

# WAWU Contract Proposal Fact Sheet

Last Updated: 5/18/2024

The current outstanding issues in bargaining include economic and non-economic demands. The economic demands include wages, and tuition and fee waivers. The non-economic demands include probation, bereavement leave, anti-discrimination and harassment, Inclusive Workplace Trainings, and parking.

## Economic Issues:

### Wages for Hourly Undergraduate Employees:

	Wage Proposals		
Proposed Effective Dates	Current Bellingham Minimum	5/17/24 11:52 AM WAWU Minimum Wage	5/13/24 4:51 PM WWU Minimum Wage
May 1, 2024	\$17.28		
July 1, 2024		\$20.28 (17%)	\$17.28 (0%)
January 1, 2025			\$18.75 (8.5%)
May 1, 2025	≥ \$18.28		
July 1, 2025		\$21.28 (4.9%)	
January 1, 2026			\$19.31 (3%)

- The minimum wage in Bellingham went up to \$17.28 per hour on May 1, 2024, and will increase to at least \$18.28 on May 1, 2025.
- In the past 2 years, rents in Bellingham have risen nearly 30%. Housing nonprofits calculate that to afford a studio apartment in Bellingham without being “rent burdened” (paying more than 1/3 of your income in rent), you would need to earn \$24.12 per hour, when working 40 hours per week.
- **The median hourly student employee works ~7 hours per week. Given WAWUs current proposal, the cost would be \$21 more than status quo per employee per week, or \$210 over a 10 week quarter.**
- WAWU has decreased the cost of this proposal many times in an effort to negotiate with WWU Administration, who continues to insist on the legal minimum.

## Tuition Relief for Undergraduate Employees:

- The Union has proposed partial tuition waivers for hourly student employees, based on how many hours that person works. Per the formula, a hypothetical employee working 19 hours per week (the maximum) would get a 20% tuition waiver starting in Fall 2024.
- **The median hourly student employee works ~7 hours per week. For these employees, the 7% tuition waiver for a resident would cost \$169.61 per quarter.**
- The WAWU Bargaining Committee has made it very clear that we see tuition relief as a shared project with the University because it is critically important for the future affordability of higher education. WAWU wants to work with the University to acquire adequate state funding to phase this program toward greater tuition reduction.
- The WWU Administration continues to reject tuition waivers for undergraduate workers.

<b>WAWU Tuition Waiver Proposals for Resident Undergraduates</b>				
	<b>19 hours (extremely rare)</b>	<b>10 hours</b>	<b>7 hours (median worker)</b>	<b>4 hours</b>
% Waived	20%	10%	<b>7%</b>	4%
Cost per quarter	\$484.60	\$242.3	<b>\$169.61</b>	\$96.92

## Fee Relief for Graduate ESEs:

- Fees cost student employees a maximum of \$672.09 per quarter.
- Fee waivers are already partially in use at UW and WSU.
- WAWU has proposed waiving only the Student Health Services Fee (\$159) and making the Student Recreation Fee (\$113.84) optional.
- Faculty can opt-in to Rec Center services by purchasing a pass. WAWU proposes a similar optional fee structure.
- WWU Administration has continued to reject any concept of a fee waiver.

<b>Fee Relief Proposals</b>			
<b>Fee</b>	<b>Mechanism</b>	<b>5/17/24 11:52 AM WAWU Proposal</b>	<b>5/13/24 4:51 PM WWU Proposal</b>
Student Health Services Fee	Waiver	\$159	\$0
Student Recreation Fee	Opt-out	\$113.84	\$0

## Graduate Monthly Stipends

Proposed Effective Dates		5/17/24 11:52 AM WAWU Proposal	5/13/24 4:51 PM WWU Proposal
Current	\$1700		
September 16, 2024		\$2100 (23.5%)	\$1920 (13%)
September 16, 2025		\$2300 (9.5%)	\$1975 (2.9%)

- Graduate stipends at WWU are considerably lower than at other universities in Washington, particularly the two largest employers of graduate student employees.
  - At the UW, pre-master’s level TA/RA/SAs make \$2664.
  - At WSU, stipends range from \$2,318.50 to \$2,974.
- Research shows<sup>1</sup> that funding for graduate student positions plays an important role in recruiting a diverse body of students and retaining them.

## Non-Economic Issues

### Probation

- The WWU Administration is attempting to introduce a 30-day probationary period, during which employees lack protections against being terminated for arbitrary reasons. This period would last nearly 1/3 of the typical ESE appointment. No other student workers in the country have such a probationary period.
- WAWU rejects the idea of introducing a probationary period designed to keep student workers feeling precarious and vulnerable. Student employees are hired after being accepted to Western, maintaining their GPA and course load requirements, and often establishing relationships with their supervisors prior to hiring. We believe this is sufficient vetting.
- Standard union contract protections do not prevent the University from terminating ESEs; they ensure that when the University terminates an ESE it is for a just cause and through a fair process.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ecton, W. G., Bennett, C. T., Nienhusser, H. K., Castillo-Montoya, M., & Dougherty, S. M. (2021). If You Fund Them, Will They Come? Implications From a PhD Fellowship Program on Racial/Ethnic Student Diversity. AERA Open, 7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584211040485>; and additional research cited therein.

## Leaves

**WAWU current proposal:** 3 days bereavement leave

**WWU current proposal:** no bereavement leave

WWU has repeatedly denied any amount of paid bereavement leave. This benefit exists in all other collective bargaining agreements at WWU.

## Anti-discrimination and Harassment

- WAWU has proposed a 180 day timeline for reporting harassment and discrimination and a strong grievance procedure.
- WWU Administration insists on the reporting timeline we tentatively agreed on in the Grievance Procedures article, which only gives survivors 28 days to report the grievance of discrimination and harassment.

## Inclusive Workplace Trainings

**WAWU current proposal:**

- Peer-led trainings modeled after the successful joint union-university EPIC (Empowering Prevention and Inclusive Communities) program at UW and WSU
- Focus aimed at the “identification and discussion of the intersectional power dynamics in ESE work situations.”
- Training facilitated by paid ESEs.

**WWU current proposal:**

- Content: “preventing sexual harassment and discrimination and responding appropriately to it when it does occur”
- Training facilitated by ESEs “whenever possible”, but not paid.

WAWU is calling for student employees to have a voice in peer-led trainings that build inclusive and healthy workplaces. The Union proposes joint planning and implementation of these trainings, to ensure that they are relevant to the current day and to real conditions in ESE workplaces. Similar, successful peer-led EPIC programs exist at both UW and WSU and have produced well-documented, proven results.<sup>2</sup> Such programs have been shown to be much more

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.washington.edu/safecampus/epic-program/reports/> for in-depth research and data.

effective than programs not run by student employee training facilitators. The WWU Administration has made movement on this issue and provided a route for ESEs to implement and facilitate EPIC trainings beginning September 2025. However, the Union still believes its best to have broader training content that's been successful in other places, and that ESE facilitators be paid.

## Parking

- WAWU has proposed that ESEs have access to pay-by-day parking permits in the commuter lots at the same rate as other employees on campus.
- WAWU has proposed many times that the University provide ESEs with no-cost bus passes year-round, but has since dropped that proposal in an effort to negotiate.
- WWU has proposed providing bus passes to ESEs during quarters in which they are working but not enrolled as a student, such as summer quarters.