



May 13, 2011

President Bruce Shepard
Western Washington University
Old Main 440
516 High Street
Bellingham, WA 98225-9000

Dear President Shepard,

The Washington Technology Industry Association (WTIA) is a Seattle based trade association representing many of the state's technology sectors, including software, web services, IT integration, broadband providers, advanced manufacturing and others. We have over 1000 company members statewide. WTIA provides discounted business services, produces a wide range of events on various technology topics and advocates for the technology industry's public policy priorities with elected officials in Olympia and elsewhere.

The WTIA has long supported higher education in Olympia, particularly in the area of producing STEM degrees. We have been proponents of tuition setting authority for the state's universities and supported other policies that the state's four year schools have pursued.

The WTIA works closely with regional technology associations and has a longstanding relationship with Bellingham-based TAG. In recent conversations with TAG, we have become aware of WWU's efforts to deal with the difficult financial and budget situation that the state's higher education institutions are facing. Like you and your colleagues, we understand the shortsightedness of the legislature's cuts to higher education.

WWU has an excellent reputation for a number of its programs, especially in Computer Science and related STEM degrees. Many WTIA members are graduates of WWU or hire WWU graduates. The state's technology based industries continue to grow, whether that is in enterprise software, search engines, video games, digital media, web services, cloud computing and many others. A brief review of our job board will demonstrate this point: <http://www.wtiajobs.org/>.

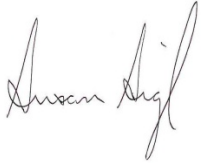
We are writing to you to encourage you to preserve STEM degree programs at WWU. We know you have difficult decisions to make and that you have a number of diverse constituencies to accommodate as you make these budget decisions. We want to make the point that STEM graduates are among the best suited to become and stay employed, under almost any economic conditions. STEM graduates, particularly Computer Science are needed by technology companies both now and in the future. STEM graduates command higher salaries and usually have excellent benefits along with higher than average salaries.

This is not to downplay the value or importance of non-STEM degrees or programs but all universities have to make decisions on what they will offer that is now more limited than in previous years. We also acknowledge that STEM degrees are often more expensive to produce than in other majors. Yet it is also important that universities remain relevant by offering degree programs that are not just what students want to take but that

have value in the economy. STEM/Computer Science degrees are among the most critical need for employers of all types today, not just in the technology industry.

We hope that you will preserve WWU's excellent Computer Science program and limit budget cuts to STEM degree programs as much as possible. Thank you for considering WTIA's thoughts on this topic. Please contact us if you would like to discuss this issue in more detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Sigl". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Susan Sigl, CEO
Washington Technology Industry Association

cc: Provost Catherine Riordan, Vice President Steve Swan