Title: Support for Graduate Assessment Activities

Initiative Description, including statement of purpose and anticipated outcomes:
While formal and informal assessment activities are routinely administered as part of our graduate curricula, a more comprehensive outlook is needed at this time. And, a collection of those activities is needed just as is present for our undergraduate programs. While we are completing our assessment activities in the context of deep understanding and continuous improvement for our Graduate Programs, certainly the assessment activities are also necessary to maintain our regional accreditation and uphold the high standard required of us by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) and several other bodies that accredit individual programs.

NWCCU expects that a formal assessment of each program, both undergraduate and graduate, be completed. These include program level outcomes as well as course level outcomes that are tied to department, college, and university mission statements, strategic plans, values, and our core themes. NWCCU requires each institution to establish Core Themes. A core theme is a “manifestation of a fundamental aspect of institutional mission with an overarching common purpose that guides planning for programs and services, development of capacity, and application of resources to fulfill that aspect of the mission.” Western's core themes derive from University's strategic plan and are as follows:
Core Theme 1: Serve the State of Washington by Expanding Student Access
Core Theme 2: Foster Student Success and
Core Theme 3: Strengthen Communities Beyond the Campus.
Continuous improvement requires “closing the loop” as assessment data reveals opportunities for enhancing student outcomes and program quality.

We propose that one person from each of our graduate programs will be asked to be responsible for the assessment activities of the programs and that they be given a modest stipend for those start-up activities. In other words, these individuals will create the assessment framework needed for their programs. The cost for those stipends, plus summer stipends for the Graduate faculty leading the start-up activities this summer, will be one-time costs. We propose that a faculty member on the Graduate Council receive a course release each subsequent academic year to help evaluate the effectiveness of the assessment plans and strategies and to make sure the assessment information is properly posted and documented across campus. This course release will be an on-going cost.

What University units (depts., colleges, etc.) will be involved?
All departments with a Graduate program will be impacted: Accounting, Anthropology, Biology, Business Administration, Chemistry, Communication Sciences and Disorders, Computer Science, Educational Leadership, Elementary Education, English, Environmental Science, Environmental Studies, Geology, History, Human Services and Rehabilitation, Kinesiology, Mathematics, Music, Psychology, and Secondary Education”.

How does the initiative support the University Mission and Strategic Plan?
All forms of assessment help us fulfill Western’s mission: because assessment is a necessary part of helping us be a student centered university that develops the potential of our students. Additionally, assessment helps us in our pursuit of access to a rigorous graduate education.
Are there potential partnerships with external organizations/institutions?
Our regional accreditation commission, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, is certainly an external partner. Other external partners are the agencies and bodies that accredit individual programs. The University is a member of the Council of Graduate Schools in the United States and adheres to the general policies and criteria established by this national association. Graduate programs, which result in educator certification are also accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. The College of Business and Economics is accredited by the AACSB International Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is accredited by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) and by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. The Mental Health Counseling and School Counselor programs are accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). The Rehabilitation Counseling program is accredited by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE)

Anticipated new positions needed to implement the initiative:
   Faculty: 1 course release
   Staff: 3-year funding exists
   Graduate Students (supported): Click here to enter text.

Space needs (boldface one; attach note from Space Administration):
   • **Existing space is sufficient**
   • Existing space will be sufficient after modification
   • New space may be required

New equipment or other one-time costs: $20000 for start-up.

Recurring operating costs: $12000 (depends on the course/individual)

Estimated timeline for implementation: Immediately with one-time funds (Summer 2015).

Potential funding sources (boldface all that apply; attach notes from University Advancement and University Relations)
   • State operating budget (decision package)
   • New enrollments (tuition-based)
   • External Education (fee-based)
   • **Reallocation**
   • Federal Support (agency: _____)
   • Grants
   • Partnerships (organizations/institutions: _____)
   • Private Funds
   • Other (please specify)