



2023-25 OPERATING BUDGET REQUEST

JANUARY 26, 2023

The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally changed higher education in Washington. Our 2023-25 operating budget request would turn the lessons learned during the pandemic into greater opportunities for social and economic mobility for the people, businesses, and communities of Washington.

Provide Fully Funded, Competitive Compensation (\$157 million)

Colleges are losing outstanding employees and job applicants to better paying K-12 schools, private employers, and other colleges and universities. Low pay has been an issue for a long time, but the consequences are more severe as we work to teach and serve students derailed during the pandemic. Faculty and staff are leaving to work in the very fields students hope to learn. A salary increase of 6.5% for each year of the biennium, for a total increase of 13%, would keep talent at our colleges. The 13% increase would be in addition to routine state general wage increases. We are requesting that any and all increases be fully funded so colleges are not forced to cut positions, instructional programs and student services to pay for the funding gap. For example, if colleges were required to fill a 17% gap in funding for wage increases, the impact to our colleges systemwide would be \$35 million over the biennium.

Advance Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (\$26 million)

Students of color have been profoundly affected by racial injustice, institutional barriers and the COVID-19 pandemic. Our colleges' ongoing, mission-driven work to advance equity, diversity and inclusion was strengthened by the Legislature in 2021 with the passage of Senate Bills 5194 and 5227. Additional investments would support further implementation of college EDI plans, close equity gaps, and improve the employment, earnings and economic mobility of students of color. In doing so, colleges would advance their work in creating a more equitable and prosperous Washington.

Support Workforce Development Programs (\$77 million)

Many industries in Washington — such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, transportation, and aerospace — were struggling to find skilled employees even before the pandemic. COVID-19 made skill gaps worse. However, colleges are having difficulty maintaining workforce programs because of the high cost of small class sizes, specialized equipment, consumable materials, and inflation. In many cases, these programs are the only pipeline into specialized fields. Investments would help keep workforce programs sustainable, modern and responsive to the needs of employers.

Expand Learning Technology (\$93 million)

Remote options hastened by the pandemic are now the new normal. Students, especially working adults, value the flexibility of learning in classrooms, online, or in a mix of the two. Unlike one-time emergency funding during the pandemic, this investment would support lasting progress in the digital evolution of higher education. Colleges would expand hybrid and online options, upgrade audio and visual equipment, equip students with laptops and hotspots, and train faculty and staff to support student success. Investments would also support back-end IT operations and protect students and colleges from cybersecurity threats. Remote options would stretch beyond the classroom to include services such as advising and financial aid.