Western joins American Democracy Project

—National multi-campus initiative designed to foster undergraduate involvement in public life

This fall, Western officially joins more than 180 campuses across the nation in The American Democracy Project (ADP), an initiative designed to foster the involvement of undergraduates in public life.

The ADP, sponsored jointly by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and The New York Times, focuses on the development of informed graduates who are committed to lives of social justice and civic engagement.

Many opportunities to participate in the ADP on Western’s campus are planned throughout the 2004-05 academic year, beginning with the Distinguished Lecture Series on October 14, which features an “Election Year Debate” with conservative columnist John Podhoretz and former Democratic presidential candidate Carol Moseley Braun.

The Center for Service Learning and the Associated Students, among others, will also be sponsoring numerous ADP-related events. It is hoped that throughout the academic year more campus projects and events related to democracy and civil discourse will become part of Western’s ADP efforts.

The ADP national initiative evolved out of a concern about decreasing rates of participation among young adults in the civic life of America, in voting, in advocacy, in local grassroots associations, and in other forms of civic engagement that are necessary for the vitality of our democracy.

The ADP has also been designed to help colleges characterize their work, to themselves and to their publics, as the work of citizenship development. This includes focusing on curricular and co-curricular opportunities that foster not only intellectual but ethical development.

For a complete listing of Western’s ADP news, events, and campus partners, go to the ADP website: http://www.wwu.edu/depts/adp/

To get a course, project, or event included as part of the project, contact Ann Carlson, (ann.carlson@wwu.edu) or x/2345.

OCTOBER

“A Chance for Change”
Fri., Oct.22, from Noon - 4 PM, first floor of the Communication Facility.

All students, faculty and staff are encouraged to participate in this event, sponsored by The Center for Service Learning and New Student Services. Speakers and representatives from local community groups will share ideas about civic engagement and ways to participate in positive social change.

Participants will be encouraged to sign up for a community service project as part of the Whatcom Volunteer Center’s “Make a Difference Day,” Sat., Oct. 23. For more information contact Anna Carey, x/3847, Anna.Carey@wwu.edu, or Lisa Moulds, x/6515, Lisa.Moulds@wwu.edu.

INSIDE

—What do Sasquatch, a modern woman, the Washington State wilderness and democracy have in common? Read about the new campus-wide reading program, and find out.

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—“First Thursdays” workshops are back! Check out this year’s schedule.

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Teaching-Learning Academy centers around student-faculty co-inquiry

Carmen Werder
Director, Teaching-Learning Academy

Western’s Teaching-Learning Academy (TLA), a campus-wide forum for studying relationships between teaching and learning, is gearing up to begin a new academic year of co-inquiry.

TLA members include faculty, students, administrators, and staff from across campus, as well as several members from the community. The TLA’s central mission is to create a community of scholars who work together to understand the existing learning culture at Western, to share that understanding with others, and to enhance the learning environment for everyone.

The TLA research and discussion agenda for the coming academic year features the overarching question: What role, if any, does/should the University play in the development of ethical reasoning or civic engagement? Discussion topics to date include General Education Reform (2002-03) and Features of an Optimal Learning Environment (2004-05).

Students participate in the TLA as part of their course work in a 300-level Communication seminar. Faculty and staff participate as a voluntary activity that many say gives them a deeper understanding of student perspectives and also informs their practices.

The TLA is also part of a national Carnegie Foundation effort on “Sustaining Student Voices in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.” Western is taking the lead in working with four other institutions to find ways to assure that students are engaged as partners with faculty in this work.

JOIN THE TLA

All members of the campus community are welcome to participate in TLA. Study groups meet weekly Sept. 29 through Dec. 3 in the Canada House Fireplace Room: Wed., 3 PM; Thurs., 2 or 3 PM; Fri., Noon. For more information, please visit the TLA website: http://www.wwu.edu/depts/TLA/ or contact TLA Director, Dr. Carmen Werder, carmen.werder@wwu.edu, x7329.
Welcome to another year of “First Thursdays’ workshops! The theme this year is “Engaging Learning,” and the focus is on the pedagogies and practices that create a more dynamic and involved learning environment for both students and faculty. This FREE series is brought to you by the Center for Instructional Innovation and Teaching-Learning Academy, with support from the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. For the most current information, go to the CII website, http://pandora.cii.wwu.edu/cii/ and click the link to “workshops & events.”

Are your students learning what you want them to in your course? There is considerable evidence showing that how we evaluate our students—and what we tell them is important—drives what they learn. At this interactive workshop, participants will hear how Western faculty from different disciplines have created measurable student learning outcomes and successfully integrated them into their courses. Discussion will focus on how to create realistic, explicit teaching objectives and match them with assessment strategies that enhance student investment in their learning, build in measurable, real-world skills, and provide feedback needed to improve teaching strategies. Participants will also work in small groups to re-craft their own course syllabi in a way that makes learning outcomes explicit to students. Faculty participants should bring a course syllabus to the workshop.

Why Bother? Strategies that Motivate Learners
THURSDAY, Jan. 6 at 4-5 PM, ROOM TBA

Despite an abiding engagement in the work of learning, we likely all have at least moments when we wonder why we should bother. This interactive workshop will feature strategies for reviving and renewing our energy for learning, including activities and approaches that students say motivate them.

How to Create and Sustain Student Engagement
THURSDAY, Feb. 3, at 4-5 PM, ROOM TBA

Extensive research shows that students who actively participate in their own learning experience have greater academic success. What can faculty members do to boost student engagement in their own classrooms? This workshop, which is co-facilitated by faculty member Joyce Hammond and other faculty and students, offers creative, effective and straightforward approaches, techniques, and assignments for enhancing an interactive dynamic for student learning inside and outside the classroom. Workshop participants will practice strategies to promote community within the classroom and discuss effective methods to help create good interactive dynamics in a variety of learning situations.

“**It can be said flatly that the mere act of listening to wise statements and sound advice does little for anyone. In the process of learning, the learner’s dynamic cooperation is required.”** —Charles I. Cagg

Case studies are stories that have an educational message. Because the best cases are often based on contemporary problems that may be encountered in other settings, using them in the classroom can make learning more relevant to students. Cases are used extensively in the disciplines of business,
First Thursdays, con’t from pg. 3

medicinc, education, and law, although they can
be used effectively in any discipline. During this
workshop, a panel of Western faculty who use
case teaching will share ways that all disciplines
can effectively use cases to motivate, engage,
and involve students in their own learning.

A Funny Thing Happened...

THURSDAY, April 7, at 4-5 PM, ROOM TBA

“Humor is also a way of saying something
serious.”—T.S. Eliot

Taking advantage of a humorous moment in class
can be a great way to turn a distraction into a
“teachable moment.” Appropriate and inten-
tional use of humor in the classroom can also
create a learning environment that boosts cog-
nition, eases student anxiety, facilitates group
cohesion, and enhances instructor appeal. At this
interactive workshop, Western faculty members
will share how they have used humor in their
classrooms. Participants will also learn some of
latest research on humor and learning, and some
strategies for using humor appropriately in a
classroom setting.

“Do videnia,” con’t from pg. 1

critical efforts that enrich teaching and learning at
Western:

—Dr. Carmen Werder will head up the newly
initiated Western Reads Program, as well as continue
the excellent work of the Teaching - Learning Acad-
emy.

—Dr. Steve Ross has agreed to serve in my place
on the General Education Committee, as the new
general education requirements continue to be de-
veloped for implementation in Fall 2005. A number of
offices and individuals will work with Dr. Ross and
the campus community to identify courses that will
be part of the new general education curriculum.

—Dr. Susan Mancuso will serve in my stead on
the state-wide Joint Access Oversight Group, and will
contribute to the progress that has been made to in-
crease transferability between Washington State com-
munity colleges and baccalaureate institutions.

Ann Carlson from my office will spearhead the
American Democracy Project and continue to pub-
lish Praxis. Janice Lapsansky will continue to coordi-
nate the New Faculty Orientation and subsequent ac-
tivities for new faculty in this academic year.

While I am honored and pleased to have this
opportunity, it is certainly with a sense of regret that
I leave this campus community at the beginning of
what promises to be a truly illustrious year for teach-
ing and learning. So many wonderful opportunities
await at Western’s doorstep; I am sorry that I will not
be able to participate along with all of you.

So, for now: Do videnia.

FYI: Beverly Jones will be serving as my admin-
istrative assistant during my absence. (You can reach
Bev at X/3345.)