

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges

Looking Ahead to 2011 -2013

Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies, Fall 2009

At its Fall Planning Retreat (Sept, 2008) the faculty and staff of the College considered a 20 page Framework Document for Strategic Planning. And during a faculty/staff meeting (Oct, 2008) the College community conducted a SWOC analysis consistent with this Framework (see below; it has been up-dated Sept, 2009). The result was two-fold: the identification of several areas of the College on which to focus strategic planning; and a tentative priority list by disciplinary fields for hiring faculty in the near term should such an opportunity arise. Since then, the State of Washington has mandated significant budget reductions for its universities and their colleges.

The faculty and staff of Fairhaven College have responded to the Western's request for budget reductions in its planning units (including the colleges) by composing Budget Reduction Scenarios of 3.8% and 5%. Without knowing at this time (mid February, 2009) whether there will be tax increases and without knowing the size of a tuition increase or the impact of the Federal Stimulus Package to the state's revenue situation, it is difficult to make definite plans yet; hence a variety of budget-cutting scenarios. This economic situation continues into the 2011- 2013 biennium, and so the analysis below is all the more important.

Under these circumstances, and at this point in our history, the College's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges are as follows:

Strengths

- A clear mission and established policies and procedures
- Our reputation for innovative, student-centered learning
- The high quality of our faculty and students, and our professional staff
- Our expertise in interdisciplinary methods of research
- Signature programs in Law, Diversity, and Justice; Adventure Learning; Outback Sustainable Agriculture; American Cultural Studies
- Self-designed, negotiated and contracted majors
- The practice of rich narrative assessment
- Intensive advising
- Our content and process core curriculum
- High demand for admission

Weaknesses

- No critical mass of minority status students
- Extremely lean operating budget which leaves little flexibility for programming innovation (now cut in half)
- Little student involvement in college governance and co-curricular planning
- Too few endowed scholarships for supporting our access and diversity goals
- Spotty use of data in decision making
- No multipurpose spaces for innovative pedagogy and a variety of events, no video production studio, not enough faculty offices and seminar rooms
- No focused and effective summer session program or curriculum
- Lack of visible identity for the College due to absence of communication and marketing strategies

Challenges

- Not nearly enough space for our current activities , let alone for any growth in programs or students – classrooms, offices, labs, studios, performance spaces, and so on
- Long-term, severe downturn in the economy
- Access for Fairhaven students to courses in siloed departments in other colleges at Western
- Imitation by other colleges of our distinctive features and programs dilutes our uniqueness and competitive advantage
- Loss of full time faculty and limited term faculty due to budget cuts
- Fear of risk-taking and innovation

Opportunities

- Pipeline programs for LDJ and ACS, perhaps in partnership with other colleges or university-wide initiatives
- Film making program to meet high demand and provide new tools for citizenship and employment
- Expanded international studies and global issues curriculum, experience, and programs
- Completion of a full-fledged electronic portfolio system
- Leadership and social entrepreneurship opportunities for students
- Our 40th and 50th year reunions as opportunities to reconnect with alumni and renew the College
- An exciting summer festival of the arts programming
- A niche focus for the sciences at Fairhaven