

REPORT TO THE NORTHWEST COMMISSION ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review



March 1, 2023

Addendum D: 2022 Ad Hoc Self-
evaluation Report Supplement to PRFR



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Western Washington University PRFR Report Addendum D

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Introduction

In 2017, Western Washington University (WWU) was evaluated for reaccreditation by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). In that Year Seven *Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Evaluation*, six recommendations were made by NWCCU in “areas where Western Washington University is substantially in compliance with Commission criteria for accreditation, but in need of improvement.” Following prior documentation to NWCCU by WWU in mid-cycle and ad-hoc reports, NWCCU determined that Recommendations 1-4 had been fulfilled. In correspondence dated July 22, 2020, NWCCU directed WWU to create an Ad Hoc Report in Spring 2022 to report on progress toward fulfillment of Recommendations 5 and 6. This report is WWU’s response to that request.

NWCCU Recommendation 5 from 2017 *Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Evaluation*:

The committee recommends that the institution reassess how well it is meeting student needs as it expands access to its educational programs and take corresponding actions for improvement (Standard 5.B.1).

NWCCU Standard for Accreditation 5.B.1 (in effect in 2017 before revised standards issued in 2020 and referenced in original recommendation)

Within the context of its mission and characteristics, the institution evaluates regularly the adequacy of its resources, capacity, and effectiveness of operations to document its ongoing potential to fulfill its mission, accomplish its core theme objectives, and achieve the goals or intended outcomes of its programs and services, wherever offered and however delivered.

NWCCU Standard for Accreditation 1.B.1 in revised 2020 standards (referenced in NWCCU 2020 correspondence regarding Recommendation 5).

The institution demonstrates a continuous process to assess institutional effectiveness, including student learning and achievement and support services. The institution uses an ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning process to inform and refine its effectiveness, assign resources, and improve student learning and achievement.

WWU Response

WWU continues to make substantial progress in addressing Recommendation 5 from our 2017 Year-Seven Evaluation, with particular emphasis on increasing access, diversity, equity, and inclusion in our programs and services. Advancing inclusive student success remains at the center of Western priorities. The university has been singularly focused on building and/or enhancing systems, structures and practices that increase retention and success for students, particularly groups who have been historically underrepresented in higher education and at Western.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further catalyzed our focus on these efforts. We saw an overall drop in enrollment of just over 5% from fall 2019 to fall 2020, interrupting several decades of slow, steady growth. We have been especially concerned about the differential impact that the pandemic has had on first-generation and low-income students at WWU; this has been observed, for example, in new student enrollments and first-year retention rates during the pandemic.

Since our mid-cycle report, significant additional steps have been taken toward supporting the needs of diverse sub-populations of students. These steps have included expanded staffing, enhanced services, dedicated facilities, enhancements in curriculum, and bold initiatives, as described below. These actions complement the work that was initiated in 2018 upon the completion of Western's Strategic Plan that calls for advancing inclusive success and increasing the university's impact in Washington and the region. The intent of this focused effort is to create a comprehensive array of services and programs to support the success of an increasingly diverse student body at Western.

Expanded Staffing

Western's goal is to build a resource base that provides the full extent of wrap-around services for Western students. Since 2018, the University has established an Office of LGBTQ+ Western and the Office of Tribal Liaison, with both programs led by new director-level positions. The Disability Access Center has been significantly expanded and the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance (CRTIC) has been remapped with increased staff positions.

More recent additions to creating this comprehensive resource base includes the following:

- **Director of Multicultural Student Services:** Amy Westmoreland, who came to WWU from Penn State, oversees the recently formed Multicultural Student Services office. This role is charged with leading initiatives and programs supporting WWU's strategic goals in equity, excellence, and inclusion for our students; including programming which centers racial and ethnic identities, experiences, and histories, intercultural communication, dialogue, and conflict resolution, inclusive celebrations, and transformational learning.
- **Assistant Director for Multicultural Student Engagement:** Position (currently vacant) will develop and lead student-focused programs and activities to bring together diverse and structurally marginalized communities, while centering identities, histories, and culturally responsive engagement. This role also provides leadership and coordination to two Associated Student programs: the Ethnic Student Center (ESC) and the Student Advocacy and Identity Resource Centers (SAIRC).
- **Basic Needs Resource Navigator:** Jon Stubblefield, previously with University Residences at WWU, has been hired to provide overall leadership in managing, implementing, and assessing student basic needs work in support of HB 1166, new legislation which extends Washington state's expansion of its Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness pilot. This two-year project position provides services to support the academic success of students who are experiencing homelessness or are in danger of homelessness, as well as students who are lacking other basic needs. Jon will serve as a non-clinical case manager, a point of referral and coordination with existing services, and will collaborate with on- and off-campus partners to ensure wrap-around services for basic needs in support of student success. This work is now also being centrally managed and coordinated through the Office of Student Life to improve visibility of these services with students.

The University also recently created an Office of Equity (please see the following section) and is in the process of hiring a Chief Diversity Officer and Executive Director of the Office of Equity to lead and coordinate diversity and equity efforts across the university with the goal of enhancing campus culture of respect, compassion, kindness, equity and inclusion.

Enhanced Services

The focus of our efforts has been to increase staffing in targeted service areas deemed critical to student retention and success and to creating a more inclusive and equitable campus culture. Several of the more important recent initiatives undertaken are highlighted below.

- **Support Services at Locations Outside of Bellingham:** WWU continues to extend collaboration with our college partners at locations beyond our main campus to ensure all students have access to support and services that will help ensure their success. In our Poulsbo location, a new joint position between WWU and Olympic College (OC) serves as the Campus Site Director and is a principal liaison between OC and WWU. We have integrated our student services teams from both institutions to ensure easy access to student advising for any student. This integrated and collaborative approach supports all students who visit the Poulsbo campus. Co-locating our staff ensures a warm hand-off from OC to WWU taking the 2+2 transfer option; our advisors are able to provide a more personal, hands-on approach to the transfer process for students, all while creating a relationship based advising model that supports the students. Advisors are well-known and present Monday – Friday for walk-in advising or by appointment. During the pandemic, we have pivoted advising to a virtual model; based on the interest and success of these offerings, we will continue virtual advising to support inclusive success for all students seeking a Western education. Additionally, our students in Everett now have the opportunity to access counseling services from Western. Previously these services were limited and provided by a third-party counselor. Beginning in Winter 2022, students can opt-in to pay the quarterly fee assessed to Bellingham students to receive virtual counseling services in addition to support for self-care, wellness, and crisis support. These services will expand to additional locations in Fall 2022.
- **Improving Counseling and Wellness Services:** The former Counseling Center and Prevention and Wellness Services have merged to form the Counseling and Wellness Center to streamline access for students who need mental health and social supports services. The Counseling and Wellness Center is also undergoing a remodel to refresh the spaces and create a more welcoming environment, introducing cultural art and bringing outdoor landscape elements into the buildings. The Center has recently hired a Director of Student Resilience and will also be adding four new counselors, including Black-identified, Indigenous, and LGBTQ mental health practitioners.
- **Creating a Gender-Affirming Care Team:** Led by staff in the Student Health Center, Counseling and Wellness Center, and LGBTQ+ Western, student services colleagues have created a Gender-Affirming Care Team to best coordinate holistic health and wellness care for gender-diverse students. Services provided include: programming to support positive identity development, academic success, and social connection; mental health care in individual and group settings; gender-affirming medical care; trans-affirming voice therapy; support and advocacy for survivors.
- **Reorganizing the Student Union:** The Viking Union Organization has undergone a dynamic reorganization to align leadership and resources to focus on the key growth areas of multicultural student engagement and community-based service/engagement.
- **Establishing the Bias Response and Structural Equity Teams:** In support of its institutional commitment to advance inclusive success and pursue justice and equity in programming, policies, and practices, Western created a two-fold structure in the fall of 2020. The first component is a Bias Response Team that coordinates prompt responses to bias incidents at the University and in the community. The second is a Structural Equity Team (SET) that uses information about bias incidents, and deeper examinations of the conditions leading to specific incidents, to inform longer-term actions and recommendations that build and sustain a more equitable and just environment. In addition, the SET will create an annual public report providing information about

reported incidents of bias, responsive actions undertaken by the Bias Response Team, and independent work undertaken by the SET, all of which will inform future work of the Teams and Western more broadly. The Structural Equity Team (SET) focuses on deeper examinations of the conditions and long-term actions and recommendations that build and sustain a more equitable, inclusive, and just environment. The SET work this year, and continuing into the next year, is driven by the vision for the recently created Office of Equity.

- **Creating the Office of Equity:**

The Office of Equity brings together two complementary functions: the existing compliance function housed in the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance and a more robust education and community training function. The Office of Equity engages individuals and groups in education, dialogue and learning; building community; examining Western's systems and structures through an equity lens; and providing visibility to, and advancing, key initiatives for inclusive student success and ADEI work on campus. In its work, the Office of Equity will partner with academic colleges, divisions, and departments across campus. In many ways, the work of the Office of Equity is to provide broad alignment across the university with institutional goals for ADEI, develop allyships to advance key priorities, and work with the President and the executive and academic leadership team of the university to ensure that as an institution we are making meaningful progress on our ADEI goals and metrics.

The Office of Equity will be headed by a cabinet level leader, the Executive Director of the Office of Equity and Chief Diversity Officer (Executive Director/CDO), who reports to the President of the University. The title reflects the role of providing the oversight to the Office and a university-wide responsibility to provide leadership and coordination of ADEI efforts. The Executive Director/CDO will be supported by two experienced director-level positions, one for the compliance function and the other for the education and community training function.

- **Budget Request for Enhanced Student Services to Support Inclusive Student Success**

Western continues to advocate for additional state resources to support our student success efforts. Western's current supplemental request includes a package that would, among other things, provide additional staffing for several key areas including mental health care, supporting former foster youth and unaccompanied homeless youth, non-clinical case management and retention support for historically marginalized populations, veteran certification services, and financial aid. While the outcome of this funding request will not be finalized until mid-March, early draft budgets from the House, Senate, and the Governor's Office all include at least partial funding for this request.

As we recover from almost two years of the coronavirus pandemic, which has included significant social upheaval, it will be important to gauge students' take on institutional climate. To this end, Western will be conducting a student climate survey in winter/spring 2022 to better understand the challenges faced by students and to inform ADEI work going forward.

Dedicated Facilities

An important component of the overall support structure is new facilities and enhancement of existing facilities, as well as examination of university's policies around systems and structures. The Structural Equity Team, mentioned in the previous section, is a new institution-wide committee examining some of the systemic trends. Additionally, the University has made important commitments to better represent the current societal diversity in its infrastructure. More than names these activities are important indicators of the type of inclusive environment we would to promote at Western.

- **Opening Alma Clark Glass Hall:** A new residence hall named for WWU's first Black student, Alma Clark Glass, features Black Affinity Housing. This inclusive living community explores and celebrates the diversity of Black

and African-American people and culture while supporting residents' social, personal, and academic success. Other themed living groups also reside in the building including queer inclusive housing.

- **Planning for a Coast Salish Longhouse:** WWU has received funding to build a large cedar longhouse in honor of the historic importance of place that it occupies and in acknowledgement of the University's responsibility to promote educational opportunities for Native students. The longhouse will be used to host Native American Student Union events and to serve as a cultural center for meetings, workshops and educational seminars. This project has been developed in direct response to demands presented by the Native American Student Union.
- **Addressing Problematic Naming:** Based on the recommendations of a Legacy Review Task Force, the Board of Trustees has decided to remove the name "Huxley" from College of the Environment and to direct the University to conduct a thorough assessment of the Viking name in the broader context of the University mascot. This review was conducted, and the resulting decision made, in direct response to demands presented by the Black Student Organization.

Enhancements in Curriculum

A critical element of the university's comprehensive effort is changes in our learning environment and our traditions to better reflect the changing demographics in our society and in our educational institutions. Our recent efforts include:

- **Expanding Ethnic Studies Curriculum:** One of the most notable changes in the demographics of WWU students over the last decade has been an increase in the enrollment of students of color, from 24% in 2011 to 30% in 2021. During the same time, students, faculty, staff and campus leadership became more aware and vocal about the need to address the structural and legacy factors that exist at WWU as a historically white institution that continue to make WWU less successful in serving students of color. Student leadership (ratified by a vote of the student body) identified the expansion of curriculum in Ethnic Studies as a top priority, and the University successfully pursued almost \$500,000 in additional funding for Ethnic Studies. This will fund new faculty positions and support the development in new curriculum in this critical area.
- **New General Education Requirement in Power, Equity and Justice:** Under the leadership of the Faculty Senate, a new requirement for coursework in "Power, Equity and Justice" is being developed as the primary initiative for improving general education at WWU. This effort responds to student demands for greater literacy on equity issues on campus and envisions the hiring of a significant cadre of new faculty with expertise in the appropriate areas of the social sciences.
- **Flexible Coursework:** The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic as the dominant catalyst for change in higher education was not envisioned when we wrote our 2017 self-evaluation, but it has certainly been the most important factor in how well we have been meeting student academic needs over the last two years. Like most other universities, we made an unprecedented, immediate shift to online instruction in March 2020. After consultation with student and faculty leadership, grading was shifted to pass/no pass for spring quarter 2020, and additional flexibility in selecting pass/no pass grading was maintained as an option for students in the 2020-2021 academic year. The current term (Winter Quarter 2022) has been no exception, with rapid shifts to remote instruction necessitated by the rapid spread of the Omicron variant.
- **Enhanced Instructional and Technical Support During COVID:** With the unprecedented shift to remote instruction came the immediate need for rapid training of faculty in the tools and techniques involved. Our technical services team stepped up support and training for more than 1000 professors who suddenly faced remote teaching. During spring, 2020 we offered more professional development sessions each week than we normally offered each quarter. Attendance at these Zoom or Teams sessions was very high as well, some with up to 160 participants. As fast as we could offer support via emails, one-on-one consultations, and one-to-many trainings, we also needed materials for people to teach themselves, thus, we created about 50 "how-to"

documents and 100 videos. With CARES Act funding to offer faculty stipends, we delivered 50 workshops plus another 12 faculty-led workshops, resulting in 2400 registrations by faculty. This was supplemented by hardware support of the loan of laptops and/or Wi-Fi hotspots for faculty who did not have access to these at home.

- **Expanding Support for Diverse Traditions:** Western has taken active steps to expand our commitments to supporting traditions that honor and celebrate diversity and which create a more welcoming environment for students and employees of varying identities. The university has taken a more centralized approach to supporting various cultural events (e.g. MLK Day, Black History month, Indigenous Peoples' Day) and partnering with the local k-12 school district, other local colleges, local tribes, and city officials for community-wide celebration. The institution has also provided full funding for the annual Pow-Wow and in support of other cultural events.

Bold Initiatives

- **First-Gen Forward Initiative:** The Center for First-generation Student Success, an initiative of NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education), has awarded WWU with the First-Gen Forward designation, which recognizes institutions of higher education who have demonstrated a commitment to improving experiences and advancing outcomes of first-generation college students. In 2021, WWU conducted a series of focus groups and a survey of first-generation students and will use the results to inform expanded services for this critical sub-population, which comprises nearly 30% of the overall student population. Two major goals informed by this work include forming a University-wide Collective to better understand how we are supporting first-generation students across the university and to develop a family toolkit to support the student experience.
- **Becoming a Health-Promoting Institution:** As part of a comprehensive plan to improve student and employee health and wellbeing, WWU has adopted the Okanagan Charter and joined the United States Health Promoting Campuses Network, an initial cohort of eight U.S. universities committed to becoming health-promoting institutions. By adopting the charter, we are making an institutional commitment to move toward more systems-level strategies that influence the health and wellbeing of every member of the Western community.
- **Supporting Foster/Unaccompanied Homeless Youth:** The Western Success Scholars (WSS) is a 3-year grant-funded, campus-based supportive program, designed to assist incoming and continuing students who have formerly been in the foster youth system or have started Western as an unaccompanied homeless youth. This program works extensively with the Basic Needs Resource Navigator due to the extent of intersectionality in the populations served by both staffing areas. In its third year, the Western Success Scholars Program Manager continues to grow participation in the program, having exceeded initial goals for participation within the first six months of the 3-year grant-funded project. This pilot is a good example of the benefits of aligning private philanthropy with the needs of the university.

Closing Statement

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, WWU was on a steady trajectory of enrollment growth of about 1% per year from 2001 to 2019. WWU has also become a more racially diverse campus, with 29.2% of students being people of color in fall 2021, compared to 21.9% in fall 2012; most of the enrollment growth of the last decade can be attributed to WWU's increasing diversity. WWU has also created new opportunities for students to enroll who are not resident in Bellingham, including at sites in Poulsbo, Bremerton and Port Angeles.

The 2018-2025 [WWU Strategic Plan](#) focuses on advancing inclusive student success, enhancing academic excellence and increasing our contribution to workforce needs in Washington State. The plan also established ambitious goals for inclusive student academic achievement. Our progress toward these goals is actively and publicly tracked

(<https://provost.wwu.edu/overall-metrics>). The pandemic has interrupted our progress toward some of our key enrollment goals; for this and other reasons, we recognize that we need to continue to innovate in how we provide the academic and co-curricular support that our students need. This was a primary motivator for the creation of the Strategic Budgeting Process (<https://bfp.wwu.edu/wwu-budget>) that was initiated in December 2021. It is through this process that we plan to ensure that WWU continues to fulfill its mission (<https://president.wwu.edu/mission-strategic-plan>) as we adapt to the ever-changing circumstances that higher education is presented with.

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NWCCU Recommendation 6 from 2017 Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Evaluation

The committee recommends that the institution update its Campus Master Plan (Standard 2.G.3).

NWCCU Standard for Accreditation 2.G.3 (in effect in 2017 before revised standards issued in 2020)

The institution develops, implements, and reviews regularly a master plan for its physical development that is consistent with its mission, core themes, and long-range educational and financial plans.

NWCCU Standard for Accreditation 2.I.1 in revised 2020 standards (referenced in NWCCU 2020 correspondence regarding Recommendation 6).

Consistent with its mission, the institution creates and maintains physical facilities and technology infrastructure that are accessible, safe, secure, and sufficient in quantity and quality to ensure healthful learning and working environments that support and sustain the institution's mission, academic programs, and services.

WWU Response

As documented in the appended email communication (see below in this document), since the mid-cycle report we've continued to work with our NWCCU liaison to fulfill this recommendation; we assert that campus planning is a strength at WWU. We have a robust ongoing campus planning process that supports the physical infrastructure needed for the university to fulfill its mission. The efforts to develop new campus facilities are done within the context of a long-term Institutional Master Plan (IMP) that is developed with the collaboration of city and neighborhood representatives and is, in essence, the regulatory approval for the zoning for the Bellingham campus. The current "Institutional Master Plan" filed with the city can be found at this link: <https://www.cob.org/wp-content/uploads/wwu-imp.pdf>.

Within the larger framework laid out by that regulatory document, the plans for campus facilities are updated regularly in an extensive process involving faculty, staff and administrators. In our process, the WWU Capital Plan currently serves the purposes of what would be called a "Campus Master Plan" on other campuses. This also serves to differentiate it from the nomenclature of the "Institutional Master Plan" that is required under city code. The Campus Capital Plan was submitted to the state in September 2020 (replacing the previous plan submitted in 2018) following review and feedback from a Faculty Senate committee, and the broader campus community and approval by the Board of Trustees. This 10-year (2021-2031) plan includes major, intermediate, and minor works preservation and programmatic projects: https://cpd.wwu.edu/files/2020-09/Final%202021-31%20Capital%20Request_1.pdf.

The WWU Department of Capital Planning and Development has outlined the need for a new multi-decadal Comprehensive Master Plan that would likely lead to the updating of the IMP described above and initiated the budget and planning processes to move this process forward. That IMP established a maximum of 4 million gross square feet of

building space within the bounds of Western's main campus. Looking at the major projects being planned in the near future, Western is approaching that cap. Provisions in the original IMP require a new IMP be drafted and adopted prior to the application for building permit of any structure that would exceed that amount of space. A new Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be required in conjunction with the review and adoption of a new IMP.

While the original IMP provided a relatively flexible framework that allowed for growth of the main campus, it was not intended as a guiding document for projecting future needs of the University, nor did it outline a strategy for meeting those needs. The Comprehensive Master Plan will provide a multi-decadal extension of the 10-year framework of integrated capital and operational budget planning processes described above. Creation of the comprehensive plan will involve a multi-year effort involving campus and community stakeholders, as well as engagement with expert consultants. These strategic investments will guide campus planning at WWU for decades to come.