Vision Statement

The vision of the Institute of Sustainability is: ‘To foster the collaborative, interdisciplinary education of critical thinkers who will lead, inspire and engage their communities toward sustainability”.

Mission Statement

The Institute will work across boundaries to promote efforts that lead to better understanding of the concepts and importance of sustainability today and in the future.

Development Principles

The Institute of Sustainability Institute Initiative (ISI) will be undertaken in concert with existing campus and community resources and support. Within one year, it is expected the Institute will be fully established; educational and outreach programs serving the public, business, and non-profit enterprises will be underway. The goal is to have the Institute self-sufficient and sustainable by the end of year 3 (spring, 2012).

Distinct features of the Initiative will include:

- Meet the intent of the Mission of the University, the Institutional Master Plan, and the Action Steps of the Strategic Plan.

- Adopt Western visions and expositions that call for the engagement its students in the vitality of our community, see the present economic environment as an opportunity, and provide University avenues toward solving the many challenges of our time.

- Be transparent and inclusive in the process of establishing and operating the Institute thereby affording broad on-campus and community opportunities for participation.

The University’s Sustainability Committee in 2006 chose an operational definition of sustainability to make it goal-oriented. The resultant definition reads: “A sustainable WWU: Protects local and global ecology; Upholds social equity; Creates economic vitality; and Maintains human health.”

Throughout the Initiative to establish the Institute, conversations with faculty, students, and staff will provide the grist for a more informed and inclusive definition of sustainability, one that will serve as the imprimatur for the programs to be included within the Institute’s umbrella.
**Goals**

The sustainability initiative will have these overarching goals:

1. Increase the number and intensity of sustainability efforts on Western’s campus.

2. Enhance the ability of WWU colleges to carry out scholarly activities and development projects in partnership with faculty and students from the broader campus community.

3. Attract federal and state grants and contracts, and private gifts, to enhance Western’s applied sustainability capacity.

4. Support the development and implementation of integrated education programs promoting sustainability throughout the curriculum.

**Need**

The broadest need for the Initiative in development of the Institute of Sustainability is to capitalize on the growing awareness among all sectors of society, in this country and across the world, that in order to meet the great challenges of the 21st century there needs to be more sustainable thinking and practices. Universities, such as Western, recognize that higher education is the nation’s incubator for future leaders and the channel by which new practices and experimentation can be implanted. Western’s Mission of “Engaged Excellence” explicitly states its intent is to provide “a high quality environment that complements the learning community on a sustainable and attractive campus intentionally designed to support learning and environmental stewardship”. (WWU Strategic Plan, 2006)

While there have been significant changes in physical plant, resident halls and dining, and campus operations at Western, the more important changes in teaching and learning are not as prevalent. Western is not alone. As determined by a recent survey of over 1,000 schools, “a relatively small percentage of campuses offer interdisciplinary degree opportunities in environmental and sustainability studies. Moreover, considerably fewer campuses today require all students to take courses on environmental or sustainability topics.” (National Wildlife Federation, 2008)

The colleges and universities that have broadly and deeply embraced sustainability efforts are succeeding in reputation and fund-raising. They have become the recognized leaders in the race to infuse the values of sustainability into their institutional culture; they have moved sustainability from good intentions to realizing the vision of meeting the challenges of this century. Upon its development, the Institute of Sustainability has the capacity to expand Western’s efforts to serve a public increasingly looking for answers and the students who seek to lead the efforts to find the answers.
There is not a more important and critical time to begin a concerted engaged effort than now when economic realities call for genuine and innovative approaches to a more sustainable future.

**Development Phases**

The Initiative will be conducted in four phases with the following objectives:

**Phase 1, Start-Up: Spring Quarter, 2009 – summer, 2009**

- Secure seed funding to support the startup of the project. This will be completed during the Spring Quarter.

- Establish an assessment/steering committee to assist in the development efforts. The committee will report to the Sustainability Committee on a quarterly basis. This will be completed by the end of Spring Quarter.

- Develop a fund-raising plan with national, regional, and local sustainability partners and professional groups. This will be completed by the end of the summer, 2009, through coordinated efforts with the Western Foundation, Bureau of Faculty Research, and the colleges.

- Participate in formative efforts to develop a faculty sustainability academy. This will be on-going through the summer and into the Fall Quarter in concert with the 40 to 60 interested faculty members, students, and deans.

- Review models of broad-based university and/or college entities that include sustainability elements of research, instructions, operations, and community outreach. Analyze as options for Western. This will be completed by the end of the summer.

- In concert with the Sustainability Coordinator and the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, to develop an internship program in sustainability. This will be completed by the end of the summer.

**Phase 2, Fall Quarter, 2009 – Spring Quarter, 2010**

- Initiate the Sustainability Internship Program on a pilot basis, an effort composed of recruitment, training, academic year employment, and faculty supervision and administration. The pilot will run through the Spring Quarter.
• Participate in broad conversations about the curricular efforts of sustainability in academe. This will be completed by the end of the Fall Quarter, 2009, through the efforts of the University’s Sustainability Committee, faculty sustainability academy, and other interested parties.

• Through campus meetings and on-line communications, review the possible models most appropriate for Western’s Institute. This will be completed by the end of Fall Quarter.

• Prepare a concept document (“White Paper”) of the Institute of Sustainability for Western. Circulate widely and gather input. The document will be completed by the end of Winter Quarter.

• Seek academic governance approval of curriculum additions and modifications for the better integration of sustainability courses and practicum.

Phase 3, Summer, 2010

• Prepare a final business plan for the Institute. Circulate widely and gather input. The draft will be crafted during the summer and circulated during the Fall Quarter.

Phase 4, Fall Quarter, 2010 – Spring Quarter, 2011

• Begin to implement curricular changes as approved. This will run throughout the academic year.

• Finalize Business Plan. This will be completed by the end of Winter Quarter.

• Undergo final review and assessment by the Sustainability Committee and the governance of the University. This will be completed by the end of the Spring Quarter.

• Issue final report of the Institute of Sustainability Initiative.

Context for Sustainability

Most leading sustainable institutions have developed initiatives of integrating sustainability throughout the University and beyond the campus into the community.
These initiatives are in the arenas of: research; education and instruction; outreach; and, campus business practices. Western will advance its Strategic Plan – “Engaged Excellence”, which includes Sustainability efforts. In so doing, Western will continue to strive for successful and sustainable programs in all institutional arenas.

Western is uniquely positioned. It can build upon the decades of environmental and sustainable leadership of the Huxley College of the Environment. For three years, the Office of Sustainability has been providing programs and activities for the engagement of students, both on campus and in the community. Faculty from across the colleges and disciplines, who have been conducting classes and research of sustainability in their fields, are forming an academy to advance curricular efforts. Furthermore, the broad visions and expositions found in the Strategic Plan call upon Western to become a University that: first, engages its students, and its resources, in the social, cultural, and economic vitality of our community, state, and nation; second, sees the economic crisis as an opportunity and moves to build environmental and economic models that will thrive; and, three, produces avenues toward solving the many challenges of our time.

Research has shown that campus sustainability calls for a systemic approach. The main constituent groups that compose the University should have the opportunity to create ideas for sustainability programs. Those programs which contribute to the University’s mission and Strategic Plan should have a structure through which their contributions toward sustainability can be most effectively stimulated, brought into relationship, and supported.

To date, Western staff, faculty, and students have made many contributions to the campus and community. They are summarized below. (A more complete listing is found in the Appendix to this Plan.)

1. Dean Brad Smith of Huxley co-chaired the Governor’s Task Force of Sustainability, a state-wide group of educators, business people, students, and representatives from the tribes, community, and governmental agencies. Their report and recommendations have formed the framework for recent gubernatorial and legislative action in the broad arena of sustainability and environmental action.

2. The Office of Sustainability has been created, staffed by the Sustainability Coordinator, Seth Vidana, and seven student employees. They provide staff assistance and some resources to a myriad of programs and activities with a strong focus on student engagement and initiative. Examples are assessment of the University’s carbon footprint and energy saving programs in the residence halls.

3. Sustainable business practices have been incorporated into the day-to-day operations of Business and Financial Affairs and Student Affairs. Examples are pesticide-free fertilizers, green cleaning methods throughout the buildings, and locally-grown food in the dining halls.
4. Collaborations with off-campus groups have been formed. Faculty, students, and staff have been involved in providing expertise, excitement, and products to support the many community efforts aimed at sustainability. Examples are involvements with City of Bellingham neighborhood planning, Brenthaven Manufacturing, and the Northwest Higher Education Sustainability Consortium.

5. The Bellingham/Whatcom Sustainable Strategies Council has recently been formed with the vision to create a center of excellence combining value proposition and a new economic model based on a vibrant local economy built on green principles. Membership includes the cities of the county, the Port of Bellingham, Technology Alliance Group, Opportunity Council, Sustainable Connections, Whatcom Community Foundation, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, Lummi Nation, Western Washington University, and a number of businesses in the region.

6. A Faculty Sustainability Academy is being established. A faculty-initiated program through the auspices of the University Sustainability Committee, it seeks to provide a University-wide umbrella for faculty who have teaching or scholarly interest in some aspect of sustainability. Through such activities as the Sustainability Design Charrette Workshop the Academy hosted in December, 2008, the Academy hopes to support the communication and the matching of complementary interests in teaching and research.

7. Woodring College of Education, along with the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Facing the Future, is sponsoring the Sustainability Education Summer Institute at Islandwood in July, 2009. The purpose of this teacher education conference is to allow teachers, school administrators, and teacher educators to develop a deeper understanding of sustainability education as it applies to K-12 schools.

These, and many other activities and programs (see Appendix), with continued and consistent coordination and direction, will lay the foundation for a broad-based Institute will promote Western as an educational leader in sustainability.

The Institute of Sustainability

Development Philosophy

“Facing Changes” could be the theme of the Western Washington University Institute of Sustainability Initiative. Because sustainability is more a way of thinking than a science and universities are complex systems, the Institute will be developed to provide clear pathways toward a definable end.
Efforts at producing a more sustainable organization and environment have tended to focus on operations that can yield immediate and tangible results (energy conservation, recycling and purchasing). The development of the Institute, therefore, will recognize the need to move beyond result-based results and comprehensively penetrate the three common higher education functions of education, research, and community outreach/service. It will afford mission-directed academic programs and activities to gain full traction and critical mass.

Furthermore, the Institute of Sustainability Initiative will define the leadership role of Western and design common internal pathways for change so it will not be difficult to craft a blueprint for change that will have a wide applicability to other schools.

**The Institute Administrator and Coordinator**

Dr. George A. Pierce, formally Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs, is serving as the coordinator of the project as Special Assistant for Sustainability. Dr. Pierce will work with the Provost and the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education in monitoring and supporting the academic integration of the sustainability efforts of the colleges.

In addition, Dr. Pierce will be working closely with the deans of the seven colleges and with the Coordinator of Sustainability. It is planned for the Sustainability Coordinator’s role to increase in fostering the co-curricular programs so important to the successful implementation of the Institute.

A number of faculty, administrators, staff, and students will be involved in the planning and development and eventual operation of the Institute. Many of these individuals have been leaders in supporting and nurturing sustainability in their operations, studies, and research. Many form the membership of Western’s Sustainability Committee, a University-wide group co-chaired by Dean Brad Smith and Dr. Pierce.

Many faculty members, instrumental in establishing what is being called Western’s Faculty Academy for Sustainability, will be instrumental in designing the specific curricular efforts for sustainability.

**Competitive Environment**

There are many indicators that point to a growing sustainability movement in higher education, both in the United States and throughout the world. The greatest gains to date have occurred in campus operations. The large number of schools working toward carbon reduction commitments is driving many of these gains.
The other Washington four-year public institutions participate in this movement, as envisioned in their web sites:

1. **Central Washington University** has the intended goal to “prepare students for responsible citizenship, responsible stewardship of the earth, and enlightened and productive lives”. Central states it is sustainable by efforts such as: promoting carbon reduction; continuing energy conservation and efficiency efforts; and, planting native landscapes. It is also developing environmentally focused majors and curriculum.

2. **Eastern Washington University** is in the process of strategic planning. It will be through these efforts that a program of sustainability will be developed and subsequently infused in the University.

3. **The Evergreen State College**’s vision for a sustainable future states that it will “be a laboratory for sustainability as demonstrated in our operations, curriculum, and quality of life for employees and students. We will nurture values and practical skills that motivate a lifetime commitment to a sustainable, intergenerationally (sic) just way of living on a healthy planet.” Their strategic plan notes the commitment to carbon neutrality, waste reduction, and the pursuit of environmental stewardship and social justice.

4. **University of Washington** has created the College of the Environment in June, 2008, which is seen as “the unifying, catalyzing hub for multidisciplinary environmental research, education, and application” in the university. The college structure is vital as it provides: *Scale* (college is highest level of academic organization); *Focus and collaboration* (faculty, students, and practitioners); *Unrivaled capabilities* (critical mass to make unprecedented contributions); and, *Degree-granting educational programs* (range of environment-linked educational opportunities across and within academic disciplines).

5. **Washington State University**’s Faculty Senate in 2006 approved a faculty-led initiative to create a system-wide interdisciplinary Center for Environmental Research, Education and Outreach. In January, 2009, an executive policy was issued called the “Washington State University Sustainability Initiative” which articulated five sustainability and university goals, including: achieve preeminence in innovation, discovery, and creativity; provide an education and transformative experience for students; lead in outreach and engagement; and, embrace diversity, integrity, and transparency.

The following list provides a broad context of the many aspects of sustainability.
Funding

Under the recent Federal stimulus funding, an emphasis has been placed on sustainability by President Obama’s administration. While most of this falls within the domain of job training and green manufacturing, there are opportunities for universities to partner with the public and private sectors to receive funding.

Higher educational Opportunity Act of 2008 – Authorizes the University Sustainability Program at the Department of Education. Will offer competitive grants to institutions and associations to develop, implement, and evaluate sustainability curricula, practices, and academic programs.

Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 – Authorizes $250 million in grants and $500 million in loans for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects in institutions, public schools and local governments.

A number of state, national, and international networks support broad-based efforts in economic, environmental, and social sustainability (U. S. Citizens Network, U. N. Environment Programme, Washington Center Curriculum for the Bioregion).

A number of local and regional private foundations and companies provide start-up and programmatic funding for education, research, and student support (Russell Family Foundation, Bullitt Foundation, Rocky Mountain Institute Grant Program).

Local and regional utility companies provide support of efforts that reduce energy or benefit alternative energy sources (Puget Sound Energy, Endeavor Wind Project).

Associations

Several national non-profit organizations and programs are formed especially to make sustainability a foundation of learning/or practice in higher education. (Second Nature, U.S. Green Building Council)

More than a dozen mainstream higher education associations now include advancement of sustainability in their agenda and core programs. (NACUBO, SCUP)

20 national disciplinary associations have formed the Disciplinary Association Network for Sustainability to jointly develop curricula, standards, and professional development programs. (Civil Engineers, Architects, Psychology)

Corporate America has formed alliances and centers aimed assisting in sustainability efforts directed to businesses (Apollo Alliance, The Conference Board, ACORE).

Higher Education Activities
Over 600 college and university presidents have signed the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment.

More than 300 campuses have conducted campus sustainability assessments with hundreds planning to.

At least 250 campuses have sustainability coordinators or offices and more than 1,000 expected to have by the end of the decade.

More than 500 schools have institution-wide sustainability committees.

With the past 3 years, several dozen universities have attracted multi-million dollar gifts for their sustainability efforts, with several getting gifts exceeding $20 million to establish sustainability centers or institutes. The latest were Portland State University which received $25 million and Stanford which received $20 million.

The Aspen Institute found 239 broadly defined applied sustainability centers across the globe. Conclusion: they are attracting significant resources and their leadership provides an increasing edge in attracting top students, faculty and company support.

At least 27 institutions launched sustainability-themed degrees, certificates, or academic programs in 2007, up from 22 in 2006 and 3 in 2005.

In 2006 at least 18 schools established new research and academic institutes or centers dedicated to studying aspects of environmental sustainability – alternative energy, environmental education, organic agriculture and transportation. Another 10 research centers started in 2007 with a focus on renewable energy. There are plans for another 6 with a focus on energy technologies.

More than 350 large campus buildings have or are “in line” for LEED certification.

The combined purchases of EPA’s Top 10 green power purchasers in higher education (including WWU) exceeds 758 million kilowatt hours of green power annually (equivalent to the electricity needed to power 78,000 average American homes).

Often as a result of student demand, higher education is now the largest purchaser of wind energy in the United States.

Last January, Focus the Nation (now the National Teach-in on Global Warming Solutions) organized the biggest national teach-in in history, engaging a million students at more than 1,900 institutions in a day-long teach-in about global warming.

Initiative Operating Budget
The University administration will be committing a .40 FTE professional staff coordinator position and start-up operational support for the project. Included in the operational costs will be the establishment of an office for the coordinator and one or two student interns. In addition, a senior member of the Institutional Research staff will be assigned to the Initiative for the initial research and assessment.

A support budget for faculty, student, and staff, plus supplies, will be committed from proceeds from the Wilder Gift for Sustainability. The total annual cost is approximately $45,000. Included in the support funding will be travel to professional workshops and conferences and internships for selected students.

In-kind contributions will be committed from local and state businesses, as well as gifts and grants for specific development and program efforts aimed at assisting in the development of the Institute. The total annual contribution is estimated to be $30,000 during the first year and $100,000 by year three.