should include the following criteria:
  • Restore and lock federal student loan interest rates at 3.4% to aim for a long term fix to student loan interest rates to pave the way for loan refinancing.
  • Improve Income Based Repayment programs to make federal loan payments more affordable.
  • Allow borrowers to refinance or modify their existing loans.
  • Ensure graduate student access to federal subsidized loans and undergraduate level interest rates.
  • Require private lenders contracted with the Department of Education to make borrowers fully aware of repayment options.

Distribution of student loan balance, 2012:Q4

40% of borrowers have balances less than $10,000
3.7% of borrowers have balances greater than $100,000

Source: FRBNY Consumer Credit Panel / Equifax

Big Debt on Campus

Student loan debt has nearly quadrupled in the past 10 years.

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of New York

Underwater

Borrowers with loans that are 90+ days delinquent

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of New York

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DREAM ACT

We believe that all students should have equal opportunity to obtain a higher education. There is inherent value in providing both a stable living situation and more accessible opportunities to pursue a career. We support the DREAM Act because:

• Students and families residing in the U.S. who are undocumented pay taxes, and therefore, should receive the benefits funded by those taxes.
• Students benefit from greater diversity in higher education while preparing to participate in the multicultural society in which we live.
• The U.S. economy benefits from engaging and investing in the creative potential of a diverse and highly educated work force.
• A pathway to citizenship means that previously undocumented students can utilize their degree to benefit our national economy, increasing our global competitiveness.

FOR-PROFIT COLLEGE ACCOUNTABILITY

We believe increased regulation and oversight of the for-profit college industry is critical to ensuring the accountability of federal financial aid dollars because:

• For profit colleges report hundreds of millions of dollars in profit every year the majority of which comes from federal financial aid dollars.
• In August 2010, a U.S Government Accountability Office investigation into for-profit colleges raised concerns about possible fraudulent and unethical behavior.
• Although for-profit colleges only enroll about 12 percent of students nationwide, such institutions account for a disproportionate share of students who do not graduate, remain unemployed, and/or default on their loans.
• Congress should support efforts to reinstate the 85/15 rule and include non-Title IV funds like the Post 9/11 G.I Bill and Department of Defense tuition assistance programs towards the 85 percent of federal funding for-profit colleges are allowed to receive.

BILLS OF INTEREST

H.R. 1330: Student Loan Fairness Act
S. 114: Fairness for Struggling Students Act of 2013
S. 1241: Bipartisan Student Loan Certainty Act
S.744 or HR.15: Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act
H.R. 3496: Protecting our Students and Taxpayers Act of 2013

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