

YEAR ONE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

Submitted to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

Western Washington University

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NWCCU YEAR-ONE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This document comprises Western Washington University's Year-One Self-Evaluation Report to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Following the commission's guidelines, this report describes our institutional context, our response to commission recommendations, and our recent strategic planning process. The report also describes our mission, core themes, objectives and indicators of achievement.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The main campus of Western Washington University is located on 212 picturesque acres in Bellingham, Washington, a city of 83,580 people located between Seattle, Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia. Nestled in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains and adjacent to the beautiful San Juan Islands, Bellingham is nationally recognized for quality of life, outdoor adventure, and environmental stewardship. As the third largest university in the State of Washington, Western enrolls 15,332 undergraduates and 707 graduate students in more than 160 academic programs at the Bellingham campus and seven satellite locations around the Puget Sound area.

Western, which first opened its doors in 1899, is perennially ranked as the best public, master's-granting university in the Pacific Northwest and the top public university of its type in the West, according to U.S. News & World Report college rankings. Kiplinger's ranks Western among the top 100 public colleges and universities in the nation that offer the best quality and affordability. U.S. News and World Report has also named Western one of the most cost-efficient in the country among highly-ranked universities. Western is particularly proud of its position as a leader in multidisciplinary environmental education and sustainable campus operations.

Western provides an active student-centered learning environment with a liberal arts and sciences foundation and robust co-curricular, internship, research, creative, and service learning opportunities. There is a widely-shared vision that Western will be a higher education leader in a culturally responsive 21st century learning environment, applying its critical strengths to societal issues while creating a welcoming community for a diversity of people, ideas, and programs. To that end, Western has embraced a style that is collegial, transparent, and timely in its engagement and communication with on- and off-campus stakeholders.

Western is not only committed to the academic growth of its students, but to empowering them to be engaged and active agents of positive change in the world. Western is ranked first in the nation among medium-sized universities for Peace Corps

participation, was first in the nation in 2014 among public, masters-granting institutions for the number of its graduates awarded Fulbright Fellowships, and has been classified for five years as a Carnegie Community Engagement University. Western has been designated a “Military Friendly School,” for six consecutive years by G.I. Jobs Magazine. ([See National Recognition](#)).

In 2015, Western was one of five schools to win the inaugural Active Minds, Healthy Campuses award, which recognizes Western as one of the healthiest campuses in the nation. (See [Active Minds, Healthy Campuses](#).)

In 2014, Western was selected to join the Ashoka U Changemaker Campus consortium, which now stretches across 29 campuses in five countries and provides students and faculty alike with interdisciplinary, entrepreneurial and solution-oriented skills to succeed and make a positive difference in the world. ([See Ashoka U, and Changemaker Announcement](#).)

In its most recent ratings, the Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) ranked Western 9th among all masters-granting institutions, public and private, for the number of its undergraduates who went on to earn a research doctorate in the past decade. ([See SED Doctorate: WWU](#).)

Information and references on these, and other distinctions of excellence, can be found at Western’s “National Recognition” site. ([See National Recognition](#)).

Western Washington University is composed of seven colleges and the Graduate School:

- College of Business and Economics
- College of Fine and Performing Arts
- College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- College of Science and Engineering
- Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies
- Huxley College of the Environment
- Woodring College of Education

Western offers degrees in Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Arts in Education, Bachelor of Fine Arts, Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Master of Arts, Master of Business Administration, Master of Education, Master of Fine Arts, Master of Music, Master of Science, Master in Teaching, and Master of Professional Accounting.

PREFACE: UPDATE ON INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES SINCE THE LAST REPORT

Accreditation

Western completed a self-study in the spring 2017, its first under the new 7-year cycle system. In July 2017, the NWCCU reaffirmed Western’s accreditation. At the same time, the Commission requested that Western prepare a focused interim report—due in fall, 2018—to address a single recommendation that:

“The institution document and evaluate regularly its cycle of planning, practices, resource allocation, application of institutional capacity, and assessment of results to

ensure their adequacy, alignment, and effectiveness. It uses the results of its evaluation to make changes, as necessary, for improvement.”

Work on this interim report was initiated shortly after it was received, and will be ready by the deadline date of fall 2018.

Achievements

During the last 7-year accreditation cycle, Western’s performance improved relative to nearly all of its sustainable indicators of mission fulfillment:

- 90% of our seniors rated their Western experience as good or excellent.
- More than 50% of our graduates reported that they had collaborated with a professor on a research or creative activity beyond course or program requirement.
- Our graduation rates for student of color remained at least 10% better than our IPEDS comparison group.

Similarly, Western’s performance improved relative to most of its aspirational indicators of mission fulfillment:

- Western exceeded its goal of increasing “high-demand” graduates.
- 6-year graduation rate targets for Pell Grant-eligible and students of color (SOC) were met [Pell Eligible = 65%; SOC = 68% (2016)].

Administration Changes

New administration changes include the recent hiring of the following individuals:

- Sabah Randhawa, President, Western Washington University.
- Melynda Huskey, Vice President, Enrollment & Student Services.
- Donna Gibbs, Vice President, University Relations & Marketing.
- Gautam Pillay, Dean of the Graduate School, Vice Provost for Research & Sponsored Programs.
- Chuck Lanham, Vice Provost for Information Technology & CIO.
- Scott Young, Dean of the College of Business & Economics.
- Horacio Walker, Dean of the Woodring College of Education.

Strategic Planning

The latest round of strategic planning began with the empaneling of the Strategic Planning Committee in February 2017. The membership of the committee consisted of five faculty, two staff, two administrators, two students, and one community representative. The committee also included two advisory members: Western’s Provost,

Brent Carbajal, and the chair of the University Planning and Resources Council (UPRC), John Bower.

President Randhawa charged the committee to develop a process that would culminate in the drafting of a new strategic plan. The process was to include environmental scanning, the facilitation of listening sessions, information gathering, synthesis, and then the actual writing of the plan itself. President Randhawa noted that the plan should be characterized by transparency and inclusivity, and informed by contexts both internal and external to Western. Specifically, the new plan should:

- Derive from the University's core values and mission and build upon University's past success.
- Be relatively brief, and contain three to five specific goals and associated objectives, with related metrics.
- Be aspirational so that it can inform and inspire the university's next capital campaign.
- Set priorities and inform decisions regarding resource allocation from AY2017-18 through AY2023-24, to also align with the next accreditation cycle.
- Be vetted through the University Planning and Resource Council (UPRC).

Through March and April 2017, focus groups met and surveys of both university personnel and Western alumni were administered. Ultimately, the committee convened twenty-five focus groups and six open forums, and conducted two extensive surveys. The committee work was shared regularly with the campus at large via campus media outlets, including group emails, articles in Western Today (our daily e-newsletter), and on the Provost web site.

The first draft of goals and objectives was shared with the University community in May 2017. After feedback, the committee revised the goals and objectives and added metrics for measuring fulfillment, along with an introductory statement and drafts of new mission, vision, and values statements. Further focus groups were conducted in fall 2017, and the committee presented its final draft to President Randhawa in February 2018. After feedback from the Trustees, and others, the University's 2018-2024 strategic plan was revised further and approved by the Trustees in April 2018.

The strategic planning process was intentionally carried out to create alignment between strategic planning and our accreditation activities. To this end, the ALO remained in close communication with the co-chairs of the strategic planning committee, sharing notes and suggestions regarding metrics and those elements of the strategic plan which should be present in the core themes and core theme objectives. We were aided in this effort by remarkably good timing as our Year-1 Report was drafted over the same period of time in which the strategic plan was finalized.

Eventually, three core themes were identified and selected. These core themes represented the three principal elements of the strategic plan that emerged through the information gathering and listening activities of the committee, and which were shared by the President with the University community in the fall, 2017 convocation. The four

goals to the strategic plan were positioned as objectives to these core themes, with two additional objectives sustained from our previous 7-year accreditation cycle.

Our strategic planning efforts were aligned to complement related efforts, such as our [Sustainability Action Plan: 2015- 2035](#), which builds on Western leadership in many areas of sustainability to define a comprehensive sustainability plan for the future

Eligibility Requirement #2 (Authority)

The Revised Code of Washington designates Western Washington University as a “regional university” to “offer undergraduate and graduate programs through the master’s degree, including programs of a practical and applied nature, directed to the educational and professional needs of the residents of the regions they serve; to act as receiving institutions for transferring community college students; and to provide extended occupational and complementary studies programs that continue or are otherwise integrated with the educational services of the region’s community colleges.” An addendum to this RCW granted Western the authority to offer “doctorate level degrees in audiology” in 2013. (See RCW 28B.35.216 and also Title 28B.35.010-010 and Title 28B.35.050.)

Eligibility Requirement #3 (Mission and Core Themes)

The mission and core themes of Western Washington University are clearly defined, concise, and deliberately embedded within the University’s strategic plan, adopted by the Board of Trustees in 2011. The mission and core themes are prominently published on the university website

CHAPTER ONE: MISSION, CORE THEMES, AND EXPECTATION

SECTION I: STANDARD 1.A

Mission

Western Washington University is a public comprehensive institution dedicated to serving the people of the state of Washington. Together our students, staff, and faculty are committed to making a positive impact in the state and the world with a shared focus on academic excellence and inclusive achievement.

Vision

Western Washington University prepares and inspires individuals to explore widely, think critically, communicate clearly, and connect ideas creatively to address our most challenging needs, problems, and questions.

Values

As a community, we uphold certain basic values. These include:

- Commitment to student success, critical thought, creativity, and sustainability
- Commitment to equity and justice, and respect for the rights and dignity of others
- Pursuit of excellence, in an environment characterized by principles of shared governance, academic freedom and effective engagement
- Integrity, responsibility and accountability in all our work.

Interpretation of Fulfillment of the Institution's Mission

Western's mission will be fulfilled when we have collectively strengthened the positive impact we bring to the state of Washington through improvements in our efforts to support the academic excellence and inclusive achievements of our students, staff and faculty.

Articulation of an Acceptable Threshold or Extent of Mission Fulfillment

Three core themes emerged through our strategic planning process as recurring and unifying ideals: Advancing Inclusive Success, Increasing Washington Impact, and Enhancing Academic Excellence. These core themes make good on our commitment to an equitable and transformative education for all students, and on our commitment to increasing Western's impact in Washington and beyond. Because these themes individually manifest essential elements of the mission, we see mission fulfillment as a consequence and result of core theme fulfillment. Consequently, we envision mission fulfillment as making substantial progress in advancing the three core themes and, in particular, our commitment to increase retention and graduation rates, eliminate achievement gaps, increase overall the number of degrees awarded annually, and to increase our impact through increasing access to our programs and advancing inclusive achievement of our faculty, staff and students.

SECTION II: STANDARD 1.B

Core Themes, Objectives, and Indicators of Achievement

CORE THEME 1: ADVANCING INCLUSIVE SUCCESS

Higher education has never been more important to the economic and social development of our communities and our global society. The data from our ongoing economic recovery underscore what we have known for a long time: higher education is a precondition for upward social mobility and the most powerful social and economic equalizer. Our most important challenge, then, is to raise the success rate for all students while eliminating gaps for students from historically underrepresented backgrounds. Western aspires to be a leader in student retention and on-time graduation, regardless of the socio-economic background of our students. We have a moral imperative to ensure that Western more closely reflects the local and global diversity in which we live and which we seek to advance, including enrolling more underrepresented students and first-generation students from the state of Washington. That will enable us to build a more diverse, inclusive and equitable community and culture of care for all.

Objectives for Core Theme 1:

- 1.a Western fosters a caring and supportive environment where all members are respected and treated fairly.

Rationale: A caring and supportive environment means creating a positive and collaborative campus climate, including the physical environment, that welcomes and affirms the diversity of individuals, groups, cultures, and ideas.

- 1.b Western pursues justice and equity.

Rationale: Justice and equity means access to a diverse student body and ensuring that all admitted students, regardless of their backgrounds, are successful. It also means that the university creates a compelling environment to attract and retain a diverse faculty and staff workforce.

Indicators of Core theme Achievement

Metrics for Objective 1.a

1. Employee satisfaction broken down by type of employee and demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, race, ethnicity, etc.).¹
2. Student satisfaction with educational support and quality of instruction using Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) data, broken down by demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, race, ethnicity, Pell-eligible, etc.).

¹ Aspirational threshold goals for each indicator of achievement are listed in Appendix A.

Metrics for Objective 1.b

1. 4 and 6-year graduation, and first-to-second year retention rates for first-time and transfer students, broken down by demographic characteristics and for first-gen, SOC, Pell-eligible students.
2. Percent of first-generation, Pell-eligible and State Need Grant eligible students, including first-time and transfer students.
3. Percent of students, staff and faculty of color.

Rationale for Core Theme #1 Indicators

The indicators for Objective 1.a are assessable because Western collects longitudinal survey findings via HERI surveys (1.a.1) and conducts and collects internal survey findings via its Western Educational Longitudinal Study, or WELS, survey (1a.2).

The indicators for Objective 1.b are assessable because indicators 1.b.1, 1.b.2, and 1.b.3 are direct measures indicated in admissions or foundations data and accessible via our data warehouse.

CORE THEME 2: ENHANCING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Western prides itself on its quality of education and preparation of its graduates. We are well-positioned to increase our impact and contributions in ways that build upon and maintain the essence of what has made us distinctive. Western faculty's research and creative work encompasses a wide range of topics and issues important to our social, economic and environmental progress, and faculty-mentored research opportunities enhance the educational experience for our students. We will continue to enhance and expand our undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts and the professional disciplines, the high-impact learning experiences for our students, and a faculty culture of innovation that cuts across disciplines and integrates research and creative work in our academic programs.

Objectives for Core Theme 2:

- 2.a Western provides a transformational education grounded in the liberal arts and sciences. For many reasons, this is a tough one for which to find indicators.

Rationale: Western's education experience will continue to be rooted in an active teaching and learning environment with a liberal arts and science foundation and robust co-curricular, internship, research, creative, and community engagement opportunities.

- 2.b Western bases its transformational education on innovative scholarship, research and creative activity.

Rationale: Western will recruit the best faculty and staff to support the growth and sustained flourishing of programs, departments, and centers. Moreover, Western will provide technological and other academic infrastructure to support curricular innovation, research, scholarship, creative activity, civic engagement and social justice.

Indicators of Core theme Achievement

Metrics for Objective 2.a

1. Post-grad placement rates from Career Services Survey, Senior Exit Survey, and/or our federal College Scorecard.
2. Comparative rates of total overall and diverse students engaging in “high-impact practices” (HIPs).
3. Number and/or percentage of students participating in interdisciplinary curricular/co-curricular offerings.

Metrics for objective 2.b

1. Percentage of graduating seniors reporting that they engaged in research or creative projects with faculty.
2. Grant dollars received.
3. Internal support for research. (Includes RSP grants, college travel support, Scitech support, etc.)
4. Total number of scholarly publications, papers, and creative activities.

Rationale for Core Theme #1 Indicators

The indicators for Objective 2.a are assessable because Western conducts and collects longitudinal survey findings via its Career Services Survey and WELS Senior Exit Survey, as well as participates in the federal College Scorecard (2.a.1). Indicators 2a.2 and 2a.3 are assessable because each enumerated category is a direct measure indicated in admissions or foundations data and accessible via our data warehouse.

The indicators for Objective 2.b are assessable because Western conducts and collects longitudinal survey findings via its WELS Senior Exit Survey (2.b.1). Indicators 2.b.2 and 2.b.3 are assessable because each enumerated category is a direct measure indicated in foundations data and accessible via our data warehouse. Indicator 2.b.4 is assessable because the data is available via college annual reports.

CORE THEME 3: INCREASING WASHINGTON IMPACT

We will work to increase our impact and contributions to the current and future economic development needs of Washington and the region by expanding access to our programs, leveraging partnerships to offer programs and credentials to place-bound and non-traditional students, and through the research and creative work of our faculty. Western’s education model with a strong liberal arts background ensures that our graduates are competitive for the best jobs after graduation and, at the same time, are prepared and adaptable to respond to continuously changing employment trends shaped by technology and innovation. And, importantly, prepared to contribute to their communities as leaders and citizens.

This emerging theme is related to our current work for the Carnegie classification as a Community Engaged institution. The concept of “place” includes the Western’s ability

to impact both within its own world, and on the world outside itself. In other words, community impact writ large: local, regional, and global. An additional feature of this theme is how we support our community in providing quality opportunities to impact our students.

Objectives for Core Theme 3:

3.a Western will impact communities beyond the campus.

Rationale: To impact communities beyond campus, Western should strive to give all students educational experiences both in and beyond the classroom that help them develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities to nurture and create the conditions for people and planet to thrive, increase engagement between Western and local communities, and increase the experiences through which students, staff, and faculty can engage with communities and environments in multiple regions in the world, both inside and beyond the classroom

3.b Western will advance a deeper understanding of and engagement with place.

Rationale: The concept of “place” calls us to recognize our obligations and connections to indigenous and Native nations, to the environment and sustainability, and to the diverse cultures within and across our borders; it inspires us to think and act thoughtfully and creatively about where we are and how we connect with the wider world.

Indicators of Core theme Achievement

Metrics for Objective 3.a

1. Total Degrees awarded both on-campus and at all off-campus sites (Bachelor’s and Master’s).
2. Annual number of degrees awarded in majors designated by the state as “high-demand.”
3. Percent international students.
4. Number and percentage of community partners expressing satisfaction with the outcomes of their community engagement with Western.

Metrics for Objective 3.b

1. Number of curricular and co-curricular offerings addressing regional/indigenous issues.
2. Number of faculty and staff participating in community engagement opportunities and related professional development.
3. Sustain Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement.

Rationale for Core Theme #1 Indicators

The indicators for Objective 3.a are assessable because indicators 3.a.1, 3.a.2, and 3.a.3 are direct measures indicated in admissions or foundations data and accessible via our data warehouse. Indicator 3.a.4 is assessable because Western conducts and collects longitudinal survey findings via its Center for Service Learning and Community Relations surveys.

The indicators for Objective 3.b are assessable because 3.b.1 and 3.b.2 are direct measures indicated in admissions or foundations data and accessible via our data warehouse. Indicator 3.b.3 is assessable because the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement is a rigorous process that requires constant scrutiny and improvement.

CONCLUSION

Over the past two years Western Washington University has deliberately assessed, discussed, evaluated and revised its mission and strategic plan. This work—led by a representative committee of faculty, staff, students and administrators—was informed by a campus-wide survey and dozens of formal and informal discussions among alumni, students, community constituents, and other stakeholders. It was a lengthy, participatory process involving more than a thousand individuals. The establishment of Western’s core themes, objectives and indicators was carried out as a natural extension of the strategic planning process with careful consideration of their alignment and fit.

Strategic planning and accreditation are not identical. Strategic planning directs a university’s actions; to this end, it is prescriptive. Accreditation establishes accountability. Its focus is not upon the university’s actions but upon the student outcomes and achievements that result from these actions; to this end, it must be descriptive.

Yet in both our strategic and accreditation planning we have sought to state our intentions boldly and concisely, the better to clarify exactly what we intend to do and exactly how we seek to be held accountable. Some of the hardest work of these efforts is most evident in what is not in this report: in the many goals, objectives and indicators we added and then removed from the document in our effort to focus on our core essence, and to concentrate our core focus. For this reason, we worked especially hard to limit our core themes, objectives and indicators. The result, we believe, is a concise, focused document that makes no mistake about what we wish to accomplish and to be held accountable for.

While aspirational and visionary, our mission is clarified in a concise interpretation of fulfillment and articulated in concrete definitions of acceptable thresholds or demonstrations of mission fulfillment. The essential elements of the mission are articulated in brief and declarative core themes. Concise, clear, assessable and meaningful indicators of achievement are established for each theme. These form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of each core theme.

APPENDIX A: ASPIRATIONAL THRESHOLDS OF CORE THEME ACHIEVEMENT

	Core Theme Indicator of Achievement	Goal*
1.a.1	Employee satisfaction broken down by type of employee and demographic characteristics (gender, race, ethnicity).	+10%
1.a.2	Student satisfaction with educational support and quality of instruction, broken down by demographic characteristics (gender, race, ethnicity, Pell-eligible, etc.).	+5%
1.b.1	4 and 6-year graduation, and first-to-second year retention rates for first-time and transfer students, broken down by demographic characteristics and for first-gen, SOC, Pell-eligible students.	+5%
1.b.2	Number of first-generation, Pell-eligible and State Need Grant eligible students, including first-time and transfer students.	+20%
1.b.3	Number of students, staff and faculty of color.	+20%
2.a.1	Post-grad placement rates from Career Services Survey, Senior Exit Survey, and /or our federal College Scorecard.	+5%
2.a.2	Comparative rates of total overall and diverse students engaging in “high-impact practices” (HIPs).	+5%
2.a.3	Number and /or percentage of students participating in interdisciplinary curricular /co-curricular offerings.	+5%
2.b.1	Percentage of graduating seniors reporting that they engaged in research or creative projects with faculty.	+5%
2.b.2	Grant dollars received.	+10%
2.b.3	Internal support for research. (Includes RSP grants, college travel support, Scitech support, etc.)	+10%
2.b.4	Total number of scholarly publications, papers, and creative activities.	+5%
3.a.1	Total Degrees awarded both on-campus and at all off-campus sites (Bachelor’s and Master’s).	+5%
3.a.2	Number of degrees awarded in majors designated by the state as “high-demand.”	+10%
3.a.3	Number of international students.	+5%

Appendix A: Aspirational Thresholds of Core Theme Achievement (cont.)

	Core Theme Indicator of Achievement	Goal
3.a.4	Percentage of community partners expressing satisfaction with the outcomes of their community engagement with Western.	+10%
3.b.1	Number of curricular and co-curricular offerings addressing regional/indigenous issues.	+5%
3.b.2	Number of faculty and staff participating in community engagement opportunities and related professional development.	+5%
3.b.3	Sustain Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement.	-

*The baseline from which each goal is determined refers to our performance for our performance in academic year 2017-2018.