

Enhance Consumer Protection

Ensure high-quality schools for Washington's postsecondary students

FY 2019

\$126,000 to protect students' higher education investments

Abrupt school closures have real impacts on students and graduates. Students may not be able to transfer all of their credits to a new school, and they may not be able to find a school that offers their same degree program. These hurdles add time and cost for students as they work to complete a degree. Some students may be too discouraged to finish.

Protecting education consumers' investments requires adequate oversight.

A \$126,000 per year investment—cost-neutral to the state budget—would fund additional staff to work more closely with schools, proactively monitoring financial conditions and providing support. To get the additional funding, we propose a change to WSAC's current fee structure. Our proposal would allow 39 out of 65 schools to pay the same or less than their current fees.

A recent report identified system-wide opportunities to improve student protections. The report called for increasing capacity so the state can proactively monitor schools' financial conditions, enrollments, and completions. The report also recommended more frequent site visits to authorized institutions.

Changes to the fee structure include itemizing fees by program and adding fees for late or expedited reviews and renewals.

With additional funding, WSAC could proactively work with schools to mitigate the impacts of school closures on students. We would have the ability to visit sites more often to provide oversight and assistance. WSAC could also work with schools to help them avoid closure, or when all else fails, wind down operations in an orderly way. This kind of intervention allows students to complete their programs and protect their academic records.

This proposal would allow WSAC to better serve schools and increase oversight to protect education consumers' investments. WSAC could offer:

- Quicker processing for new schools and degree programs.
- Additional required site visits to monitor schools' records and train staff.

Washington can't afford to lose graduates because of school closures. To meet workforce demands, we need more students to finish their degree programs. Abrupt school closures create significant barriers for students to finish a degree, and many have the additional burden of student debt. Increased oversight and training supports a clear path to graduation for students when their schools close.



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