President’s web page: http://www.wwu.edu/president/

MAY 2006

2006-2007 OPERATING BUDGET NEWS

You may have read the report in FAST (3/10) concerning WWU’s success during the 2006 supplemental legislative session. Western obtained funding for three separate decision packages: 1) Planning for Expansion to the Bellingham Waterfront ($400,000 in non-recurring funds); 2) Planning and Emergency Management Program Track ($250,000 in permanent funding); and 3) Border Policy Research Institute ($250,000 in permanent funding). These funds enhance the operating budget already approved by the Trustees in February, which includes a 5% average salary increase for faculty and exempt staff, 15 new faculty positions, and funding for classified staff salary survey adjustments and longevity step increases. (See January Context on President’s web page)

2006-07 High Demand Enrollment Funding Proposals: The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) is seeking proposals from Washington’s regional 4-year universities and the Evergreen State College to increase student enrollment in high-demand fields. This initiative, according to the HECB, was designed to respond to two primary challenges: 1) “college and university students are unable to take advantage of educational and career opportunities because enrollment access is limited in certain fields or programs”; and 2) “many employers report difficulty in bringing enough qualified graduates from Washington state institutions to fill high-skill job openings.” Western’s faculty and administrators submitted four proposals on May 3, 2006: 1) Molecular Biology (16 FTE students); 2) Master’s of Teaching in Secondary Education (15 FTE); 3) TESOL (28 FTE), and 4) Composite Materials Engineering Technology (10 FTE). These proposals request approximately $1M in General Fund-State support for FY 2006-07. Western representatives will present these proposals to the HECB review committee on Thursday, May 11, in Olympia.

2007-2009 BIENNIAL BUDGET PLANNING

In April, proposals were invited by the President and Members of the President’s Planning and Resources Council (PPRC) to suggest 2007-2009 biennial operating budget decision package ideas. Decision package proposals will be discussed at the next meeting of the PPRC on May 10.

A recent financial forecast for the next biennium shows the state revenues coming up short, and we have been told by the governor not to expect budget increases in coming years. Among the state budget assumptions in the forecast is a 2% increase for salaries.

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PROGRESS REPORTS

Strategic Planning Document

Following campus review and revision by the Strategic Planning Committee, a revised draft of the strategic plan was presented to the Board of Trustees for review on April 14. The committee will produce a final edition after it is presented to the campus for review and input. The Trustees will consider a final version for approval on June 9, 2006.

Waterfront Planning

The campus waterfront committee recently completed Phase I of the campus planning process. The legislature was encouraged by the progress to date, and appropriated $400,000 in planning funds in its recent Supplemental Budget session to support the next phase of planning.

A WWU report was presented at a campus forum on April 11, to the Board of Trustees on April 14, to the Faculty Senate on April 17, and to the Port Commissioners on April 19. The report described completion of Phase I, with particular emphasis on the potential overarching themes of initiatives, estimated space requirements, and physical locations. These plans for the university’s presence on Bellingham’s waterfront have been developed by the Waterfront Committee with assistance from consultants, Sal Rinella and Doug Graham of Stratus, Inc., and with extensive input from members of the campus community.

We are now moving into the next phase of the process which involves further programmatic and budget planning, preliminary agreements with potential partners for WWU’s presence at the Waterfront, updating the Institutional Master Plan, and development of an institutional staffing and structural model to lead and carry the project to completion over the coming decades. Updates will be posted to the committee website: http://www.wwu.edu/president/waterfrontnews.htm
On April 18, a crowd of 800 people assembled to hear Steve Ballmer, CEO of Microsoft, at the 9th annual WWU Seattle Business Forum. In the room were leaders of the business community, donors, public officials, alumni, deans, faculty, students, and staff from the foundation and alumni association who have worked to cultivate relationships that will strengthen and create opportunities for WWU’s students. Sponsorship of tables and proceeds from individual reservations raised over $100,000 for student scholarships. Following an inspiring video about 4 of our student scholarship recipients, I delivered the following message.

“These students are wonderful representatives of Washington’s flagship undergraduate university. Their stories are just four among the more than 12,000 that could be told.

Theirs are impressive efforts, supported by all of you in this room today. Your investments of time and money in our students support their:

- Innovation
- Imagination
- Investigation and
- Ingenuity

Your scholarships support innovation, unleashing student’s creativity, boosted by excellent teaching with one-on-one interactions, and state of the art technology in an environment that enables people to do their best work. Such innovation propels students successfully into your businesses and agencies ready to be competitive and contribute and adapt as their own capabilities increase.

Western scholarships fuel imagination, as faculty inspire students to discover and develop their passions and as our students respond by empowering themselves and sharing their excitement with those around them.

It is important to Western that our students are prepared to be local and global citizens to lead us to a better future. You support our students’ ability to investigate issues and develop problem solving skills. You allow them to pursue their own ideas, as demonstrated in our student-led and student-funded Green Energy initiative that made Western one of the nation’s 25 largest purchasers of green energy.

And you support ingenuity. WWU students and faculty are becoming known for their ingenious research and invention. With a liberal arts core and interdisciplinary studies, WWU has produced strong, stimulating academic programs. One example is a new Materials Characterization Facility and Advanced Materials Science and Engineering Center which encourages collaborative, interdisciplinary teaching and research, and promotes connections to regional technology companies. Please remember that students from all colleges are ready to be your colleagues.

As we all invest in our students’ ingenuity, imagination, innovation and capacity to investigate and address issues -- it allows them to invest their talents in our collective future. We get the most out of our students who in turn will help develop our knowledge-based workforce, driving business success and growth and providing responsible citizens. We are doing what you expect of a university.

Thanks to all of you who are investing in our students by being here today. Join me in applauding our students -- 100 of whom are here to share their inspiration and thanks for your generosity.

Like you, I look forward to hearing a leader of our times and one who reflects all of what we strive to develop in our students -- our speaker, Steve Ballmer.”

Angelika Herbold, a 2005 WWU Computer Science graduate and Microsoft Employee, introduced Steve Ballmer, who spoke about building people-oriented products and the importance of having a workforce inspired by the potential to change the world. He also talked about the need for the state to continue investing in higher education for the worldwide knowledge-based economy.
Sue Guenter-Schlesinger, Executive Director of Western’s Equal Opportunity Office has established an Equal Opportunity Advisory Council. The Council serves as an advisory group to the EO Office by reviewing the University’s Affirmative Action Plan, providing critical feedback for EO programs and policies, and assisting in developing recommendations in the areas of affirmative action, equal opportunity and diversity. Selected members will periodically review appeals to discrimination complaints. This Council will also review nominations for the University’s Diversity Achievement Award and make recommendations to the President.

The Council membership includes faculty, staff, students and a community member. For further information please contact Sue Guenter-Schlesinger at 650-3307, or email: sue.guenter-schlesinger@wwu.edu

Edward Tenner will be the fall Distinguished Lecturer on Thursday, October 12, 2006. Tenner will speak about the unintended consequences of technology. Edward Tenner is an independent writer, speaker, and consultant on technology and culture. His book Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences has been an international bestseller. His most recent book is Our Own Devices: The Past and Future of Body Technology.

Tenner received a Ph.D in European History from the University of Chicago, is a former Guggenheim fellow, Wilson fellow, researcher for the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study, researcher of the Princeton Department of Geosciences, and is a Senior Research Associate of the Jerome and Dorothy Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation, National Museum of American History.

Participation Invited: I believe it is important to maximize the impact of our access to the DLS speakers and so I seek your suggestions on ways to enhance their value to our academic environment. Over the past several years, we have made a concerted effort to involve faculty and students in planning the visits of our distinguished lecturers, through direct interaction with classes or through special sessions to which groups are invited. We invite faculty and students to help us take full advantage of the opportunities. If you are interested in participating in Tenner’s October 11 and 12 visit, please contact Fran Maas at Fran.Maas@wwu.edu or 650-7545. If you have ideas for future speakers, contact Harriet Wender at Harriet.Wender@wwu.edu or 650-7766.

WWU: Host to the National Association of Ethnic Studies

The national office of the National Association of Ethnic Studies (NAES) is located at WWU, brought here last year by its current president, Professor Lawrence Estrada. Hosting the association brings national exposure to Western and provides high visibility for Western’s efforts to increase comparative research and continued dialogue centered on the issues of race and ethnicity in the Americas. It also reinforces Western’s various diversity initiatives, the stature of ethnic and cultural studies on this campus, and the quality of teacher education, and supports Western’s increasingly diverse student population. The national journal, Ethnic Studies Review, published through the NAES office, affords numerous research and faculty development opportunities for WWU faculty as readers, referees and editors for special editions, and as members of the Ethnic Studies Review editorial board. A strong WWU contingent of faculty and students attended the NAES annual conference in San Francisco at the end of March. For further information, see the association’s web site: http://www.ethnicstudies.org/
WWU Preparation for Flu Pandemic is in Process

During the flu pandemic in 1918, local health authorities ordered WWU’s predecessor, the Whatcom Normal School, to close on Tuesday, October 8th, 1918. It reopened on Monday, November 18th, 9 days earlier than expected, when the danger seemed to have passed. The impact of that pandemic worldwide was staggering, killing over 20 million people. Late in 2005, the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) began alerts about the possibility of a new pandemic flu outbreak resulting from the avian flu circling the globe. The nation is more aware of and better prepared for a pandemic given advances in science and information since 1918. However, much still needs to be done at every level to be as prepared as we need to be.

Members of the faculty and staff have been inquiring about institutional preparedness for a potential flu pandemic. I am pleased to report that the university is working at many levels to be prepared. Your questions and input are helpful as we consider what it will take to protect our community and to continue operations.

Since November 2005, University personnel have been working with the Whatcom County Health Department and other officials. The University is well represented on a County Pandemic Planning Taskforce which began meeting in February 2006 to develop a local plan. A summary report of the first meeting is available from the Whatcom County Health Department web site at http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/health/. In coordination with that effort, I charged a broad-based university committee to work to ready our campus. At the April Washington State Pandemic Planning Summit (attended by Dr. Emily Gibson, Director of Student Health, and Gayle Shipley, WWU Director of Environmental Health and Safety), state and federal officials agreed that pandemics are global in nature, but their effects are always local. Many people on campus have been working on our local plans, united around the goals of preserving health and maintaining operations in the event of an emergency. We are reviewing other plans developed in higher education as we tailor a plan to address our situation. As plans progress, cooperation and communication will be essential.

Communication is recognized as a key issue. The need to provide clear and consistent information has been widely discussed during both County and University planning to date. Vice Provost Boles is evaluating our on-campus data service capabilities and needs. We are also examining our network systems and the capacity of the common internet carriers in the area to determine our capacity to maintain instruction during a potential campus closing. Each faculty member might give some thought to the extent to which they could conduct classes using technology from home if a quarantine were imposed by the health department, as in 1918.

It is important for each one of us to take steps to ensure that we are prepared — both related to possible disruptions of university operations and at home. Readiness guidance for individuals and families is available. Federal pandemic information is found at http://www.pandemicflu.gov/ and Washington State information may be found at http://www.doh.wa.gov. The State and County Health Departments and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that we all take common-sense steps to limit the spread of germs. Dr. Gibson, Medical Director of Western’s Student Health Center, urges the campus community to emphasize good hygiene. Though these simple steps seem understated in anticipation of a pandemic, they can make a difference in the potential threat to the university and to your families:

- Don’t touch dead birds!
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Put used tissues in a waste basket.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you don’t have a tissue.
- Clean hands after coughing or sneezing. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Stay at home if you are sick.

Our Emergency Management Committee will continue to work diligently to identify needed procedures, supplies, and decisions that may be needed should a pandemic materialize. In the near future, the university will be putting up a web site with information on university procedures and preparations as well as other relevant links.