

From: Governor Christine Gregoire  
To: Washington Learns Steering Committee  
Re: Statewide Tuition Policy

The legislation that created Washington Learns calls for a recommendation to the legislature about the appropriate shares of the cost of instruction that should be borne by the state and by students. There has not been enough discussion by the Steering Committee about this issue, so there is no recommendation on a tuition policy in the current draft of our report. This memo outlines a proposal for a statewide tuition policy for discussion by the committee.

### **Goals**

- **Predictability** so that students and families know what to expect and colleges and universities can plan ahead for program development.
- **Affordability** so that college is accessible to more low- and middle-income citizens.
- **Accountability** so that citizens and the state know what they are getting in return for their investment in higher education.
- **Quality** so that students receive a world-class education and our institutions can recruit and retain top faculty and staff.
- **Clarity** so that citizens know how much the state is investing in their education and training after high school.

### **Proposal for a Statewide Tuition Policy**

The state will establish a 10-year funding goal for our public colleges and universities that combines revenue from both state appropriations and tuition. The target funding level for our colleges and universities will be the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile of similar institutions in the Global Challenge States (GCS).

In order to ensure predictability for students and their families, the state legislature will set a ‘cap’ on annual tuition increases of no more than 7%. This is the historical average in Washington and is the annual increase assumed by the Guaranteed Education Tuition (GET) program.

The state will invest the remainder of the revenue needed to each year to maintain progress toward the goal of the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile of comparable institutions in the Global Challenge States. While it is impossible to guarantee that future legislatures will be able to meet this funding goal within 10 years, as downturns in the economy may necessitate different choices, it will be the policy of the state to meet this funding goal if at all possible.

While tuition cannot increase by more than 7%, it does not have to go up that much, or at all, in any given year if the state is able to make an investment that requires a smaller increase in tuition revenue to achieve the overall funding goal for that year.

The baccalaureate institutions, and the community and technical college system, will be accountable to the state and citizens for specific, measurable outcomes in exchange for the increased revenue this plan generates. For example, workforce program completion rates and degree production in high demand fields (such as construction, engineering, and health care) will increase to specified levels, or the overall funding goal for that institution will be reduced for the following year.

Colleges and universities will also be expected to increase the percentage of students from low- and middle income families who are admitted and subsequently complete programs and degrees.

Finally, in order to better inform citizens about the contribution the state is making to their higher education and workforce training, tuition statements for students will show the cost of instruction for the program they are in, the amount the state is contributing to that cost and the amount they are paying in tuition and fees.