



## Candidate Questionnaire

To be considered for Graduate Washington's endorsement, please complete the following questionnaire by 9:00am on Monday, June 11<sup>th</sup>. Responses should be sent to board chair Quinn Majeski at [qmajeski@gmail.com](mailto:qmajeski@gmail.com).

### **Why do you think higher education is important?**

To be successful in an ever-more competitive global marketplace, Washingtonians must be prepared for the demands of a knowledge-based economy. Other countries are investing in the intellectual capital of their citizens, and our employers are looking to these countries to meet labor needs that our universities are unable to satisfy. This is a travesty in this, the richest country on earth. While secondary school may have been sufficient for agrarian, industrial or even service economies, the 21st century has introduced new competitive forces and corresponding challenges. Higher education is our single best investment in the economic competitiveness of our country.

### **How do you plan on prioritizing higher education if elected?**

Education from early learning and K-12 to higher education is my top priority and at the heart of my campaign. My vision for Washington State is that this will be a state in which every student will graduate from high school ready to attend college, and that a college education will be both available and affordable for that student.

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

I would attack this problem from three directions. First, in order to establish a stable funding source for higher education, I would convene leaders from the business, labor and education communities, and see if a revenue source might be identified that could receive broad support. Passing such a revenue package might depend on whether I1053/1185 is still the law in this state, but, in any case, I believe a reasonable discussion could take place if all stakeholders are involved early on.

Secondly, I would look at how further efficiencies in current government operations and spending might open up funding for higher education, though I recognize that the McCleary ruling might mean that K-12 education will have the most political backing when it comes to repurposed general fund dollars. We must develop a logical policy with respect to tax exemptions. Not all tax exemptions are bad, but many are unnecessary or regressive, and those should be revisited and voted down. We absolutely must have a sunset provision that forces legislators to reauthorize tax exemptions every 5-10 years. Savings from expired exemptions could and certainly should be considered for higher education.

Finally, we should try to build on Boeing and Microsoft's recent financial commitments, and seek out other public-private partnerships to leverage state spending on higher education. Our employers understand better than anyone else how vital these investments are, and I look forward to working with them to help us return to a more sane level of funding.

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

I am proud to serve as a Trustee of the Bellevue College Foundation, which raises scholarship funds to help economically disadvantaged students of the college. In that capacity, I have lobbied in Olympia on behalf of funding for the college, and have also championed baccalaureate degree granting authority for BC. I have also worked with Democrats and Republicans alike to raise funds and advocate for the college. Last month, Attorney General Rob McKenna and I shared the stage at Bellevue College's annual luncheon to give a joint fundraising ask, which led to \$300,000 being raised that day for student scholarships.

I also mentor and coach high school students with mock trial and with the college admissions process.

Once elected, I hope to serve on the Higher Education Committee, where I will champion a stable funding source for higher education in our state.

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

We absolutely must stop shifting higher education costs onto students, which is pricing well-qualified low- and middle-income students out of our state university system. Over the past decade, the state has halved its expenditure on higher education as a percentage of general fund spending. It is now down to around 8% of the general fund, which is far too low given the importance of these institutions to our future as a state. At Bellevue College, the state now provides only about 40% of the cost of education, with the other 60% coming from tuition and private fundraising. Historically, the state committed to over 3/4 of the cost of a Bellevue College education, and I know from my service at the college how difficult this slide has been on students, faculty and staff. I will be a strong voice for our 2- and 4-year institutions, and argue passionately for the need to return to at least a 50/50 cost sharing arrangement between students and the state for a college education.

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

My two top priorities when it comes to the quality of higher education in our state are to first ensure that there are sufficient slots in high-demand classes to allow students to enroll in them and graduate on time, and then to make sure that students are given sufficient career guidance as they plan their next transition. I would like to work with students and administration to address these two issues at our 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education.

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

As I mentioned above, the state needs to adequately fund our universities and colleges and ensure that they are offering market-driven degrees that will benefit students. In doing so, we should take full advantage of our community and technical colleges, which are often in a strong position to train workers in high-demand sectors like healthcare and information technology. We should also incentivize the creation of STEM and other high-demand degree programs at our 4-year institutions. I am also interested in how online education might be able to further supplement our offerings.

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

We need to ensure that our high school graduation requirements match college entrance expectations. We must ensure that graduates of Washington's public school system are fully prepared to pursue higher education and to join the workforce. Requiring them to pass exams in the most critical subjects and aligning high school graduation requirements with college readiness and admissions criteria are important ways of achieving this.

We should also make sure that there are mentors for students as they consider and later enter the higher education system. We know that a student's performance in her first year in higher education is critical in determining whether she will go on to earn a degree, and we must support all students in their pursuit of higher education. I have recently been assisting a new nonprofit operating in the Seattle School District, called Step Ahead, which seeks to do this important work.

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

As the recent study published by the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education illustrates, the governance of our higher education system in this state is fractured and anemic. The Strategic Master Plan has failed to lead to the adoption of a transparent and logical tuition policy, and, as I myself have seen firsthand, in-fighting among our various institutions has led to regionalism rather than holistic thinking. These are but two of the ways in which we should all be disappointed in the status quo. I was thrilled to see the Presidents of the state's six institutions of higher education meet publicly at Town Hall to communicate the urgency of the higher education predicament, but I would like to see this sort of transparent, collaborative, and motivated work govern our entire approach towards funding and delivery in the coming years.

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

We should ensure that all students have access to, and can participate in, the governance of higher education institutions, and that decisions made at the administrative level are made with student input. It is absolutely critical that we know what students need to succeed and that they have a voice in the policymaking that directly impacts their education. As mentioned above, whenever the process can be taken into the community, we create an opportunity to build the necessary public will to augment funding to these institutions.