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# Western Washington University

## Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats Focus on 2011-2013: Preparing Tomorrow Today What are we headed?

Prepared by University Planning and Budgeting

*The following draft is the result of President Shepard’s discussions across campus, with the vice presidents, and within the community, including advice submitted by divisions on preparing for the future. Additional advice and review will be sought via the web community forum, from Western’s Deans and other Planning Unit Leaders, and from Western’s Board of Trustees at the Board’s December 10, 2009, meeting.*

Strategic planning informs the university budgeting process and guides the university’s progress by explicitly linking our choices to critical analyses of our strengths and the challenges we face. Additionally, as a Washington public institution of higher learning, we must thoughtfully consider the environment in which we serve, including external opportunities and threats.

The university-level SCOT analysis that follows is a draft assessment of where we currently stand and where we are headed in the next several years, including the 2011-13 biennium, given what we know at this time. This is a current snapshot and must be regularly adjusted as events unfold and as we learn more. This assessment incorporates matters relevant to the university as a whole. **Real planning will be done at the level of programs and departments -- what, in Western’s planning process, are referred to as “planning units.” The university planning units will develop their own assessments, providing specificity on considerations directly related to their responsibilities.**

**The university-level SCOT and each one of the Planning Unit’s SCOT analyses,** taken together with university and planning unit priority initiatives, will provide a foundation for planning units to formulate, communicate, explain, and justify proposed directions, actions, and budgets.

### INTERNAL ASSESSMENT - STRENGTHS

#### ***Western’s strengths to build on:***

- Western’s reputation remains strong. It rests upon the special approach to learning we call “engaged excellence” as we carry out the traditional mission of the liberal arts and sciences to produce intelligent, critical thinkers who can formulate problems, suggest solutions, critically examine those proposed solutions, and draw appropriate conclusions. The most potent evidence of our strong reputation is found in the experiences our students, alumni, employers, and other graduate schools report.

- 1           ➤ Western has evolved from being a respectable regional university to being a destination  
2 university, the Pacific Northwest's premier public comprehensive university, with nearly  
3 10,000 admissions applicants competing for 2,700 openings.  
4
- 5           ➤ Demand for access to Western continues to be very strong, enrollment targets are  
6 regularly achieved, and the University has been able to remain select in its admissions.  
7 WWU currently has the largest percentage of Washington residents of all public and  
8 private baccalaureate institutions in western Washington.  
9
- 10          ➤ Just as our country is changing, demographically, so too are the students on our campus.  
11 At Western, the ethnic and racial composition of the student body closely matches that of  
12 the state. As with the state, we are becoming increasingly diverse. For spring quarter  
13 2009, over 18% of our students identified themselves as African American, Hispanic  
14 Latino, Asian, or Native American. In 2008, it was 16.8%.  
15
- 16          ➤ In 2009-10, Western will have one its largest cohorts of international students studying  
17 on campus and contributing to the diversity and global awareness of the academic  
18 community. Nearly 300 students representing over forty different countries will be  
19 attending Western as either a matriculating student, exchange student or as a participant  
20 in an intensive English studies program.  
21
- 22          ➤ WWU is known for excellence in undergraduate instruction across the range of liberal  
23 arts and sciences with a focus on a high level of intellectual contact between faculty and  
24 students.  
25
- 26          ➤ For the 13<sup>th</sup> year in a row, *U.S. News and World Report* ranks WWU as the best master's  
27 granting public university in the Pacific Northwest and number three in the western  
28 United States, a region stretching from Texas to California.  
29
- 30          ➤ WWU's tuition and fees for undergraduate resident students continues to be lower than  
31 the average HECB national peer group of like institutions. In 2008-09, WWU's tuition  
32 for this student category was 17.5% below the national peer average  
33
- 34          ➤ Western's edge and driving force is the quality of our academic programs. Our engaged  
35 excellence rests upon the outstanding quality of the people who are the university and  
36 who, even though other opportunities abound, continue to choose to be an engaged part  
37 of our university.  
38
- 39          ➤ During 2008/09 faculty members published 80 books and edited volumes, 379 refereed  
40 journal articles, presented 607 papers at scholarly conferences, and showed artistic  
41 creations at 232 exhibits and 479 performances in addition to producing 35 recordings.  
42 Two patents on inventions by faculty were issued and the reviews of two other patent  
43 applications are pending.  
44
- 45          ➤ Innovative, interdisciplinary programs are being developed by faculty across campus.  
46 For example, the College of Business and Economics is developing a bachelor's degree  
47 combining study of environmental issues and policy, economic analysis and business  
48 manager. Another example—many College of Humanities and Social Sciences faculty  
49 are exploring an "allied health" initiative, work that represents a desire to expand current  
50 degree programs and also a willingness to take risks on many levels.  
51

- 1       ➤ Western students in every college are making their way around the world including art,  
2 theater, and music students performing in Italy, Greece, England, Japan, Argentina,  
3 Germany, Poland and Uruguay in 2008-09 and Huxley students doing research and field  
4 work in places like the Bering Sea, Costa Rica, Siberia and the United Arab Emirates.  
5
- 6       ➤ Essential partnerships are being formed regularly. For example, the College of Sciences  
7 and Technology, the Port of Bellingham and the Bellingham Technical College have  
8 partnered to found the Technology Development Center, a facility located on the  
9 waterfront that will provide research and development space for faculty and students who  
10 are working on projects in collaboration with private sector companies. This facility was  
11 dedicated on September 28, 2009.  
12
- 13       ➤ Through the addition of a Masters in Teaching program in Everett, Woodring College of  
14 Education expanded its 20-year commitment to bringing quality educational opportunities  
15 to individuals away from the main campus. In fall of 2009, Woodring will enroll 1139  
16 students in undergraduate, graduate and certificate programs in sites in Bremerton,  
17 Everett, and Seattle.  
18
- 19       ➤ In fall 2009, Western will deliver on its designation by the state as the pilot program for a  
20 new approach to building the pipeline to under-served populations. Western's Compass  
21 2 Campus program has already attracted the direct involvement of many community  
22 members, over 100 faculty and staff, 450 Western students, and 10 school districts.  
23
- 24       ➤ Western has established open and regular communications on its operating budget  
25 challenges where the community is able to see the alternatives, the choices made, and  
26 whether or not those difficult choices reflect departmental, college, and university  
27 priorities, needs, and chosen strategic directions. Every penny we had to budget in 2009-  
28 11 was available for all to see. Because of this transparency, folks at Western never felt  
29 in the dark about the budget, or budget cuts, and were real participants as Western was  
30 forced to make difficult budget choices.  
31
- 32       ➤ Western is working to facilitate our community and its able leaders as they come together  
33 on developing the Bellingham waterfront that future generations can look on with pride.  
34 The Western community is asking itself, what is it we could uniquely do at the  
35 Waterfront that contributes to our basic vision to be the premier university of our type in  
36 the nation through engaged excellence?  
37
- 38       ➤ Western has developed a versatile set of "dash board indicators" in the past year, and has  
39 started discussions on how the campus will participate in the Voluntary System of  
40 Accountability (VSA), a joint initiative of the American Association of State Colleges  
41 and Universities and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant  
42 Colleges.  
43
- 44       ➤ Western will launch a faculty and staff diversity initiative to recruit and retain faculty and  
45 staff of color sometime in 2009-2011; and the President's office and Equal Opportunity  
46 Office are coordinating a student equal opportunity climate assessment to be launched in  
47 the current fiscal year; and faculty and staff climate assessment will be implemented in  
48 fall 2010.  
49
- 50       ➤ The Western Washington Foundation, in collaboration with the University, is in the first  
51 stages of planning a major capital campaign .

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- Western's excellence in the residential environment includes strengths in student orientation programs, outreach and advising services, an emphasis on health and wellness, and co-curricular programs that complement the academic curriculum and support student learning.
  - The HECB reports that Washington ranks fourth in the nation in terms of state student grant aid funding per capita.
  - WWU is a growing leader in green power and sustainability, and ranks in the EPA's listing of the nation's top green-energy purchasers in higher education.
  - The racial diversity of Western's entering freshman class for fall 2008 (\*\*\*\*should this be fall 2009???) has grown by 16.5%.
  - As we transition to lower state supported resources, we look for opportunities to change outdated and antiquated business processes in favor of those that are more entrepreneurial and efficient.
  - Ability to re-evaluate our use of campus space so that we can meet emerging programmatic needs without immediate, large-scale capital investments.

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➤ INTERNAL ASSESSMENT - CHALLENGES

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***Challenges to attend to in the next biennium:***

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- Western aspires to become the best university of our type in the nation. We recognize that this cannot be accomplished simply by doing more of what, to this point, has proven to be successful. Western will need to leave known and familiar territory to relentlessly seek the front of the pack: to experiment, to create, to innovate, to occasionally fail, and to transform.
  - It is very likely that additional state budget reductions will be imposed in the 2011-13 biennium. In order to cope with 2009-11 reductions, Western reduced course sections by 10-12% and yet maintained the same number of seats. Western has struggled to maintain 2008-09 levels of actual enrollments. If cut further, will Western be able to maintain current enrollment levels?
  - It is also possible that capital funding for major and minor capital projects will decline as a result of changes in state priorities and a reduction in state debt capacity. Any decrease in capital funding for 2011-13 will put pressure on an already aging physical plant; we will be increasingly challenged to support and sustain critical buildings and infrastructure that support teaching and research.
  - In July 2009, the Office of Capital Planning and Development was established to improve efficiencies and enhance transparency of the capital planning process for major capital

- 1 projects and minor works projects. An open, strategically drive, transparent process for  
2 developing the 2011-13 biennial capital budget and ten-year capital plan was launched in  
3 fall 2009 to ensure open decision making and improved internal communications.  
4
- 5 ➤ While progress was made in 2008-09 on having an open and transparent decision-making  
6 process that was truly bottom up for Western's 2009-2011 operating budget, that progress  
7 was uneven and campus expectations are high for improvement in 2011-13. For example,  
8 in several departments and even though we promised otherwise, people reported not  
9 having any idea where the college was in formulating the "bottom up" SWOT analyses  
10 and principles that would then guide open consideration of decision making. Our culture  
11 needs to change; it is a responsibility we all share.  
12
  - 13 ➤ We need to recognize that we have a serious stake in the success of all institutions of  
14 higher education and the K-12 sectors in the state. Western already has nine  
15 baccalaureate and masters programs on campuses of four other institutions. In this web  
16 of inter-institutional relationships, we realize we must pool our resources to achieve our  
17 mission.  
18
  - 19 ➤ While at Western our student body is 54.5 percent female, a demographic that portends  
20 major and continuing societal transformation, we need to grow the number of female  
21 graduates in areas like engineering, mathematics, and certain sciences, in order to  
22 complete their success story in higher education.  
23
  - 24 ➤ Delivery technologies will extend the effectiveness by which mentors and learners work  
25 together, but the basic dependence for effective learning will remain on highly talented  
26 faculty.  
27
  - 28 ➤ Growing WWU's summer programs – both for our students and for special programs that  
29 serve continuing education and training opportunities is a potential strength, especially in  
30 difficult economic times.  
31
  - 32 ➤ Successes dependent on innovation and risk taking will require expanded opportunities  
33 and incentives to collaborate across "silos." We need to continue to build leadership  
34 teams at university and college levels with cultures of decision making that are congruent  
35 with and that advance our aspirations.  
36
  - 37 ➤ While there are currently many examples of shared resources and leadership in key  
38 campus-wide programs, curricular and co-curricular initiatives can be better integrated.  
39 Providing ever better "engaged excellence" requires initiatives that span Academic  
40 Affairs and Student Affairs. These must be approached as opportunities to  
41 synergistically multiply impacts, especially in times of scarce resources.  
42
  - 43 ➤ The role of graduate programs as a component of our mission is currently under study.  
44 Once clarified and goals are set, it is anticipated that changes in this area will be  
45 implemented over several years.  
46
  - 47 ➤ Western's GUR program – also currently under study -- is a challenge insofar as we trail  
48 our Carnegie class and our competitors on student satisfaction benchmarks in the  
49 freshman year related to level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning,  
50 student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus

- 1 environment. Once improvements are identified, it is anticipated that changes in this area  
2 will be implemented over several years.  
3
- 4 ➤ We have identified “leadership” as, potentially, distinguishing what is special about an  
5 undergraduate degree earned at Western. While Student Affairs, Academic Support  
6 Services, Deans and faculty, are in the process of analyzing this potential; work needs to  
7 continue until goals are refined and the community decides if “leadership” should be  
8 focused on as a primary quality of the WWU undergraduate degree.  
9
  - 10 ➤ In order to plan for the future, WWU needs a comprehensive recruitment and admissions  
11 strategy and a strategic long-term academic enrollment growth plan.  
12
  - 13 ➤ As many universities strive to internationalize their campuses and their curricula, we sit  
14 on the Pacific Rim with “middle of the pack” efforts in these areas.  
15
  - 16 ➤ While our reputation is strong, our image in the broader public lacks specificity. We are  
17 no longer a regional university but what are we? We do much marketing but it is not  
18 integrated. In order to plan effectively, University Relations has launched a  
19 comprehensive and aggressive university-wide branding and marketing effort that will be  
20 rolled out over the next two years. We must clearly community who we are and what we  
21 offer, and this requires that we understand and agree upon who we are and where we  
22 intend to go.  
23
  - 24 ➤ In order to plan effectively, WWU needs a strong Office of Institutional Research,  
25 responsive and responsible to all university stakeholders. In fall 2009, a nationwide  
26 search for Western’s new Director of Institutional Research was instituted.  
27
  - 28 ➤ WWU continues to face compensation challenges for our faculty, exempt professional  
29 and classified staff, at a time when the nation is experiencing approaching and wide-  
30 spread baby boom retirements. Thus, WWU faces increased hiring needs as “supply” is  
31 diminishing.  
32
  - 33 ➤ Western’s challenge to recruit and retain a diverse workforce – both faculty and staff –  
34 has been intensified in recent years by the highly competitive market in higher education  
35 across the nation. Recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, as well as recruiting and  
36 retaining a diverse student population, should be a priority for investment even under  
37 difficult economic times. The numbers of faculty members of color has gone from 61 to  
38 74 in four years – an increase of about 16%. The number of professional staff of color at  
39 Western has increased by a third in the last few years. We need to do better than this.  
40
  - 41 ➤ The current Strategic Plan fully identifies all we value as important to the direction of the  
42 university. It does not provide the more focused objectives, actions, timelines, and  
43 assigned responsibilities that would comprise an operational plan. The current plan,  
44 inclusive as it is, does not provide goals and objectives for the University sufficiently  
45 focused as to meaningfully guide budget allocation: all budget requests can be justified  
46 within the plan.  
47
  - 48 ➤ WWU was appropriated approximately \$20M in minor works in the 07-09 biennium and  
49 asked for re-appropriation of approximately \$10M of this amount during the 2009  
50 legislative session, a fiscally difficult time. WWU was granted the re-appropriation and

1 is now challenged to expend all appropriated minor works project funds by the end of the  
2 2009-11 biennium.

- 3  
4 ➤ Workloads for faculty, administrators, and staff continue to increase, even though state  
5 budget support is declining, and unfunded state and federal mandates are imposed. A  
6 focus on sustaining employee morale is critical in this environment.  
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10 EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT - OPPORTUNITIES  
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12 *Opportunities to take advantage of:*  
13

- 14 ➤ Higher Education is in the process of a societal transformation: 1) decades ago,  
15 universities talked teaching; today, universities habitually focus upon learning; 2)  
16 learning is not about transmitting information; it is about guiding students to construct  
17 meanings within their own contexts; and 3) students of today differ remarkably in  
18 “learning styles” – they are no longer passive recipients, they are engaged collaborators.  
19
- 20 ➤ Western and all of Washington higher education needs to work relentlessly to turn around  
21 the political situation in the state so that, once again, the state will make the sustained  
22 public investments necessary for a brighter future.  
23
- 24 ➤ Western now has an historical opportunity to define what it means to become a publically  
25 purposed university. Public education is defined not by where the money comes from but  
26 by where we put our efforts: our mission. The purposes we pursue define us as public. In  
27 being publicly purposed it is important that we not abdicate our roles as a forward-  
28 looking institution. Success as a university worthy of the name means knowing what will  
29 be needed by those it is our mission to serve – students, the private and public sectors,  
30 posterity – *before those we exist to serve may full realize their needs*. Western needs to  
31 become a national leader as a publicly purposed university; as we do so, we will make the  
32 case clearer and stronger for further state investment.  
33
- 34 ➤ The populations in the state that are growing are those whose parents are least likely to  
35 have graduated from 4-year institutions. The HECB goals can only be met by building  
36 “pipelines” to these populations of potential students.  
37
- 38 ➤ There are additional opportunities for WWU to serve the state by obtaining state support  
39 to expand off-campus degree programs.  
40
- 41 ➤ The 2008 HECB Strategic Master Plan seeks to reward performance: improvements in  
42 student progression toward degrees and certifications. State continues to focus on  
43 increased access and investing in high demand enrollments.  
44
- 45 ➤ WWU’s Huxley College of the Environment, while the first environmental college in the  
46 country, does not appear well known to our state’s policy makers. Huxley should be the  
47 first college to communicate with policy makers when they are looking to solve  
48 environmental problems, such as the Puget Sound Clean-up.  
49
- 50 ➤ The Waterfront Development project provides an opportunity for WWU to be a wise  
51 steward of a major resource. We can and must help shape a development that will have

1 enduring consequences for the place we call home, doing so even were there were no  
2 opportunity to specifically meet Western's needs.

- 3
- 4 ➤ Strong partnership with Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) increases student  
5 mobility and reduces demand for on-campus parking, in addition to improving our  
6 outreach into the Bellingham community. WTA is an active partner with Western and  
7 the City of Bellingham for the proposed final build-out of the Lincoln Creek  
8 Transportation Center, which is a strong candidate for federal funding.

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11 EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT – THREATS

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14 ***Threats to attend to:***

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- 16 ➤ State support dropped from 60% (2008-09) to 43% of the operating budget in 2009-10,  
17 virtually "overnight". How is Western to respond to rapidly diminishing state support for  
18 public higher education? How does Western move from the best in the Northwest to the  
19 best in the nation?
- 20
- 21 ➤ Washington taxpayer support for the costs of instruction has dropped below 50% from  
22 above 70% a decade ago.
- 23
- 24 ➤ Higher education is part of that roughly 50% of the state budget not constitutionally  
25 protected so that state revenue shortfalls impact higher education disproportionately. The  
26 state's fiscal situation is not going to turn around any time soon and, even if the economy  
27 picks up, the fiscal picture remains bleak for the next biennium and perhaps beyond
- 28
- 29 ➤ A supplemental budget reduction has been mandated by the Governor and she will  
30 submit reduced higher education budgets to the Legislature for the 2010 session. These  
31 cuts will impact the 2010-11 fiscal year, and it is anticipated that reduction amounts will  
32 grow based on continuing shortfalls in state revenue estimates. The 2010 session may  
33 bring greater permanent reductions to Western than the \$995,000 established by the  
34 Governor.
- 35
- 36 ➤ With budget cuts, quality diminishes, tuition goes up, and fewer students are able to  
37 attend, or graduate on time. What will Western do to minimize these impacts?
- 38
- 39 ➤ Higher education, including WWU, is embedded in a society that is rapidly changing: the  
40 globe is shrinking and flattening; diversity has become a critical building block to  
41 construct shared and ever-brighter futures; climate change; sustainability; pressures for  
42 the public sector to be more efficient and accountable; more emphasis on the  
43 entrepreneurial culture; the dizzying pace of technology advances...and Western wants to  
44 be a leader in all of these areas, not just be pushed along.
- 45
- 46 ➤ Higher Education needs to develop a go-forward strategy to make our case to the public  
47 and to legislators. We must do a better job of explaining and look for ways to do more  
48 for our communities and the state. At the present time, many do not see a connection  
49 between investing in the continuing strength of higher education and their futures.  
50 Constituents of various legislators do not see that higher education means brighter futures  
51 for the state and for students over the long term.

- 1
- 2 ➤ Throughout the country, higher education costs have been kept in check by having more
- 3 and more classes taught by part-time and non-tenure track faculty. These good teachers
- 4 are required to teach heavier loads because they do not have research and scholarship
- 5 responsibilities. Since keeping Western at the cutting edge requires involving
- 6 undergraduates in a shared faculty/student learning adventure in the areas of research and
- 7 scholarship opportunities; this requires tenure-track faculty. We need to find a solution to
- 8 this dilemma.
- 9
- 10 ➤ Access to higher education is being provided through a highly competitive marketplace.
- 11 Therefore, we need to make the most effective use of resources provided by the public
- 12 and increasingly by our students. There are many good things we can do; there is no
- 13 shortage of ideas and it is easy to calculate the resources required. However, with
- 14 Olympia unlikely to offer further support, it is now time for all members of the Western
- 15 community to ask: where will I find the resources I need? **Ours is an increasingly**
- 16 **competitive environment:**
- 17
- 18 ➤ WWU's Huxley College of the Environment may face increased competition from
- 19 University of Washington's new College of the Environment.
- 20
- 21 ➤ In the 2009 legislative session, Bellevue Community College became, a large 2-year
- 22 college, rapidly proceeded on a course to become a full-fledged 4-year university,
- 23 and that campus is located right in the middle of the area from which we currently
- 24 draw most of our students.
- 25
- 26 ➤ Even as we struggle, given space constraints, to find ways to help serve the state's
- 27 desire for further baccalaureate education, existing two-year campuses are offering to
- 28 do so through expanded mission. The aforementioned state fiscal challenges not
- 29 withstanding, there is the very real possibility that, in a decade, many more
- 30 community colleges will become full-blown regional comprehensive universities.
- 31
- 32 ➤ While the HECB Master Plan emphasizes tremendous growth in enrollments over the
- 33 next 10 years, this growth is based on increased participation rates. If participation rates
- 34 do not improve at the rate anticipated by the HECB, and the predicted decline in high
- 35 school graduates materializes, meeting future enrollment targets could be a concern.
- 36
- 37 ➤ Changing enrollment needs in surrounding states may impact WWU's enrollment; as
- 38 well as competition from online programs and privates as a drop in K-12 enrollments
- 39 occur in the Northwest.
- 40
- 41 ➤ Rising tuition without adequate financial aid programs could deter low and middle
- 42 income students from attending Western. WWU lacks private scholarships dollars when
- 43 compared to competition such as the University of Washington.
- 44
- 45 ➤ The continuing economic decline encourages potential for more non-traditional students,
- 46 requiring more financial, faculty and academic support services.
- 47
- 48 ➤ Demographics that may impact WWU's enrollment
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- A drop in K-12 enrollment in the state of Washington, the Northwest and across the country, increasing competition for a shrinking pool of resident and non-resident students.
  - Increasing diversity in the region: an increase in the number of historically under-served populations such as Hispanic students, first generation, low income, ESL, learning disabled and undocumented students; in short, freshmen may be less well prepared.
  - More international students, requiring more support, due to WWU's increasing focus on international exchange programs
    - **Accreditation revisit in two years**
    - Review and revision of operating budget processes
    - Program assessment especially related to GURs
    - Library plan
    - Review of structure and working relationships of committees, processes and reports institution-wide
  - By law, per student funding levels are to be improved to 60<sup>th</sup> percentile of WWU's peers in the Global Challenge States within the next ten years. Thus, funding is tied to Global Challenge state benchmarks. However, the HECB is currently contemplating a revised approach to be presented to the legislature during the 2010 session

END