

State Legislative Update: Higher Education

Steve Bollens

WSU Faculty Representative to the State Legislature
February 17, 2022





“Council of Faculty” (COF) = Faculty Legislative Reps from the state’s six, 4-year public institutions

- Dr. Steve Bollens (Environment & Biology), WSU
- Dr. David Douglas (Information Technology), CWU
- Mr. Sam Ligon (English), EWU
- Dr. Bill Lyne (English), WWU
- Dr. Maria Morales (Latinx Studies), TESC
- Dr. Jake Vigdor (Public Affairs), UW



Partnerships and Communication

- Faculty Senates of the six, 4-year public universities
- Council of the Presidents (COP)
- Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC)
- College Promise Coalition (CPC)
- House and Senate “Higher Education” Committees; House Appropriations and Senate Ways & Means Committees
- District legislators (49 senators and 98 representatives)



Even-Year vs Odd-Year Legislative Sessions

- ▶ Even numbered years (e.g., 2022) are 60-day sessions to consider adjustments to the biennial budget (aka the “supplemental budget”) and “minor” policy legislation (avg = 1,500 bills; 312 passed)
- ▶ Odd numbered years (e.g., 2023) are 105-day sessions to consider the biennial budget (e.g., 2023-25) and major policy legislation (avg = 2,400 bills; 460 passed)



2022 WSU Legislative Priorities

- Increasing faculty/staff compensation. (The university's request to the governor in late summer 2021 was for a 3% increase for 2022-23.) Fiscal matters will be taken up publicly by the legislature next week, with release of House and Senate budgets.
- HB-1051 & SB-5918 – “Creating a faculty regent at the research universities.” (Approved in the House on Tuesday by a vote of 73 aye, 25 nay; now being considered in the Senate.)



2022 COF Legislative Priorities

- Increasing student access and affordability in higher education
 - **HB 1659** – “Making higher education more affordable and accessible for students by bridging the gap between cost and need to reduce barriers, improve opportunity, and advance economic security” (passed House with 83 yeas, 15 nays; currently in Senate)
 - **HB 1736** – “Establishing a state student loan program” (passed House with 59 yeas, 39 nays; currently in Senate)
 - **HB 1835** – “Creating outreach and completion initiatives to increase postsecondary enrollment” (passed House with 88 yeas, 8 nays; currently in Senate)
- **SB 5830** – “Increasing tenure-track faculty at the public baccalaureate institutions” (died in Senate Ways and Means)
- **SB 5854** – “Concerning ethical performance of faculty duties” (passed Senate with 48 yeas, 1 nay; currently in House)

Recent Budget News out of Olympia

- At the beginning of the current fiscal year (July 1, 2021), the state had an unprecedented “several billion dollar” surplus, from both federal (ARP) and state (increased revenue) sources.
- Governor’s proposed 2022-23 supplemental budget (released in December, 2021) included increased spending in many areas, including a 3.0-3.25 % increase in faculty/staff compensation.
- As of yesterday’s state revenue forecast:
 - Another \$1.45 billion increase for the 2021-23 biennium
 - Current projection is 2.5% over the governor’s 2022-23 budget request
 - Current projection is 9% over last year’s approved 2021-23 biennial budget
- The House and Senate draft budgets are due to be released in the coming days, and then they will need to be reconciled with each other, and with the governor’s budget, by the end of the legislative session on March 10th.



Going Forward ...

- COF is the voice of all faculty of the six, 4-yr public institutions
- Timely and effective communication is crucial! (Things happen very fast in Olympia! I am in email correspondence with Faculty Senate Steering Committee on daily-weekly basis.)
- Faculty are welcome to attend public Senate and House hearings (TVW) and visit/tour the Capitol (post-COVID)
- Legislative bill tracking (<https://app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/>)
- Feel free to email (sbollens@wsu.edu) or call me (360-608-6893) anytime



Thank You!
Questions?