

# State Legislative Update: Higher Education

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WSU Faculty Representative to the State Legislature

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

- Dr. Bidisha Biswas (Political Science), WWU
- Dr. Steve Bollens (Environment & Biology), WSU
- Dr. Bernadette Jungblut (Political Science), CWU
- Mr. Sam Ligon (English), EWU
- Dr. Jake Vigdor (Public Affairs), UW
- Dr. Sandra Yannone (Creative Writing), TESC



# 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)



# Odd-Year vs Even-Year Legislative Sessions

- ▶ 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)
- ▶ Even numbered years (e.g., 2024) 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)



# 2023 WSU Legislative Priority

- Increasing faculty/staff compensation.
  - The university's request to the governor in late summer 2022 was for a 4% increase for 2023-24 and a 3% increase for 2024-25.
  - The governor's budget, released in December 2022, was identical to this.
  - Fiscal matters will be taken up publicly by the legislature in the next few weeks, culminating in passage of a biennial budget in late April 2023.

# 2023 COF Legislative Priorities

➤ Increasing faculty/staff compensation

➤ Emerging “policy” bills

- **HB 1156/SB 5711** – “Extending the terms of eligibility for the Washington college grant program” (passed higher education committees, fiscal committees and rules committees, and will be voted on by full chambers next week)
- **HB 1399** – “Establishing a Native American scholarship program” (passed House higher education committee; died in Appropriations)
- **SB 5593** – “Improving equity in the transfer of student data between K-12 schools and institutions of higher education” (passed Senate higher education committee, fiscal committee and rules committee, and will be voted on by full Senate next week)
- **HB 1142** – “Increasing tenure-track faculty at the public baccalaureate institutions” (passed higher education committee; died in Appropriations)



# The Legislature's 2023 Legislative Priorities

- Housing
- Behavioral Health
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
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- Higher Education
  - Access > Affordability > Quality



# Budget News (and Prospects) out of Olympia

- The next state revenue forecast is due March 20, 2023, and will be critical to the fate of most policy and all budget bills.
- Reminder: Governor's proposed 2023-25 biennial budget (released in December, 2022) included increased spending in many areas (\$70B, an 11.9% increase overall), including an increase in faculty/staff compensation of 4.0% in 2023-24 and 3.0% in 2024-25.
- A lingering, unresolved issue is the dreaded “funds split” for higher education – that is, what percentage of compensation increases will be funded by the state (governor's proposal is 66%) vs. tuition/other sources (proposed 34%).
- The House and Senate draft budgets are due to be released in the coming weeks, and then they will need to be reconciled with each other, and with the governor's budget, by the end of the legislative session in mid-April.



# 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
- Legislative bill tracking (<https://app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/>)
- Feel free to email ([sbollens@wsu.edu](mailto:sbollens@wsu.edu)) or call me (360-608-6893) anytime



**Thank You!**  
**Questions?**