

### **LIST OF COMMON THEMES HEARD THROUGHOUT THE LISTENING SESSIONS.**

My summary of common themes ended up with exactly 100. Time did not permit me to cover the full richness of even those subjects in common in my talk, let alone the many important particulars relevant in a specific departmental context. Should you be interested, though, in that level of detail, I have put my rough notes -- my personal summary of the listening sessions below. The raw data -- the [notes from the listening sessions](#) -- are also available. Let me know what I missed, for I know well that more eyes allow clearer vision. I now encourage you to comment on what I got right, and, what I overlooked or misunderstood.

### **ACADEMIC PROGRAMS**

1. Academic Advising.
  - a. Incentive structure for “real faculty” involvement – e.g., summer term.
  - b. What are the expectations in this area for professorial rank faculty? How is performance defined, assessed for promotion, tenure, merit?
  - c. Challenges to get effective advising to all transfer students.
  - d. Serious advising gap for sophomores and those unable to get into majors. They are “in limbo” and this has serious, longer lasting impacts.
  - e. Most advisees don’t come in for help; it is hard for departments to obtain lists of advisees.
2. Student Preparation.
  - a. Running start students have more issues, including strength of their preparation, from our perspective. From their perspective, we could treat them as freshmen but they may not want that.
3. Academic Quality.
  - a. Program after program proudly shared clear evidence of their academic excellence. From department after department came the words, “we have the best program in the state” and, not infrequently, we are in the top X percentile nationally and including doctoral comprehensives in the list.
  - b. Need smaller GUR classes; need to protect smaller upper division classes.
  - c. Research and graduate programs were often mentioned as an important ingredient in maintaining excellence of undergraduate programs. Yet, departments report barriers to developing funded research efforts.
  - d. Some see the instructional mission of the campus being “lost” in an increasing emphasis on research; others fear that the need to stay at the cutting edge in scholarship is being diminished because of demands from the instructional side; others see the two as mutually reinforcing.
  - e. Need to leverage our alumni expertise.
  - f. Our students are extraordinarily well prepared; our students need better preparation (writing and mathematics being mentioned).
  - g. A number of academic programs reported efforts to reorganize undergraduate curricula (or reported such efforts as underway).
  - h. A number of programs mentioned “lost positions” or experienced dramatic enrollment growth without corresponding increases in faculty positions.
  - i. Entrepreneurial impulses are difficult to carry out, given regulatory environment and perceptions of internal constraints.
  - j. Broad, liberal arts-based education is one of our core strengths.

- k. Service learning is increasingly being found across the campus as valuable for education and for preparing responsible citizens.
  - l. Considerable questions and ideas expressed about relationship between budget and enrollment size and, if we do grow, what kind of enrollment growth we should seek to support.
  - m. A key to our undergraduate program is “high touch.”
4. Partnerships.
    - a. We have exemplary programs that offer joint degrees with other institutions.
    - b. Should we be concerned about a possible UW campus in Everett? How about the proposal to transform Bellevue Community College into Bellevue College?
  5. Opportunities for Further Development.
    - a. We must explicitly and collectively reach understandings on the roles of graduate programs in the future of Western.
    - b. In several areas, there may be opportunities and needs to pursue applied or clinical doctorates.
    - c. External programs and outreach often mentioned.
    - d. Allied health mentioned as an area with existing strengths but also gaps.
    - e. Considerable questions surrounding “Leadership Advantage”; considerable evidence that an emphasis on leadership pervades the current curriculum.
  6. International Programs.
    - a. Important market to get into for academic and financial reasons.
    - b. General sense that this is an area that has not been fully developed at Western.
    - c. Although there is variation, the widely varied international backgrounds of current faculty members is explicitly seen as contributing to the academic quality of academic departments.

## **CAMPUS FACILITIES/FUTURE NEEDS**

1. Space/Facilities Issues.
  - a. A number of units raised challenges created by limitations on space, lack of propinquity for related functions, or lack of state of the art facilities.
  - b. Why no (or very few) evening classes? We need more weekend classes.
  - c. Need to have grounds looking even better.
  - d. Why are windows so dirty?
2. Location.
  - a. A number of student service efforts are located at the north end of campus while “center of gravity” for student activity/classes has migrated toward the southern end of campus.
  - b. Performing Arts and Athletic events located at center of campus, creating access challenges (read, “parking”). Reinforces a sense of distance between campus and community.
  - c. Parking is a multi-faceted problem for multiple constituencies.
3. Waterfront.
  - a. Waterfront development was often raised as question: where are we on this?
  - b. Concerns about distance between main campus and a waterfront presence: geographic ( getting back and forth) and culture (becoming isolated).
  - c. Concerns about not diluting resources available to support current programs in order to create a new presence.

- d. Concerns about seismic stability.
  - e. Multiple units interested in the potential of the site for academic, cultural, athletic, service interfaces with the larger community.
4. Off Campus Sites.
- a. Many successful ventures were highlighted by a number of departments along with plans for further development through entrepreneurial efforts or redirection of resources currently serving off-campus needs.
  - b. Need clearer, stronger presence in Seattle: in terms of marketing and, perhaps, a physical presence.

## **DIVERSITY**

1. A number of programs discussed, usually with considerable passion, the challenges they face in increasing the diversity of faculty, staff, and students.
2. A number of success stories related as well: how attention to diversity of the student body brought benefits to a particular programs, in one instance, described as “overwhelmingly positive.”
3. Some tension: in making sure, while recognizing the benefits that can follow from increasing diversity through a more international faculty, staff, and students, we must make sure that internationalizing does not become a substitute for fully engaging and fully reflecting the diversity of our own nation.
4. We need to reach into communities of color through deeper, integrated pipeline efforts.
5. Our LGBTCC colleagues report life-long experiences of marginalization that are reinforced by certain university practices and policies.
6. We need to set priorities among the various challenges and opportunities that exist to more effectively attract, support, integrate, and serve those with disabilities.
7. There has been a narrowing of the kinds of students who come to Western. There is the perception that we are no longer as open to students who are, in their preparation, academically diverse.
8. There are opportunities to clarify and integrate the efforts of offices and groups (student groups, the Minority Employees Council) in support of diversity.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL.**

1. Fragmentation/Decentralization.
  - a. Fragmented tutoring services: e.g., Math under math dept, Writing under Provost, Accounting advising led by a student group, and the Tutoring Center.
  - b. Printing/Graphic Design has become more and more decentralized, creating fiscal challenges for central operations, efficiency, and quality.
  - c. Decisions on credit acceptability and course equivalency for transfer students are highly decentralized.
  - d. Students would benefit from a “one stop shop” for student services.
  - e. Athletics must be better integrated with the campus.
  - f. We need to help improve budgeting practices at departmental level by investing in continuing education and support.
  - g. Programs at 32<sup>nd</sup> street: problems of isolation, not feeling a real part of the campus; challenges using personal vehicles when on main campus; needs for video conferencing.
  - h. Academic and financial “sides of the house” need to be more of a team.

- i. Functions and areas such as the Library find they are too often “out of the loop” when decisions are being considered which they could help inform.
  - j. Need to strategically settle the centralized/decentralized approach we intend to follow and fund, as regards a myriad of IT functions and services.
2. Interdependencies.
  - a. There are striking understandings that all parts of the university are important to the success of a department and its particular mission: e.g., CBE noting the need to maintain strong fine and performing arts.
3. Marketing (internally, externally) and Branding.
  - a. Needs to be integrated.
  - b. Everybody in the organization needs to understand the same coherent message. Need clear vision.
  - c. Need to keep university as a whole fully informed.
  - d. Need to elevate external recognition of our excellence, expertise.
  - e. “Branding” mentioned over and over as an important and yet-to-be-accomplished need.
  - f. We have very successful programs better recognized for their high quality in Washington, D.C. (and the granting agencies there) than in the state of Washington.
  - g. Again and again, Western is no longer a regional university, we must “break out of the regional pack.”
  - h. We need to do a better job of getting out the word about our impacts in the community: economic; educational; cultural.
4. Advancement.
  - a. Need to create a university irresistibly worthy of support.
  - b. Need to work even more aggressively in fund raising.
  - c. From multiple perspectives (not just fund raising) and in multiple discussions, people see opportunities for our relationships with alumni to be stronger.
5. Economic Development.
  - a. Employers, presidents of graduate universities, report that they are delighted to have our graduates because of the quality of the undergraduate experience that they have at Western.
  - b. Students report that they love the Bellingham area and want to stay after graduation but cannot find jobs, asking if the university can help there.
  - c. Our academic programs are playing important direct and catalytic roles, working to enable further regional economic development. This is not broadly recognized.
6. Support Functions.
  - a. University has systematically underfunded support functions: disproportionately cutting academic and student support services in tough times, adding back academic program initiatives when times are better.
  - b. That notwithstanding, there is the perception that “the administration” keeps growing disproportionately.
7. Business Practices.
  - a. System of charge-backs needs to be examined.
  - b. Need a clear operational and capital budget process.
  - c. Need to assure we have best practices in place.
8. Climate.
  - a. Ours faculty, staff, and students are passionately engaged in the challenges of our surrounding communities, our country, and our globe.
  - b. Again and again, heard the value of clear, prompt, open communication.

- c. Need to improve climate for management and labor to work together.
  - d. Need more events to bring people together.
  - e. Generally, the feeling that the town/gown relationship is pretty good – coming from both town and gown listening sessions – with aforementioned challenges for access and opportunities to more fully involve surrounding neighborhood associations in decision making processes that affect them.
  - f. Need to be willing to take risks, to change a winning game.
  - g. We need to treat each other respectfully and not just collegially but also congenially.
9. Institutional Research
- a. Lack of information to adequately inform decision making arose in many contexts.
  - b. Units report difficulty with getting information they need.
  - c. Difficulty with getting prompt answers to “what if” questions; efforts spent on routine (but largely non-analytical) reports needs to be evaluated in terms of current institutional needs for data-driven, open, transparent decision making.
  - d. Data elements have not been designed with decision making purposes in mind leading to confusion and incorrect inferences in several contexts (e.g., teaching loads, administrative overhead).
  - e. Data sets not fully utilized (e.g., integrating NSSE with academic records).
10. Tuition
- a. Role of tuition in supporting the WWU of the future was a frequent subject of discussion.
  - b. Concern about balancing financial barriers to access, with the obligation to provide access to excellence.
11. Vision
- a. Over and over, I got the question: what is the “type” in our commitment to be the “best university in the nation of our type”?
  - b. How will we measure our success and know when we are there?
  - c. Who are our “competitors”?
  - d. We must build on current strengths (engaged excellence, sustainability) rather than take off in entirely new directions.