INTERNAL ASSESSMENT – STRENGTHS

- The people who work within the division. We are a division made up of people who love technology and care about education, about students, about faculty. Our vision is simple: Using appropriate technology we want to help Western achieve its goals of providing an exceptional educational experience for its students and faculty.

- Western students receive exceptional software and technology services bundled into their academic experience. Flexible access to the Microsoft Office365 suite, increased network storage and newly added Google Suite services to name a few.

- ITS maintains a strong student focus through its innovative Student Tech Center that provides student access to advanced technological applications and offers ‘just-in-time’ help to students who may be experiencing technical difficulties or who wish to include new technology in completing assignments.

- The recently created Digital Media Center (DMC), staffed through a reorganization within ATUS, has now joined the Student Technology Center (STC) and the Center for Instructional Innovation (CIIA) as contributing partners of the Learning Commons. The Learning Commons is a cross-divisional partnership supporting students and faculty with a variety of instructional support services.

- ITS Communications has risen to a strength. The new ATUS website, “Just Two Minutes” news video—along with the extensive teaching, training and learning articles for employees and students—is addressing a significant need.
INTERNAL ASSESSMENT – CHALLENGES

• ITS essentially has no operating budget which has forced ITS to always operate in a reactive mode. An operating budget, especially for an IT organization, is critical to stimulate strategic investment and proactive response to aging or outdated technology.

• ITS has a significant number of staff retirements approaching which are congregated in a few critical support areas. ITS also has a deficit in certain employee skill set areas. Compare those challenges with the highly competitive technology employee recruitment situation in the Northwest and we find ourselves highly exposed.

• More demand for services for all of the ITS units then can be fulfilled. This is highlighted in ATUS with requests for video services, in EAS for application development and implementation services, and in EIS for backup and security services.

• Our wireless network does not cover the entire campus. The risk is threefold: most critical would be if the lack of wireless coverage affected student recruitment; second is that because of the number of devices, the network becomes saturated and performance declines; third, more of our academic and administrative software applications have gravitated toward mobile interaction dependent upon ubiquitous WiFi coverage.

• We must address the issue of centralization of certain technology resources as the most efficient method of delivering service. We must also address the “how” to accomplish the centralization of technology resources in a manner that provides support for each component of the institution to achieve their goals. Without addressing this issue, we will continue to see growth in units that decide to fund their own technology units to accomplish their needs. While we recognize their contributions and are appreciative of their efforts, they often unintentionally create more work for ITS and/or place additional unplanned demand on infrastructure components.
INTERNAL ASSESSMENT – OPPORTUNITIES

• The selection of a new permanent Chief Information Officer along with efforts to address governance and budget over this transition year will hopefully mark the beginning of a new era for a strategic ITS organization.

• Western Washington University has a strong history of decentralization that has served us well in many ways. However, the challenges and threats to Central ITS are multiplied for the university through each decentralized IT service area. Improved collaboration or consolidation of ITS services would address some of the university’s IT funding challenges along with allowing both Central and Distributed IT to be more strategic in their adoption of newer technology.

• Western must continue its efforts to become more “web centric” for information exchange with all devices. Our collaborative efforts with External Relations and WebTech will continue to be strong and we feel that the synergy is creating the opportunity for delivering the right message with the right technology. The delivery to mobile devices has risen in importance and while resources are constrained, our personnel are working hard to meet this demand.

• Western has an opportunity to transition the responsibility for WiFi coverage away from individual departments to become a true university resource. WiFi today is a required utility resource that should strive to provide ubiquitous coverage across the entire campus. This is an opportunity available now for Western with some funding adjustments.
INTERNAL ASSESSMENT – THREATS

- In technology, change is constant but it becomes a threat without training and professional development.

- Change also comes with each new freshman class who arrive with new technologies and new expectations for using technology in their residence, in their classes, and socially. Western’s IT must keep up with both student and faculty demands to provide an effective teaching and learning environment where each student can succeed.

- Security of our university digital resources will always be a threat for which we will always strive to provide adequate resources for our defense.

- We have a number of expensive infrastructure and software application replacement needs that are and will be addressed in the coming year.