



2005 Legislative Session Update

WEEK 5: 02.07 – 02.13

WEEK 5 SUMMARY

On Monday, the House Capital Budget Committee received a briefing from the Council of Presidents (the association of all four-year university presidents) on the Higher Education Capital Budget Request. The capital budget, which is written separately from the state operating budget, provides the money that state agencies (like public universities) use to build, maintain, and repair buildings and facilities. The UW's capital budget request of \$186 million – including money for renovation of Savery, Clark, Guggenheim, and Architecture, as well as money to perform much-needed repairs and maintenance all over campus – is funded at less than 50% (\$92 million) under Governor Locke's proposed budget.

On Tuesday, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education Finance met to receive a briefing on how higher education is financed in Washington. The subcommittee, which was just formed this year, includes a number of key legislators from both sides of the aisle and is focused on determining a way to pay for the rising costs of higher education in our state. Representatives from all six schools were on hand to answer questions and the committee focused a great deal of discussion on tuition and general-fund support mechanisms.

The big events of the week came at the Thursday & Friday morning committee meetings of the House Higher Education and Senate Education committees respectively. Both committees held public hearings on the bill that would allow race, color, ethnicity, and national origin to be used as a factor in admissions. On Thursday, GPSS Vice President Carl See and Evans School graduate student Mark Philpart testified on behalf of GPSS and ASUW in support of the bill. On Friday, Precious Aure (ASUW Director of Diversity Efforts) and Enrique Gonzales (former ATN chair) also testified in support. Provost David Thorud, Assistant VP for Enrollment Tim Washburn, and Vice President for Minority Affairs Nancy (Rusty) Barcelo were on hand both days to testify in support of the bills on behalf of the administration.

Because these bills do not allow quotas, points, or set-asides to be used, but rather allow race and other factors to be taken into account as part of the individual holistic review of each applicant, ASUW has taken a position in support of this policy as we have done in the past several years when this issue has come up in the legislature.

On Friday afternoon, the House Higher Education Committee held a work session & public hearing on the HEC Board's proposed revisions to the minimum entrance requirements to Washington's four-year universities. Jamie Corning testified on behalf of the ASUW in support of the proposed changes.

Also on Friday afternoon, the Education Finance subcommittee met again to consider a proposal by Rep. Bill Fromhold that would create more than 20,000 new enrollment spots at our state institutions over the next four years. This proposal is in part designed to address the upcoming wave of graduating high school seniors in 2008, but also to address larger concerns that many legislators have about access to our public universities.

PREVIEW OF WEEK 6

Tuesday, February 15th is Higher Education day in Washington! Students from Eastern & Central Washington University will be here to meet with legislators, and alumni, faculty, staff, and students from all six institutions will be on hand for the legislative luncheon hosted by Governor Christine Gregoire. There is also a higher education reception at the Governor's mansion that evening.

The Washington Student Lobby will be meeting in person with Governor Gregoire on Wednesday afternoon to discuss our concerns about tuition and financial aid in this biennium and to encourage her to fund financial aid increases and keep tuition affordable in her request budget, which is due out in March.

The Branch Campus issue will also be back on the forefront as the House Higher Ed Committee will be holding a public hearing on Tuesday on HB 1794 which would allow both UW campuses to transition to four-year universities as they have requested.

Also, on Friday, the Education Finance subcommittee will meet to approve a final set of recommendations to the House Appropriations Committee.

ISSUE IN DEPTH: CAPITAL BUDGET

Last year, for the first time, all six public baccalaureate institutions came together to produce one master prioritized list of capital projects on all campuses. After dropping some of the lower-priority items, the list was submitted to the governor and the legislature with the recommendation that the four-year institutions receive \$586.7 million out of the original \$720 million requested. However, Governor Locke's budget did not fully fund the request – in fact, several important priorities were left off or underfunded.

Of the \$186 million requested by the University of Washington from state funds, only \$92 million was budgeted. This includes \$6 million (out of an original request of \$42 million) for important preservation and maintenance projects and includes just \$400,000 for the original \$9 million requested to perform needed renovation of Savery and Clark Halls. The proposed UW Bothell Off-Ramp, UW Tacoma's Assembly Hall, and nearly \$20 million in Computing & Communication upgrades were not funded at all.

We will be working with the administration and with members of the Capital Budget Committee to provide greater capital budget funding to the University of Washington to ensure that our facilities can meet the needs of students.