

# **Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report**

**Prepared for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities**

**Western Washington University**

**February 2020**

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## I: Mission Fulfillment

The institution provides an executive summary which describes the institution's framework for its ongoing accreditation efforts. This might include evidence of institutional effectiveness, Core Themes, or other appropriate mechanisms for measuring fulfillment of its mission.

The framework for Western's approach to Mission Fulfillment began with the empaneling of our Strategic Planning Committee in February 2017. The committee's work was informed by an iterative process of stakeholder feedback regarding Western's future and the value and purpose of a new institutional framework. As discussed by President Randhawa in an important communication to the campus during the early stages of strategic planning, this work and feedback comprised a process of "getting clear about what matters," underscoring the collective "whys" motivating the strategic plan. (See [Imperative to Change](#).) "It is important to reflect on the 'why' before we transition our focus from planning to implementation," he noted. "If we have a strong 'why,' an unshakable commitment to our purpose, then the 'how' will follow." Continuing, he explained that Western's "whys" are grounded in three moral imperatives:

First, we believe Western has a moral imperative to expand access to higher education, particularly for those from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds, including first generation and ethnically diverse students. Why is this a moral imperative? Because there is no more powerful economic and social equalizer than higher educational attainment, both for individual graduates and the communities they come from and ultimately settle in. Public higher education was created in the mid-19th century to provide a more equal playing field for those from less privileged backgrounds, and its history is essentially one of increasing inclusion and access to the transformative opportunities it affords. It is past time to expand that circle of inclusion and upward social mobility to economically disadvantaged, ethnically diverse, and first-generation students. Increasing the graduation and success rates of all students, but especially these students—and ensuring that they feel welcome and valued—is advancing social justice and equity in one of the most concrete and measurable ways possible.

Second, we are committed to sustaining and enhancing Western's distinctive approach to education—grounded in the liberal arts and sciences, emphasizing high-impact learning experiences, faculty-mentored undergraduate research, and fostering skills, knowledge and habits of mind that prepare students to effectively contribute to rapidly evolving societal needs. Now, more than ever, the world needs critical thinkers to step up and make it a better place: people who are problem solvers, comfortable with diverse experiences and beliefs, empathetic and able to collaborate and communicate across cultural lines.

The third and final 'why' that motivates Western's new strategic plan is that we must adapt to a changing world if we are going to avoid becoming irrelevant, elite-serving, or a compromised version of ourselves. This is not so much about what we want to impose upon the world in terms of our values and goals, but about what the world is imposing upon us in terms of facts. Changing demography means that more of our students *will*

be coming from underrepresented backgrounds and first-generation families, and they will need us to step up to meet them where they are with more support services to ensure their success. Over and apart from the moral imperative to expand access and success rates for these students, Western simply cannot sustain itself with students from more or less privileged backgrounds. Accordingly, the way we measure our success must change as well: it's not simply about attracting the most prepared, highest achieving students, it's also about how far we can take all students by the time they graduate.

As the Committee discussed these "whys" and the feedback it had received from campus on the question "What should Western be and do in the future?" it became clear that new mission and vision statements would be needed to capture these imperatives and the institution's new commitment act on them—particularly with regard to an increased emphasis on equity in student success and achievement. To these ends, campus feedback was sifted and organized into areas of emphasis. Consistent with previous Standard 1.B.1, these areas were identified as our core themes, manifesting essential elements of the mission while collectively encompassing the mission. These essential elements, represented by the three core themes, are "Inclusive Success," "Washington Impact," and "Academic Excellence," as described by President Randhawa at the University's fall 2018 convocation. The new institutional mission and values statement, as well as our vision and core themes are prominently displayed [here](#). The new mission is as follows:

"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."

This emerging framework for our strategic plan was also informed by close attention to accreditation expectations—particularly those concerning mission fulfillment. We were helped in this regard by our President, who previously served as a NWCCU Commissioner, and by our Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs who co-chaired the Strategic Planning Committee while remaining active as a NWCCU evaluator. Each of these individuals remained in contact with the ALO throughout the process and was mindful of the need to produce both a useful and meaningful strategic plan and a meaningful structure suitable for our ongoing accreditation efforts.

Guided by the previous accreditation standards and overlapping with our strategic plan's goal metrics, we established definitions, core theme objectives and corresponding indicators of achievement, as well as goal metrics, for each of these core themes. These were modified through discussions with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the Strategic Planning Committee with an eye to clarity, measurability, and usefulness.

### **Assessment of Mission Fulfillment**

These themes and metrics formed the basis of our [Year One Self-Evaluation Report](#), which we submitted in May 2018, and which was accepted by NWCCU on July 31, 2018 "with no further action required." As noted in that report, we define 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.

In the previous accreditation cycle we reported ongoing assessment of mission fulfillment via a mission fulfillment report that was printed and shared electronically across campus. (See [Mission Fulfillment Report](#).) For this cycle we created a simple, one-page dashboard so that assessment of our progress toward mission and core-theme fulfillment can be easily and continuously communicated and tracked. (See [Overall Metrics Dashboard](#).) In addition, progress relative to mission fulfillment is summarized in the President's Annual Report to the University community and Board of Trustees. (See [President's Annual Report](#).) The report is discussed each year by the BOT at their summer meeting and is widely distributed in electronic and print formats. (See [Western Today Article](#).) In this way we ensure that the broader university community, as well as the Board of Trustees, is involved in our process of assessing mission fulfillment and, more importantly, in making resource and strategic decisions informed by our mission and core theme fulfillment data.

Mission fulfillment, of course, is more than capturing progress on quantitative metrics. Creating and sustaining institutional climate and culture is just as important in attracting and retaining a diverse community of students, faculty and staff, and ensuring that they are successful while at Western and beyond. To this end, Western has started and/or expanded a number of programs and initiatives. These range from creating a Values campaign and WWU Kindness Day, to the Provost's Diversity and Hiring Initiative to hire, retain and advance faculty to cultivate a more diverse campus, and to the construction of the Multicultural Center. Many of the student-related initiatives are captured on the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion webpage (See [DEI](#).) Transformative cultural changes need to be inclusive, persistent and long-term, and Western is committed to creating an exemplary institutional culture and climate foundational to advancing our mission and core themes.

### **Core Themes**

Informed by the previous accreditation standards, our strategic planning documents describe our core themes as “overarching constructs essential for advancing the institutional mission.” While the revised Core Themes identify distinct areas centrally related to mission fulfillment, they also prioritize objectives and indicators identified by the Strategic Planning Committee as key to all the themes—such as improvement in our rates of retention and graduation. However, for the sake of simplicity, we only list shared metrics once, under Core Theme 1.

Advancing inclusive excellence, increasing Washington impact and enhancing academic excellence represent those overarching constructs. We believe that progress on advancing institutional mission and vision requires making significant and continuous progress on these ideals, which reflect the goals of the strategic plan. Following this

framing, we established a definition and rationale, an overarching goal, and measurable objectives for each core theme.

### **Core Theme 1: Advancing Inclusive Success**

Education is the most powerful social equalizer, a true engine for upward mobility. While postsecondary institutions become increasingly diverse, the degree attainment gap persists for low-income students and students of color. We recognize that our most important challenge is to advance inclusive success, that is, increase retention and persistence rates and the number of graduates, while eliminating achievement gaps for students from diverse and under-represented socio-economic backgrounds. We have a great platform to advance access and completion at Western, starting with a six year graduation rate of 70 percent, one of the best in the region.

**Advancing Inclusive Success Goal:** Increase retention and persistence rates and the number of graduates, while eliminating achievement gaps for students from diverse and under-represented socio-economic backgrounds.

#### **Objectives:**

- Increase first-to-second year retention overall, and for students of color, and PELL-grant eligible students.
- Increase six-year graduation rates overall, and for students of color, and PELL-grant eligible students.
- Increase transfer 4-year graduation rates overall, and for students of color, and PELL-grant eligible students.

### **Core Theme 2: Increasing Washington Impact**

In the next decade, two-thirds of the jobs in Washington will require some form of post-secondary education. We recognize that to contribute to the future workforce needs in Washington and the region we need to expand access to our programs, increase persistence and graduation rates, and partner with other education providers to offer programs and credentials to place-bound and non-traditional students. At the same time we must prepare our students to be successful in a continuously changing work and social environment, where technology and automation are driving employment trends and changing the nature of work and relationships.

**Increasing Washington Impact Goal:** Expand access to our programs, increase persistence and graduation rates, and partner with other education providers to offer programs and credentials to place-bound and non-traditional students.

#### **Objectives:**

- Increase degrees awarded overall, and for graduate students and state “high needs areas.”
- Increase enrollment for students of color, off-campus students, and for students enrolled in Outreach and Continuing Education (OCE) programs.

### **Core Theme 3: Enhancing Academic Excellence**

Western provides a transformational education grounded in the liberal arts and sciences and based on innovative scholarship, research and creative activity to foster the development of engaged members of a global community. Making progress on critical issues—from environmental sustainability and climate change, to human health, economic vitality and cultural diversity—requires investing in, and nurturing, a faculty culture that integrates knowledge and exploration in our undergraduate and graduate programs. We will continue to enhance the high quality of our undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts and professional programs, while simultaneously extending our reach to become a greater catalyst for regional economic and social development. We strive to expand and deepen our work to build a diverse, inclusive and equitable community and culture in terms of access and success, curriculum, learning, shared experiences, embedded values and beliefs, and engagement opportunities to create enduring change.

**Enhancing Academic Excellence Goal:** Enhance the high quality of our undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts and professional programs, while simultaneously extending our reach to become a greater catalyst for regional economic and social development.

#### **Objectives:**

- Increase tenure / tenure-track faculty overall, and for faculty of color.
- Increase annual research revenue for Research & Sponsored Programs (external), and university supported research and creative activities (internal).

As previously noted, our performance relative to each of these objectives is displayed on the [Overall Metrics](#) dashboard.

## **2: Student Achievement**

The institution provides a brief overview of the student achievement measures it uses as part of its ongoing self-reflection, along with comparative data and information from at least five institutions it uses in benchmarking its student achievement efforts. In providing the overview, the institution may consider including published indicators including (but not limited to) persistence, completion, retention, and post-graduation success student achievement measures. Additionally, the report must include the widely published indicators disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, first generation college student, Pell status, and any other institutionally meaningful categories that may help promote student achievement and close equity gaps, i.e., barriers to academic excellence and success amongst students from underserved communities.

With respect to the assessment of student achievement, Western is an unusual institution. We are, for instance, high-performing but not selective. Within the overall IPEDS data base our graduation rates place us alongside “highly selective” public institutions which accept 25% or less of their applicants, while Western accepts nearly 90% of our applicants and, consequently, serve a first-year class of students much more varied in their academic preparation than universities we otherwise appear to resemble.

In addition, some of our key assessment and improvement initiatives are not easily visible in our student achievement data. For instance, while our persistence and graduation rates for historically underrepresented students are among the highest in our class of comprehensive, masters-granting public institutions, our internal assessments direct us to prioritize improvements in climate and support for these students.

These features of our performance make establishing “peer” comparisons an interesting puzzle. For example, the algorithms of [College Results Online](#), a transparency initiative of the Education Trust designed to hold institutions accountable for equitable student success and achievement, currently ranks Western fourth in an eclectic list of institutions it considers “similar” to Western:

**Table 1: Similar Institutions to Western as Reported by College Results Online**

Institution	2017 6-year Grad Rate	2017 6-year Grad Rate: Minorities	% of Pell Recipients among Frosh	% Minorities	High School GPA (Frosh)	Estimated Median SAT / ACT
University of New Hampshire	77.5%	68.0%	20.6%	4.9%	3.46	1101
Univ. Pennsylvania, West Chester	72.6%	58.0%	24.1%	16.5%	3.44	1061
University of Oregon	72%	63.6%	25.8%	13.6%	3.58	1111
<b>Western Washington University</b>	<b>69.0%</b>	<b>66.0%</b>	<b>22.3%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	<b>3.41</b>	<b>1122</b>
Rowan University	68.9%	55.1%	28.9%	20.3%	3.46	1125
Illinois State University	68.8%	56.8%	30.3%	18.6%	3.36	1090
University of Nebraska, Lincoln	67.9%	55.9%	23.9%	8.7%	3.65	1144
University of Northern Iowa	67.5%	64.8%	23.7%	6.8%	3.49	1050
Univ. of Wisconsin, Eau Claire	66.6%	53.7%	23.0%	3.7%	-	1110
Georgia College & State Univ.	66.0%	60.2%	18.8%	10.8%	3.47	1116
University of Rhode Island	65.6%	59.1%	24.0%	15.0%	3.45	1081
University of Kansas	63.1%	49.8%	23.4%	12.1%	3.60	1185
University of Mississippi	60.1%	44.5%	22.5%	16.4%	3.54	1155
North Dakota State University	58.0%	35.2%	20.9%	5.9%	3.43	1091
Georgia Southern University	49.9%	46.6%	33.1%	31.1%	3.33	1110
Univ. of Tennessee, Chattanooga	45.2%	39.2%	31.2%	14.5%	3.51	1088

In addition, we work hard to balance attention to persistence and graduation with assessment of academic quality and achievement. Consequently, we regularly use a broad and robust range of peer comparisons, intentionally selected for specific purposes, and have come to rely on a unique combination of student achievement measures, disaggregated whenever possible, representing both internal and nationally benchmarked comparisons.



## Student Achievement Measures

To begin with, and in alignment with our strategic plan—which foregrounds our commitments to equity, justice and accountability—Western has a history of transparently disaggregating student achievement for the purpose of tracking mission fulfillment and of assessing and improving our service to our students. Within our previous accreditation cycle (2010-2017), for instance, our indicators of mission fulfillment included the following aspirational goals:

- Increase the graduation rate for Pell Grant Eligible students to 65%.
- Increase the student of color graduation rate to 66%.
- Ensure that graduation rates for students of color remain at least 10% better than the mean rate of our Board of Trustees comparison group (as informed by IPEDS data). (See [IPEDS Data Feedback Reports](#).)

As noted in our 2017 Mission Fulfillment Report, we were pleased to report that we achieved each of these goals at least once over the course of the previous accreditation cycle, though we have not yet been able to sustain this performance in each area. (See [Mission Fulfillment Report](#).)

Building on this success, and the benefits we found in disaggregating our graduation rate goals, we have approached this cycle’s strategic planning cycle by raising equity in student achievement to our most visible component of mission fulfillment, establishing “Inclusive Success” as our first Core Theme. We have also built upon our previous achievements by making our goals yet more aspirational and by establishing additional intermediary objectives to help guide our efforts to achieve them. This is demonstrated in our new Core Themes and Core Theme Objectives pertaining to Mission Fulfillment. We find the clarity and simplicity of these indicators to be useful as they are focused and prioritized to operationalize our key values. That is why the [President’s Annual Report](#) reports out our performance, relative to these indicators each year, and why these are the metrics discussed annually by the Board of Trustees. However, for the purpose of more comprehensively assessing the component parts which roll up to contribute to our Core Themes, our Strategic Goals are more numerous and include the Core Theme objectives as well as additional objectives, or “Sub Goals,” to each Goal. As with our Core Theme 1, our progress relative to these indicators is measured in real time on our “Detailed Metrics” dashboard. (See [Detailed Metrics](#).)

**Goal 1.** Western will provide a transformational education grounded in the liberal arts and sciences and based on innovative scholarship, research, and creative activity.

Indicators:

- Percentage of students engaging in High Impact Practices (HIPs) and types of HIPs engaged in.
- Level and “Mental Activities” emphasized in student course work.
- Satisfaction with usefulness and challenge level of our General Education coursework.

- Internship Participation.
- Graduation rates, disaggregated by first-gen status, academic preparation, gender, Pell-eligible status, and race.
- Graduation rates for students of color.
- Number of departments offering Gen Ed courses, and rates of seats filled.
- Second-Year Retention disaggregated by Pell-eligible status and underrepresented race.

**Goal 2.** Western will advance a deeper understanding of and engagement with place.

Indicators:

- Number of students originating outside the United States.
- Number of students who participated in an internship while at Western.

**Goal 3.** Western will foster a caring and supportive environment where all members are respected and treated fairly.

Indicators:

- Percentage of students attending Western who have a disability.
- Student's satisfaction levels with the quality of relationships with other students, faculty, and staff/administrators.
- Percentage of Western students dealing with food insecurity.
- Graduation rates for fall-entering students (freshmen and transfers), disaggregated by students of color and Pell-eligible status.
- Graduation rates for students of color.
- Graduation rates for freshmen and transfers disaggregated by first-generation, high school GPA, and gender.
- Second-Year Retention disaggregated by Pell-eligible status and underrepresented race.

**Goal 4.** Western will pursue justice and equity in its policies, practices, and impacts.

Indicators:

- Linguistic diversity as measured by the percentage of students who speak a language other than English, or a language other than English is spoken by their family at home.
- Tuition and fees tracking.
- Student's satisfaction levels with the quality of relationships with other students, faculty, staff and administrators.
- Graduation rates for fall-entering students (freshmen and transfers), disaggregated by students of color and Pell-eligible status.

- Graduation rates for students of color.
- Graduation rates for freshmen and transfers disaggregated by first-generation, HSGPA, and gender.
- Second-Year Retention disaggregated by Pell-eligible status and underrepresented race.

Recognizing the shaping force of the diversity of students we enroll, the influence of college costs, and the impact of social and institutional features upon the student achievement measures, included in detailed metrics above the following strategic goal indicators:

- Quality of Student Relationships With People at Western, including:
  - Relationships with other students,
  - Relationships with faculty members,
  - Relationships with administrative personnel and offices.
- Tuition and Fees (current and trending over time).
- Languages spoken by incoming students.
- Number of students with documented disabilities.
- Enrollment and Demographics of International Students.
- Percentage of Students Reporting Food Insecurities.

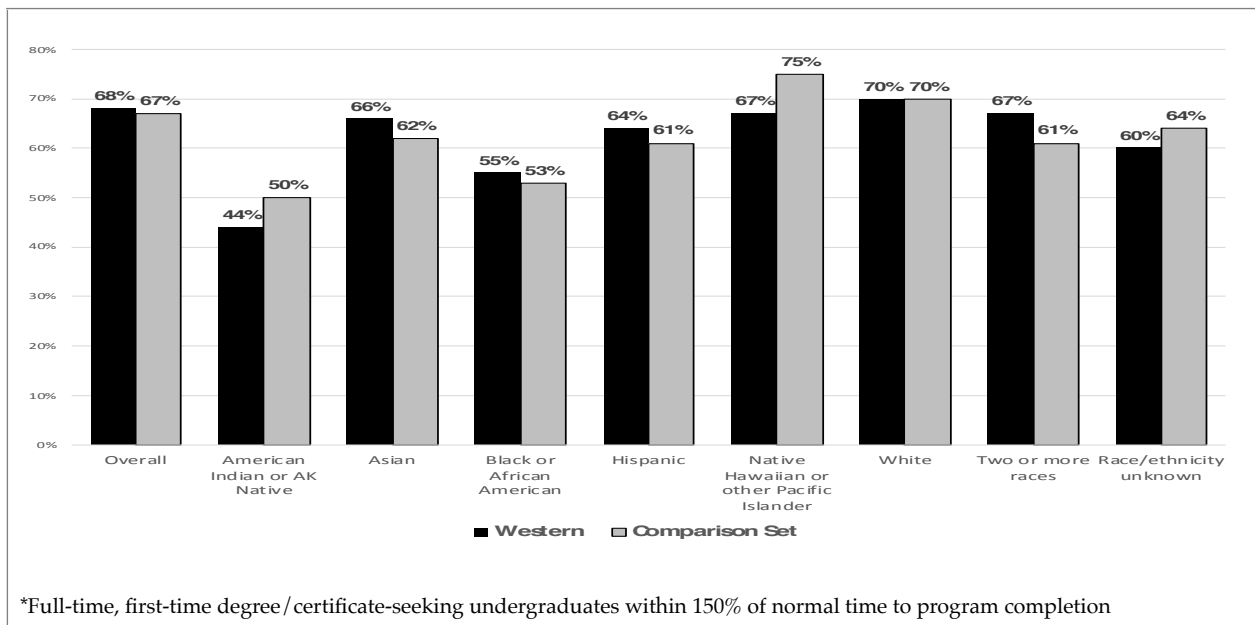
We gather most of this data via the Western Educational Longitudinal Studies (WELS) surveys administered by our Office of Survey Research. This allows us to fine tune questions and to track, publish and reflect on more recent data than would be possible were we to rely on IPEDS or the NSSE. Our WELS surveys have a high response rate and are more “actionable” in that they provide more recent data and allow us to add new questions as needs arise. For instance, a professor from our Department of Health and Human Development recently completed research suggesting that as many as 1/3 of our students are periodically food insecure. Based on those findings, we immediately added a food insecurity question to our WELS surveys so that we can monitor this need among our students and the adequacy of our response.

While our WELS surveys provide more current data than can be provided by national surveys, we do use nationally benchmarked data for benchmarking and peer comparisons. In fact, many of our WELS questions track items used in national surveys or are informed by national comparisons. For instance, the importance of our strategic indicator concerning student reports of quality of “Relationships with administrative personnel and offices” was informed by NSSE data demonstrating that we trail our peers on this measure.

## Comparative and Benchmarked Data

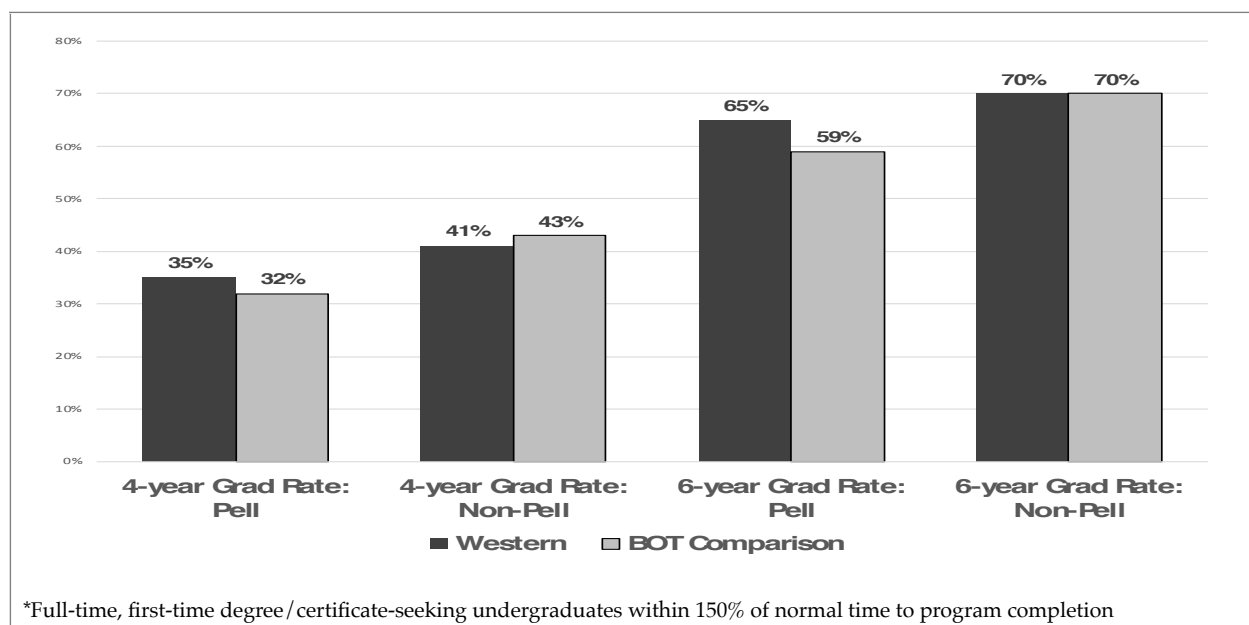
Western has used several sets of peer institutions over the last two decades. All have been developed for specific purposes and rely on the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). One of Western’s comparison data sets was developed in 2004 by the Board of Trustees for use in benchmarking various areas. (See [BOT Peers Set](#).) This list continues to be used for multiple purposes. For example, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) annually distributes a report prepared by the National Center for Education Statistics that compares Western’s performance on several important IPEDS data points with the Board of Trustees peers. (See [IPEDS Reports](#).) The prime benefits of the Board of Trustees peers are the number (25 institutions) and variety of institutions; these allow Western to compare performance against the average of a diverse set of universities across the country. For example, here are our graduation rates of full-time, first time students, compared to the mean of our 25 peers, disaggregated by race/ethnicity for the 2012 cohort.

**Figure 1: Graduation Rates: WWU v. BOT Comparison by Race/Ethnicity – 2012 cohort**



The 2010-11 cohort is our most recent IPEDS comparison of our enrollment and completion rates for first-time, full-time undergraduates, disaggregated by Pell status, compared to our 25 peers:

**Figure 2: Graduation Rates: WWU v. BOT Comparison by Pell Eligibility – 2010-11 cohort**



A second set of peer institutions is Western’s [Global Challenge State peers](#). This list was compiled by the State as part of a statewide effort to increase Washington institutions’ performance relative to institutions in a few selected states (California, Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey, and Virginia).

A third set of peer institutions is used in determining parts of salary increases for faculty per the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). This list is compiled according to Appendix E of the CBA, which specifies these as those public universities in the 2010 Carnegie Master’s Large classification with 10,000 or more FTE students. This list changes every year based on enrollment and reporting variances. It is only used for the specific purpose identified in the CBA.

The fourth and most recent set is the set of aspirational peer institutions developed by the Strategic Planning Committee and presented in conjunction with the strategic plan to the Board in 2018. The President’s charge to the committee included the directive “to establish a new peer institution list that would help drive establishing stretch goals for the institution.” Following a process that included the examination of IPEDS data, the state context, university websites, and other rankings, the committee identified seven institutions that it deemed aspirational in one or more important dimensions, such as work in equity, inclusion, and diversity; internationalization; student retention and graduation; social mobility; and research productivity. All seven of these institutions are on the Board peer list, and all but one of the eligible institutions are on the Global Challenge list. (See [Aspirational Peer Comparison Set](#), page 9.)

Benchmarked comparisons between Western and our Aspirational Peer Comparison Set regarding retention rates overall include the following:

**Table 2: Aspirational Peer Comparison Set: Retention Rates Overall**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Percent of full-time, first-time, bachelor's degree seeking, fall 2017 undergrads returning in fall 2018</b>
Cal Poly San Luis Obispo	94%
Georgia College and State University	85%
Stockton University	85%
Appalachian State University	87%
University of North Carolina Wilmington	83%
College of Charleston	79%
James Madison University	90%
<b>Average for Comparison Institutions:</b>	<b>86%</b>
Western Washington University	81%

Benchmarked comparisons between Western and these institutions regarding our costs and enrollments that we are currently reflecting on include the following:

**Table 3: Benchmarked Comparisons: Western v. Aspirational Peers – Costs, Degrees Awarded, Enrollments**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>% of applicants admitted, fall 2018*</b>	<b>FT enrollment, 2017-18</b>	<b>Master's degrees awarded, 2017-18</b>	<b>Bachelor's degrees awarded, 2017-18</b>	<b>Academic year tuition and fees, 2018-19**</b>	<b>Average net price of attendance for students awarded grant/scholarship aid.</b>
Appalachian State	69%	18,681	701	3,893	\$7,364	\$10,491
Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo	30%	21,329	630	4,808	\$9,816	\$20,036
College of Charleston	79%	10,334	220	2,222	\$12,838	\$19,649
Georgia College and State University	78%	6,790	337	1,201	\$9,346	\$20,478
James Madison University	71%	21,266	778	4,450	\$12,016	\$17,753
Stockton University	84%	9,739	256	2,033	\$13,739	\$18,577
University of North Carolina Wilmington	61%	15,368	625	3,708	\$7,091	\$17,771
<b>Average for Comparison Institutions:</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>14,787</b>	<b>507</b>	<b>3,188</b>	<b>\$10,316</b>	<b>\$17,822</b>
WWU	88%	14,669	309	3,482	\$8,126	\$17,403

\*First-time, degree/certification seeking undergraduates. \*\*First-time, full-time, degree/certification seeking undergraduates. Source: IPEDS

Benchmarked comparisons between Western and these institutions regarding graduation rates, disaggregated by race/ethnicity include the following:

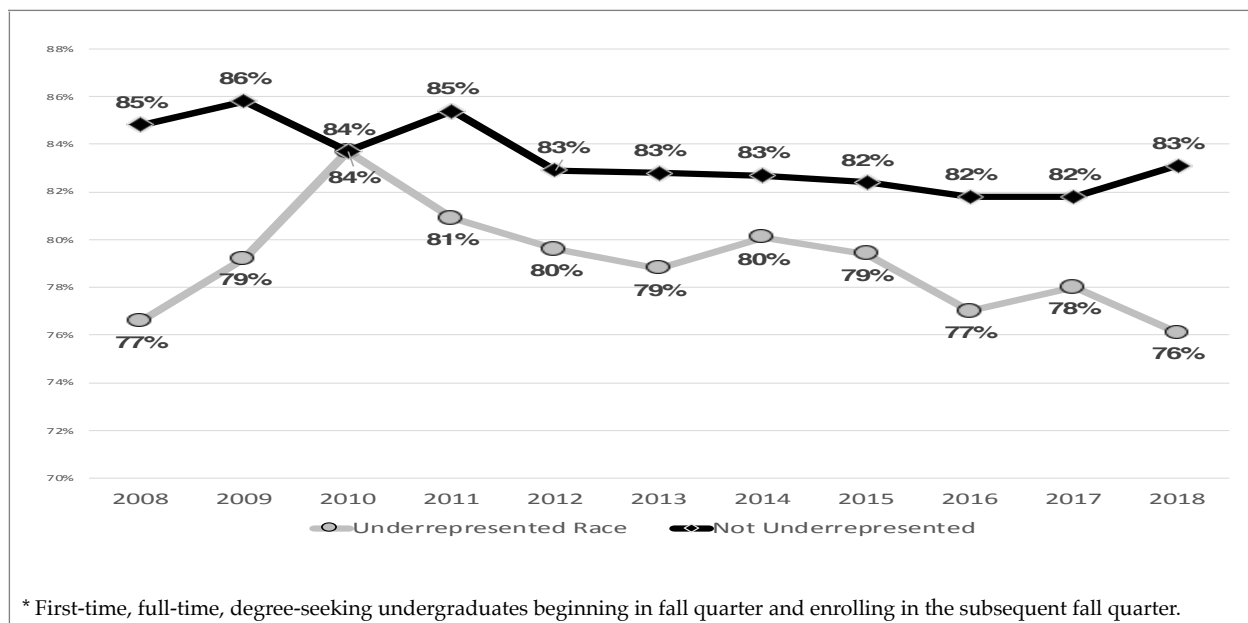
**Table 4: Benchmarked Comparisons: Western v. Aspirational Peers Set – Graduation Rates\***

Institution	Overall	American Indian or AK Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	White	Two or more races	Non-resident
Appalachian State	72%	29%	71%	66%	62%	75%	73%	62%	77%
Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo	82%	80%	80%	71%	74%	75%	85%	82%	67%
College of Charleston	71%	100%	76%	73%	65%	100%	72%	63%	73%
Georgia College and State University	64%	67%	61%	67%	60%	-	64%	63%	33%
James Madison University	84%	100%	82%	71%	80%	78%	85%	86%	64%
Stockton University	74%	0%	77%	67%	68%	50%	76%	71%	0%
University of North Carolina Wilmington	73%	38%	71%	62%	73%	100%	74%	61%	75%
<b>Average for Comparison Institutions:</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>56%</b>
WWU	68%	44%	65%	55%	64%	67%	70%	67%	75%

\*First-time, full-time, degree / certification seeking undergraduates. Source: IPEDS

In addition, we internally track, publish and reflect on rates of retention for our students via our student performance dashboard. (See [FactBook](#).) This data is updated annually and allows us to disaggregate rates of retention by more than a dozen variables, including first-generation status, gender, full or part-time status, high school GPA, Pell eligibility, and race and ethnicity. For instance, we earlier noted that, while rates of graduation for our underrepresented students are among the highest in our class, our internal assessments indicate that we need to improve our climate and services to underrepresented students. This is underscored by the recent downturn in rates of first-second year retention for these students noted on this dashboard.

**Figure 3: WWU Retention Rates\*: Underrepresented Race v. Not Underrepresented – 2008 to 2018**



### Measures of Academic Quality

In alignment with Core Theme 3, “Enhancing Academic Excellence,” we regularly reflect on a variety of student achievement measures pertaining to the quality of our undergraduate degrees and programs. All degree-granting programs and departments complete annual Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) assessment and improvement reports, assessing their students against their program outcomes as described in their Master Assessment Plans (MAPS), and documenting program improvements informed by these assessments.

At the university level we track all the indicators previously described in our Overall and Detailed Metrics. In addition to these, we also track the success of our students who seek to earn graduate degrees. We track this achievement measure through multiple approaches. (See [Overall Metrics](#) and [Detailed Metrics](#).)

- Our WELS Senior Exit Survey asks students who have indicated they plan to attend graduate school whether they have accepted one or more offers of admission. (See WELS Senior Exit Survey.)
- We track students attending any college after Western through the National Student Clearinghouse which covers nearly all graduate programs that are federally funded. (See Graduate Outcomes Report.)
- Periodically, we access data in the NSF-sponsored Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) to track and reflect on the number of our students to go on to earn a research Ph.D. We consider this data an important indicator of academic quality on the logic that only very well-prepared undergraduates can be admitted to and graduate from Ph.D. programs. We are very pleased that the number of Western



students who have gone on to earn a research Ph.D. has been steadily improving and that, in the most recent SED data set, Western ranked 7th among approximately 600 Masters granting U.S. institutions on this measure. (For reference, see SED.)

- To provide a nationally-benchmarked value-added assessment of our general education program we use the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). The CLA compares the performance of an institution's first-year students against the performance of its graduating seniors on a variety of general education outcomes concerning writing, analytic ability, problem solving, statistical understanding, evidence and argument. In this way, the CLA provides a measure of how much students learn over their 4-years at a university, or of the "value added" in general education skills and abilities. The performance tasks are "real world" problems we would expect college graduates to be able to solve. In two iterations, Western's CLA reports noted that the observed performance of our graduating seniors on these measures has been almost exactly "what would be expected relative to schools testing similar populations of students." (See WWU CLA Report, 2016, page 2.)

### **3: Programmatic Assessment**

The institution must provide programmatic assessment of at least two programs as evidence of a continuous process of improvement. The programs should be representative of institutional efforts (programs that are approved by a CHEA-recognized programmatic accreditor are discouraged for this report).

At Western we strategically assess the needs of our students and design programs and services to foster their success. Following implementation of these programs and services, we assess their results and outcomes, and use the results in our continuous improvement processes. Assessment results also inform our budgeting and planning processes as we direct financial and human resources toward evidence-based initiatives demonstrated to help us achieve our strategic plan and goals. Below you will find representative examples of how these processes function in the two most critical divisions for academic success: 1) Academic Affairs and 2) Enrollment and Student Services. Finally, a different example, Western on the Peninsulas, is briefly described, showing how the themes and priorities of the new Strategic Plan have resulted in a major new legislative initiative for the university.

#### **Example 1: Chemistry.**

Every 7 years, at the onset of our accreditation cycle and following establishment of a new strategic plan, every academic program and department reviews their Master Assessment Plan (MAP) and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) to better align with the strategic plan and any changes to the University mission. Departments are also asked to account for changes in their faculty, changes in their field, and changes in professional expectations for what their graduates should know and be able to do. Following this

analysis, each department submits a revised or affirmed MAP that establishes SLOs for each degree program and mapping how each SLO will be assessed.

Within Academic Affairs, we employ a biannual assessment system wherein departments assess program SLOs one year and document assessment-informed program improvements the next. This system was a continuous improvement change made by the Accreditation and Assessment Advisory Committee (AAAC) during the previous accreditation cycle after its “assessment of our assessment processes” revealed that departments did not have sufficient time to conduct their program assessments and to make assessment-informed improvements in the same year.

Our previous accreditation cycle concluded in spring 2018 with our Year-7 Comprehensive Evaluation. Because our strategic planning efforts were on the same timeline, we remained on our normal assessment schedule and asked departments to complete a “closing the loop” report for that year and placed those reports in the SharePoint reports site for the 2018-25 cycle. The full report, which is too large to excerpt here, also describes the outcomes the department can assess to determine if these improvements impacted student learning. (**Note:** password access to this URL will be provided to NWCCU’s peer evaluators at a later date.)

Chemistry’s report for that year documented the following improvements and their rationales.

“CLOSING THE LOOP”: PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT DOCUMENTATION

**Chemistry: 2017-18**

SLOs targeted	Program Improvement	Rationale and Level of Faculty Involvement
1,2	Adopted a new textbook that uses an “Atoms-focused” approach, foregrounding atomic and molecular structure as a basis for making predictions on the macroscopic level. This is a departure from the “traditional” curriculum which foregrounds calculations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rationale: Assess student understanding of fundamental chemical principles that are necessary for success in future chemistry coursework and/or employment.</li> <li>● Assessment carried out by research teams of two faculty members who specialize in chemistry education research and have experience teaching in both the traditional and revised curricula.</li> </ul> General chemistry task force, comprising both faculty and staff from a wide array of sub-disciplinary backgrounds, decided on revised curriculum. Decision was ratified by the entire department.
8	General chemistry lab attendance policies were revised to be clearer and more welcoming to students, as well as to put less of a burden on staff for overseeing lab make-ups.	General chemistry task force, comprising both faculty and staff from a wide array of sub-disciplinary backgrounds, decided on revised policies. Decision was ratified by the entire department.

SLOs targeted	Program Improvement	Rationale and Level of Faculty Involvement
8	The chemistry department is currently involved in conversations about how to reach a broader segment of our student population with research opportunities. Possibilities include informal meet-and-greets with research-active faculty members and current research students, establishing an online “clearinghouse” of faculty research descriptions and procedures, etc.	Two faculty members piloted the use of an existing, validated instrument to assess student outcomes in undergraduate research. Based on the findings, the faculty members provided a preliminary report to the department with several recommendations, including the continued use of the above-mentioned instrument to assess student outcomes. The report also sparked a broader conversation in the department that led to the discussion of the informal meet-and-greets and clearinghouse mentioned under “Description of program improvement.”

### 2018-2019 Chemistry Master Assessment Plan (MAP)

Following establishment of the new strategic plan in 2018, every academic program and department was given two assessment tasks. First, each program and department reviews their MAP and SLOs. Following this analysis, each department submits a revised or affirmed MAP, establishing SLOs for each degree program and a plan for how each SLO will be assessed. These revised MAPs were due at the end of winter 2019. Secondly, departments and programs then put their new MAP into practice by assessing at least two program or degree outcomes by the end of spring term.

The Department of Chemistry undertook this work in 2018. While the revised MAP is too large to import into this report, several changes relative to the Core Theme of “Academic Excellence” are notable.

- Chemistry revised their MAP to more intentionally distinguish the SLOs designated for students in their separate programs. Degree outcomes were also distinguished for B.S. and B.A. degree students, for instance, and additional SLOs were established for students pursuing the B.S. in Biochemistry.
- Additionally, the department added the Undergraduate Student Self-Assessment (URSSA), a NSF validated assessment tool developed at the University of Colorado, to their toolbox of assessment strategies. (See URSSA.) The URSSA was added as an additional and indirect measurement of SLOs 3, 4, and 7 in their plan to “Give the instrument to students involved in research projects and to use their responses to guide department-level discussions about recruitment and mentoring of students in research labs.”

Chemistry’s previous MAP can be found in the archived bank of departmental assessment reports from our 2000-2017 accreditation cycle; their revised MAP can be found in the SharePoint of academic assessment reports for our 2018-2025 cycle. (See [SLO Archive](#). Also note that peer evaluators will receive a user name and password for access to the SharePoint site.)

## **Chemistry's 2018-19 Assessment Report**

Chemistry implemented its revised MAP in the spring of 2019 with formal assessments of SLOs 1, 3, 4, 7, and 8. SLO 1 was assessed via two separate direct measures (exams and a group “card sort task” co-authored by faculty from Western’s departments of Chemistry and Psychology), as well as our senior exit survey. (See [Card Sort Task](#) and [Senior Exit Survey](#).) In addition, the department used the URRSA to more meaningfully assess SLOs 3, 4, and 7. This assessment combined two years of data from the survey as it included a year of pilot data as well as assessment data from 2018-19. While this assessment primarily concerned the Core Theme of “Academic Excellence,” it also touched on Core Theme 1, “Inclusive Success.” This attention to Core Theme 2 was also prevalent in departmental discussions regarding equity in student achievement among their students. In their summary of what they learned from this assessment, they noted the following:

“In both of the years for which data was collected, students reported strong gains in skills such as understanding the theory and concepts guiding (their) research project, understanding journal articles, explaining my project to people outside (the) field, and figuring out the next step in a research project. These results suggest that our undergraduate research program is effectively addressing the learning outcomes of our degree programs. The demographics of the students engaged in research are approximately consistent in terms of race and gender with the population of all Phase II majors in our degree programs. Students identified the application process and dissemination of information about opportunities as areas for improvement. These topics have been the subject of discussion in faculty meetings, but it is clear that further work is needed. In the most recent set of data students also noted the need for more training around ethics and inclusivity.”

## **Chemistry's 2019-20 “Closing the Loop Program Improvement Report**

Informed by further attention to the University’s new strategic plan, discussions and faculty development within CSE, and Chemistry’s 2018-2019 assessment findings, the department is currently initiating several improvements which will be documented in their 2019-20 “Closing the Loop Program Improvement Report.” Importantly, these improvements will include a new major application process the department has initiated to improve equity, diversity and fairness in its admission processes.

## **Chemistry's Assessment Efforts in an Institutional Context**

Chemistry’s assessment efforts have also informed university-level strategies and resource decisions. More specifically, the assessment-informed continuous improvement efforts of the Chemistry department have strengthened the program such that its graduates have a remarkably high acceptance rate in graduate programs, schools of Pharmacy, and medical schools. This success has strengthened student demand for the program. In response, over the last four years the university has provided resources for seven new tenure-track faculty in Chemistry. In addition, strategic repurposing of space within Morse Hall in 2019 resulted in new teaching/research labs. Finally, the university

will soon be breaking ground for a new \$60 million Interdisciplinary Science Building that will create new space for teaching, research and faculty offices in Chemistry and other science programs in the College of Science and Engineering and Huxley College of the Environment.

### Example 2: University Residences.

Since 2018, Western’s Enrollment and Student Services (ESS) has worked to improve its assessment model and processes, including establishing a triennial assessment cycle, introducing new requirements for program reviews, and supporting integrated assessment efforts across the division. Investments in resources and staffing to support assessment have increased capacity not just for continuous assessment, but also for special assessment projects to meet emerging needs or inform significant program revisions.

An excellent example of a special assessment project is the University Residences Initiative for Student Engagement, also known as *URISE*. During the 2018-2019 academic year, University Residences staff formed a team to assess the effectiveness of residential education programs on campus. The *URISE* team analyzed focus group and survey results, which showed decreasing participation in formal programming and rapidly shifting student demographics. The team also researched residential education models, which suggested the previous learning model was considered outdated.

Finally, the team reviewed the new university strategic plan, and concluded that current programming would be inadequate to support the goals of the institution.

To address these challenges, the *URISE* team was tasked with researching best practices and recommending a new curricular model. As a result of their research, the team proposed a shift to a community-based learning model to leverage the inherent educational assets of the University Residences community, including an emphasis on community cultural wealth to highlight the intrinsic resources available to a changing student population. Additionally, the team recommended a strengths-based approach for applying this model and identified corresponding learning strategies:

#### Learning Strategies



This revised model and the corresponding strategies have been implemented for the 2019-2020 academic year, with associated structural changes in staffing and expertise to support them. To assess the impact of these improvements, University Residences staff collected baseline data at the beginning of the year, and will collect outcomes data at the end of the year to analyze how this shift in programming has impacted student outcomes, relative to their updated learning goals:

- Promoting inclusive community building by intentionally engaging with staff and students.
- Creating a deliberate focus on student's career preparedness through a variety of co-curricular activities and conversations.
- Providing students with opportunities to aid in personal wellness behaviors focused on three main areas: healthy relationships, stress management, and conflict resolution.

Consistent with these goals students will be asked to provide feedback on personal wellness, engagement with peers and staff, and participation in co-curricular activities. Based on the results, the effectiveness of the new model can be analyzed, further program improvements can be made, and the resulting data can be used to inform allocations of financial and human resources to support impactful programming.

University Residences will continue to collect data each year to assess the effectiveness of its revised learning model, and to make further improvements as necessary. In this way, a successful special assessment project has introduced new mechanisms for continuous assessment into University Residences' programming and operations.

Through continuous and focused assessment efforts like *URISE*, Western will continue to close the loop on student learning assessment, operationalize continuous improvement, and enhance the transformative educational experience we provide to our students.

### **Example 3: Western on the Peninsulas**

As captured in the "Increasing Washington Impact" core theme, Western's new strategic plan recognizes that we need to contribute to the future workforce needs in Washington and the area. This includes expanding access to our programs beyond the main campus in Bellingham.

Western currently offers a number of degree programs in several locations on the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas in partnership with local community colleges, referred to as the "Western on the Peninsulas" programs. Funded by the Washington State Legislature, Western conducted a study of the educational needs on the Peninsulas and the feasibility of expanding Western's programs to meet those needs. (See [Peninsulas Feasibility Study](#).) The study completed in fall 2018 established the region as one of the most underserved in the state when it comes to four-year degree programs and other degree options.

During the 2018-19 academic year, the university developed a strategic vision document for the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas that articulates its commitment to deliberately and coherently expanding four-year and master's-level higher education opportunities, and that identifies both short- and long-term goals, and operating and capital funding requirements. The vision document was developed with university input and participation and broadly shared with legislators. Based on this vision document, the university submitted a 2020 legislative budget request of approximately \$2 million annually to increase access and affordability and improve recruitment and student support services for Western on the Peninsulas.

#### 4: Moving Forward

The institution must provide its reflections on any additional efforts or initiatives it plans on undertaking as it prepares for the Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Report.

We find that the resources, time and effort we invested in development of our new Core Themes, our Strategic Plan, and Resource Modeling Report have provided us with a clear, ambitious and widely-shared understanding of mission fulfillment, useful mechanisms for tracking progress relative to mission fulfillment, and a detailed plan for the resources needed to achieve this mission. Informed by our assessment of student achievement—including honest and unflinching internal examinations of existing achievement gaps—we have allocated one million additional dollars to student success initiatives since the onset of this accreditation cycle in 2017. Thirty percent of this investment has been targeted to enhance educational access for our state's changing demographic of high school graduates while 70% has been specifically directed in an evidence-based manner to strengthen counseling, tutoring and advising services, disability resources, and multicultural support for specific populations of students.

Moving forward, we seek to sustain this commitment to our convictions by focusing our work on the following:

- **Assessment:** including an evaluation and analysis of metrics, improved understanding of the relationship between strategies and outcomes, and engagement of the campus community to reflect on progress and strategize on adapting and evolving our activities and initiatives.
- **Alignment:** ensuring that the work at unit and college/division levels is aligned with institutional themes and goals, and using our resource modeling exercise to ensure that resources distribution helps address existing operational gaps and advance strategic initiatives.
- **Communication:** ensuring maximal transparency of our efforts and to promote learning and engagement.

These objectives will be achieved through annual examination of our student achievement and performance data, and use of that data in our improvement and

resource-allocation efforts. As noted previously, these efforts will be operationalized via our [Overall Metrics Dashboard](#), the [President's Annual Report](#), the [Detailed Metrics](#) of our strategic plan, our use of disaggregated, comparative and benchmarked data, and our departmental and divisional SLO assessment.



## 5: Response to Topics Previously Requested by NWCCU

Institutions which have been asked to address prior recommendations or which have been asked to address any transitional efforts to the 2020 Standards may include these materials in an Addendums section.

### Recommendation 1

The evaluation committee recommends that the institution move forward and re-evaluate its current set of core theme objectives and indicators; the institution needs to identify meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement that form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of its core themes (Standard 1.B.2).”

Western is fortunate in that our strategic planning and accreditation cycles are aligned and mutually reinforcing. Indeed, the work of reevaluating our mission, strategic goals, and core theme objectives and indicators actually began prior to the submission of our Year-7 Self Study 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 faculty 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 its 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.
- To also align with the next accreditation cycle, set priorities and inform decisions regarding resource allocation from AY2017-18 through AY2023-24.
- 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. Documentation of these activities, including a timeline, our

survey results, and a detailed list of focus group sessions can be found at [Planning Process and Documentation](#).

The strategic planning process was intentionally carried out to further strengthen alignment between strategic planning and our accreditation activities. To this end, the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) remained in close communication with the co-chairs of the strategic planning committee, sharing notes and suggestions regarding metrics. As noted previously, 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: Inclusive Success, Washington Impact, and Academic Excellence. 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.

Guided by the previous accreditation standards, we established core theme objectives and corresponding indicators of achievement for our Year 1 report. These were modified through discussions with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) with an eye to clarity, measurability, and usefulness. To these ends we established a simple, one-page dashboard so that progress toward the core-theme indicators of achievement could be easily communicated and tracked. (See [Overall Metrics](#).)

While aligned with and informed by our core themes, the strategic planning process became more detailed and nuanced. 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. This final plan employed four goals and objectives or "sub goals," and measurable indicators of achievement for each goal. These goals and metrics formed the basis of the Year 1 Self-Evaluation Report we submitted in May. Our Year 1 was accepted by NWCCU on July 31, 2018 "with no further action required." As noted and explained in our Mid-Cycle Self Evaluation Report, the Core Themes, their definitions, objectives, indicators of achievement and goal metrics were further improved for measurement validity and for usefulness and meaningfulness to the university community.

## **Recommendation 2**

Western should, "...establish mechanisms, capacity and expertise to provide and analyze verifiable, meaningful, and useful data that will support and inform University decision-making and assessment of desired outcomes (Standard 4.A.1)."

In winter 2018, Western intentionally expanded capacity and expertise in data analysis and research to better support and inform university decision-making and assessment by establishing the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE). OIE serves to coordinate Western's internal data collection and analysis activities, including assessment activities related to accreditation and strategic planning.

Informed by NWCCU Recommendation 2, our own internal needs and assessments, and emerging best practice recommendations, OIE serves to coordinate Western's internal data collection and analysis activities, including assessment activities related to accreditation and strategic planning. (See [Association for Higher Education Effectiveness](#)) The OIE's mission is to facilitate effective data-driven decision making by creating and providing accurate data collections, performing integrating analysis and research, and advocating for data quality and integrity.

In announcing the new office, Provost Brent Carbajal noted that "As we implement our new strategic plan and begin a new accreditation cycle, we're excited by the coordination and project management opportunities that the Institutional Effectiveness model provides. We look forward to this office providing leadership and training related to planning and assessment processes, and also in monitoring our progress toward mission fulfillment and the goals/objectives in the strategic plan." Dr. John Krieg was named the OIE's Director. Of the appointment Provost Carbajal said, "Dr. Krieg is possessed of a great deal of experience and is particularly well positioned to communicate and coordinate work with units across campus. I'm excited to get this new initiative started and am very pleased that Dr. Krieg will serve as director."

The establishment of OIE permitted us to immediately expand capacity and expertise regarding data analytics practices for the purpose of improving our decision-making and assessment processes. This was achieved through the hiring of additional staff, including the faculty director and an administrative assistant, as well as a restructuring of job duties. Previously, the Office of Institutional Research consisted of three employees. After the restructuring process, the OIE now consists of seven employees, an increase of 133%.

### **Recommendation 3**

Western should, "...analyze and better use its data in an integrated and intentional way to clearly show how well the University is achieving its mission and core themes, and to ensure that the information is clearly communicated to all pertinent stakeholders, including those involved in strategic planning resource allocation, institutional capacity, assessment, and other campus initiatives (Standard 5.A)."

Western has made rapid improvement in its integrated and intentional use of data to assess and track institutional performance relative to our mission and core theme objectives, our communication of that data to stakeholders, and our use of data to inform strategic planning and resource allocation.

Evidence that we are better using "data in an integrated and intentional way to clearly show how well the university is achieving its mission and core themes" is demonstrated

in the structure of OIE itself, as the new office integrated the Office of Survey Research (OSR) and Institutional Research (IR) within its structure and resources. This has allowed OIE to conduct more analyses of significance for the University and to provide evidence-based data analyses to more offices.

A partial list of data requests, projects and analyses undertaken by the OIE in the last year includes, but is not limited to:

1. Non-Returning Student Survey: a collaboration with Admissions and Academic Advising. The last non-returning student survey was administered in 2013, but plans are now to administer the survey each fall.
2. Analysis of the impact on admissions scholarships (i.e. Presidential Scholarship) on yield: a collaboration with Enrollment Management and Admissions. Two reports have been submitted for this work in progress.
3. Discount rate project: a collaboration with Enrollment Management which will measure the actual money paid by students of different types.
4. Strategic Goals Metric page. (See Strategic Goals Metrics.)
5. Report on class size, SCH, enrollment, faculty headcount and FTE, and majors: a collaboration with Western's academic departments. (See Department Metrics.)

As noted above in Response to Recommendation 2, the OIE continues to work on creating a Factbook that will automatically update.

Evidence that we are ensuring that "information is clearly communicated to all pertinent stakeholders" is demonstrated in the many improvements we have made to our dashboards and data sharing instruments. These include:

- The data and timeline presented on the President's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion site.
- The expanded information in more user-friendly formats on our IR Factbook.
- Our use of Qualtrics to make survey data from Western's Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) more accessible, useful, and understandable.
- Our improved dashboards for tracking progress related to strategic planning and accreditation, including our Key Performance dashboard, our core theme assessment dashboard, Overall Metrics, and our Detailed Metrics dashboard used for tracking performance relative to the strategic plan.

In addition to making data more user-friendly and available on our Factbook and dashboards, we have also worked to intentionally share actionable data with stakeholders involved in program assessment and resource allocation decisions. For instance, whereas we previously encouraged academic department chairs and assessment coordinators to review senior exit survey data as part of their assessment processes, we recently piloted a process whereby this data is usefully summarized for each department and sent directly to chairs in Qualtrics reports that can be easily manipulated. These pilot reports were well-received and are now a service the OIE and

VPUE provide each spring for our academic departments. Here is a sampling of reports shared last year: [Accounting](#), [Art](#), [Economics](#), and [Sociology](#). These reports have been made possible by our expanded use of Tableau, which permits user-friendly access to data analyses that previously would have required an analyst.

Evidence that we are better using the data we produce to inform strategic planning and resource allocation is clearly documented in the resource modeling activities we recently completed. At the start of Western's strategic planning process in the fall of 2016, the university recognized the need for a complementary resource planning process to ensure our strategic plan would be connected to a realistic sense of the additional funding it will take to advance our goals and objectives. To this end, President Randhawa convened the "President's Advisory Committee on Institutional Resource Modeling (PACIRM) to "... guide a resource modeling exercise to estimate the 'prosperity gap' associated with achieving key strategic plan objectives." More specifically, the "prosperity gap" was divided into two parts: 1) the difference above current funding levels required to adequately support existing services into the future, and 2) the additional funding required to advance the institution's aspirations and priorities set forth in the strategic plan.

To ensure resource modeling activities were informed by appropriate data and institutional experience and knowledge, working groups of campus stakeholders with expertise in retention and graduation, research, and institutional degree production met to establish assumptions and to identify the "drivers" associated with institutional performance in each of these areas. For instance, the Retention/ Graduation Rate Working Group was comprised of representatives of our campus advising and student support services, as well as the Senior Director of Student Success Initiatives, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, the Director of Financial Aid, the Registrar, the Director of Western's Disability Access Center, as well as a student and faculty member.

This working group requested and shared data from the OIE regarding rates of retention and graduation for various student populations, course and major access, and other areas. Combined with the collective experience of the working group, this data led to the identification of several drivers of our graduation rate, including clear graduation pathways, proactive, tailored advising and counseling, sufficient financial resources for students, and more diverse faculty and staff. The full report of this working group is available [here](#); links to all the working groups' reports, as well as the final PACIRM report, and other documents, are available [here](#). Importantly, the full report is intentionally designed to model the impact of strategic investment in key areas, such as retention and graduation. In this way, the entire process was informed by campus expertise and available data to inform resource allocation with respect to the strategic plan, and our institutional capacity. (See [Institutional Resource Modeling](#).)

Starting in 2018, the Career Services Center implemented a new method for collecting post-graduation education and employment outcomes data. Through a strategic partnership with the Employment Security Department, this new methodology greatly increases the sample size and accuracy of results reported over previous years, capturing outcomes for nearly 90% of recent graduates. A summary of these outcomes is

published in the annual [Graduate Outcomes Report](#), and detailed outcomes by college, department, and major are available on the [Career Services Center website](#).

#### **Recommendation 4**

The committee recommends 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, and finally, that the University uses the results of its evaluation to make changes, as necessary for improvement (Standard 5.B.2).

As instructed by NWCCU, we addressed Recommendation 4 in an Ad Hoc Report we submitted in fall 2018. The Commission accepted that report in January of 2019, noting that “Recommendation 4 of the Spring 2017 Year Seven Peer-Evaluation Report is fulfilled and no further action is required.”

#### **Recommendation 5**

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).

Considerable progress has been made in addressing this recommendation, especially within the Enrollment and Student Services (ESS) division. Since the hiring of Melynda Huskey as Vice President of Enrollment and Student Services in 2017, the division has undergone a significant reorganization to better align departments and roles to maximize both efficiency and effectiveness in meeting student needs. This improved structure includes defined units for Counseling, Health, and Wellness; Enrollment Management; LGBTQ+ Western; Student Life (Dean of Students); Student Success Initiatives; University Athletics; and University Residences.

To highlight one of these areas, the newly formed Student Success Initiatives unit consists of Academic Advising, Career Services, Student Outreach Services, and a brand-new program: Western Success Scholars. As a unit, Student Success Initiatives is responsible for identifying strategies to support and retain students, specifically those in at-risk populations. Some of these strategies include:

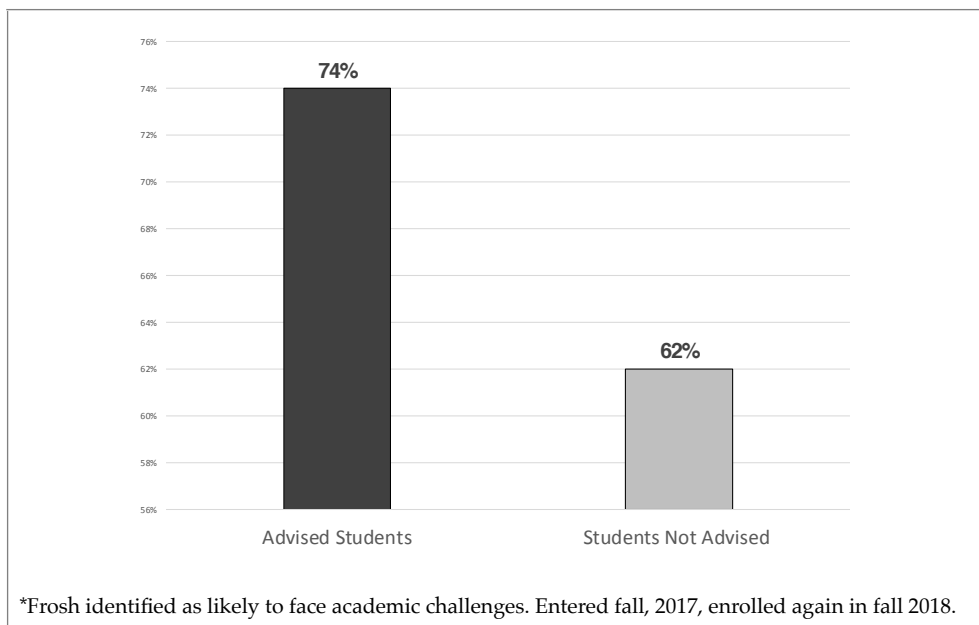
- The new Western Success Scholars program, an externally-funded initiative to attract and retain students who have experienced foster care or homelessness, and to support students facing food and housing insecurity.
- The new First Generation Student outreach and support campaign coordinated by Academic Advising and Student Outreach Services, to better connect this growing population (over 30% of incoming students) to critical support services.
- New drop-in counseling services in Career Services (based on user feedback) to offer flexibility to meet students on demand and support strong post-graduate outcomes; and the introduction of a “Career Closet” to support students unable to afford professional attire to attend career fairs and interviews.

- Implementation of successful strategic outreach campaigns based on data analysis to engage high-performing freshmen; to support the needs of newly-enrolled students with lower academic index scores; and to reach students with defined academic interests to discuss plans for major declaration.

Additionally, two new advisor positions have been added in Academic Advising and Student Outreach Services to meet increasing demand (based on utilization data); a new Director of Career Services position has been added to support expansion of career support services (based on graduate outcomes); and a new Program Manager position has been added to implement the new Western Success Scholars program, which is designed to support former foster youth and unaccompanied homeless youth.

Furthermore, in order to persistently refine and strengthen support for students, each department in the Student Success Initiatives unit is engaged in continuous assessment of programs and services. As an example, Academic Advising launched an outreach campaign in fall 2017 to target newly-enrolled first-year students identified as more likely to face academic challenges, based on low academic index and standardized test scores. The members of this population have historically accessed advising services at a lower rate, and have been retained at a lower rate, than their peers. The goal of this campaign was to engage and retain these students, who were contacted by both phone and email each quarter by Academic Advising staff and encouraged to schedule an appointment to discuss course planning, campus resources, programs of study, etc. As a result of this outreach, 43% of the students who were contacted met with an advisor, and those who met with an advisor were retained at a 12% higher rate than those who did not:

**Figure 4: Retention Rates\*: Students Advised v. Not Advised – fall 2017 cohort**



As a result of this campaign, Academic Advising has continued to provide targeted outreach to this population of students during the 2019-2020 academic year, and has expanded efforts to engage students through partnering with Residence Life and the Office of Off-Campus Living. The Tutoring Center and the Career Services Center are also designing intentional outreach to further engage this group of students and increase their connections to campus resources. (See EAB [Report 1](#), and [Report 2](#). **Note:** a user name and password will be provided.)

Another new unit within the Enrollment and Student Services division is LGBTQ+ Western, which was formed in 2018 with the hiring of the inaugural LGBTQ+ Director for Western. This position and unit were created to provide advocacy and resources for the growing population of LGBTQ+ students on campus, as a direct result of our campus climate survey, strategic analysis, and student demand.

A new Multicultural Center (MCC) in the Viking Union was completed in 2019. The MCC houses the Associated Students (A.S.) Ethnic Student Center, the A.S. Student Advocacy and Identity Resource Centers (the Blue Resource Center, the Queer

Resource Center, the Disability Outreach Center, and the Womxn's Identity Resource Center), and Multicultural Student Services (LGBTQ+, Western Success Scholars, Men's Resiliency). Development of the Multicultural Center came as a result of extensive student feedback and is funded through student fees, institutional funds and saving achieved by refunding some existing Viking Union bonds.

Additionally, staffing has been expanded and reconfigured across the Dean of Students unit since 2017, including two new positions: Assistant Director for Student Governance and Representation, and Coordinator of Student Advocacy and Identity Resource Centers. Both positions were added as a result of student feedback, which also resulted in reconfiguration of two Ethnic Student Center positions to better meet student needs. Staffing has also been expanded in the Counseling, Health, and Wellness unit based on utilization data, with a new mental health counselor hired in 2018 to keep up with student demand for mental health services.

Furthermore, major steps have been taken to implement ongoing assessment across the Enrollment and Student Services division. Since 2017, all of the major departments in the division (except those subject to separate accreditation processes) have completed a comprehensive self-study using the Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), identifying program improvements for each department to implement by the end of the current three-year assessment cycle. A position was repurposed in Enrollment and Student Services to create a Division Assessment Consultant (12-month, full-time) to support the development of assessment plans for each department and for the division as a whole, with defined measures for each articulated goal to ensure programs and services are meeting student needs and supporting student success. Finally, the division is in the process of implementing a new model for planning, assessment, and resourcing—which will require all new resourcing requests to be supported by assessment evidence—to ensure new resources will be used effectively to support student success.



All of these efforts and more have been made to better meet the needs of Western's students. Outside of Enrollment and Student Services, additional work to meet student needs is evident in the aggressive efforts within colleges to increase equity in student achievement. This is demonstrated in ongoing, grant-funded projects, including the following:

- [Becoming Engaged Engineering Scholars](#) (BEES), an NSF-funded initiative to improve the recruitment, retention and academic achievement of academically-talented, low-income students from diverse backgrounds.
- [Advancing Excellence and Equity in Science](#) (AEES), a Howard Hughes Medical Institute-funded initiative to increase the academic success and representation of under-represented minorities, first-generation students, and women in the natural sciences.

## **Recommendation 6**

Western should, "...update its Campus Master Plan (Standard 2.G.3)."

At Western the planning document that other institutions would call the "Campus Master Plan" is called the "Capital Plan." This is the plan which describes the building projects needed for the university to fulfill its mission. We use the name "Capital Plan" in order to distinguish it from the "Institutional Master Plan," which is a separate document, pertaining largely to zoning, required by the City of Bellingham.

The "Capital Plan" is updated every two years in a year-long process involving faculty, staff, and administrators. This plan was last updated in 2018, resulting in the 2019-21 Capital Request and the 2019-2029 Capital Plan. The Capital Plan includes major (over \$5 million), intermediate (\$2 million to \$5 million), and minor works (\$25,000 to \$2 million) preservation and programmatic projects. Following development of the draft plan, the Vice Presidents and the Capital Development Working Group received additional helpful feedback from the UPRC, the Board of Trustees, and the campus community. The final version of the Capital Request and Capital Plan was approved by the Board of Trustees at their June 2018 meeting.

The projects that make up the 2019-21 Capital Request were submitted to the state in August 2018. The 2019-29 Capital Plan was submitted to the state in September 2018. Details of these capital planning process, the timeline, the Capital Plan Campus Map, and other documents can be found at [Capital Plans](#).