

18.33 Increasing Access and Affordability of Post-Secondary/Higher Education and Certificates

Resolution passed 2017

Whereas, in Washington state, about 70% of all jobs require some type of higher education, but currently (2015), only 44% of Washington adults have an AA degree or higher, and only 31% of high school 9th graders complete a certification in seven years. These trends are leaving students without appropriate training/education and employers without qualified employees. Will employers import talent or relocate to fulfill their needs; and

Whereas, in Washington state, job growth is averaging about 150,000 jobs per year, and 70% (103,000) will require a certification (certificate or degree). The ability to graduate certificated students is about half of the demand for qualified, certified employees; and

Whereas, Washington state has shifted the costs of tuition from state to the students. In 2001, students paid only 21% of the higher education costs (Washington state paid 79%), but as of 2017, students pay almost half (48%) of tuition costs. Washington has the 10th highest tuition increase (at 50%) in the country, and Washington state tuitions are higher than Oregon and Idaho. Tuition (2017) is less affordable than it was in 2008 (despite recent tuition freezes). Nationally tuition costs have tripled while incomes remain flat; and

Whereas, the high costs for campus housing or rentals contribute to the inaccessibility of post-secondary education, especially if you are not able to commute to one of the six public state universities. Cost (2017) for 4-year tuition, books, and housing/food range from \$88,400 to \$110,000 for a BA/BS degree. Students cannot work enough hours to pay for their education. Nationally, 70% of college students have an average of \$30,000 in student debt, and total United States student debt is more than \$1.3 trillion which exceeds all car and credit card loans (2016 data); and

Whereas, currently (2017) and for the upcoming years, demand for BA/BS degree graduates exceeds Washington state's capacity to meet employer needs, especially in STEM fields. Options to expand access for BA/BS degrees include expanding local community and technical colleges (CTC) with staff and courses so they can provide BA/BS degrees. Another option is to expand the number of CTC who offer "Applied" BA/BS degrees and to expand Washington state college/university regional locations; and

Whereas, Washington State Need Grants (SNG) help low-income students defray some costs, but it suffers from inadequate state funding as over 30,000 qualified students cannot receive grants due to lack of state funding (2017 data); and

Whereas, the College Bound Scholarship program which targets at-risk, low-income, and foster youth who enroll in middle school and meet program requirements works. College Bound students have a 33% higher high school graduation rate, as compared to qualified students who did not enroll. However, enrollment is limited to middle school regardless if students become income-eligible in the 9th or 10th grade and that should change; and

Whereas, in 2011, Washington state passed the “Launch Year Act” into law that encouraged all public high schools to increase the number of dual credit courses offered to maximize a student’s 12th year. Within existing resources, districts shall expand and inform students/families, especially underrepresented groups, about options to earn at least one year of post-secondary credit towards a CTE certificate, apprenticeship, or BA/BS degrees, thereby “launching” their careers while still in high school. However, funding was to come from existing school districts’ budgets, and therefore this was an “unfunded suggestion”; and

Whereas, dual credit opportunities expand access to post-secondary credits/certificates in high school at little or no cost to the student. Options include national exam courses at the local high school such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Cambridge International (CI) plus College in the High School (CIHS) and Tech Prep Dual programs. High school programs also include off-site programs such as Running Start to start an AA/AS degree while in high school, innovative programs such as “Career Start” that allow students to earn a CTE certificate, many apprenticeship programs including “Core Plus” which teaches basic manufacturing skills applicable to industries across Washington state. There are many other intern programs and partnership programs, but they vary district by district and are therefore not accessible by all students.

Therefore, be it

Resolved, that Washington State PTA initiate/support legislation that helps to increase access to higher education/post-secondary degrees and certificates by increasing state funding for tuition, books and affordable student housing (on and off-campus) without taking funds away from K-12 education or other social/health programs and are not regressive funding sources. Also, support “Free Community and Technical College for All” that includes wrap-around support services to ensure graduation success; and be it further

Resolved, that the Washington State PTA initiate/support legislation that specifically targets low-income students by expanding College Bound Program and State Need Grants. Also, support legislation that provides relief for middle-income students by expanding State Need Grants with higher eligibility thresholds and support services; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA initiate/support legislation and community partnerships that increase access to BA/BS degrees by expanding the number of regional campus of our state universities, and also expand the number of CTC colleges that can offer BA/BS and Applied BA/BS degrees; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA initiates/supports legislation and community partnerships that realize the “Launch Year Act” to provide every high school student with at least one year of dual credit, thereby allowing them to earn college credit while in high school and to help launch their career. Options include AP, IB, CI, and CIHS programs, plus Tech Prep, Running Start, Career Start, Core Plus, AJAX and many other dual credit or vocational/intern programs.