

Olympia Update No. 14 • April 2, 2007  
Proposed 2007-2009 Operating Budget

## Three big issues for WSU in House-Senate negotiations

Negotiations are underway between House-Senate negotiators over the 2007-2009 biennial operating budget (House Bill 1128.) The Senate version passed 30-17 on Saturday. The House version passed 62-35 on March 26. There are dozens of differences between the two budgets. However, Washington State University is urging lawmakers to give a priority on three key issues before setting WSU's final budget:

- 1. WSU supports the House's position of providing all tuition revenues for distribution by the students' institution.** The Senate uses much of the tuition revenue for costs historically provided by the state general fund. The Senate budget drives more than \$10 million in tuition revenues normally distributed by the institution into faculty and staff compensation. WSU supports the historical funding model that was used in the House budget and the Governor's budget. The Senate shift takes needed revenues away from programs that receive new enrollments. This reduces funding per student and takes us away from the policy directions set by the governor and Washington Learns. The institution also desperately needs the tuition revenues next biennium to enhance and expand program offerings to avoid bottlenecks to students, fund student support services such as counseling and advising, fund inflation, to pay for students on waivers, to fund programs like "Cougar Commitment," to match donations for endowed faculty chairs, to cover unpredicted increases in operating costs, etc.
- 2. WSU supports the Senate's position of funding increased utility costs, and maintenance & operations costs for new academic buildings that were constructed to serve the interests of the state.** The Senate budget appropriates \$4.3 million in new state money to help with utility cost increases, including the costs associated with converting the Pullman power plant from coal to a more environmentally-friendly natural gas fuel. This funding was not provided by the House. WSU requires the Senate and Governor's funding levels maintenance and operation for the Life Sciences Building and the Vancouver Undergraduate Classroom Building. These were not contained in the House budget. It is also essential that the m&o funding is provided for the Mount Vernon research station as it has historically been provided for all research stations. This was not included in legislative budgets and was

under funded by the Governor. Federal and other funds for maintenance and operations have been subtracted before WSU submitted its budget cost estimates.

- 3. WSU supports the House funding level for the Unified Agriculture Initiative.** The House funds \$9.5 million of WSU's \$10.8 million research request on behalf of the industry, a very important investment for the state. The Senate provides just \$2.8 million for two competitive grant pools. Missing from the Senate appropriation is support for agricultural research stations that was funded by the governor. Most conspicuously missing are those WSU faculty positions sought by the agricultural organizations to make our state's largest industry globally-competitive. They include an enology and viticulture program leader for the state's wine industry, a new cherry breeder, a new food technologist position to develop new products for wheat and other grains, a new tree fruit breeder that could produce apple varieties for the Northwest, six faculty positions for dairy, beef, sheep and other livestock producers, a Mount Vernon-based hydrologist to work on water quality issues, a Puyallup-based urban and environmental horticulturalist, and two value-added agribusiness development positions. This request is the result of an unusual industry-based process that has truly unified dozens and dozens of agricultural constituencies. WSU internal reallocation plus this funding form a complete industry-inspired package that will allow us to do this vital work.

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