WESTERN
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MEMO

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To: Paula Gilman, University Planning and Budgeting

From: Christopher Cox, Dean of Libraries

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Subject: Western Libraries Preliminary Initiatives

Western Libraries Strategic Plan 2009-2013 identifies a number of initiatives aimed at making the Libraries more integral to student learning and faculty research at Western Washington University. Following discussion in the Libraries' Department Heads Advisory Group and input from faculty and staff throughout the Libraries, we have identified two initiatives to pursue during the 2011-2013 budget process. These initiatives, informed by the "Opportunities" and "Challenges" sections of out SCOT analysis, dovetail nicely with the University's strategic plan and the President's "Preparing Tomorrow Today" fifteen initiatives.

1. Support for digitization of high quality, unique University materials and dissemination of the intellectual output of the University

Western Libraries has a number of unique collections housed in the University Archives, Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, and Special Collections areas. These materials are of definite research interest not only to Western's students and faculty, but also to alumni, members of the Whatcom community, as well as researchers from across the country. Example collections include Western student newspapers, records of the Wallie V. Funk Photographs and Papers, campus sports films, aerial photographs of the Pacific Northwest, etc. These unique materials are what separate Western Libraries' collections from other institutions across the country. Unfortunately, in most cases the only way to access these resources is by physically visiting Western. Digitizing these important and rare materials would allow scholars greater access to them, increasing the number of in-person visits to examine them, and putting Western on the map where such collections are concerned.

The faculty and students at Western also produce unique scholarly work that is unparalleled at other institutions and its preservation and dissemination is of great significance. Western Libraries would like to explore the creation of an institutional repository or other such means of sharing this research with the scholarly community and the world. Such a repository might include student theses and undergraduate research, peer-reviewed faculty research, conference proceedings, presentation papers, posters, and slideshows, newsletters and journal

back files, digital audio and video, and images. The repository serve to achieve a number of goals, including collecting content in one place so that it might be easily discoverable, providing open access to institutional research, storing and preserving institutionally-authored assets that may not otherwise be digitally available, and creating global visibility for Western's scholarly research and other intellectual activities.

Completing this initiative would not only effectively fulfill Western's mission to "promote scholarly and creative work of significance and applies that scholarship in regional, national, and global communities," it would also move the University forward in the achievement of a number of its strategic objectives and actions, including:

- Supporting teacher-scholars who integrate the highest quality teaching, scholarship, and creative activities;
- Supporting innovative teaching, high quality scholarly and creative activities, and collaborative and interdisciplinary activities;
- Engaging students and alumni in ways that ensure their lifelong connection to Western;
- Engaging friends and other constituents in ways that develop enduring relationships with Western.

Lastly, the President details the campus' desire under his "Research and Creative Activity" initiative to successfully market Western's scholarship, which is on par with many Carnegie I institutions, to Olympia and to the state. The creation of an institutional repository would go a long way toward achieving this.

2. Support the continued development of a learning commons

Western Libraries are committed to create a vibrant living learning space where students and faculty can informally interact and where students will have access to all the resources they require to be successful at Western. This does not simply mean providing the printed and electronic research materials and research assistance students require, but creating a space where learning can happen. Over the past two years the Libraries have been moving forward on the creation of a learning commons, a physical space within the libraries where students have access to all the assistance they require, whether it be related to research, technology, writing, study skills, etc. The Libraries have been reaching out to other learner focused organizations on campus like ATUS, the campus writing and tutoring centers, the Teaching and Learning Academy, etc., to develop partnerships that would either provide a physical or virtual presence for them within the Libraries. We believe that the development of a learning commons will revitalize the Libraries' space and provide the informal learning spaces that the Western so sorely lacks.

The creation of a learning commons would again support the University's mission to "bring together an increasingly diverse and talented student body, faculty, and staff to form a learning community that, along with community partners, involves its members in active learning, scholarly discourse, and reflection." It would encourage engaged excellence, through

“interactive learning and the active participation of students in scholarly and creative activities.” It would assist in recruitment and retention efforts and improve international, cross-cultural, and interdisciplinary opportunities for students. It would also, of course, maintain and enhance the functionality of the Libraries’ building. Finally, it would improve the academic quality of Western’s graduates, putting learning first, in alignment with the President’s fifteen initiatives.