

Legislative Update January 9, 2015

The regular session of the Washington State Legislature commences on January 12 and is scheduled to end on April 26. We have posted a schedule for legislative committee meetings of interest [online](#).

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) has been invited to present before the House Higher Education Committee on January 13 at 8:00 a.m. The Council will discuss the [Strategic Action Plan](#), which outlines funding and policy recommendations to help meet the state's educational attainment goals. The Strategic Action Plan will be introduced to the Senate Higher Education Committee on January 20 at 1:30 p.m. Note that the committee hearing schedules related to WSAC issues are available [online](#).

Governor Proposes 2015-17 Budget

The development of the 2015-17 biennial budget began with the release of Governor Inslee's budget proposal on December 18. The Governor's "Book 2" budget proposes raising revenue to help fund education.

The [Governor's education budget proposal](#) allocates \$25.5 million to maintain commitments to College Bound Scholarship students and calls for a zero percent tuition increase for in-state, undergraduates at public institutions of higher education, \$9 million to increase low-income student participation in College in the High School, \$10 million for Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training and Adult Basic Education at community and technical colleges, \$100 million for the Opportunity Scholarship to support 12,000 more students committed to earning bachelor's degrees in STEM and health care fields, among other proposals.

Legislative Work Sessions – Synopsis

Note that more information on the work sessions listed below can be found on the Washington State Legislature's [Electronic Bill Book](#) (under Committee meeting materials). Many hearings are also available at [TVW.org](#)

Senate Higher Education Committee

Work Session: Student Debt

Date: November 20

Dustin Weeden of the National Conference of State Legislatures provided an overview of student loan debt. The total, outstanding student debt has gone beyond \$1.3 trillion nationally, driven mainly by an increased number of borrowers (although the average debt load has also increased since 2004). More students are borrowing regardless of income, and borrowing varies greatly depending on the type of institution attended. Student debt is now about 9 percent of household debt, compared to 3 percent of household debt in 2004.

Rachelle Sharpe, WSAC Senior Director of Student Financial Assistance and Support Services, presented with UW Professor Jim Fridley on the Affordability Framework. WSAC collaborated with Dr Fridley to develop this interactive model. The model should improve understanding of the impact of various funding, tuition, and financial aid policies.

WSAC Council member and Executive Director of the Council of Presidents, Paul Francis, presented the state four-year institution perspective. Paul noted that Washington has traditionally ranked low in terms of student debt load. He outlined a variety of institutional activities that help students understand debt including counseling, developing financial literacy skills, and web-based resources.

WSAC Council member Rai Nauman Mumtaz and President of the Washington Student Association also provided student perspectives for Committee members.

Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee

Work Session: K-12 outcomes and trends, education system health indicators; Initiative 1351, and the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver impacts

Date: November 21

Ben Rarick, the Executive Director of the State Board of Education, presented K-12 indicators showing many areas in which Washington is not bridging the poverty gap nor reversing weak student performance. Failure to prepare students in early years creates gaps that progressively worsen over time.

House Labor and Workforce Development Committee

Work Session: Workforce Training

Date: December 4

Staff representing the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board share their report, "2014 Workforce Training Results." The report outlines the employment and earnings outcomes for the state's workforce programs, which include workforce programs at community and technical colleges, private career school programs and apprenticeships.

House Higher Education Committee

Work Session: Higher Education Priorities

Date: December 5

Dr. Gene Sharratt, WSAC Executive Director, presented the 2014 Strategic Action Plan, noting that implementation will be necessary to achieve the state's higher education goals. Paul Francis, Executive Director of the COP, joined liaisons from public baccalaureate institutions to present their priorities for the 2015 legislative session. Nick Lutes, Operating Budget Direction for the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and Dr Ed Brewster, President for Grays Harbor College, presented on behalf of the community and technical college system. John Paul Johnson presented for the Divers institute of Technology, and Tom Fitzsimons for the Independent Colleges of Washington. During the meeting Representative Seaquist was honored by colleagues for his four years serving as Chair of the committee.

College Bound Scholarship Workgroup**Work Session:** College Bound Scholarship Draft Recommendations**Date:** December 15

The workgroup's [draft recommendations](#) touch upon student support, data, funding, communications, and statutory changes, among others.

2015 Session Resources

To find presentation and meeting agendas, go the Committee Meeting Documents at the [Washington State Legislature website](#). Select: 1) House or Senate, 2) Year, and 3) Committee – see screenshot below.

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Agenda (38k)

Work Session

Higher Education Institution Priorities.