



2022 Joint Legislative Agenda

Compensation for Vital Faculty & Employees

Quality educators and staff are critical to the success of higher education institutions and Washington students. From the beginning of the pandemic, our employees quickly adapted curricula and support services to online formats, managed critical budget deficits, and implemented on-campus safety protocols, all while delivering high quality education. However, colleges and universities struggle to recruit and retain quality faculty and staff amidst increasing costs of living and competition for employees.

Due to revenue uncertainty caused by the pandemic, the current biennial budget does not include a salary adjustment for most higher education employees. With recent state revenue forecasts reflecting a rebounding economy, the four-year public universities and community and technical colleges request modest salary adjustments in FY23. These adjustments will allow our vital faculty and staff to continue to live and work in our state and help our institutions remain competitive. Importantly, in the 2019-21 budget, the legislature included “foundational support” for our institutions, which recognized that incremental tuition revenue is not sufficient to cover many of these ongoing expenses. It is vital that the state continues to fund at least the majority of our incremental wage increases and central services with state funding in FY23 and beyond.

High Demand Program Expansion

The pandemic has intersected with changing employer needs and brought attention to our state’s workforce shortages. Retirements in key fields have been expedited by the pandemic, leaving employers short-staffed and placing new burdens on the remaining workers. Employers need professionals at all levels of credentialing, particularly in high-wage STEM fields.

Washington’s public colleges and universities are advancing funding requests to address our state’s greatest workforce shortages in cybersecurity, computer science, nursing, and behavioral and mental health. Additionally, many of these fields are in high demand among students. The requests will help improve prosperity for our residents and better position Washington to meet the needs of a post-pandemic economy.

Learning Recovery

The loss of in-person learning experiences and other pandemic-related disruptions will have a lasting impact on students. Declining enrollments, decreased FAFSA/WASFA filing, and increased demand for remedial courses are a few examples of the learning disruptions seen on our college and university campuses. The global pandemic also exacerbated equity gaps across society, including in higher education. Students of color, low-income students, and first-generation students now face higher barriers to access and completion in higher education.

The higher education community is pursuing strategies to help all Washington students recover from pandemic related setbacks. These include investing in student support and learning recovery strategies in the areas of outreach and recruitment, FAFSA/WASFA completion and financial aid counseling, housing insecurity, mental health support and academic advising that are proven to expand access and improve student success.