



# Legislative Affairs Council

## Choosing an Issue

**Issue:** Student Services + State of Emergency

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**Endorsements:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Proposed Action Agenda Item Title:** TBD

### 1) Describe the Issue (what is the problem & what is the solution):

The success of Western students depends not only on the resources and support they receive inside the classroom, but is very much dependent on the resources and support made available to them outside the classroom as well. In order for students to be successful on our campus, we need to look at them holistically and ensure that we're providing them with ample resources to aid in their progress while at Western. Unfortunately, as funding at our institution is limited, we do not have the resources available to fully ensure student success from a holistic standpoint. First-generation, low-income, and students of color need more academic and advising support to guarantee their success and graduation from Western and Western needs the resources to recruit and retain a more diverse group of students to our campus. Students with mental and emotionally disabilities need to be given more resources for counseling and professional health services. Additionally, students who are survivors of sexual trauma and assault need more resources to help them heal after their trauma.

In order to fully support and ensure student success from a holistic standpoint, Western needs increased funding to offer better services for Western students who face unique challenges while attending our university. It is important we set every student up for success by providing them with resources to support them both inside and outside of the classroom. As of now, Western has limited ability to provide all the services Western's diverse range of students need. The Student Success package being lobbied on by the administration would help provide the various resources and services Western students need to ensure their success.

In order to demonstrate Western's needs for greater student resources I've included some statistics below.

#### **Need for Academic Advising:**

Graduations Rates After Four Years: 2009 —

All students: 39.5%

Black/African American: 24.5%

Latino/Latina: 35.4%

White: 40.8%

[Source](#)



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### Increased Recruitment and Retention of Students of Color:

Demographics:

Students of Color— 22.3%

Latino/Latina — 6.7%

Black/African American — 1.5%

White - 75.5%

[Source](#)

### Need for Increased for Survivors of Sexual Assault and Trauma:

It is estimated that the percentage of completed or attempted rape victimization among women in higher educational institutions may be between 20% and 25% over the course of a college career.

It is estimated that for every 1,000 women attending a college or university, there are 35 incidents of rape each academic year.

[Source](#)

### Need for more Mental Health Services and Counseling

Available data suggests that suicide occurs at a rate between 6.5 and 7.5 per 100,000 among college students.

[Source](#)

## 2) Please fill out a Strategy Chart:

Goals	Organizational Considerations	Constituents, Allies, & Opponents	Targets	Tactics
Long Term: 1. Have ample funding for various resources to aid in student success which include, but are not limited to, increased academic advising for students of color, low-income and first generation students, mental health counseling and treatment, and treatment for students who identify as survivors of sexual assault and trauma.	Western Votes  LAC  The REP  The AS as a whole  ESC  Resource & Outreach Programs  USSA  Administration	Constituents Students, parents, prior attendees of Western who left before attaining a degree because of the lack of resources, alumni who's Western experience would have been better had they had access to greater resources  Allies:	Primary Larry Seaquist, Gerry Pollett (House Higher Ed.)  Barbara Bailey, Randi Becker (Senate Higher Ed.)  Ross Hunter (House Appropriations)	Org/Educational  Days of action, phonebanking, emailing, letter-writing  Social Media  Student Testimony  Testimony from students who didn't graduate because of lack of funding  Increasing awareness about Western's low



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<p>Intermediate</p> <p>1. See Western dedicate extra revenue and funding to resources which aid in student success which include, but are not limited to, increased academic advising for students of color, low-income and first generation students, mental health counseling and treatment, and treatment for students who identify as survivors of sexual assault and trauma.</p> <p>Short Term</p> <p>1. Get Student Success on our LA</p>	<p>USSA (NPCSC, NWC, State of Emergency Committee)</p>	<p><b>Administration</b></p> <p>Opponents:</p> <p>I don't think we'll necessarily encounter individuals who don't support the idea of our proposal, but I think there will be individuals who think money should be allocated to other areas, for example those who think all extra funding should go to K-12</p>	<p>Andy Hill, Michael Baumgartner (Senate Ways and Means)</p>	<p>graduation rates for students of color and lack of resources</p> <p>Using Alumni network and parents of students</p> <p>Expanding ideas of what students need to be successful</p> <p>Lobby Days</p> <p>Utilizing all our various networks and supports (WSA, USSA, Western Advocates )</p>
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### 3) Please explain briefly how/if this issue meets the following qualifications:

#### 1. Is it winnable?

Yes. Student success is key to a university's reputation. Everyone goes to college to succeed, not to be a dropout. If there are no resources for those with emotional distress or underrepresented students, the chances of them dropping out increase. This sense of not belonging and alienation hinders students' academic progress as well as emotional wellbeing. Many students will get behind this initiative since it will directly benefit them as well as academic success by giving them help and a place to fit in.

#### 2. Does it directly impact and improve students' lives?

Absolutely. Many students need access to support services, whether it be veterans' services, disability resource services or counseling services. Access to these resources is essential for students to be able to know they have a place to get help when they need it and to improve their quality of life. In order for



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students to be able to focus on school and their careers, they must first know that there are resources available to ensure their quality of life and mental health, which are prerequisites to other aspects of life like careers and grades and participating in extracurricular activities. Knowing these resources are available will impact and improve students' lives exponentially.

#### 3. Does it have a clear target?

Yes, those who create the budget and the existing student resource centers. Everything comes down to money, without sufficient funding, resource centers can only help students so much. Those who allocate the funds are clear targets as well as those who advertise the resource centers for they are underrepresented on campus.

#### 4. Does it build a measurable amount of power?

Yes- increased funding dollars for student services translates directly into more staff and funding for these programs, allowing them to offer services for more students and perform outreach to make sure that they are reaching all students who need their services.

#### 5. Does it have a clear and realistic time frame?

Yes. There is a significant amount of time and focus that will be put into the specific actions that will take place on campus to mobilize students on this issue, however, many students are in positions where the success of this legislation will be somewhat determine the success on this campus. There are many ways to implement the different parts of this legislation if it were to be passed. It would come in the form of forming a committee that would be able to create timelines for the specific aspects of this bill. For example, there would be a group that focuses on administering and overlooking the funding and composition of more resources such as a bigger Ethnic Student Center. There would also be a committee focused on working towards equity within the sector of financial aid and working to ensure policies are being enacted to counteract those that exist which have historically, and are currently further perpetuating inequity for students who hold marginalized identities.

#### 6. Does it have a local/state/federal organizing and lobbying angle?

Yes- as state and federal budgets were cut in times of austerity, often the first programs to go were student services at public universities, which were trying to cut funding to these services in order to avoid cuts to academic programs. Additionally, the fact that marginalized students have lower retention and



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graduation rates is not unique to Western Washington University, or even to Washington- it's an across-the-board challenge of universities in the USA.

Because of this, it has a strong lobbying angle on the state and federal level, and on the local/campus level, there's an amazing opportunity for grassroots activism on the issue- it's something that affects a lot of folks in very big, personal ways.

### 7. Could students build a diverse campus coalition around this issue?

This issue is one that affects many different students, especially ones that are marginalized. Students afflicted by mental illness or other disabilities or who are veterans face unique tribulations that are often pushed to the periphery so that the rest of society can pretend these problems don't exist. Providing greater resources for these individuals offers a unique opportunity for students to build a coalition of diversely affected individuals and bring this issue to the forefront of many important conversations. This is an opportunity to take action to improve lives that cannot be ignored.

### 8. Is it likely to be debated and acted upon by the Legislature in the next year?

Yes- because this year the Legislature will be determining budget allocations for each public institution, it is an ideal time to bring the expansion of student services at these universities into the conversation. Additionally, this proposal is also a large part of the potential lobbying agenda for Western Washington University in the coming year, and so it will definitely be brought into the conversation by multiple organizations.

### 9. Will it strengthen and expand efforts within WSA?

Yes- this is an issue that affects all universities as they try and get increased funding for the coming two years, and so it has the potential to be an action that many students, schools, and organizations can rally behind and advocate for in a very personal way.

### 10. Can you provide background information and the current context of the issue?

(Needed to do more research to adequately answer this question- more info to come)

### 11. What creative and/or innovative tactics could we employ to engage the media and excite new students around this issue?

In advocating for increased funding for student services, we have the exciting opportunity to not only educate students about the resources that are available for them on campus, but also to highlight



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the important work that has already been done in those offices. A creative tactic might be to encourage students to, if they feel comfortable, talk about how those services have empowered them.

We also have the opportunity to talk realistically about student retention and struggles that students (particularly students of marginalized identities) currently face despite the presence of student services. Another thing too that might be able to excite new students around the issue would be to launch grassroots educational campaigns that talk about institutional marginalization and privilege in an accessible way- perhaps many folks who would think themselves removed from the issue of student services + student retention on-campus could realize the ways in which those issues impact them.