

State Universities Call for Reinvestment to Bolster Student Access and Success

OLYMPIA—Washington’s public college and universities are jointly requesting a \$198 million state investment over the next two years to expand student access and increase degree production in high demand fields to support the state economy.

“We are now at a major turning point that will determine the trajectory of our state as well as long-term opportunities for our students,” said Dr. Thomas L. (Les) Purce, president of The Evergreen State College and chair of the Council of Presidents. “Adequately funding higher education will move the state forward, grow our economy, and increase opportunities for our residents.”

The additional funding would increase degree production in high-demand areas and improve student access and performance through targeted, evidence-based initiatives. This new investment in higher education would enable Washington’s public college and universities to hold the line on tuition increases for an additional two years.

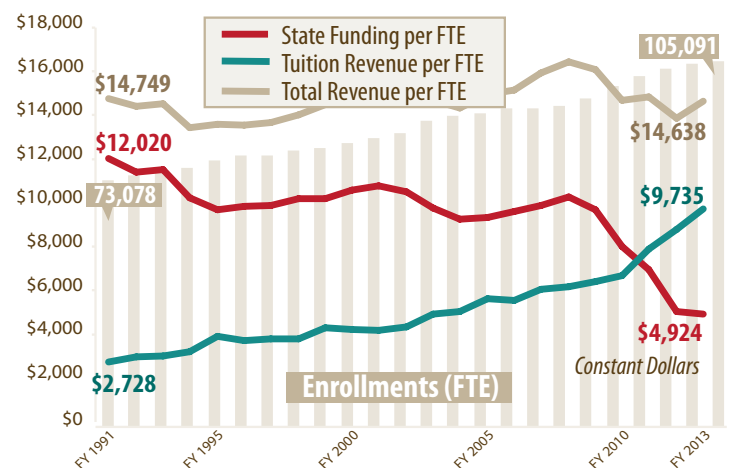
The proposal builds upon the state’s 2013 reinvestment in higher education, the first enhancement following six years of some of the largest decreases in state funding in the nation. During that time class sizes, time to degree, student indebtedness, and tuition dramatically increased while nearly 2,000 faculty and staff positions supporting the academic mission were lost. Washington currently ranks 49th nationally in total per student funding, including both state support and tuition.

“If we are to meet higher education goals of the state, investment in higher education must continue,” Purce said.

During the 2014 legislative session, the Legislature endorsed separate statewide educational goals calling for all adults in Washington between the ages 25 and 44 to have a high school diploma or equivalent, with at least 70 percent of that population earning a postsecondary credential.

“We understand and fully support the need to fund basic education but let’s make sure we’re not meeting the needs of our K-12 students at the expense of our earliest learners and college students,” said Gene Sharratt, executive director of the Washington Student Achievement Council. “It’s critical that we support a strong continuum of education opportunities for Washington students to ensure they are career ready.”

Public Baccalaureates Serve More Students & Control Costs



Per student funding is lower now than it was over 20 years ago, but the burden has shifted dramatically from the state to students and their families.

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