

Comments through October 1, 2008

The following comments to WWU President Bruce Shepard during listening sessions with divisions and departments have not been filtered. They include comments, concerns, recommendations, and bragging points.

Academic Programs and Courses

1. Students' most often chosen major coming in is not congruent with the most frequently granted degrees reflecting, in part, the difficulty students have with mathematics. Western could benefit by investing in a top notch math preparation course.
2. The state is emphasizing higher demand courses, meaning things the state and the economy demands more of. What about the high need and value for liberal arts education?

Advancement

1. Important to look at the priorities of the university and keep the university as a whole informed about the role of advancement.
2. We have an opportunity for key decision makers to be provided information about our excellence. We need to elevate the recognition of our expertise.
3. While we have the expertise to help key decision makers, it is our responsibility to be responsive to their needs.
4. We need to look at ways university advancement can facilitate faculty/key decision maker exchanges.
5. Individuals: Bellingham is increasingly a retirement destination. Many are people of means and people with substantial expertise in a variety of fields and occupations. Most are happy to share when asked, though identifying them can be a problem.

Alumni Connections

1. Look for more ways to connect students to alums with increased alumni mentoring of students.
2. Alumni are connected with MySpace and Facebook.
3. We need to leverage our alumni expertise

Budget

1. How are potential budget cuts likely to impact the budget process?
2. The university has systematically underfunded support functions. It would be useful to review the budget process and how decisions are made.
3. Given the time lag in our data reporting systems, we lose valuable information about budgets from June to October.
4. Service units try to provide service at a high level, but budget shortfalls make it difficult to meet expectations.
5. We are curious about how budgeting is done and about new directions.

6. Space management and the capital budget planning need to be integrated more with the operating budget to avoid surprises when new positions are added through the operating budget.
7. Recharging from one department to another takes a tremendous amount of resources (time and money).

Branding and Marketing

1. Make sure that the branding and marketing of Western are integrated.
2. Everyone in the organization has to understand the same coherent message.

Communication

1. Not everyone knows what WWU is known for. We need better information about our successes.
2. Departments don't understand all the financial services BFA can provide. We need to have training and orientation for employees across the campus.
3. If it is clear that we need to get the message out, who is responsible for doing so?
4. It is often a major effort to get everyone on board.
5. Broad communication of university messages is important.
6. Everyone should be able to recognize and use the institutional mission.
7. We need to improve the climate for management and labor so that we can get more work done.
8. Events like the annual Staff Arts and Crafts Fair bring people across campus together for common goals.
9. Loans and Collections and Student Accounts staff have lots of contact with students. We encounter some silos and try to bridge the gap with communication among users.
10. The entire campus should be made familiar with the Governor's directives on energy savings and what we are doing or should be doing, as individuals, as departments, and as an institution.
11. Most of us enjoy risks and challenges and success. Sometimes the labor/management framework inhibits dealing with those who are less willing. In a related point, it is both hard to extend proper kudos to people, and difficult to address incompetence.

Decision Making and Transparency

1. I am curious about the philosophy of risk taking. There are some areas where one can't take risks because of high degree of accountability required.
2. In assessing enterprise risk, we need to better tie decisions to the mission, and separate decision-making processes from personality and the loudness of voices.
3. All the process around decision-making should be targeted to bringing people closer together, since clearly all voices can't be reflected in a given decision.
4. Transparency of decisions will be important – there is a lot of fear about the various pressures on the university, which is leading to posturing and positioning behaviors.

5. There is a hope that decision-making will be more decisive. Too often the university appears to default to “no decision” because the process is not clear and not deliberate.
6. Entrepreneurial impulses are difficult to carry out, especially given the regulatory environment and perceptions of internal constraints.
7. As someone who came recently from the private sector, I’ve noticed that the university seems less adaptable to change.
8. Staff without experience outside of the institution or with experience only at WWU are not as aware of best practices in higher education.
9. Decision makers need to converse more with the people who have parts of the implementation. This requires broad consideration of the impact of decisions throughout the university. (eg: student accounts is involved in charging the fees that get changed when a program is brought on budget.)

Event Planning

1. It would be good if there were a campus-wide special events office to help coordinate all that is going on (esp as regards moving equipment around at the last minute).

Facilities

1. The university is undercapitalized given the needs for renovations access and infrastructure.
2. The university is short on green space for playfields and stadium seating. We need more ideas on how to maximize the functional space. We could expand the use of space along the south campus entry, but there are no full sized fields now.
3. We need a politically viable solution for the Carver Gym facility
4. Signage is not adequate on campus.
5. There is a project for signage on campus, but insufficient budget for it.
6. We hope to get out of the armory. It needs substantial renovation to make is a workable environment, even for storage.
7. The university has lots of old inventory of furniture and such. We need better central control of equipment replacement.
8. Close to start up of the quarter, too many room assignment changes are made at the last minute, making it difficult for the transport staff. We see some change in this with Francis (Halle) on board.
9. Book drops for Wilson Library should be provided at various campus locations.

Financial Aid

1. Students who work and have other financial obligations have more difficulty meeting GPA requirement for competitive majors, and students coming from lower socio-economic status have more trouble than most. We need to keep that in view as we target scholarship dollars.
2. I am concerned with middle America students who don’t have “need” in accord with the federal guidelines but whose parents have competing financial obligations. WWU needs to strike a balance with need-based and merit-based aid and scholarships.

3. Undocumented students can be admitted in Washington if they were enrolled in a high school in the state, but they are not eligible for financial aid. Can the university be more vocal about this and about occasional deportation of students (as happened to a WWU student a couple of years ago)?
4. Students work too much – local employers exploit their need for part time work and expand it to too many hours, which distracts students from their primary occupation. When you compare the hourly wage to the cost of education per student per hour, the investment of student time is quite lop sided.

Financial Services

1. We're implementing a new cashiering system with EBill and EPay for students. We're also working toward a new ECommerce system which has potential for revenue generation. Perhaps investment in such a system should be at the central level since it will be useful across campus.
2. We need to work with credit unions and banks to take on students who can't get a bank account for electronic payments.

Graduate education

1. We have not grown our graduate programs. Is there a problem selling such programs in Olympia?

Health and Safety

1. When grease traps were cleaned last week, it was noxious and there was no warning it was going to happen so people were concerned and it wasn't clear who to call. Shouldn't we do that sort of thing on weekends or after hours?

Institutional Research

1. We need to make better use of institutional research to support decision making.

Laws and Regulations

1. The legislature is an active regulator. There are many mismatches between federal and state regulations such as in safety reporting and waivers. There are building and business regulations that impact programs and management that don't yield sufficient value.

Parking and Transportation

1. The community has trouble coming on campus to buy tickets. We need some convenient temporary parking.
2. It has been widely reported that the campus is hard to reach and parking is impossible, parking enforcers lie in wait, etc. There is a poorly publicized alternative/solution to this and that is the Lincoln Street parking lot where anyone can park for free. There is frequent bus service, at least every fifteen minutes (more frequently at certain times) that carries riders to the doors of Wilson Library, closer than even the Dean of Libraries can park! The bus ride costs \$0.75 which is cheaper than the metered parking and the buses depart from this same choice location and deposit riders at the Lincoln Street point of departure. If

- an information blitz was made, an appendage of this information to fliers and posters announcing lectures, events, etc. was widely circulated it could reduce this excuse for not visiting the campus and might well increase the number of campus visitors from the community.
3. Parking is free after hours in the C Lots. More use can be made of the buildings on the south side of campus for events, like Turning Points lectures which are now in the Communications building.
 4. If WWU considers going to 4 ten-hour days, which is being piloted by the Governor, we would need to work with WTA on earlier and later bus lines so it will be feasible for employees who bus to work.
 5. Funding transportation for our students to nearby sources of information and expertise (eg: Canadian universities and museums and other area institutions) is cheaper and quicker than obtaining legislative approval and funding for new buildings, faculty and the staffing costs of duplicating these programs on our campus. It may represent a new twist in budgeting but the payoffs are big and it may well be worth a try.

Partnerships

1. University of British Columbia: Liu Institute for Global Issues. There are several divisions within this institute all staffed with talented faculty and are generally interested in sharing their expertise with other faculty and students, especially their visiting lecturers and experts. UBC also has a Longhouse for the First Nation students and the same applies there. The Museum of Anthropology is a world famous teaching museum and is accessible for a nominal fee. The School of Forestry and the School of Fisheries certainly complement our environmental work at Huxley. UBC also has a downtown campus with a strong focus on MBA programs and includes a Master of Health Administration and probably something dealing with Asian firms. There are people in the College of Business and Economics better qualified than I to comment on the opportunities there, Paul Storer in Economics and the holder of the Ross Chair of Canadian Business and Economics for starters. Their Asian oriented programs are numerous and often funded by Asian corporations and donors. There are other opportunities of similar ilk spread across the UBC campus.
2. Simon Fraser University in the heart of downtown Vancouver has a wide variety of classes and some programs including planning and business. A jewel attached to SFU and the downtown center is the Morris Wosk Center for Dialogue which is used for a huge variety of seminars, meetings, lectures etc. The main campus atop Burnaby Mountain also has various attractions including a faculty club with a spectacular view.
3. British Columbia Institute of Technology: The Vehicle Research Institute under Mike Seal had some contacts and interaction with faculty there and still may.
4. Vancouver Art Gallery: It is an important cultural asset and has some education programs. It should be worth exploring along with other museums and cultural institutions. British Columbia and especially the Lower Mainland has a large Asian population and many Asian cultural institutions. It is possible to have an "Asian Experience" of sorts within an hour drive of Bellingham.

5. Partnerships with Northwest Indian College, Whatcom Community College and Bellingham Technical College should be more fully developed.
6. Corporations and Businesses. We have done some things with them in the way of internships, guest lectures, tours and visits but more is possible. We need to be encouraged to increase the interaction and the leadership initiative can benefit from closer ties to the leaders.

Registration and Academic Advising

1. It is hard for students to get the classes they need. We should work toward marrying what students want to take with what the faculty offer. This is not a new problem, and not unique to WWU.
2. We need to attend to the system of student academic advising at all levels. Transfer students are rarely admitted into a major, so they miss out at a critical time in their educational planning.
3. The state favors community college education, but associate degree holders are not necessarily prepared for the major. If they're interested in a cohort program, this can lead to big problems.
4. Students would benefit from a one stop shop for student services, and it would be useful for staff so that they could more easily follow problems through to solutions with colleagues in different departments.

Service Learning

1. Didn't see much in the preliminary report about service learning and community service.

Service to the Community and Society

1. We're not a regional university but we are interested in our role in the region.
2. Many graduates want to stay in the area and so service to the community is an important part of their education.
3. Some faculty do not do anything in their research and teaching that is particularly local or regional. The University shouldn't be too parochial in its focus on the region.
4. We're a regional university in a global economy, including the Pacific Rim. We need to continue to take advantage of our proximity to Canada.

Student Health and Student Support

1. Students with mental health concerns require a team to support them. Staff are stressed as they support a larger number of students each year.
2. Some of our students are place-bound or time-bound. We need to tailor support for non-traditional students

Sustainability

1. To really exploit our environmental niche, we need to expand the sustainable focus throughout the campus.

2. We have examined operations and reduced vehicle use in the interest of saving fuel. We're talking about reducing a second mail delivery each day – but only after first talking with constituents.
3. We are interested in getting back to using electric vehicles. We abandoned them early on because of problems in the early models (eg: not waterproof), but understand that they're better now.
4. The economic return on investment on “sustainable” products (like hybrid cars) is not always high.
5. We have switched to 100% recycled paper.
6. B.C. is a major energy source and our building heat comes from Canada. There is work going forward in energy development, utilization and transportation. B.C. also is far ahead of us in sustainability and a number of environmental issues – a good resource.

Vision

1. We must have a clear vision of who Western is and keep that vision in front of us.
2. We must assure we are a university that is irresistibly worthy of support.

Waterfront Development

1. Envision the Waterfront as a way to make Western a destination university.
2. Is Western ready to become a destination university or do we lack a sense of readiness?
3. Need to increase feedback loops and increase our internal marketing.