



Candidate Questionnaire

To be considered for Graduate Washington's endorsement, please complete the following questionnaire by 9:00am on Monday, June 11th. Responses should be sent to board chair Quinn Majeski at gmajeski@gmail.com.

Why do you think higher education is important?

Higher education is one of the most important paths to personal success as well as a vital economic driver for our state. The importance of higher education cannot be overstated - we must keep it accessible to all Washington students. Higher education produces employment, research, and innovation - all of which are crucial elements of a healthy economy. Great businesses and industries move to this state because we produce highly educated individuals ready to enter the workforce.

Higher education can also create a pathway out of poverty for so many of our citizens; especially low-income and people of color. By 2018, 67% of our jobs will require some sort of degree or post-secondary credential. If those companies can't find those employees here, they will go elsewhere. We can't let that happen in our state.

How do you plan on prioritizing higher education if elected?

My top priority is to provide quality, affordable, and accessible education in our state - from early learning all the way up to higher education. This has to be our state's biggest focus right now. Funding and access to higher ed have been tremendously cut back in the last few budgets; this is arguably the worst decision we have made as a state. Disinvesting in our future will lead to terrible results for decades to come. I want more and more local kids to attend our amazing four-year universities and our world class community college system. We need people to be higher education champions similar to how Senator Scott White was; I intend to be that leader.

What is the best way to allocate resources to provide adequate support for higher education?

It is clear that our current tax structure is not working to fund the essential services we need in Washington State, including higher education. We must make our system more progressive. I am open to all options on the table that work towards this goal, including instituting a capital gains tax, an income tax, and reforming the B&O tax. We should also be working towards establishing a dedicated funding stream specifically for our higher education institutions. We have to start looking at ways to protect our core state investment in higher education from the turbulence of the economy and a recession. A dedicated funding source for higher education is a discussion worth having.

What have you done to advocate for higher education in office or in the community? What do you plan to do?

It seems as if all the work I do advocates for higher education. In my current professional capacity I work for an education non-profit organization that implements a cradle to career education initiative called the Road Map Project in South Seattle and South King County; our region's areas of highest need. Part of the Project is to strengthen the transition from high school to college for K-12 students and have a spot for them when they decide to go to college. I've visited schools in South King County and helped low-income students sign up for the College Bound Scholarship so that the barrier of paying for college can be removed. I have lobbied in Olympia to protect funding for the State Need Grant and the Work Study Program. I plan to be one of the members in the legislature that develops very strong relationships with the higher ed community, including advocate groups like Graduate Washington, so that they know I'm standing up for their issues.

If elected how do you plan on increasing accessibility for students?

It's important to make sure there is enough space in our higher education system for all qualified students, especially the kids from our region. Spaces at our schools are shrinking and it means capable students are being denied a shot at a great future. We need funding to expand our high demand programs, open more campuses and keep students in our region going to our great schools. Also, it should be easier to transfer from a community college to a four-year institution.

If elected how do you plan on improving the academic quality of the student's higher education experience?

Our institutions need full staffing in order to operate at a high level. We need to focus on keeping administrative staff, attracting great faculty, and having the space to keep class sizes low; especially in graduate level courses. Student services also play a significant role in the higher ed experience and should be a priority in our colleges and universities.

How should the legislature ensure that the state has enough degree holders to meet current and future workforce needs?

We ensure there are enough degree holders by having a stellar K-12 education system, and then an affordable higher education system. Students must meet the challenges of post-secondary education ready to perform on day one. Remediation is an enormous concern, especially for low-income students. When they reach college and get placed into the lowest level math or writing course, that is discouraging and it wastes their time. If students were fully prepared in K-12, they could hit the ground running and fulfill their potential.

We also have to focus on teaching in the areas where the most demand will be; that's STEM education. Expanding these programs at colleges and universities to meet the demand will be critical. It's a crime if engineering departments at our four-year institutions have to turn well-qualified students away because there is not enough space.

What are your ideas for improving the transition from K-12 to higher education, both community and technical colleges and four year institutions?

Asking all school districts to adopt policies that require graduating seniors to meet the Higher Education Coordinating Board minimums, that will help prepare students for CTCs and four-years. Again, the stronger the K-12 system is and the more students we can turn out who are prepared, the more productive our higher education system will be. Creating a college access network that can work regionally so that students who move between schools are not left out. Implementing the Common Core Standards in all of our public schools will ensure that all students are learning the material required to be successful. Asking districts to increase expectations for students similar to what Federal Way does; putting more students in AP courses has shown amazing results. These are just a few ideas; because of my extensive work with education issues, I have become familiar with several more possibilities as well.

What changes, if any, would you like to see in the governance of our higher education systems?

The Governor has proposed a Department of Education as a cabinet level position which would oversee the many education related departments in our state. This idea could go a long way in finding ways that allow better coordination between early learning, primary grades, and post-secondary work. This is a discussion I'm looking forward to continuing, but I'm also excited to hear what advocates think would work best for governance.

What policies would you propose to increase transparency and efficiency in our higher education system?

It would be great for students to have more influence in the budget decisions, since it impacts them the most. This can be done from the university level all the way to the legislature. The Provost Advisory Committee for Students at the University of Washington is a great model that can be expanded to other institutions. There are a number of other possibilities we can discuss, and I can't wait to have those conversations.