Associated Students of Western Washington University

Legislative Agenda 2017

Tuition & Revenue, Support & Success, Representation
Tuition

The ASWWU believes that long term tuition policy needs to be implemented for the security and longevity of affordable, accessible, quality higher education in Washington state. We believe that education should treated as a spectrum from early learning to higher education, and should be funded as such. We request that lawmakers ensure students have continued access to education in Washington State. We advocate for the following:

- A tuition freeze to prevent any increases, with state funding to cover necessary backfills, restoring state investment in higher education to pre-recession levels this biennium. While reducing tuition does benefit the students of Washington State, it should not come at the expense of financial aid programs or be subsidized by graduate or out of state tuition.
- Fully funding the State Need Grant, in order to offer direct support to the communities who need it most.
- A permanent decoupling of Services and Activities fees from tuition to maintain student autonomy and ensure funding for critical services. If tuition continues to decrease, or freeze, student accessibility-related services will be negatively impacted. In the past two bienniums, S&A fees were temporarily decoupled from tuition to prevent these negative impacts.

Revenue

The 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 financially feasible, less regressive sources of revenue, which push Washington State towards equity, both in tax policy and in higher education.

We advocate for the following:

- Closing the extracted fuel exemption
- Implementing a capital gains tax
- Limiting the real estate excise tax exemptions
- Increasing the estate tax
- Closing the first time mortgage lenders tax loophole
- Instituting a tax on lottery winnings.

- We request that revenue from these sources and others, such as the tax on cannabis, are 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.
Student Success

The ASWWU recognizes that 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. We advocate for increased funding for the WWU Counseling Center, disAbility Resources Services, Academic Advising Center, Tutoring Center, and resources for students experiencing homelessness. These demands stem from the following:

- The WWU Counseling Center cannot meet the current 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.
- The amount of students requesting disability resources has grown 77% since 2009. The currently underfunded system causes many to go without accommodations for far too long.
- The demand for academic advising has increased significantly without adequate increases in resources, reducing the overall capacity and quality of the services.
- Demand for tutoring services has increased by nearly 200% in the past six years without adequate increases in resources to accommodate the need.
- No-cost services for students who are currently experiencing homelessness are needed so that a students’ primary needs like housing and food are no longer a barrier to accessing higher education.

Support for Survivors

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 create a healthier campus and community environment. Additionally, this support will help students who are survivors of sexual or domestic violence complete their education with fewer roadblocks.

We advocate for:

- 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.
- Clarification of both the reporting process and available support services for survivors of sexual and domestic violence at the university level and beyond.
- Legislative direction to the Washington Student Achievement Council in regards to assessing the effectiveness of current codes of conduct at Washington State universities that deal with sexual harassment and sexual assault in accordance with RCW 28B.110.030.
Student Trustee

The ASWWU recognizes that universities are designed to serve the students they educate and students should be represented in all areas of the university business. The Student Trustee is one of the most important roles a student can fill, as it operates at the highest level of university management. We advocate for:

- Given the full voting rights that are afforded to the other trustees, as they are currently barred from in RCW 28B.50.102
- Democratically elected by the student body they are meant to represent. Allowing students to tangibly engage with the appointments of student trustees will foster a stronger connection between the students and the Student Trustee.

Voter Rights and Access

The 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. 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.
- 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.
- Automatic voter registration instituted at state funded departments, agencies and institutions.
- Increasing access for voters with disabilities by allowing people who are unable to sign their ballots to do a voter registration affidavit only once.
- 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.

Civics Education

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. We advocate for the following:

- Teaching students to consider social issues in relation to the public good, use democratic decision making processes, and connect critical thinking content to current issues.
Dear Legislators,

It is with great pride and respect that we present our 2017 Legislative Agenda on behalf of the Associated Students of Western Washington University (ASWWU). This document has been drafted with great care to represent the experiences and needs of WWU students as inclusively and accurately as possible.

As students, we have experienced the barriers associated with success first hand and we have put an immense amount of work into crafting our agenda with overcoming those obstacles in mind. Our agenda represents student concerns that we live everyday while attending school. Whether it be increasing student support services, improving support for survivors of sexual and domestic violence, ensuring access to civic engagement and representation, or setting a long term tuition policy in favor of students, we know what we need on our campus to continue and excel in our educational journey at Western. We ask that you consider our success, and what we have determined we need to thrive, in your work this legislative session.

Thank you for reviewing our ASWWU Legislative Agenda. We appreciate the hard work you do for students and hope that you will join us in building a better future for Washington State. We appreciate your continued support.

Sincerely,

The ASWWU Board of Directors.
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The Associated Students of Western Washington University (ASWWU) is the official government representing WWU students at the local, state, and federal level, as well as to our faculty and administration. The ASWWU employs over 200 students and provides many of the services offered on our campus, from educational events to entertainment centered programming to resources supporting student communities.