

Gregoire proposes historic higher education budget

A 2007-2009 biennial budget proposed today by Gov. Christine Gregoire would deliver Washington State University its best operating budget package in years and the most state construction funding in WSU history.

The operating budget proposal funds 640 more students at all WSU campuses, creates new Spokane opportunities for 85 dental, nursing, and medical students, provides more freshmen at WSU Tri-Cities and WSU Vancouver, improves funding for agricultural experiment stations, and funds the research partnership in alternatives to petroleum fuels with Pacific Northwest National Laboratories.

Adjusted for carry-forward costs, the operating budget proposal would represent a 12.5 percent increase in the university's state-funded operating budget. It caps student tuition increases at 7 percent per year and keeps tuition revenues for use at the student's institution.

The Gregoire plan touched all major parts of the university's budget request from high demand enrollments in engineering and math to additional capacity for liberal arts students. It recommends the first state appropriation in the history of WSU Small Business Development Centers and critical operations dollars to university research stations at Puyallup, Mount Vernon, Wenatchee, and Prosser.

Topping Gregoire's \$176 million WSU construction budget proposal is \$58 million to complete the four-story Life Sciences Building in Pullman to house researchers in National Institute of Health-sponsored projects.

It funds a pedestrian mall and utility improvements that is now Library Road on the Pullman Campus. While the operating proposal funds 375 more lower-division enrollments for WSU Vancouver, the capital construction budget provides \$24.35 million undergraduate classroom building at that campus.

The Gregoire proposal funds at least a portion of each major WSU budget request that was submitted to her in September.

These WSU proposals were all virtually funded in total:

- **\$9.5 million in more doctor, dentist and nursing students** for WSU Spokane in cooperation with the University of Washington and Eastern Washington University.
- **An innovative "augmented" funding allowing 50** existing students per year funded at general enrollments to move into high-demand fields such as engineering or nursing.
- **Funding for Small Business Development Centers** in Southeast Washington, Kelso-Longview, Aberdeen-Shelton, Des Moines, Bremerton and Bellingham.

Also, these WSU requests were largely funded:

- **\$4.1 million** in 425 general enrollment increases at Vancouver and Tri-Cities. WSU Vancouver received 150 new enrollments for Fall 2007, 50 less than requested.

- **\$2.4 million** in 230 “high-demand” enrollments for programs like engineering. Additional funding for nurses at WSU Tri-Cities, was not included in the governor’s budget.
- \$200,000 each to the University of Washington and WSU for the William D. Ruckelshaus Policy Consensus Center. Also, \$50,000 was provided for each institution so that the center could work on property rights issues. In addition, the center was funded \$500,000 operating and \$500,000 capital for implementation of the “Ag Pilots” project.
- \$340,000 each to UW and WSU for the Washington Academy of Sciences.

Significantly, the Gregoire proposal contained new major ideas for university research including \$500,000 for “research to products.” It would help identify faculty that have research projects that could produce products for the marketplace. However, the institution’s research requests were not fully funded.

The governor decided to provide just \$3 million of the \$10.8 million requested for the Unified Agriculture Initiative. She funded these two provisions of the request:

1. **Competitive Agriculture Grant Funds.** She delayed by one year the implementation of \$1.4 million in competitive grant pools to enable greater responsiveness to emerging agricultural research needs. One of the grant pools provides \$400,000 annually for refining research in organic and sustainable production systems in competitive grants for Biological Intensive and Organic Agriculture. The other fund provides \$1 million annually for interdisciplinary, outcome oriented programs to assure that research results have an immediate impact on the state. To assure that funds are allocated to issues of greatest relevance to the state, priorities for this internal grant competitions would be established by an advisory board comprised of representatives from the food and agriculture industry (e.g., producers, agribusiness representatives, consumers).
2. **Operating support for the university’s research and extension centers located throughout the state.** Research and extension centers include the Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center located in Prosser, the Tree Fruit Research and Extension Center in Wenatchee, the Northwest Washington Research and Extension Center in Mount Vernon, and the Puyallup Research and Extension Center. Six additional research farms, as well as the Pullman Research Station, are located in eastern Washington. A total of \$1.2 million is recommended by the governor to support operation and maintenance of these facilities.

In the area of Bioproducts, the governor provided \$4 million of the \$6.7 million requested by WSU in partnership with Pacific Northwest National Laboratories. She funded these major provisions of the request:

1. \$2 million in state funds to complete a team of ten scientists that would have joint WSU/PNNL appointments at the new Bioproducts, Science and Engineering Laboratory at WSU Tri-Cities.
2. \$2 million for targeting Washington-grown crops that could be used for biofuels and other bioproducts.

Salary increases for WSU faculty and non-representative staff are provided at 3.2 percent on Sept. 1, 2007 and 2 percent in 2008.

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