



Resolution in Support of Operational Student Employees Right to Collectively Bargain

WHEREAS 2,500 student workers at Western Washington University (WWU) perform a wide range of essential tasks that support the university's operations and help them afford the cost of completing their degrees;

WHEREAS 1,100 of these student workers (Educational Student Employees) engaged in a democratic process to unionize as Western Academic Washington Workers United/United Auto Workers (WAWU/UAW), and negotiated a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) with Western Washington University, establishing terms and conditions of their employment;

WHEREAS 1,400 of these workers (Operational Student Employees), have repeatedly engaged in a democratic process to unionize as WAWU/UAW, yet remain without formal union recognition or a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA);

WHEREAS student workers routinely move between ESE and OSE positions, with protections in the former and none in the latter;

WHEREAS in a time of political and economic uncertainty, there is an urgent need for the University Administration to honor the democratic decision of student workers to form a union by recognizing and respecting this choice;

WHEREAS despite acknowledging the current uncertainty, Western Washington University Administration refuses to recognize the unionization efforts of Operational Student Employees, even after implementing some - but not all - terms of the ESE agreement for them;

WHEREAS WWU used the state legislature's failure to pass a bill mandating bargaining with Operational Student Employees as an excuse not to recognize and negotiate a contract;

WHEREAS both the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) and Washington courts have long affirmed that public employers may voluntarily recognize an exclusive bargaining representative upon demonstration that the union represents a majority of the unit;

WHEREAS this unique situation, where 2,500 similar workers have likewise democratically chosen unionization, yet one group is having their choice respected while the other is not, calls for unique solutions;

WHEREAS OSEs have recently concluded a strike authorization vote in which 62% of the bargaining unit participated and 94% voted to authorize a strike if circumstances warrant; and

WHEREAS all students benefit from labor peace and assurance that the Administration takes seriously the choice of student workers;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE ASSOCIATED STUDENTS URGE THE UNIVERSITY TO IMMEDIATELY:

- Select a mutually agreeable third party (PERC or other) to verify the choice by OSEs to select WAWU/UAW as their union;
- Adopt a mutually agreeable definition of the bargaining unit and scope of bargaining, modeled on the legislation that was adopted for ESEs and considered for OSEs;
- Swiftly recognize and negotiate a collective bargaining agreement that ensures strong rights and protections for OSEs, modeled on the ESE CBA;
- Develop a plan with WAWU/UAW, the WA Student Association, and other stakeholders, to pass OSE collective bargaining legislation in the next session and collaborate to restore the draconian budget cuts imposed on the University by the state.