

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats
October 2009

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT – STRENGTHS

- **Solid infrastructure for graduate education:** The Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges 2008 Accreditation Report's states that, "In summary, the Graduate School appears operationally sound; there are clear processes and procedures for faculty deployment, curricular review, and student admission and degree progress."
- **National accreditation of professional programs:** National professional organizations periodically evaluate and accredit a number of graduate programs. These include: The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, the International Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, and the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. Western's graduate programs meet the national standards and are accredited by these organizations.
- **Quality graduate programs:** As a measure of quality, WWU graduate theses have been finalists in the annual Distinguished Thesis Award competition of the Western Association of Graduate Schools (98 graduate schools in the 13 western states and 3 Canadian provinces) in 12 of the past 15 years and have won awards in five of those years.
- **Strong academic preparation:** WWU graduate students who choose to continue their graduate education beyond the Masters degree are admitted to the doctoral programs in the top ranked universities including: University of California, Stanford University, University of Washington, University of Oregon, University of Colorado, Columbia University, University of Massachusetts, State University of New York, University of Arizona, Purdue University, and the University of Michigan.
- **Accelerated Masters Programs:** WWU is the only university in Washington offering Accelerated Master's Degrees enabling bright undergraduates to complete the B.S and the M.S., or the B.A. and MBA in five years.

- **Well prepared professionals:** Over the past nine-year period 80.6% of the Master's degree recipients found employment in positions related to their field of study and that only 3.2% were still seeking employment six months after graduation.
- **Western's MBA program,** ranked in the top 100 programs worldwide in an Aspen Institute survey measuring academic content and efforts to integrate social and environmental concerns.
- **Excellent faculty scholarship:** WWU faculty members are first rate scholars. In AY 2007/8 WWU faculty published 44 books, edited 38 volumes, contributed 430 journal articles and 123 book chapters and presented 625 papers at scholarly conferences. Faculty members in the performing arts contributed 139 exhibits, 23 recordings and 333 performances during that year.
- **Strong research:** WWU faculty members are nationally acknowledged researchers, winning over the past four years an average of \$11.6 million per year in competitive funding.
- **Innovative Research:** Western Border Policy Research Institute is a nationally recognized center for policy research dealing with transportation, mobility and security issues affecting the U.S.-Canada border. Two other innovative research/education programs are: Advanced Materials Science and Education Center (AMSEC) and the Biomedical Research Activities in Neuroscience (BRAIN) program.

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT – CHALLENGES

- **The role of graduate programs** as a component of our mission needs clarification. The NWASC 2008 Accreditation Report states: "Strategically, the Graduate School has been tapped as an action item in the current strategic plan. On-site interviews substantiated faculty interest in discussing the issues related to graduate education, especially in the areas of target enrollments and resource deployment." **This has been initiated:** A White Paper on Graduate Education was completed in June 2009, and its recommendations are under discussion in the departments, colleges and Faculty Senate during fall quarter 2009.
- **WWU's tuition and fees** for graduate students are higher than national averages (WWU has the authority to adjust tuition in these categories). The non-resident tuition is 18.9 higher than national average for peer institutions (HECB).

- **Resource allocation** to support the number of graduate assistantships has not increased in the past decade.
- **Start-up funds:** To recruit excellent faculty and to maintain their productivity WWU needs to invest more resources in start-up funds.
- **Bridge funds:** To support faculty between externally funded grants, we need a “bridge fund” program.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT – OPPORTUNITIES

- **Growth Goals:** There are ambitious enrollment growth goals established by the HEC Board for graduate programs at WWU. The recent White Paper on Graduate Education recommends that at a minimum 10% of enrollment be graduate students.
- **New types of Masters programs:** Professional Science Masters, have been developed nationally. WWU offering such programs will give us a comparative advantage –no other university in the state has such programs.
- **Future Community College faculty:** There is a rapidly growing demand for Community College faculty and administrators. WWU can play a leading role (both regionally and nationally) in developing programs for future CC faculty and administrators.
- **Science and Mathematics Education:** WWU has a national reputation in Science Education on which we can capitalize by strengthening and growing the graduate program and research in Science Education.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT – THREATS

- **Low Endowment:** WWU lacks private scholarships dollars for graduate students when compared to competition.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Implementation of existing and new state and/or federal regulatory accountability requirements without requisite funding to establish a research compliance office. We risk losing federal funding if found in violation of regulations.
- **Competition** from online programs and privates especially in the fields of education and business administration.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

- **Strategic Plan for Graduate Education:** As a result of the White Paper on Graduate Education at WWU, we are in the process of developing a strategic plan for the growth and expansion of graduate education.
- **Science Faculty for the Community Colleges:** We are preparing a proposal to request funding from the National Science Foundation for the training of future science faculty for the Community Colleges. This project involves collaboration of College of Science and Technology, Woodring College of Education, the Integrated laboratory Network, Whatcom Community College, Everett Community College and North Seattle Community College.
- **Professional Science Masters:** several departments are considering offering Professional Science Masters programs. These programs add to the science degree courses in business, law and ethics, and they require an internship in a private sector company or a public sector organization.
- **Environmental Science and Geography Masters Programs for Professionals:** Currently being developed for offering in October 2010 in Port Angeles. These programs are patterned after the Professional Science Masters model.
- **MBA for Managers and Professionals:** The program has been approved for offering at Everett.

FUTURE INITIATIVES:

- **Mathematics Faculty for the Community Colleges:** We plan to develop a proposal to the Gates Foundation for the preparation of Mathematics faculty for the Community Colleges.
- **Doctor of Audiology Degree:** The D. Aud. Is the entry degree for professional practice of audiology. It would benefit our region if such a degree were offered at WWU.
- **Master of Nursing:** There is a growing need for Nurse Educators who are Master's degree holders.
- **Master of Physical Therapy:** There is a growing need for Physical Therapists who are Master's degree holders.