

**WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
ITEM SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: President Sabah Randhawa on behalf of Provost Brent Carbajal

DATE: February 12, 2021

SUBJECT: **Human Services Self-Sustaining Degree Program Rate Reduction**

PURPOSE: Action Item

Purpose of Submittal:

To obtain approval from the Board to reduce the Human Services degree program self-sustaining tuition and fee rate (\$327/credit) to the Academic Year Self-Sustaining rate (\$272/credit).

Proposed Motion:

MOVED, that the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University, upon recommendation of the President, approve the Human Services self-sustaining rates as proposed.

Points to Consider:

- The Human Services online degree program primarily serves students on the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas. In 2020, undergraduate degree programs on the peninsulas received 886K in state-funding to allow most of Western's undergraduate degree programs on the peninsulas to be offered at state tuition rates. However, the funding was not sufficient to permit a reduction in Human Services tuition to state rates.
- Decreasing the self-sustaining degree program rate to the Academic Year Self-Sustaining (AYSS) rate supports Western's commitment to students in the region by reducing the gap in cost between the state-supported location-based programs in Bellingham and Everett and the self-sustaining Distance Learning program.
- As a mature distance learning program that shares some operational efficiencies with the state-supported majors in Bellingham and Everett, it is possible to reduce to use the AYSS rate (\$272/credit) and maintain the program's ability to be self-sustaining.

Supporting Information:

The AY20-21 self-sustaining degree program tuition and fee rates are \$327/credit. The AY20-21 self-sustaining course rate is \$272/credit. The proposal is to reduce the per credit rate to the Academic Year Self-Sustaining course rate in the Human Services program.

2020-2021 Extension/Self Supporting Programs Tuition & Fees			
Classification	Tuition (per CR)	Fees (per CR)	Total (per CR)
Undergraduate	\$315	\$12	\$327
AYSS Courses- Academic Year Self- Sustaining Undergraduate	\$272		\$272

Introduction

The Human Services distance learning program is a 75-credit upper division major that is designed specifically to serve place-bound students. It has traditionally focused on the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas and offered fully online for over 20 years. The program serves a critical need in the State of Washington by educating bachelor-prepared professionals to work in non-profit and government

agencies providing essential services to the most vulnerable children, families, schools, and communities in remote parts of the State.

Summary

With the move of all other undergraduate peninsula programs to state-funding in 2020, the Human Services major has become an outlier in terms of WWU program costs in the region. Moreover, the Human Services major is offered on the Everett and Bellingham campuses at state-supported rates. This results in distance learning students on the Peninsulas paying a premium for an equivalent program. The difference in cost between the 75-credit state-supported program in Bellingham and the distance learning program on the peninsulas is approximately \$10,000. While the pursuit of state-funding for the Human Services Distance Learning program remains a strategic priority for Western, this proposal seeks to address the outstanding cost-differential to the extent possible while maintaining consistency with other self-sustaining fee rates and ensuring the fiscal sustainability of the program.

Why is a Rate Decrease Needed?

Students in the DL program represent diverse racial, ethnic, age, geographic, gender, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Currently, 65.9% percent of the enrolled students reside on the Olympic Peninsula. Students representing non-White race and ethnicity in the DL program has consistently been higher than WWU as a whole, with percentage of students of color ranging from a low of 26% to a high of 50% over the past 5 years, and just under 30% for the 10-year period between Fall of 2010 and Fall of 2020. Additionally, the majority of the students are geographically located in communities experiencing higher rates of poverty than the State average, and are pursuing a career that - while critical for community health – has an annual mean wage of \$40,910 in Washington State ([U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), 2019).

At present, the human services distance learning program receives no state-supported funding. State-supported students in Bellingham pay \$2,836 for 15 credits, while distance students pay \$4,905 for 15 credits (\neq \$2,069). The curriculum and classes are the same; the Human Service faculty are the same, and in elective classes, distance learning students can be in the same sections as students in the state-supported majors. In other words, lower-income, geographically place-based students on the peninsulas with a higher than average percentage being from under-represented demographic backgrounds are paying substantially more than students in the Everett and Bellingham locations. The proposed rate reduction represents Western's desire to improve cost-equity for students on the peninsulas whilst ensuring the program remains able to sustain itself from the program tuition dollars.

The Implementation Plan

The AYSS rate would retroactively apply to Winter Quarter and be established as the baseline rate for future quarters. The rate would be identified as a self-sustaining line item for ongoing approval by the Board of Trustees. The decision to refund a portion of Winter Quarter 2021 tuition and fees is designed to reduce the impact of campus disruption from COVID-19 on students.

Proposed Rate Decrease:

- The proposed tuition and fee decrease is from \$327/credit to the AYSS rate of \$272/credit, a \$55 per credit reduction.
- The AYSS rate will be consistent with the self-sustaining rates as reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees. Projected annual increase for the next year ranges from 2-3%.

Impact of the Rate Decrease

- The reduction would save students taking 75 credits in the major (15 credits/quarter) a total of \$4125, or \$825/quarter.
- Other tuition and fees are not affected by this reduction.