**URGENT: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Whitman College Student Government Becomes First in the Nation to Impose an Internal Carbon Tax**

Walla Walla, WA—On February 7, 2016, the Associated Students of Whitman College (ASWC) passed an act that places a tax on carbon emissions attributed to student travel, making it the first collegiate student government in the nation to self-impose a carbon tax.

Students requesting funding for travel will be asked to calculate a charge on their emissions based on destination and mode of transportation. At the end of the academic year, the sum of these taxes will be moved to a “Green Fund,” from which students can request financial support for sustainability initiatives. The tax does not charge the student, but rather changes how the student government internally allocates its funds.

Whitman’s Sustainability Committee has encouraged student senators since September to adopt this legislation as a step toward campus carbon neutrality. With two proposals for carbon pricing slated for this year’s Washington State November ballot, the student-led carbon tax aims to function as a small-scale model similar to these state initiatives.

“The program’s intention is not just to incentivize students to find less carbon-intensive means of travel,” said ASWC Sustainability Committee Chair Dani Hupper, “but to use our campus as a learning laboratory as we continue to educate Whitman’s community about developing solutions to climate change.”

“The end goal of this program is to advocate for similar systems across the entire college, extending to athletics, faculty, and other long-distance travel. I’m very optimistic that this step will inspire other departments to do the same,” said ASWC Ombudsman Mitchell Cutter.

“Students are making an institutional change in how and where we spend our money to better represent a student body that has consistently demonstrated sustainability as a core value,” remarked ASWC Finance Chair Anya Tudisco. “This is a tangible change we can make as a student government, and we are excited to hopefully serve as a model for the College and other institutions.”

On February 7th, the two-year pilot program passed the student senate unanimously and will begin in the academic year of 2016-2017.

Yale University has designed a similar “carbon charge” program. Their program is led by Economics professors and incentivizes academic buildings to lower emissions. Whitman’s carbon tax program was designed, written, and self-imposed by their student government.

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EXTRA**: WHITMAN’S STUDENT GOVERNMENT PASSED THE FOLLOWING ACT ON 2/7/16, ENACTING THE CARBON TAX PROGRAM AND BECOMING FIRST IN THE NATION**

IN THE SENATE

ACT SAS 16.2

**AN ACT TO ESTABLISH AN ASWC CARBON TAX**

WRITTEN BY Mitchell Cutter ’17, Dani Hupper ’17

SPONSORED BY: Anya Tudisco ‘16

**SECTION I TITLE**

1. This act shall be referred to as An Act to Establish an ASWC Carbon Tax

**SECTION II JUSTIFICATION**

1. Climate change is the one of the greatest problems the world currently faces, and fighting it requires bold and concerted action.
2. The Associated Students of Whitman College (ASWC) has demonstrated its commitment to this fight through green initiatives and progressive legislation.
3. ASWC believes that a method of taxing greenhouse gas emissions from travel is an effective way to mitigate the effects of carbon emissions, educate users of ASWC funds on the repercussions of their travel, and encourage them to use less impactful forms of transportation.
4. The implementation of a carbon tax will make ASWC a leader among colleges and universities worldwide, and will demonstrate the viability of a college-wide carbon tax, signifying a major step forward for sustainability at Whitman College.
5. A carbon tax will advance other green initiatives at Whitman by ensuring that part of ASWC’s budget is set aside for emission mitigation and sustainability projects.

**SECTION III PURPOSE**

1. This act aims to make ASWC a pioneer in carbon emissions policy by dedicating a portion of funds used for travel to mitigative or educational efforts.
2. This act hereby establishes the ASWC Carbon Tax, which will be instituted and overseen by the ASWC Finance Chair, Finance Committee, and Sustainability Director. This will be a pilot program, instituted for a period of two years.

**SECTION IV FORMAT**

1. In the Spring 2016 budgeting process, the Finance Committee will consider the allocation of the Green Fund as a part of the ASWC Budget, as it normally does.
2. Starting in Fall 2016, the ASWC Carbon Tax will be operated through the use of earmarked funds
	1. Any request from the Travel and Student Development Fund that includes travel costs will be subject to the ASWC Carbon Tax.
		1. Any travel outside the US, Canada, and Mexico will not be included.
	2. The requesting party, with assistance from the Finance Chair, will determine the total “cost” of their travel using a formula that considers the mode of transportation and distance travelled to calculate a dollar figure which will be added on to the request.
		1. This formula shall be created by the ASWC Finance Chair, in consultation with the ASWC Advisor and ASWC Sustainability Director, and will be approved by a majority vote of the Finance Committee.
		2. This formula will remain in effect until it is amended by a majority vote of the Finance Committee.
		3. If the Finance Committee has not yet convened, the Executive Council may approve changes by unanimous vote. .
	3. Educational information regarding the definition and purposes of an internal ASWC carbon tax will be communicated to students on the Travel and Student Development Request form in order to better educate students on the tax and the impacts of their travel on the environment.
	4. The request will be reviewed, discussed, and voted upon by the Finance Committee and the Senate as stipulated by the ASWC Bylaws.
	5. If passed, the requesting party will gain the use of the original requested funds, while the carbon tax portion, calculated from the matrix, will be earmarked by the Finance Chair as allocated Carbon Tax monies.
	6. Neither the Finance Committee nor ASWC Senate may amend the carbon tax portion of a request out of that request without amending the full cost of travel out of that request.
	7. At the end of the fiscal year 2015-2016, the Finance Chair will transfer all earmarked Carbon Tax monies from the Travel and Student Development Fund to the Green Fund. These monies will constitute a portion of the Green Fund’s starting balance for the next fiscal year.
	8. The Green Fund will close into itself at the end of the 2016-2017 fiscal year.
	9. In the Spring 2017 budgeting process, the Finance Chair will inform the Finance Committee and Senate of the current total of earmarked monies. This total will factor into the consideration of further allocation to the Green Fund as part of the budget to stay in line with the needs of ASWC in the next fiscal year.
	10. This process will continue through the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

**SECTION V OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

1. At the conclusion of the pilot program, this act may be renewed or the bylaws amended to extend the Carbon Tax.

**SECTION VII NOTWITHSTANDING**

1. Should any provision of this act come into contradiction with the ASWC Constitution or bylaws; or should any provision of this act come into contradiction with Whitman College policy; or should any provision of this act come into contradiction with state or federal law, that specific provision shall be considered null and void, while leaving intact all other complying provisions of this act.