

Western Regional Office
915 L Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814
916-442-0392 (voice) 916-446-4028 (fax)
Web site: www.hacu.net



April 15, 2009

The Honorable Lisa Brown
Senate Majority Leader
c/o Washington State Senate
LEG 307
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Frank Chopp
Speaker of the House of Representatives
c/o Washington House of Representatives
LEG 339-C
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Honorable Members of the Legislature:

On behalf of the Hispanic Association of College and Universities (HACU), I am writing in strong support of a higher education budget that allows the higher education system to provide a quality, affordable, and accessible higher education to the students of the State of Washington. We understand that, like much of the country, the State of Washington has experienced a significant economic downturn and that difficult decisions must be made during this biennium. However, we encourage the Legislature to work with Washington's higher education system and the business community to find solutions that continue to provide an educated workforce for our knowledge-based economy.

Cuts as dramatic as those proposed by both the Senate and House would result in faculty and staff layoffs, reduced access to college and college courses, longer times to completion for students, and fewer resources to enable low-income and first-generation students to successfully complete their college degrees. I would recommend that the Legislature adopt, at the very least, the Senate version of the higher education budget, which has less severe cuts to the education system. In addition, no student fees should be diverted from colleges to the general fund. I would further encourage you to continue to look for additional ways to provide resources to the higher education systems to mitigate the cuts that are in both proposed budgets. If Washington is to succeed economically, its colleges and universities must have adequate resources to ensure academic access, particularly among low-income and first generation college students. Additionally, the state must ensure that there are increases in financial aid that allow low- and moderate-income families to bear the burden of any tuition increases necessitated by cuts in state support to higher education.

We are confident that the Legislature will do its best to work with the higher education community to fully utilize federal stimulus dollars and find new state resources for the education of its population and future workforce. I look forward to continuing to work with you to make college a reality for all students.

If we can be of assistance, Erica Romero, our Executive Director of Western States Legislative Affairs, would be happy to work with your office. Erica may be reached at eromero@hacu.net or (916) 442-0392.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Antonio Flores". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Antonio Flores
President and CEO

cc: Members, Washington State Senate and House of Representatives
Washington HACU-Member Institutions
Erica Romero, Executive Director of Western States Legislative Affairs, HACU