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TO: Faculty Senate
FROM: Bret Smith, Faculty Legislative Representative
DATE: May1, 2019
RE: Faculty Legislative Representative update

Dear colleagues,

There was a crescendo of activity toward the end of the regular session, culminating in some late nights on the floor. However, the legislature completed its work and adjourned Sine Die on schedule Sunday, April 28.

Operating Budget

The operating budget ([ESHB 1109](#)) worked its way through conference committees, and from what I've heard and read, is relatively positive for higher education and CWU. A useful preliminary summary is [here](#). It includes funding for the Game On! program (\$442,000), various adjustments for bargained contracts and benefits as well as non-bargained employees, and "compensation and central services support" (\$1,819,000) targeted to limit the strain on tuition dollars.

The biggest news is the passage of [ESHB 2158](#), creating a "workforce education investment" fund through increases in the state B & O tax on certain businesses. This bill was a bit of a surprise, and faced healthy debate as one might expect. The intent is to create a recession-proof revenue stream for higher education. From what I can tell, CWU will get funding from this source for the comp/central services mentioned above, increasing education program enrollments, and providing mental health counseling. In the broader perspective, here's what the press release says:

The Workforce Education Investment Act (WEIA), HB 2158, invests nearly \$375 million in higher education in Washington, with a focus on programs in high-demand fields. It increases foundational support for four-year institutions and effectively doubles it for the state's 34 career and technical colleges. It also establishes the Washington College Grant Program – a statewide, guaranteed free college program for lower-income students – as well as a Career Connected Learning work group to connect young people to high-quality, family-wage paying jobs. The act

creates a student loan debt refinancing program, gives students greater access to child care benefits, expands a tuition waiver for veterans and National Guard members, and gold star families, and allows local governments and Indian tribes to seek state matching funds for students under the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship.

Capital budget

On this front, it appears CWU will be in line for \$5 million in funding for health education (with \$55 million in future biennia), \$32 million for nutrition science (plus a “reappropriation” of \$21.5 million), and about \$10 million for various minor works and maintenance needs. It’s a little confusing to me how these projects are described, but I believe this completes the Health Sciences Phase II construction and Nicholson renovation. These were CWU’s top priorities.

Specific bills

For access, visit leg.wa.gov, click Bill Information on the left, and type in the bill number (i.e., 1079) or click the links below.

A handy preliminary list of higher-education-related bills is [here](#). Some highlights:

[E2SHB 1311](#): Extends College Bound Scholarship pledge to ninth-graders, and expands eligibility for state need grants for CBS students.

[2SHB1668](#): Establishes the Washington Health Corps, with loan repayment assistance for health care professionals in underserved areas.

[HB 1688](#): Resident student status for veterans.

[SHB 1734](#): Requires accreditation for College in the High School programs.

[2SHB 1973](#): Provides scholarships and textbook vouchers to low-income students enrolled in Running Start and College in the High School.

[SSB5166](#): Amends the requirements for accommodations for religious observances to allow for more than two days of absences, requires institutions to publish the policies and reference them in syllabi, and notify students of grievance procedures.

[ESSB 5410](#): Requires granting as many credits as possible for scores on International Baccalaureate of 4 or higher, and scores of E(e) on Cambridge International exams.

[SB 5786](#): Removes institutions of higher education from the state agencies required to align with policies regarding release of information for research purposes (bringing state practice in line with FERPA and Institutional Review Boards).

There were a few bills that we were watching that didn't make it. [HB 1079](#) (on adding a faculty member to the board of regents at the research universities) and [HB 1755](#) (on authorizing regional comprehensive universities to offer the Ed.D) might come back next year.

Another surprise was the late action on [Initiative 1000](#), which “amends the provision of law that prohibits the state from discriminating against or granting preferential treatment to an individual or group based on certain characteristics in public employment, public education, and public contracting.” From the initiative text, this is accomplished by “restoring affirmative action into state law without the use of quotas or preferential treatment.” This was approved by both chambers on the last day of session by relatively narrow margins.

The Big Picture

As I've reported, the Council of Faculty will continue to research and promote attention to the status of the State Work-Study program as well as the idea of a statewide consortium for accessing digital scholarship. We'll be working locally in the interim, and scheduling our retreat for October to gear up for next session. It's hard to think about January here in early May, but a lot of things get done in the fall and we'd like to be proactive.

Once again, don't hesitate to call (1548) or email (Bret.Smith@cwu.edu) with questions or comments. It's an honor to represent you.

Bret