TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: President Sabah Randhawa on behalf of Becca Kenna-Schenk, Executive Director of Government Relations

DATE: December 11, 2020

SUBJECT: Legislative Update

PURPOSE: Information Item

Purpose of Submittal:
Update from WWU Office of Government Relations.

Supporting Information:

State Budget Outlook
The state’s quarterly revenue forecast adopted by the Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council on November 18th projects a $634 million increase in state revenues for the 2019-21 biennium and a $328 million increase for the 2021-23 biennium compared to the September 2020 forecast. Despite the improvement, state revenues are still projected to be more than $3.3 billion below the pre-pandemic projection for the two biennia. If the shortfall remains, state legislators will need to balance the state operating budget through use of reserves, spending cuts and/or increased revenue. Governor Inslee will release his proposed 2021-2023 operating budget in mid-December based on the November 18th forecast, which will kick-off the biennial budgeting process.

2021 Legislative Session
The 2021 legislative session is scheduled to begin on January 11th and end on April 25th. The legislative session will be conducted almost entirely virtually, with all committee meetings being held remotely and very limited in-person floor sessions in the House and Senate chambers.

Western’s 2021 legislative priorities will be focused on the state operating and capital budgets. For the operating budget, WWU’s top priority will be to protect the university’s current level of state funding and to prevent any cuts. Western is also partnering with the state’s other public four-year comprehensive universities on a joint proposal related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives aimed at improving the access and success of traditionally underserved students in postsecondary education. WWU’s portion of the proposal is derived from the “Advancing Inclusive Success” decision package that was submitted to the Governor’s Office this fall.

WWU’s top capital priority is a $51 million request for construction of the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Building. Other capital budget priorities include construction funding for the Coast Salish-style Longhouse, renovation and maintenance projects, and pre-design funding for a new Student Success Center and the renovation of the Environmental Science Center.

The WWU Office of Government Relations is working to advance these priorities by coordinating meetings between state legislators and President Randhawa and meeting with legislative and Governor’s Office staff.
Munro Seminar for Civic Education
The annual Ralph Munro Seminar for Civic Education was held online on October 27 and 28. The keynote of this year's seminars, "Institutional Stresses in an Era of Pandemic," featured Alasdair Roberts of UMass Amherst and Kyle Harper of the University of Oklahoma. The seminar also included panel discussions focused on specific aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic: "Who is in charge here? Federalism, Bureaucracy and Lessons on 'Managing' a Pandemic," and "The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Washington's LatinX Population."
2021-23 CAPITAL BUDGET PRIORITIES

Electrical Engineering/Computer Science Building
($51 million)

Western's electrical engineering and computer science programs are the University's fastest growing majors, but capacity constraints are significantly limiting the number of students WWU is able to accept into these programs each year. The 60,000 square foot EE/CS building will help graduate more majors with hands-on and applied experience to fill vacancies in these high demand fields. The increased capacity will support a 150% expansion in engineering and a 50% increase in computer science graduates per year, as well as shortening students' time to degree by alleviating current course bottlenecks. The EE/CS building will be designed as a hub for collaboration and connection with industry partners, with physical and cultural accessibility and inclusion in mind.

The EE/CS Building will include spaces that foster innovation, investigation, inspiration, and the exchange of ideas among an increasingly diverse population of students and faculty. WWU's Foundation is on-track to secure $15 million in private donations for the building to support and leverage the state's investment, including funding to ensure the EE/CS building is a net-zero carbon building.

Coast Salish-style Longhouse
($5 million)

In partnership and close collaboration with Coast Salish tribal nations and the WWU Native American Student Union, WWU seeks to build a traditional Coast Salish style longhouse in honor of the historic importance of place that it occupies and in acknowledgment of the University's responsibility to promote educational opportunities for Native students. The primary purpose of the Coast Salish-style Longhouse is to increase representation of Native students and enhance their recruitment, retention and graduation. The Coast Salish longhouse at Western will support American Indian/Alaska Native and First Nation students in academics by providing a sense of place through a dedicated space on the university campus for students to gather, build community and support each other.

The longhouse will include a gathering hall that will support educational, community, and cultural functions, a teaching/warming kitchen, student lounges and other support services. The outdoor spaces will include gathering areas, cooking space, and educational gardens with native plantings that may be used in teaching indigenous science, art, and medicine.

Minor Works - Preservation ($15 million)

This omnibus minor works category represents Western’s highest priority needs for facility renewal, health, safety and code compliance, and infrastructure renewal. A large number of these projects have been identified by the Physical Plant Backlog Reduction Plan.

2021-23 Classroom & Lab Upgrades ($9 million)

The 2021-23 Classroom and Lab Upgrades would renovate and repurpose approximately 56 individual classrooms and labs throughout campus, for a total of approximately 49,000 gross square feet (60% Classrooms and 40% Instructional labs). This project is part of an ongoing, multi-biennia program that will address significant and growing inconsistencies in the quality, capacity and utilization of college and departmental learning spaces at Western, as well as extend the useful life of these spaces by approximately 25 years.

Student Development and Success Center ($225,000 for pre-design)

WWU is requesting pre-design funding to create a consolidated space dedicated to front-line student support services. The current proposal is to build a 40,000 square foot building that will co-locate student advising, financial aid, counseling, and career development into one collaborative facility. Bringing these services together will facilitate an integrated approach to delivering student services and increase ease of access. The facility would provide active, welcoming student development space that will be used to coach and engage students to support their academic success and development of personal and civic responsibility.
Washington's comprehensive baccalaureate institutions are a critical access point for economic opportunity. As Washingtonians grapple with the economic challenges resulting from COVID-19, it is more important than ever to address issues of equity in higher education. CWU, EWU, Evergreen and WWU are working to ensure underrepresented students receive the same opportunities for academic success as their peers. Addressing barriers to access and completion among underrepresented students is a critical step toward reaching the Washington Roundtable's goal of 70% of Washington high school graduates earning a postsecondary credential by 2030.

**Evergreen: Native Student Success - $1.2 million**
- Enhances Evergreen's ability to recruit and retain Native students throughout the curriculum
- Increases outreach to rural and underserved areas throughout the state
- Formalizes our ongoing partnerships with Tribal Nations through the development of a Tribal relations plan

**CWU: Diverse Workforce Development - $2.58 million**
- Increase the number of graduating students of color
- Improve the college experience for students of color
- Recruit and retain more faculty of color
- Close the diversity gap between faculty and student body

**EWU: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative - $2.75 million**
- Accelerate efforts in becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).
- Target advising and community-based mentoring for dual credit eligible students from rural, low-income and traditionally underserved populations.
- Ensure student support through faculty and staff preparedness, education and development, and inclusive pedagogy.

**WWU: Advancing Inclusive Success - $3.4 million**
- Expands recruitment and outreach efforts to underserved Washington students.
- Addresses urgent needs in mental health counseling, sexual violence survivor support, multicultural student support, veterans' services and disability access.
- Creates an Ethnic Studies curriculum to ensure WWU students have a foundational understanding of power, privilege and social justice issues as they relate to race and ethnicity.