



2019 Joint Legislative Agenda

Student Success = Completion, High Employer Demand Degrees, Student Support Services

Washington employers are anticipating 740,000 job openings by 2021, 74% of which will require an associate degree or higher. With only 40% of Washington high school students currently earning a credential beyond a high school diploma by age 26, we need to drastically increase access to career-ready credentials to meet workforce needs.

Washington's public four-year institutions and community and technical colleges stand ready to address this challenge. But in order to improve student success and ensure access to high-quality jobs, investments are needed in four critical areas:

- 1. *Improve student completion through competitive compensation for faculty and staff*** – Student success is directly tied to students' access to high quality faculty and staff. Dedicated, high quality faculty and staff are central to ensuring timely degree completion, supporting an increasingly diverse and non-traditional student population, and preparing students to enter an increasingly competitive job market.
 - 2. *Increase student access to high employer demand degrees*** – Access to high employer demand degree programs, including include STEM fields, teacher preparation, healthcare and other priority workforce programs, will directly impact students' abilities to access the high quality jobs. Washington is a net importer of people with college degrees, and Washington students need to be able to compete with a national pool of job candidates. High employer demand programs are often resource intensive and require specific state investments.
 - 3. *Increase student support*** – Once students are enrolled in a post-secondary degree program, they need robust support services to ensure they graduate. Key priorities should be investing in strategies that lead to degree completion and strengthening pathways for historically underserved populations. The state must also maintain the commitment to fully funding Washington's nationally recognized State Need Grant program.
 - 4. *Provide facilities that prepare students for the jobs of the future*** – Student learning is dependent on access to facilities, labs, and classrooms that reflect the current practices of teaching and the needs of employers. This requires long-term and sustained investment in maintenance and renewal programs that keep classrooms, labs, and learning spaces relevant.
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