

2025–2026 ASUW Legislative Agenda

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Section 1: Protect and Promote Access to Quality Education

Funding University of Washington, and the Washington College Grant

The ASUW recognizes that the State of Washington leads the nation in need-based financial aid programs and has made historic investments in higher education. We commend the state for funding the Washington College Grant and for increasing the median family income eligibility in statute to 60% of the median family income during the 2025 legislative session. We support any further increases to Washington College Grant eligibility to address rising education costs. The ASUW urges the legislature to fund the University of Washington amidst reductions in state and federal funding, which have contributed to departmental budget shortfalls and exacerbated the growing gap between tuition revenue and state support. The decline in funding contributed to the maximum 3.3% tuition increase by the UW Board of Regents this year. The ASUW is concerned about the shifting balance between state funding and tuition, which has changed from 61% state support and 39% tuition in 2005 to 40% state support and 60% tuition in 2025, resulting in higher costs for students and highlighting a shift in higher education funding practices over the past decade, and ultimately widening the funding gap.

<https://www.dailyuw.com/article/deans-of-college-of-arts-sciences-departments-express-budget-plan-concerns-dean-harris-confirms-layoffs-and-centralization-efforts-20250926>

<https://www.seattletimes.com/education/lab/uw-other-wa-colleges-face-big-money-problems/>

<https://wsac.wa.gov/media-2024-01-29-WA-First-In-Need-Based-Financial-Aid>

<https://www.washington.edu/opb/uw-data/fast-facts/>

<https://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2025-26/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/Senate/5785-S%20SBR%20FBR%2025.pdf?q=20251013102526>

Workforce Education Investment Account (WEIA)

ASUW urges the Legislature to protect the Workforce Education Investment Account (WEIA) and ensure its usage for supporting students, and not to cover institutional costs, or appropriations to the general budget. WEIA was created in 2019 through HB 2158 as Washington's first higher education fund to support programs like the Washington College Grant and previously the Graduate Student Loan Program. It's funded through the advanced computing surcharge on companies with over \$25 billion in global revenue. In the last legislative session,

HB 2081 raised the surcharge cap from 1.22% to 7.5% and increased the cap from \$9 million to \$75 million per business annually starting next year, which could generate billions in new revenue over the next four years. While ASUW supports this increase, we are concerned that the 2025–2027 operating budget would allow WEIA funds to supplant rather than supplement general fund allocations for higher education. In this biennium, The University of Washington would receive \$400 million in funding from WEIA instead of the general fund, and \$177.9 million in WEIA dollars would be used for employee compensation costs that used to be covered by the state. WEIA is also funding \$15 million for UW’s Center for Behavioral Health Learning, \$3.5 million for discharge services at UW Medicine and Harborview, and \$650,000 for short-term transition and support for patients deemed unfit to stand trial. ASUW calls on the legislature to ensure WEIA funds are used to support students, and their access to higher education, and not to replace funding previously covered by the general budget. ASUW recognizes Washington must uphold its commitment to students, and the future of its workforce.

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary/?BillNumber=2081&Year=2025&Initiative=false>

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=43.79.195>

<https://researchcouncil.org/new-weia-revenues-would-be-used-to-supplant-other-funds-for-higher-education/>

<https://lawfilesex.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2025-26/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/2081-S.SL.pdf#page=1>

Textbook Tax Exemption and Promotion of Open Educational Resources

The ASUW supports policies that protect student financial aid and increase the accessibility of required course materials. ASUW recognizes the significant financial burden that textbooks and other required course materials including but not limited to digital subscriptions, lab materials, scantrons, and blue books place on students across Washington. Research shows that the cost of course materials has increased over 1,000% since 1970, accounting for inflation, and 63% of college students have skipped purchasing a textbook. Students receiving financial aid should never have to choose between using their aid for basic needs like food and housing or purchasing the class materials they need to succeed. To help ease this burden, the ASUW urges the Legislature to exempt required course materials from local and state sales taxes.

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1751&Year=2025>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/freshman-year/college-textbook-prices-have-risen-812-percent-1978-n399926>

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary/?BillNumber=1751&Year=2025&Initiative=false>

<https://studentdebtwarriors.com/students/these-states-dont-charge-sales-tax-on-textbooks/>

Research Funding

The ASUW supports policies that strengthen UW's status as an R1 research institution by expanding paid research opportunities for students, including funding for the Office of Undergraduate Research and its new pilot program, the "Undergraduate Research Collective." This program, which is donation based, provides students \$1,600 a quarter to advance their research in preparation for the Undergraduate Research Symposium, breaking barriers by increasing accessibility to research opportunities that benefit students long-term in workforce development. According to Jason Campbell, UW's interim senior vice president for finance, planning, and budgeting, UW anticipates a 26.8% decline in federal research, and a loss of \$280 million in federally sponsored research and a \$376 million overall decline in sponsored research funding, including state and private sources. The University of Washington is home to life-saving research programs and the state's only medical cyclotron, which provides particle beams for patient care and research including Neutron Therapy, Proton Therapy, Radiation Effects Testing, and Isotope Production. All of which contribute to groundbreaking cancer treatments and major medical advancements. Senator Maria Cantwell recognized UW's impact by inviting a UW cancer researcher to the 2025 State of the Union. The ASUW supports policies that strengthen UW's ability to continue this vital research and urges the Legislature to fund these valuable programs that benefit students, the state, the nation, and beyond.

<https://www.washington.edu/undergradresearch/undergraduate-research-collective/>

<https://www.radiationoncology.uw.edu/research/uw-medical-cyclotron-facility/>

<https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/uw-other-wa-colleges-face-big-money-problems/>

Section 2: Student Welfare and Well-Being

Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness (Shoutout SARVA X QSC)

The ASUW urges the Washington State Legislature to strengthen protections for survivors of sexual assault, harassment, and relationship violence. The ASUW recognizes the "Red Zone" months of September through November with higher instances of sexual assault. ASUW supports reviving key elements of SB 5355 and HB 2242, as outlined in the proposed Sexual Assault Survivors' Bill of Rights, including access to Confidential Resource Advisor, notices of survivor rights, trauma-informed support, and consistent reporting processes across campuses.

The ASUW recognizes the need for accessible on-campus resources for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence and advocates for more robust services and partnerships through UW Medicine and other campus support programs. ASUW calls for amnesty protections for survivors and witnesses who may have violated alcohol or drug policies, so fear of punishment doesn't prevent reporting. ASUW also supports increased funding for Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners, improved campus lighting and blue light systems, and education on interpersonal relationships.

Expanding Access to the Students Experiencing Homelessness Grant (Shoutout ASUW Prez)

The ASUW supports policies that expand access to basic needs to combat student housing and food insecurity, including amending the Student Experiencing Homelessness Grant (SEH) to allow all institutions to apply, not just one per campus. ASUW calls for increased funding for the UW Food Pantry and Emergency Housing Resources. Institutions like WSU use SEH grant funding to distribute individual emergency grants, and South Puget Sound Community College rents apartments to provide temporary housing and resources. However, UW Seattle's basic needs resource navigator is underutilized, partly because our administration has not applied for this funding, and the Council of Presidents has shown little interest. The UW Food Pantry recently experienced its highest demand ever in Fall 2024, with a 14.3% increase in usage, with over 7,500 visits. Students begin using the pantry as soon as the first day of school, and the lines only grow longer throughout the quarter as student dining funds run low, demonstrating the urgent and ongoing need for expanded support. ASUW contributed \$10,000 to the Food Pantry this year. The ASUW urges the Legislature to prioritize funding for these essential services, so students have reliable access to basic needs, to further support key factors in optimal student success and wellbeing.

<https://wsac.wa.gov/media-2025-02-03-wa-student-experience-survey>

<https://thewholeu.uw.edu/2024/01/29/fighting-food-insecurity-across-the-uw/>

<https://www.dailyuw.com/>

<https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-SSEH.Legislative.Report.pdf>

<https://studentcare.wsu.edu/student-assistance/housing-assistance/>

Post-Undergraduate Unemployment Exemptions (Shoutout Erick)

The ASUW supports policies to remove the exemption from unemployment benefits for students employed at institutions of higher education when those positions follow the same procedures for unemployment eligibility in comparable non-student roles at the same institutions. Despite their contributions, these graduates remain ineligible for unemployment benefits under RCW

50.44.040 solely due to their student status, while non-student employees in similar positions continue to receive coverage. The ASUW urges the legislature to amend this statute to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all workers, regardless of student status, and to provide the needed support for recent graduates transitioning to the workforce.

Section 3: Bridging Educational Gaps and Inequities

Supporting Students with Dependents (Shoutout Towa)

ASUW urges the Legislature to expand support for student parents by prioritizing policies that address the high cost of childcare and the unique challenges faced by students with dependents. This includes granting students with dependents priority class registration and expanding access to programs like the Working Childcare Connections Program to include graduate students. Currently, students at UW campuses have access to the Childcare Assistance Program (CAP), which provides financial support funded by the Student Activities Fee (SAF). At UW Seattle, CAP provides a maximum of \$3,150 per quarter depending on credit load and the age of the child. However, this support falls significantly short of the actual cost of childcare in Washington state. In 2023, the City of Seattle estimated that the true cost of childcare ranges from \$13,000 to \$40,000 annually depending on the child's age, and as of 2025, average childcare costs in Washington state reached \$21,000 per year. Without enough financial aid or early class registration, student parents often must choose between school and caring for their children. The ASUW supports policies that increase funding, expand access, and offer resources to better accommodate student parents while finishing their degrees.

https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/DEEL/Results/Reports%20and%20Data/Child%20Care%20Reports/KC_Seattle_CostofCareBrief_FINALdesign_July%202023.pdf

<https://www.washington.edu/financialaid/types-of-aid/child-care-assistance/application-process/>

<https://www.washington.edu/financialaid/types-of-aid/child-care-assistance/>,

https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/Affordability_Analysis_2024.pdf

<https://www.axios.com/local/seattle/2025/05/29/washington-state-child-care-costs>

Supporting Undocumented Students (Shoutout Josue and Valeria)

The ASUW supports full compliance with the Keep Washington Working Act and urges strong enforcement to ensure Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is not allowed on college campuses. We commend Governor Ferguson for signing Executive Order 24-09 to create an Immigration Sub Cabinet and strongly believe student representation across all public institutions is crucial to keep students informed on everchanging immigration policy. The ASUW supports giving undocumented students access to state financial aid and paid work

opportunities. ASUW urges the legislature to develop paid work opportunities, and to fulfill Washington's promise of guaranteeing education to students regardless of documentation status, we support the expansion of state financial aid opportunities and encourage the legislature to raise awareness of such programs enshrined into law through the Real Hope Act. ASUW supports universities establishing safe campuses for international, immigrant, and undocumented students, and data protections to prevent unlawful detainment and deportation of students, including data in discrimination or malpractice complaints submitted to the university.

<https://lawfilesexternal.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2013-14/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/Senate/6523%20SBR%20FBR%2014.pdf>

<https://governor.wa.gov/news/2025/governor-ferguson-signs-executive-order-reaffirming-washingtons-commitment-protecting-immigrant>

<https://lawfilesexternal.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2025-26/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/Senate/5115%20SBA%20HEWD%2025.pdf?q=20251013113005>

Supporting Financial Literacy Education Initiatives (Ashwin)

The ASUW supports expanding financial education and literacy resources across Washington's public institutions to ensure every student graduates with the knowledge to make informed financial decisions. We commend Senate Bill 5080 sponsored by Sen. Javier Valdez and supported by State Treasurer Mike Pellicciotti, which made financial education a statewide graduation requirement. We urge the Legislature to require more comprehensive, culturally responsive financial literacy curriculum spanning budgeting, credit management, student loans, taxes, and long-term investing, beginning at the K–12 level and extending through public colleges and universities. The ASUW supports partnerships between the Washington Student Achievement Council, State Treasurer's Financial Education Public-Private Partnership, and campus-based programs to develop standardized yet flexible educational modules. We further advocate for funding to provide financial literacy workshops, digital learning tools, and peer-mentorship programs, with a specific focus on underserved, first-generation, and undocumented student populations. Strengthening statewide financial education aligns with Washington's commitment to economic equity and student success by preparing all residents to navigate financial responsibilities with confidence, amid growing personal finance concerns nationwide.

<https://ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/resources-subject-area/financial-education>

<https://tre.wa.gov/policy-and-education/treasury-legislation/financial-education>

<https://lawfilesexternal.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2025-26/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/Senate/5080%20SBR%20EDU%20TA%2025.pdf>

<https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2023-08/fek-12learningstandardsoct2016.pdf>

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.300.460>

[https://uwnetid-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/personal/asuwssvc_uw_edu/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7BFE3F7DAE-09A1-4E5F-BCCE-2F390EFB6B36%7D&file=Board%20Bill%205.12%20\(R-31-6\)%20A%20Resolution%20for%20the%20Establishment%20of%20a%20Mandated%20Financial%20Literacy%20Training%20Course.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true](https://uwnetid-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/personal/asuwssvc_uw_edu/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7BFE3F7DAE-09A1-4E5F-BCCE-2F390EFB6B36%7D&file=Board%20Bill%205.12%20(R-31-6)%20A%20Resolution%20for%20the%20Establishment%20of%20a%20Mandated%20Financial%20Literacy%20Training%20Course.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true)

Section 4: Technology and Sustainability

Campus Decarbonization (Shoutout Institutional Climate Action)

ASUW recognizes the global climate crisis and UW's role in the top three most emitting state agencies. The ASUW supports policies that help fund the University of Washington's energy renewal plan to decarbonize the power plant by 2040 or sooner, including allocating funds from the Climate Commitment Act. The ASUW supports allocating \$47.5 million from the capital budget toward electric boilers and the conversion of steam to hot water loop systems. The ASUW recognizes that Washington is facing budget challenges. However, the ASUW does not support reappropriating Climate Commitment Act funding away from emissions reduction projects in order to fund other needs like filling shortfalls in the capital budget. The ASUW urges the legislature to continue taking meaningful action toward decarbonization across Washington, preserving habitats and protecting species impacted by the climate crisis, including whales, salmon, and orcas. Multiple student initiatives, including Fossil Free UW, and WASHPIRG's Save the Orcas campaign, advocate for these efforts.

Artificial Intelligence Property and Privacy Rights

The ASUW recognizes that RCW 63.60.010 protects individuals' property rights in their name, voice, signature, photograph, or likeness, but does not explicitly address AI-generated images, deepfakes, or digital impersonation, leaving Washingtonians vulnerable to identity exploitation. Generative AI tools can produce deep-fake videos and images, synthetic voice recordings, and social media impersonation content, posing significant risks of misinformation, and identity theft. While HB 1205 (2025) amended RCW 9A.60.010 and 9A.60.045 to criminalize distribution of forged digital likenesses, it provides limited civil remedies. The ASUW urges the legislature to update RCW 63.60.010 to explicitly include "AI-generated images," "deepfakes," and "digital impersonation" as protected elements of a person's likeness. This update would create a clear civil cause of action allowing individuals to seek damages for unauthorized use, modernizing the statute to reflect current technology and proactively protect Washington residents, especially students in K-12 and higher education who frequently use digital platforms. Furthermore, ASUW supports protections prohibiting practices of scrapping online student data, including but not limited to student-made art, social media posts, coursework, and FERPA

protected information, to train Large Language Models (LLMs) or Generative AI models hosted by third party companies like OpenAI, Microsoft, Meta, and Google.

<https://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2025-26/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/House/1205-S%20HBR%20FBR%2025.pdf?q=20250915073848>

<https://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2023-24/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/Senate/5152-S.E%20SBR%20FBR%2023.pdf?q=20250915075601>

<https://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2025-26/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/House/5105-S.E%20HBR%20CS%2025.pdf?q=20251013080953>

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/jun/27/deepfakes-denmark-copyright-law-artificial-intelligence>

Position Statements:

Native Student Tuition Waivers: The ASUW supports full tuition waivers and increased scholarship opportunities for Native students as a step toward addressing the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization. ASUW believes public institutions have a responsibility to remove financial barriers and expand access to higher education for Native communities through increased institutional support.

Public Transportation: The ASUW supports policies that make public transportation more affordable, accessible, and sustainable for the student population. This includes expanding evening transit schedules and developing larger fleets to better support student commuters.

Data Privacy: The ASUW supports strong student data privacy policies that limit data collection, give students control over their information, and require transparency from institutions about data use. We are concerned about contracts like the UW Libraries contract with LexisNexis, a company known to share data with ICE and DHS and call for greater protections to prevent student data from being accessed by law enforcement or immigration agencies.

Asynchronous work opportunities: The ASUW supports policies that require asynchronous work opportunities and lecture slides to be made available to students experiencing medical or family emergencies, as well as for those participating in civic activities such as jury duty or testifying. These accommodations help remove barriers to academic success and support students being civically engaged.

Shared Governance and Civic Engagement: The ASUW supports policies that protect civic engagement and student participation in peaceful protest, and opposes RCW 28B.10.281, which uses vague language that disproportionately harms students who rely on financial aid by putting their aid at risk. The ASUW supports striking or clarifying the statute to uphold due process and equity. The ASUW commends the Lieutenant Governor and the UW Evans School for the Project for Civic Health Initiative, which promotes political dialogue and respectful discourse.