July 21, 2023

Dr. Sabah U. Randhawa
President
Western Washington University
516 High Street, MS 9033
Bellingham, WA 98225-9033

Dear President Randhawa:

Attached please find the Spring 2023 Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR) Evaluation Committee's review of Western Washington University. The attached review documents areas where the institution was found to be in compliance with the NWCCU Standards for Accreditation and where additional opportunities for improvement exist. Please note that the Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness (EIE) Evaluation Team will receive a copy of this report, as will the NWCCU Board of Commissioners at your EIE evaluation by the Commission in roughly one year's time.

Please address any areas of needed improvement that the PRFR Evaluation Committee has noted as findings in this report in your EIE self-evaluation. Please feel free to reach out to your NWCCU Staff Liaison if you have further questions.

Type 1: Standards Substantially in Compliance but in Need of Improvement
- Finding Type 1: Spring 2023 Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review - The following standards are areas substantially in compliance but where improvement is needed. (2020 Standard(s) 2.B.1;2.G.3;2.G.5;2.G.6)

Future Evaluations
- Year 7 - Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Spring 2024
  - Recommendation 6: Spring 2020 Mid-Cycle Review
  - Finding Type 1: Spring 2023 Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review

Thank you for your commitment to the process of peer evaluation and continuous quality improvement. If you have questions about any of the information in this letter, please contact your staff liaison, Dr. Ron Larsen, at rlarsen@nwccu.org.

Sincerely,

Ron Larsen
Senior Vice President

cc: Dr. Jack Herring, Associate VP for Academic Affairs
        Mr. John Meyer, Board of Trustees Chair
        Mr. Michael Meotti, Executive Director, Washington Student Achievement Council

Peer Evaluation for: Western Washington University

Standard 2: Governance, Resources, and Capacity
The institution articulates its commitment to a structure of governance that is inclusive in its planning and decision-making. Through its planning, operational activities, and allocation of resources, the institution demonstrates a commitment to student learning and achievement in an environment respectful of meaningful discourse.

Standard 2.A.1
The institution demonstrates an effective governance structure, with a board(s) or other governing body(ies) composed predominantly of members with no contractual, employment relationship, or personal financial interest with the institution. Such members shall also possess clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Institutions that are part of a complex system with multiple boards, a centralized board, or related entities shall have, with respect to such boards, written and clearly defined contractual authority, roles, and responsibilities for all entities. In addition, authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated in a written contract, described on its website and in its public documents, and provides the NWCCU accredited institution with sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Institutional governance policies and procedures _Y_
- System governance policies and procedures (if applicable) _N/A_
- Multiple board governing policies and procedures (if applicable) _N/A_
- Board's calendar for reviewing institutional and board policies and procedures _Y_
- Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation referencing governance structure _Y_

Rationale:
Western Washington University demonstrates effective governance with a Board of Trustees that meets regularly and has clearly defined authority and responsibilities delineated from the president. Governing documents are readily available online and clearly show when they have been updated and implemented.

Standard 2.A.2
The institution has an effective system of leadership, staffed by qualified administrators, with appropriate levels of authority, responsibility, and accountability who are charged with planning, organizing, and managing the institution and assessing its achievements and effectiveness.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Leadership organizational chart _Y_
- Curriculum vitae of executive leadership _Y_

Rationale:
Leadership at WWU includes a qualified executive leadership team that includes roles overseeing a comprehensive set of areas including academic affairs, enrollment and student services, advancement, business and financial affairs, and university relations and marketing.

Standard 2.A.3
The institution employs an appropriately qualified chief executive officer with full-time responsibility to the institution. The chief executive may serve as an ex officio member of the governing board(s) but may not serve as its chair.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Curriculum vitae of President/CEO _Y_

Rationale:
President Randhawa was appointed in 2016 and has extensive prior experience in administration and in teaching.

Standard 2.A.4
The institution's decision-making structures and processes, which are documented and publicly available, must include provisions for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which each has a direct and reasonable interest.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Institutional governance policies and procedures (see 2.A.1) _Y_

Rationale:
WWU provides opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to participate in decision-making processes through various formal advisory groups, student government, a faculty senate, and a strategic budgeting process that seeks feedback and transparency.

Standard 2.B.1

Within the context of its mission and values, the institution adheres to the principles of academic freedom and independence that protect its constituencies from inappropriate internal and external influences, pressures, and harassment.

Team Verification: Needs Improvement

Evidence:
- Academic freedom policies and procedures (evidence could include samples of negotiated agreements with faculty and/or staff, where appropriate) **_Y_**
- Evidence that the students also have academic freedom **_N_**

Rationale:
The support of academic freedom is stated in the faculty handbook and the collective bargaining agreement with faculty. The faculty handbook required a login to view online. No evidence for protections for students were provided.

Standard 2.B.2

Within the context of its mission and values, the institution defines and actively promotes an environment that supports independent thought in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It affirms the freedom of faculty, staff, administrators, and students to share their scholarship and reasoned conclusions with others. While the institution and individuals within the institution may hold to a particular personal, social, or religious philosophy, its constituencies are intellectually free to test and examine all knowledge and theories, thought, reason, and perspectives of truth. Individuals within the institution allow others the freedom to do the same.

Team Verification: Compliant

Rationale:
WWU provided documentation demonstrating state statute and policies and expectations of behavior that include support for independent thought and expression.

Standard 2.C.1

The institution's transfer-of-credit policy maintains the integrity of its programs and facilitates the efficient mobility of students desirous of the completion of their educational credits, credentials, or degrees in furtherance of their academic goals.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
- Transfer of credit policies and procedures **_Y_**

Rationale:
WWU referenced statewide guidelines and policies and procedures to facilitate students transferring along with military credit.

Standard 2.C.2

The institution's policies and procedures related to student rights and responsibilities should include, but not be limited to, provisions related to academic honesty, conduct, appeals, grievances, and accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:
Documentation of student's rights and responsibilities policies and procedures, which include:
- Academic honesty **_Y_**
- Conduct **_Y_**
- Appeals, grievances **_Y_**
- Accommodations for persons with disabilities **_Y_**

Rationale:
WWU referenced Washington State code and university policies for student rights and responsibilities that do include provisions related to academic dishonesty, conduct, appeals, and documentation guidelines for accommodations for persons will disabilities.

Standard 2.C.3

The institution's academic and administrative policies and procedures should include admission and placement policies that guide the enrollment of students in courses and programs through an evaluation of prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to ensure a reasonable probability of student success at a level commensurate with the institution's expectations. Such policies should also include a policy regarding continuation in and termination from its educational programs, including its appeal and re-admission policy.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies and procedures for recruiting, admitting, and placing students **_Y_**
- Policies/procedures related to continuation and termination from educational programs including appeal process and readmission policies/procedures **_Y_**

Rationale:

WWU's admissions website and university catalog provide clear descriptions of state and university admission and placement polices and related information for maintaining academic standing and reinstatement procedures.

Standard 2.C.4

The institution's policies and procedures regarding the secure retention of student records must include provisions related to confidentiality, release, and the reliable backup and retrievability of such records.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures regarding secure retention of student records, (i.e., back-up, confidentiality, release, protection from cybersecurity issues or other emergencies) **_Y_**

Rationale:

WWU referenced state administrative code and university policy addressing the confidentiality and retention of student records including back-up and retrievability processes.

Standard 2.D.1

The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently through its announcements, statements, and publications. It communicates its academic intentions, programs, and services to students and to the public and demonstrates that its academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion. It regularly reviews its publications to ensure accuracy and integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures for reviewing published materials (print or websites) that assures institutional integrity **_Y_**

Rationale:

WWU described how the Office of University Communications and related committee promote consistency and integrity and provided a link to the University Catalog. Webpages are clear and consistent. The scorecard of several metrics presented clearly on the strategic plan metrics website is to be commended and demonstrates consistent measures for enrollment and graduate rates.

Standard 2.D.2

The institution advocates, subscribes to, and exemplifies high ethical standards in its management and operations, including in its dealings with the public, NWCCU, and external organizations, including the fair and equitable treatment of students, faculty, administrators, staff, and other stakeholders and constituencies. The institution ensures that complaints and grievances are addressed in a fair, equitable, and timely manner.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures for reviewing internal and external complaints and grievances **_Y_**

Rationale:

WWU provided access to a number of state statute and university policies that address and clearly communicate a commitment to ethics and eliminating opportunity gaps, relevant expectations of behavior for faculty, staff, and students, and requisite procedures for grievances and resolutions.

Standard 2.D.3

The institution adheres to clearly defined policies that prohibit conflicts of interest on the part of members of the governing board(s), administration, faculty, and staff.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures prohibiting conflict of interests among employees and board members **_Y_**

Rationale:

WWU provided a number of newly revised policies and procedures that prevent and address conflict of interest issues including state law. A dedicated webpage to listing ethics related policies in one place is to be commended.

Standard 2.E.1

The institution utilizes relevant audit processes and regular reporting to demonstrate financial stability, including sufficient cash flow and reserves to achieve and fulfill its mission

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures that articulate the oversight and management of financial resources _Y_
- Latest external financial audit including management letter _Y_
- Cash flow balance sheets _Y_
- Audited financial statements _Y_
- Tuition and fees, educational, and auxiliary revenue for undergraduate and graduate enrollments _Y_
- Significant contracts/grants _Y_
- Endowment and giving reports _Y_
- Investment revenue _Y_

Rationale:

WWU provided documentation demonstrating a stable financial position, a diversity of revenue sources, regular audits of financial status including the related Foundation. The panel appreciated the tables and graphs being placed in the report for ease of review.

Standard 2.E.2

Financial planning includes meaningful opportunities for participation by stakeholders and ensures appropriate available funds, realistic development of financial resources, and comprehensive risk management to ensure short term financial health and long-term financial stability and sustainability.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies / procedures for planning and monitoring of operating and capital budgets, reserves, investments, fundraising, cash management, debt management, transfers and borrowing between funds _Y_
- Sample of meeting agendas, minutes, and/or other documentation as evidence of meaningful opportunities for participation by stakeholders _Y_

Rationale:

A new strategic budgeting process designed to simplify and align efforts while including participation from multiple stakeholders was shared by WWU. Short-term and long-term strategies for managing risk were also described.

Standard 2.E.3

Financial resources are managed transparently in accordance with policies approved by the institution's governing board(s), governance structure(s), and applicable state and federal laws.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Description of internal financial controls _Y_
- Board approved financial policies, state financial policies, or system financial policies _Y_

Rationale:

WWU provided board statements and policies on internal financial controls that demonstrate sound management and transparency.

Standard 2.F.1

Faculty, staff, and administrators are apprised of their conditions of employment, work assignments, rights and responsibilities, and criteria and procedures for evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Human resource policies / procedures _Y_
- Policies/procedures related to teaching, scholarship, service, and artistic creation _Y_
- Policies/procedures for apprising employees of working conditions, rights and responsibilities, evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination _Y_

Rationale:

Collective bargaining agreements with three separate unions and MOUs were provided to demonstrate that WWU has internal processes and trainings to address working conditions for professional and part-time staff.

Standard 2.F.2

The institution provides faculty, staff, and administrators with appropriate opportunities and support for professional growth and development.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Employee professional development policies/procedures _Y_

Rationale:

WWU provided description of multiple policies and practices that support professional development with staff including financial support, tuition benefits, and training. The panel appreciated the details provided for what financial support is provided.

Standard 2.F.3

Consistent with its mission, programs, and services, the institution employs faculty, staff, and administrators sufficient in role, number, and qualifications to achieve its organizational responsibilities, educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Documentation about engagement and responsibilities specified for faculty and staff, as appropriate _Y_
- Personnel hiring policy/procedures _Y_
- Academic organizational chart _Y_
- Administrator/staff /faculty evaluation policies/procedures_Y_

Rationale:

Despite recent, nationwide labor market challenges, WWU demonstrates strategic efforts guided by policy for the recruitment, onboarding, and retention of qualified administrators and staff.

Standard 2.F.4

Faculty, staff, and administrators are evaluated regularly and systematically in alignment with institutional mission and goals, educational objectives, and policies and procedures. Evaluations are based on written criteria that are published, easily accessible, and clearly communicated. Evaluations are applied equitably, fairly, and consistently in relation to responsibilities and duties. Personnel are assessed for effectiveness and are provided feedback and encouragement for improvement.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Administrator/staff/faculty evaluation policies/procedures _Y_

Rationale:

WWU provided policies for regular performance reviews for faculty and staff that involve the employees with goals for support and improvement when needed.

Standard 2.G.1

Consistent with the nature of its educational programs and methods of delivery, and with a particular focus on equity and closure of equity gaps in achievement, the institution creates and maintains effective learning environments with appropriate programs and services to support student learning and success.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Listing of programs and services supporting student learning needs _Y_

Rationale:

WWU provided evidence of a commitment to equity and comprehensive support for students through its mission, policies, and a variety of student support services including information about a Student Resilience Department, basic needs supports, and co-curricular programs.

Standard 2.G.2

The institution publishes in a catalog, or provides in a manner available to students and other stakeholders, current and accurate information that includes: institutional mission; admission requirements and procedures; grading policy; information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion based on normal student progress and the frequency of course offerings; names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty; rules and regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities; tuition, fees, and other program costs; refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment; opportunities and requirements for financial aid; and the academic calendar.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

Catalog (and/or other publications) that provides information regarding:

- Institutional mission **_Y_**
- Admission requirements and procedures **_Y_**
- Grading policy **_Y_**
- Information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion **_Y_**
- Names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty **_Y_**
- Rules and regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities **_Y_**
- Tuition, fees, and other program costs **_Y_**
- Refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment **_Y_**
- Opportunities and requirements for financial aid **_Y_**
- The academic calendar **_Y_**

Rationale:

WWU's catalog is comprehensive and updated regularly. Curriculum requirements, tuition and aid, and services are all available and the website is easy to navigate. The panel found information about faculty titles, but not conferring institutions.

Standard 2.G.3

Publications and other written materials that describe educational programs include accurate information on national and/or state legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered. Descriptions of unique requirements for employment and advancement in the occupation or profession shall be included in such materials.

Team Verification: Needs Improvement

Evidence:

Samples of publications and other written materials that describe:

- Accurate information on national and/or state legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered **_N_**
- Descriptions of unique requirements for employment and advancement in the occupation or profession shall be included in such materials **_N_**

Rationale:

The Catalog includes information about all degree and certificate programs, including name, degree or certificate conferred, program goals, learning outcomes, and requirements, along with information about career opportunities. Information about fields which require certifications or licensure, such as Chemical Dependency Counselling, Nursing, and Welding are presented in detail.

Standard 2.G.4

The institution provides an effective and accountable program of financial aid consistent with its mission, student needs, and institutional resources. Information regarding the categories of financial assistance (such as scholarships, grants, and loans) is published and made available to prospective and enrolled students.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Published financial aid policies/procedures including information about categories of financial assistance **_Y_**
- Information to students regarding repayment obligations **_Y_**
- Policies / procedures for monitoring student loan programs **_Y_**

Rationale:

WWU has been nationally recognized for providing quality education at an affordable price and the office of Financial Aid provides clear and comprehensive information regarding types of aid, repayment considerations, and additional resources for assistance including a Net Price Calculator for both first year and continuing students.

Standard 2.G.5

Students receiving financial assistance are informed of any repayment obligations. The institution regularly monitors its student loan programs and publicizes the institution's loan default rate on its website.

Team Verification: Needs Improvement

Evidence:

- Published financial aid policies/procedures including information about categories of financial assistance **_Y_**
- Information to students regarding repayment obligations **_Y_**
- Policies / procedures for monitoring student loan programs **_Y_**

- Loan default rate published on website _N_

Rationale:

WWU provides thorough information about loan repayments with other consumer information. There was no evidence of the loan default rate being published on the website and could also not be found with a search.

Standard 2.G.6

The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates a systematic and effective program of academic advisement to support student development and success. Personnel responsible for advising students are knowledgeable of the curriculum, program and graduation requirements, and are adequately prepared to successfully fulfill their responsibilities. Advising requirements and responsibilities of advisors are defined, published, and made available to students.

Team Verification: Needs Improvement

Evidence:

- Description of advising program, staffing, and advising publications (Student handbook or Catalog; links to webpages – please note specific pages or areas) _Y_
- Systematic evaluation of advising _N_
- Professional development policies / procedures for advisors _Y_

Rationale:

WWU provided information about a variety of academic advising resources and programs including use of a predictive analytics and advising platform and plans to implement mandatory advising for all incoming students. Professional development opportunities were described but there was no information provided about regular, systemic evaluation of advising, particularly as WUU has different teams providing this service.

Standard 2.G.7

The institution maintains an effective identity verification process for students, including those enrolled in distance education courses and programs, to establish that the student enrolled in such a course or program is the same person whose achievements are evaluated and credentialed. The institution ensures that the identity verification process for distance education students protects student privacy and that students are informed, in writing at the time of enrollment, of current and projected charges associated with the identity verification process.

Note: Institutions should refer to NWCCU Distance Education Policy for guidance and definitions related to the required evidence.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Policies/procedures for ensuring the student who registers in a distance education course/program is the same student who participates in the course and receives credit _Y_
- Policies/procedures make it clear that these processes protect student privacy _Y_
- Notification to students at the time of registration of any additional charges associated with verification procedures _Y_
- Academic policies/procedures for instructors to implement requirements for *regular and substantive interaction* in distance education courses/programs _N_

Rationale:

WWU provided polices and practices that demonstrate a focus on identity verification including multi-factor authentication and an internal portal for a learning management system. The "policy on credit hours" as evidence of regular and substantive interaction needs to be verified as the link presented for evidence required a login and could not be viewed.

Standard 2.H.1

Consistent with its mission, the institution employs qualified personnel and provides access to library and information resources with a level of currency, depth, and breadth sufficient to support and sustain the institution's mission, programs, and services.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

- Procedures for assessing adequacy of library collections _Y_
- Library planning committee and procedures for planning and collection development _Y_
- Library instruction plan; policies/procedures related to the use of library and information resources _Y_
- Library staffing information; policies/procedures that explains faculty/library partnership for assuring library and information resources are integrated into the learning process _Y_

Rationale:

WWU has policies to regularly evaluate library resources and staff to operate. Subject teams, guides and tutorials, and student-centered spaces and programs are provided. The panel appreciated the thorough information provided for review.

Standard 2.I.1

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.

Team Verification: Compliant

Evidence:

Facilities master plan, including:

- Equipment replacement policies/procedures _Y_
- Procedures for assessing sufficiency of physical facilities _Y_
- Policies and procedures for ensuring accessible, safe, and secure facilities _Y_
- Policies/procedures for the use, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste _Y_
- Technology master plan and planning processes _Y_

Rationale:

WWU created a capital planning and use of space committee that has begun work on a new campus master plan. Policies and procedures that address evaluation upkeep of facilities, infrastructure, and IT governance and plans for updates and replacement were provided along with a description of recently completed construction projects. While WWU is found to be compliant with this standard, the report would be stronger if evidence of an equipment replacement policy was provided.

Concluding Comments

The panel appreciated the format and content of the report, particularly the helpful descriptions written for each standard and the many links to evidence presented. The WWU website is clear and well organized.