

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



March 3, 2010

The Honorable Christine Gregoire and Members of the Washington State Legislature
Via email/fax
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Gregoire and Members of the Washington State Legislature:

As you enter the final weeks of session and begin the final debate over the state's supplemental budget plan, I am writing on behalf of the Hispanic Association of College and Universities (HACU), in strong support of a higher education budget which ensures that the institutions of higher education are able 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 session.

We commend the Legislature for restoring vitally needed funding for the state's system of financial aid, including the State Need Grants (SNG) and State Work Study (SWS). Even with the continued funding of the SNG, there are an estimated 7,200 financially needy SNG-eligible students who will go unserved because of inadequate funding. As the economy improves, we urge you to work towards fully funding this program and allowing low-income students, including many first-generation college-going students, to achieve their dreams of a higher education.

Both Senate and House supplemental budget bills include cuts to higher education (cuts of nearly \$70 million in the Senate version and nearly \$41 million in the House version). These cuts could result in faculty and staff layoffs, reduced access to college courses, longer completion times for students, and possibly fewer programs that enable low-income and first-generation students to successfully complete their college degrees. We acknowledge that the State finds itself in a difficult situation and that you chose to protect access to higher education by preserving the SNG. However, we also urge you, as you hammer out the final budget, to minimize cuts to the systems of higher education as well.

We are confident that the Governor and Legislature will do their best to work with the higher education community and the business community to find new state resources for the education of Washington's 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 any assistance, Erica Romero, our Executive Director of Western States Legislative Affairs, would be happy to help 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 style with a large initial 'A'.

Antonio Flores
President and CEO

cc: Washington HACU Member Institutions
Erica Romero, Executive Director of Western States Legislative Affairs, HACU