2016 LEGISLATIVE SESSION
SINE DIE REPORT - APRIL 2016

The 2016 legislative session concluded March 29, the 20th day of the first special session. The legislature adjourned after passing compromise operating and capital budgets. During the final three weeks of session, budget negotiators considered a number of outstanding revenue and spending issues, trying to find tools that would have generated small amounts of new revenue.

In the end, House and Senate negotiators were not able to reach consensus on any new revenue components, and consequently, the final supplemental budget made very few new investments. It also swept other fund sources in order to create a balanced 4-year budget outlook following a grim February revenue forecast.

In all, it truly was a supplemental budget, and the table is now set for the 2017 legislative session, when higher education priorities will face a steep challenge from the K-12 McCleary situation in maintaining and growing the commitment from the state to access, quality, and opportunity for all students. Already, UW is working with the other 4-year baccalaureates, the community and technical colleges, and other higher education partners and stakeholders to develop a cohesive joint message and strategy for 2017.

UW 2016 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

MAKE THE UNIVERSITY WHOLE – IMPLEMENTING THE STATE’S NEW TUITION POLICY
The UW was successful in bringing home its top priority: backfill for the tuition reduction adopted by the legislature in 2015. Throughout the session, Regents, students, staff, alumni, the College Promise Coalition, and UW leadership reinforced the same message: backfilling the tuition cut was critical to preserving access to and quality of the education at the UW.

EXPANDING OUR SUCCESSFUL RURAL DENTISTRY PROGRAM IN SPOKANE
Despite support from the Spokane delegation and other legislators, we were unable to secure additional funding for the RIDE program in Spokane.

RESTORING FAIRNESS FOR PUBLIC AGENCIES PAYING LEASEHOLD EXCISE TAX
Legislators agreed with the tax fairness policy of HB 2523 and SB 6462, but we were unable to overcome the challenge of the $1.0 million annual fiscal impact.

COMPUTER SCIENCE & ENGINEERING – MAKING MORE DEGREES A REALITY
Joined by Microsoft and other partners in the private sector, we made a strong push for additional state funding for the new CSE building but ultimately came up against a small supplemental capital budget that had almost no funding for 4-year colleges.

ADDITIONAL LEGISLATION IMPACTING UW AND HIGHER EDUCATION
The UW had a stake in far more than the four items featured on the legislative agenda. Here are a few other pieces of legislation that were debated in 2016 that were of interest to the UW and higher education stakeholders. Most legislation did not ultimately pass, but bills that did pass both chambers are marked with an asterisk*.

BILLS WE SUPPORTED THAT PASSED
Higher education and disabled students (SB 6466*/HB 2825)
Creates a work group to develop a plan that will make transferring between institutions easier for students with disabilities to and gain the accommodations they need on campus or in the classroom.
Telemedicine (SB 6519*)
Establishes a formal work group led by UW Telehealth Services to enhance the understanding and use of health services provided around the state through telemedicine - doctors providing services and information online from a medical center directly to patients via computers and other devices.
Athlete Agents (SB 6281*)
This legislation updates the Uniform Athlete Agent Act, which protects the interests of student athletes and academic institutions by regulating the activities of athlete agents, with current best practices.
Victims of sex crimes (HB 2530*/SB 6484)
Requires the Washington State Patrol to create and operate a statewide sexual assault kit tracking system, including participation by UW Medicine.
Student mental health (SB 6243, HB 2439*/SB 6494, HB 2793*)
The legislature considered a number of bills to address mental health issues, including: development of a youth suicide prevention training program for school administrators, teachers, counselors, psychologists, social workers and parents (6243); a requirement for OSPI to create an online social and emotional training module for educators, administrators, and other school staff (2439); creating a children’s mental health work group to identify barriers in mental health services for children and families (6494); and creating the safe homes task force to raise public awareness and increase suicide prevention education among new partners in key positions to reduce suicide (2793).
Professional educator workforce (SB 6455*/HB 2921)
Addresses the teacher shortage by allowing retired teachers to reenter the workforce without penalty to pension benefits, improving student enrollment forecasting, adding funding for alternative routes to certification and educator retooling programs, and improving teacher recruitment strategies.
Educational opportunity gap (HB 1541*)
Implements policies to bridge the equity gap in student achievement, including reducing the length of time students of color are out of school due to suspension, hiring and retaining more teachers of color, and more integrated student services and family engagement.

Reverse transfer agreements (SB 6354*)
Requires public four-year institutions and community colleges to develop plans for the transfer of academic credits from a four-year to a community or technical college.

BILLs WE OPPOSED THAT DIDN’T PASS
Adjudicative proceedings (SB 6019, SB 6464)
These bills sought to revise the processes for internal adjudicative matters within a government agency. SSB 6464 would have required any adjudicative process to be completed within two years or go to a judge for judicial review, which is problematic for some faculty-related processes that are more complex than procedures at most other agencies and can sometimes last longer than two years.

State need grant (HB 2301)
This proposal would have capped individual state need grant awards at the community and technical college rate for a student’s first two years at any institution, including four-year colleges, in essence limiting the amount one student could receive but increasing the number of recipients.

OTHER BILLs
Free to Finish (HB 2955)
Would have created the Washington “free to finish” college program to encourage state residents with some credits from a state community college or four-year institution just shy of graduation to return and complete their degree tuition-free.

Textbooks (HB 2680, HB 2686, HB 2780, HB 2796)
Several proposals sought to reduce the cost-burden of textbooks on students, including bills that would require college course descriptions to include the cost of all required books and materials, or encourage faculty and institutions to use more open resources.

Higher education opportunity/expanding College Bound (HB 2801)
Would have expanded the College Bound Scholarship program to allow undocumented students eligible for in-state tuition to also qualify for College Bound.

Services & activities fees (HB 2911, SB 6587)
These bills would separate services and activities fees from tuition rates at state universities and allow the governing boards of higher education institutions to annually alter existing services and activities fees.

Higher education administrative efficiency (HB 2755/SB 6409)
These bills would have cut unneeded red tape and redundant administrative processes for the state’s public four-year and community and technical college institutions.

UW regents faculty representative (HB 2546)
Would have changed the composition of the UW board of regents to include a voting member of the faculty.

Bellevue College CSE bachelor’s degrees/CTC pilot (SB 5928*/HB 2769)

5928 allows Bellevue College to offer a bachelor’s degree in computer science following college board approval. 2769 would have allowed up to five community and technical colleges to develop programs for bachelor degrees in high-demand fields of study.

Community and technical college access (HB 2820)

Would have created the Washington Promise program, a tuition waiver for eligible Washington residents attending the state’s community and technical college.

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