

# AFFORDABILITY AS WORKABILITY

---



Students understand that higher education is an investment in personal futures as well as local and state economies, **but tuition increases of 75% since 2008 have placed the cost of that responsibility too heavily on our shoulders.** Washington state had the 9th largest decline in state funding per student from FY08-FY13. It had the 2nd largest tuition increases over that same period. Facing these challenges, ASUW is proposing a model to inform financial aid policy and tuition setting decisions that factor in a feasible level of student contribution without requiring student debt.

## AFFORDABILITY AS WORKABILITY

---

Students aren't looking for an easy way out. Education is an investment and a privilege that we are willing to work for, but that isn't even possible now. **College is not affordable until all students can earn enough wages in a given year to pay their share.** Our model proposes that a student who works part time during the academic year and full time over the summer should be able to afford the cost of education without turning to student loans. For students, this model is a minimum standard of affordability, as opposed to an ideal. With 12 weeks of summer and 38 weeks in an academic year (2 weeks left out for travel, illness, job search, summer vacation, or family time, etc.), at Washington State minimum wage, a student can earn **\$11,742 pre-tax income\***. Therefore, we propose **\$11,742** as the maximum amount a student is expected to contribute to their education. In other words, **[Total Cost of Education] – [Grants and Scholarships] – [Expected Parent Contribution] ≤ \$11,742**. Currently, many students need to come up with more than that amount and are forced to turn to substantial debts, even while working. **We urge the legislature to make it possible once again to work our way through school.**

## WHY THIS MODEL?

---

By supporting a student-centric model of affordability, **students are demonstrating that they are willing to help pay their way through college.** It is becoming increasingly common for students to work one or two part-time jobs while going to school, but they still find themselves unable to afford a University of Washington education. At current rates, a student would have to work **54 hours per week, year-round**, at Washington minimum wage in order to fully fund one year of their own education. This is not a reasonable expectation. Our affordability metric has been endorsed by ASUW as well as the Washington Student Association, which represents over 150,000 students from colleges and universities across the state. If our affordability metric is embraced, **Washington State will send a simple but powerful message to students: anyone who is willing to work through school will be able to graduate debt-free.** Washington State will show students that higher education is on a path toward affordability.

\* $(12 \text{ wks})(40 \text{ hours/wk})(\$9.47/\text{hour}) + (38 \text{ wks})(20 \text{ hours/wk})(\$9.47/\text{hour}) = \$11,742$