An overview will be provided for the Supplemental 2022-2023 Operating Budget Request by:

- Brent Carbajal, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Joyce Lopes, Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs
- Faye Gallant, Executive Director, Budget and Financial Planning
Purpose of Submittal:

Board approval is required for Western's 2022-2023 Supplemental Operating Budget Request for submission to the Governor's Office of Financial Management.

Proposed Motion:

MOVED, that the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University, upon the recommendation of the President, approve the 2022-2023 Supplemental Operating Budget Request of $7,936,662. With concurrence of the Board Chair, the President may make adjustments to the approved budget request in response to subsequent instructions from the Office of Financial Management, to advance consistency among the submissions of Washington's six public baccalaureate institutions, or other adjustments as appropriate.

Supporting Information:

Attached
TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: President Sabah Randhawa by:
Brent Carbajal, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Joyce Lopes, Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs
Faye Gallant, Executive Director, Budget and Financial Planning

DATE: August 20, 2021

SUBJECT: Supporting Information for Board Approval of the 2022-2023 Supplemental Operating Budget Request

Overview
The proposals pending approval by the Board of Trustees to be submitted to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) for the 2022-2023 Supplemental Operating request are:

1. Student Success
2. Addressing Nursing Workforce Needs
3. Tenure Track Faculty Initiative
4. Compensation
5. Legal Services

Additionally, Western plans to request support for the Washington State University (WSU) proposal to fund historic salary increases for Everett contract employees, which would pass funding through the existing contract to Western.

Proposal #1 – Student Success
WWU requests funding in the supplemental budget to address critical staffing and programmatic needs aimed at ensuring underrepresented students receive the same opportunities for academic success as their peers. This request would address the most urgently needed student support services on WWU’s Bellingham campus, as well as on Western on the Peninsulas campuses, that serve the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas. This reflects the highest-need elements of WWU’s 2021-2023 and 2020 supplemental budget requests that were not funded in previous budget cycles, specifically in the areas of outreach and recruitment, financial aid support, and veterans services.

As WWU strives to return to pre-pandemic operations, the University is more committed than ever to advancing inclusive success and addressing barriers to access and completion, particularly among underserved students across Washington. Western also remains strongly committed to helping the state meet the 2030 degree attainment goal of a postsecondary credential for at least 70 percent of Washington residents. Over the next few years, WWU will be strategically focused on recovering from declines in student enrollment as a result of the pandemic, particularly among first generation and low-income Washington students, as well as
refocusing on student retention and success initiatives and helping students get back on track to academic success following pandemic-related disruptions.

WWU is requesting state funding in the 2022 Supplemental Operating Budget to address the most urgently needed staffing and programmatic items to support current and prospective students on Western’s Bellingham and Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas locations.

In the 2020 Supplemental Budget, WWU requested state funding to expand access to Western on the Peninsulas undergraduate degree programs that are located on the campuses of Olympic College-Bremerton, Olympic College-Poulsbo and Peninsula College in Port Angeles. The scope of the 2020 Supplemental request was to secure state funding in order to align tuition rates for these programs with other WWU baccalaureate degree programs offered in Bellingham and Everett, as well as to hire support staff to be located at WWU’s locations on the Peninsulas to serve as front-line support for current and prospective students in these locations. Ultimately, the Legislature funded the tuition reduction portion of this request but did not provide funding for WWU to address staffing needs at its Peninsulas locations.

In the 2021-2023 Biennial Budget, WWU requested state funding for student support services aimed at supporting all students, especially historically underserved student populations, in the areas of outreach and recruitment, mental health counseling, financial aid support, veterans and disability services, and multicultural student support. In the final 2021-23 biennial budget, WWU received approximately $521,000 per year to address these staffing needs. While this funding will support important investments in student support at Western, a significant need still remains to address outreach, retention and success initiatives that are critical to addressing barriers for underserved students in the state.

This 2022 Supplemental Budget request is aimed at addressing the most critically needed portions of these previous requests that were not funded in previous budget cycles, as well as more recently identified staffing and programmatic needs focused on helping current and future students get back on track after the pandemic.

The cost to address these needs is $1,968,662. This amount includes new FTE for a mental health counselor, sexual violence survivor support services, veterans support, underrepresented and multicultural student services program developer, retention counselor, former foster youth and homeless youth program manager, academic/career advisor, enrollment and retention data analyst, application development, financial aid counselor, financial literacy counselor, financial aid IT data analyst, admissions and financial aid IT data specialist, Western on the Peninsula (WotP) academic administrator, WotP program coordinator, WotP recruitment and student success specialists, and WotP curriculum specialists. Additionally, it includes operational funding for inclusive commencement, financial aid resources in non-English languages, Western Success Scholars, and Multicultural Student Services.

**Proposal #2 – Addressing Nursing Workforce Needs**

WWU requests state funding to address critical regional needs in the nursing workforce. Specifically, Western is seeking state funding to align tuition rates for WWU’s existing Bachelor of Science in Nursing (an RN-to-BSN program) with other state-supported undergraduate degree programs at Western and to establish a new Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree program, with tracks focused on population health, nursing administration, and nursing education. The aim of this request is to improve affordability and expand access to WWU’s current RN-to-BSN program by making it more affordable to prospective nursing students while simultaneously addressing an acute workforce need for more nursing educators and nursing
professionals who are equipped to care for medically complex public health needs, particularly in underserved communities, as a means of achieving health equity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically exposed the frailty of our health care and public health systems and has widened health inequities, particularly for low-income and marginalized communities. In the recently released landmark report, “The Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity”, the National Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) called for a concerted, collaborative effort among nursing stakeholders to address these growing health inequities by adapting to the changing health needs of the nation’s populations. The pandemic has highlighted the need for significant structural and systemic work, including strengthening nursing education. This situation confirms the value of WWU’s current RN-to-BSN nursing program and points to the critical need for higher education for nurses via specialty certification and graduate degrees.

WWU has offered an RN-to-BSN degree program since 2013. This nationally accredited program accepts students who have earned their Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) from community and technical colleges, and enables their completion of a Bachelors of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree. Research shows that a more highly educated nursing workforce is worth the investment in terms of health outcomes. For example, evidence demonstrates that over time, hospitals who employ more BSN-educated nurses have reduced patient death rates and cases of “failure to rescue” - i.e., failure to recognize when a patient’s health status quickly deteriorates and needs emergency clinical care. A BSN degree also opens pathways to higher education and attainment of advanced practice degrees. With approximately 30 students per year, WWU’s program has now graduated over 200 nurses who are solidly grounded in social justice, health policy, leadership, and community/public health nursing. Many of these nurses have expanded their practice roles and made significant contributions to the health of people across the state as nurse administrators, nurse educators, and advanced practice nurses.

Despite these successes, the impact of the program has been hampered by its cost. While programs funded by student tuition alone can address a critical workforce need, they are significantly more expensive for students than state-funded programs, which are offered more affordably through the combination of state-funding and tuition revenue. The current tuition-funded rates for WWU’s RN-to-BSN program create significant barriers to access for many prospective nursing students, particularly for those who are low-income, first-generation, and people of color. From a multi-year review of advising, we estimate that approximately 10 students per year choose not to join the program due to the high cost of tuition. For low-income students, the cost difference is even more of a barrier, as income-based financial aid programs like the Washington College Grant only cover tuition costs for state-funded programs. This fact forces low-income students attending tuition-funded programs to take out more student loans to cover the cost of their degree. Having already incurred student debt in their ADN program, our tuition rates can be the determining factor in a decision not to enroll.

Transitioning the existing program to state-support tuition and creating a Master of Science in Nursing program will cost $474,000 on a recurring basis, with an additional $100,000 in one-time startup costs.
Proposal #3 – Tenure Track Faculty Initiative

WWU requests funding to create new tenure-track faculty positions to improve student retention and success for current and future WWU students. Years of research has shown that increasing access to tenure-line faculty can very positively impact student success, especially low-income students, students of color, and first-generation students. This initiative will increase student access to faculty with the expertise, time, and resources to provide students with the advising and mentoring they need. The initiative will also build on WWU’s current Faculty Diversity Hiring Initiative by targeting additional resources toward hiring faculty from underrepresented groups.

This initiative is part of Western’s commitment to the State’s goal of 70% of Washington adults having a post-secondary credential by 2030. Retention and graduation are crucial to this goal and student retention and graduation are significantly improved and enhanced when more tenure-track faculty can be hired. Extensive research has shown that access to faculty with appropriate training, expertise, time, resources, and institutional commitment increases student engagement, persistence, and graduation. This is particularly true for first-year students and students from underserved backgrounds. Faculty are a student’s primary connection to the university, and meaningful connections between students and faculty present one of the best opportunities for students to feel welcome and part of the campus community. Faculty with appropriate time and resources are also best positioned to identify at-risk students who may need additional supports such as tutoring, advising, financial support, or mental health counseling.

WWU is seeking $2,000,000 in FY23 to create approximately 20 new tenure-track faculty positions (dependent on discipline) as part of the University’s ongoing and multifaceted efforts to advance inclusive student success.

Proposal #4 – Compensation

Recruiting and retaining a skilled and dedicated workforce is essential to delivering on Western’s commitments to excellence. The state’s approach to compensation in the biennial budget included partial funding for one pay increase per employee group over the three-year period of FY21, FY22 and FY23. This request would include funding for a general wage increase in FY23 for all employee types.

The total cost of an FY23 3% general wage increase for faculty and professional staff employees is $3,153,000. The cost for classified staff, in addition to this figure, will depend on bargaining. The state practice has been to partially fund any general wage increase for institutions of higher education, relying on increased tuition revenue to fund the remainder. Given the sector-wide impacts to enrollment and tuition revenues due to COVID-19, Western is identifying the full cost of the increase in our supplemental request for consideration.

Proposal #5 – Legal Services

An additional Assistant Attorney General (AAG) position is requested to meet the expanding workload demands arising from campus growth and development, as well as an increase in complex legal issues requiring more attorney time and resources. By its nature, higher education law has become increasingly complicated. The legal risks for not complying with federal laws and regulations concerning areas such as campus sexual assault issues (Title IX), privacy issues relating to student health records, data privacy and contracting, and public records, as well as novel, but frequently emerging challenges related to COVID-19 pandemic, have significantly increased WWU’s need for timely and thorough legal advice. In the past 20 years, there has been a slight increase in legal services or resources dedicated to WWU. This
increase is inadequate considering the significant increases in both state and federal legal and regulatory obligations, and significant student and employee growth at WWU. Currently, only 1.5 AAG FTE is funded to advise the entire institution. With the size of the institution, 1.5 AAG FTE are spread too thin to proactively manage liability risk and respond to emergency legal issues.

Increasing AAG capacity to meet existing workload would require $241,000 per year, for an Assistant Attorney General (1.0 FTE) and Legal Assistant (0.5 FTE).

**Washington State University Proposal – Everett Salaries Support**

WWU has developed and will indicate our support for a WSU request to cover salary increases related to the Everett contract. Because of the original funding mechanism for this program, WWU Everett employees have not been included in the state’s compensation increase calculations, creating an operating gap for that program. Funds will be requested to cover WWU Everett employee salary increases from 2014 to present not funded by state (via WSU contract), as well as FY23 increases mirroring those requested above.

With the transferal of WWU programs from Everett Community College to the Everett University Center in July 2014, a contracted amount was determined for the delivery of the existing degree programs at the center location. The contracted amount was based on program enrollment targets and amounted to $1,134,126. The programs and the contracted amount remain the same today despite a 14% total increase in Washington State Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) over the last seven years. The request includes both one-time funding to address the accrued impact to date, and recurring funding to bring funding levels in line with current costs.