

March 21, 2022

To: President Kenton and the WOU Board of Trustees

Subj: Recommendation from the Tuition & Fee Advisory Committee

After several months of continuous meetings, gathering student input, and many lively discussions as a committee while trying to keep the student at the forefront of our minds, we recommend a resident undergraduate tuition rate increase of 3.19%, \$6 per credit hour. Although the Committee overall supports this, there were strong feelings towards recommending a lower increase (1-2%). While the committee understands that not every student pays out of pocket, there are many students who do and will feel this increase directly. As a committee and through the results of our student survey (survey results attached), we think it is imperative that the Board direct the university to support rebuilding and strengthening academic programs, faculty supports, and student success human infrastructure.

We estimate that this will result in \$830K of additional revenues, and request that the Board direct the University to reinvest \$150K of these funds in expanding student paid opportunities on campus. These opportunities are vital to our students in prioritizing their education, while being able to financially support themselves, reducing that barrier to higher education. Additionally, we ask the Board to continue to support students via directed fee remissions (as was done with one-time HEERF funds this year) who are close to graduating and have run out of financial aid eligibility to help them to complete their degree.

In our student survey with 1,084 respondents, 640 students said that our current tuition rate of \$188/credit (for resident undergraduates) is the maximum they would be willing to pay for their courses (Question 3). Additionally, we asked students to rank their priorities between affordability, access to health services, access to academic support, on-campus experiences, maintaining quality programs, and other (Question 4). 914 students ranked affordability as one of their top three priorities. This is of concern to our committee, because we fear these students will leave if there is an increase, leading to a greater enrollment decline. On our student survey, also of note in the ranking priorities question (Question 4) was that 770 students ranked maintaining quality programs as one of their top three priorities. We understand that the university has many financial pulls that continue to increase in cost and have begun to see the impact of dwindling resources as students. As a result, our recommendation attempts to balance the needs to sustain the institution as well as the need for affordability for our students. While we recognize that a tuition increase is a component to university financial sustainability, enrollment is even more important.

Additionally, we recommend a 2.67%, \$4/term increase (from \$150 to \$154 per term) for health service fee with a recommendation to use additional funds to diversify staff and provide Spanish-speaking bilingual counselors.

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