

1 **Western Washington University**

2 **Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats**

3 *Surveying the Landscape for Budget Planning*

4 Prepared by University Planning and Budgeting

5 12-15-08 FINAL

6 *The following draft SCOT is the result of President Shepard's Stakeholder Surveys in the*
7 *Summer and Fall of 2008, and Fall 2008 Listening Sessions. Additionally, advice was*
8 *sought via the web community forum, in meetings from the campus community including*
9 *governance organizations and their appropriate standing committees, and from*
10 *Western's Trustees at the Board's December 11, 2008, meeting.*

11 Planning is no more than a process for reaching understandings on where we wish to go and how
12 we wish to get there. *Strategic* planning does just that but by explicitly linking choices to critical
13 analysis of our strengths and vulnerabilities as a university and to thoughtful consideration of the
14 environment in which we serve, including external opportunities and challenges.

15
16 One such draft assessment follows. This is a current snapshot and must be regularly adjusted as
17 events unfold and as we learn more. The assessment that follows incorporates matters relevant to
18 the university as a whole. **Real planning is done at the level of programs and departments --**
19 **what, in this planning process, are referred to as "planning units."** **These units develop**
20 **their own supplementing assessments, providing specificity on considerations directly**
21 **related to their responsibilities.** These assessments, taken together with university and planning
22 unit priorities, will provide bases for the planning units to formulate, communicate, explain, and
23 justify proposed directions, actions, and budget allocations.

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26 INTERNAL ASSESSMENT - STRENGTHS

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28 *Western's strengths to build on:*

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30 Our reputation is strong. It rests upon the special approach to learning we call "engaged
31 excellence" as we carry out the traditional mission of the liberal arts and sciences to produce
32 intelligent, critical thinkers who can formulate problems, suggest solutions, critically examine
33 those proposed solutions, and draw appropriate conclusions. The most potent evidence of our
34 strong reputation is found in the experiences our students, alumni, employers, and other graduate
35 schools report. There are supporting indicators:

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT – STRENGTHS (continued)

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- 3 • WWU is known for excellence in undergraduate instruction across the range of liberal arts
- 4 and sciences with a focus on a high level of intellectual contact between faculty and students.
- 5
- 6 • For the 12th year in a row, *U.S. News and World Report* ranks WWU as the best master's
- 7 granting public university in the Pacific Northwest and number three in the western United
- 8 States, a region stretching from Texas to California.
- 9
- 10 • WWU is ranked third among the top medium-sized colleges and universities with alumni
- 11 serving as Peace Corps volunteers, after the University Virginia and George Washington
- 12 University.
- 13
- 14 • WWU ranked in the top 5 percent in a National Opinion Research Center study measuring the
- 15 percentage of bachelor's degree recipients who go on to earn research doctorates.
- 16
- 17 • WWU graduate theses have been finalists in the annual Distinguished Thesis Award
- 18 competition of the Western Association of Graduate Schools in 12 of the past 15 years and
- 19 have won awards in five of those years.
- 20
- 21 • Excellence in the residential environment which includes strengths in student orientation
- 22 programs, outreach and advising services, an emphasis on health and wellness, and co-
- 23 curricular programs that complement the academic curriculum and support student learning.
- 24
- 25 • Our engaged excellence rests upon the outstanding quality of the people who are the
- 26 university and who, even though other opportunities abound, continue to choose to be an
- 27 engaged part of our university. As illustrated below, this, then, yields learning opportunities
- 28 of special note including but not limited to:
- 29
- 30 • Western's Woodring College of Education, recognized throughout Washington and
- 31 beyond as a leader in the development and implementation of programs that prepare
- 32 outstanding teachers, from early childhood to adult education; educational
- 33 administration leaders; and human services professionals.
- 34
- 35 • Western's Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies, with a national reputation
- 36 for innovative pedagogy including self-designed majors, narrative assessments, as
- 37 well as the Law, Diversity and Justice program which prepares undergraduates for
- 38 careers in law.
- 39
- 40 • Huxley College of the Environment, one of the oldest environmental-science schools
- 41 in the country, and a recognized national leader in producing the next generation of
- 42 environmental stewards.
- 43
- 44 • Western's MBA program, ranked in the top 100 programs worldwide in an Aspen
- 45 Institute survey measuring academic content and efforts to integrate social and
- 46 environmental concerns.

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT—STRENGTHS (continued)

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3 • The Minorities in Marine Science Undergraduate Program at Western’s Shannon
4 Point Marine Center in Anacortes, nationally recognized for increasing diversity in
5 the marine sciences.
6
- 7 • Two innovative programs: the CST program, Advanced Materials Science and
8 Education Center (AMSEC) and the CST/CHSS Biomedical Research Activities in
9 Neuroscience (BRAIN) program, recognized in Olympia and generously funded in
10 the 2007-2009 biennium.
11
- 12 • WWU’s Vehicle Research Institute in the College of Sciences and
13 Technology represents an outstanding opportunity to develop home grown
14 options for more efficient transportation while reducing harm to the
15 environment.
16
- 17 • Central to a well-founded liberal education is the College of Humanities and Social
18 Sciences, providing students with a three-component liberal education: a
19 program of education-in-breadth through major contributions to the General
20 University requirements; a program of education-in-depth in a disciplinary or
21 interdisciplinary major designed to prepare students for careers or graduate
22 study; and a choice of elective courses which can help satisfy the student's
23 curiosity about any of the multitude of subjects that the University curriculum
24 embraces.
25
- 26 • A multi-disciplinary Border Policy Research Institute which opened in 2005 at
27 Western and focuses on policy research dealing with transportation, mobility and
28 security issues affecting the U.S.-Canada border, including the impact of the
29 Vancouver/Whistler, B.C. 2010 Winter Olympics.
30
- 31 • Our highly regarded programs in the fine and performing arts, which immeasurably
32 enrich the quality of campus life and the cultural richness of our surrounding region.
33
- 34 • Demand for access to Western continues to be very strong, enrollment targets are
35 regularly achieved, and the University has been able to remain select in its
36 admissions. WWU currently has the largest percentage of Washington residents of
37 all public and private baccalaureate institutions in western Washington.
38
- 39 • WWU’s tuition and fees for undergraduate resident students have consistently been
40 lower than the average HECB national peer group of like institutions. In 2003-04,
41 WWU’s tuition for this student category was -11.7% below the national peer average.
42 By 2007-08, tuition for this student category fell to -16.4% below the national peer
43 average (or -\$907 on an annual basis).
44
- 45 • The HECB reports that Washington ranks fourth in the nation in terms of state
46 student grant aid funding per capita.

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INTERNAL ASSESSMENT – STRENGTHS (continued)

- 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.
- Growing WWU’s summer programs – both for our students and for special programs that serve continuing education and training opportunities is a potential strength, especially in difficult economic times.
- The racial diversity of Western’s entering Freshman class for Fall 2008 has grown by 16.5%.

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT - CHALLENGES*Challenges to attend to in the next biennium:*

- We desire more open and transparent decision making processes and improved internal communications.
- Successes dependent on innovation and risk taking will require expanded opportunities and incentives to collaborate across “silos.”
- While there are currently many examples of shared resources and leadership in key campus-wide programs, curricular and co-curricular initiatives can be better integrated. Providing ever better “engaged excellence” requires initiatives that span Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. These must be approached as opportunities to synergistically multiply impacts, especially in times of scarce resources.
- We need, quickly, to build leadership teams at university and college levels with cultures of decision making that are congruent with and that advance our aspirations.
- The role of graduate programs as a component of our mission needs clarification.
- Western’s GUR program is a challenge insofar as we trail our Carnegie class and our competitors on student satisfaction benchmarks in the freshman year related to level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment.
- We have identified “leadership” as, potentially, distinguishing what is special about an undergraduate degree earned at Western. We must analyze that potential and decide if it should be made a reality.
- In order to plan for the future, WWU needs a comprehensive recruitment and admissions strategy and a strategic long-term academic enrollment growth plan.
- As many universities strive to internationalize their campuses and their curricula, we sit on the Pacific Rim with “middle of the pack” efforts in these areas.
- While our reputation is strong, our image in the broader public lacks specificity. We are no longer a regional university but what are we? We do much marketing but it is not integrated.
- In order to plan effectively, WWU needs a strong Office of Institutional Research, responsive and responsible to all university stakeholders.
- WWU continues to face compensation challenges for our faculty, exempt professional and classified staff, at a time when the nation is experiencing approaching and wide-spread baby boom retirements. Thus, WWU faces increased hiring needs as “supply” is diminishing.
- Western’s challenge to recruit and retain a diverse workforce – both faculty and staff – has been intensified in recent years by the highly competitive market in higher education across

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT – CHALLENGES (continued)

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3 the nation. Recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, as well as recruiting and retaining a
4 diverse student population, should be a priority for investment even under difficult economic
5 times.

- 6
7 • WWU's tuition and fees for undergraduate nonresident students and all graduate students are
8 higher than national averages (WWU has the authority to adjust tuition in these categories).
9
- 10 • The current Strategic Plan fully identifies all we value as important to the direction of the
11 university. It does not provide the more focused objectives, actions, timelines, and assigned
12 responsibilities that would comprise an operational plan. The current plan, inclusive as it is,
13 does not provide goals and objectives for the University sufficiently focused as to
14 meaningfully guide budget allocation: all budget requests can be justified within the plan.
15
- 16 • WWU was appropriated approximately \$20M in minor works in the 07-09 biennium and is
17 having to ask for re-appropriation of approximately \$10M of this amount in a fiscally
18 difficult time.
19

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT – OPPORTUNITIES*Opportunities to take advantage of:*

- The state gets the connection between higher education opportunities and brighter futures for the state. There are ambitious enrollment growth goals established by the HEC Board.
- The populations in the state that are growing are those whose parents are least likely to have graduated from 4-year institutions. The HECB goals can only be met by building “pipelines” to these populations of potential students.
- There are additional opportunities for WWU to serve the state by obtaining state support to expand off-campus degree programs.
- By law, per student funding levels are to be improved to 60th percentile of WWU’s peers in the Global Challenge States within the next ten years. Thus, funding is tied to Global Challenge state benchmarks.
- The 2008 HECB Strategic Master Plan seeks to reward performance: improvements in student progression toward degrees and certifications; some portion of funding based on completed course enrollments, in addition to funding based on enrollments; and funding for some completed degrees in addition to funding enrollments.
- The State-WWU Performance Agreement is intended to be a mechanism to connect funding with desired outcomes.
- Prosperity Partnership is interested in the shared goal of long-term economic prosperity and 100,000 new jobs for the central Puget Sound region.
- WWU’s Huxley College of the Environment, while the first environmental college in the country, does not appear well known to our state’s policy makers. Huxley should be the first college to mind when policy makers are looking to solve environmental problems, such as the Puget Sound Clean-up.
- State continues to focus on increased access and investing in high demand enrollments.
- The Waterfront Development project provides an opportunity for WWU to be a wise steward of a major resource. We can and must help shape a development that will have enduring consequences for the place we call home, doing so even were there were no opportunity to specifically meet Western’s needs.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT – THREATS*Threats to attend to:*

- **Washington faces serious revenue shortfalls as a result of immediate economic distress. Longer-term, national studies project continuing state disinvestment in public higher education as states deal with federal mandates involving health care, the escalating costs of other state programs, and fiscal and revenue structures designed for an economy that has changed significantly.**
- **Ours is an increasingly competitive environment:**
 - There are politically substantial proposals to establish new campuses, one near us.
 - WWU’s Huxley College of the Environment may face increased competition from University of Washington’s new College of the Environment.
 - A large 2-year college is rapidly proceeding on a course to become a full-fledged 4-year university, and that campus is located right in the middle of the area from which we currently draw most of our students.
 - Even as we struggle, given space constraints, to find ways to help serve the state’s desire for further baccalaureate education, existing two-year campuses are offering to do so through expanded mission. The aforementioned state fiscal challenges notwithstanding, there is the very real possibility of these entities becoming, in a decade, full-blown regional comprehensive universities. The most likely such development is in an area from where we draw a very large number of our students.
 - While our “engaged excellence” niche accounts for our leadership position in the Pacific Northwest, across the country institutions of our type are aggressively seeking innovative ways to more fully involve undergraduates in meaningful learning opportunities with high quality faculty.
- **In order to plan for the future, WWU needs a comprehensive recruitment and admissions strategy and a strong enrollment growth plan. The following key external issues need to be addressed:**
 - While the HECB Master Plan emphasizes tremendous growth in enrollments over the next 10 years, this growth is based on increased participation rates. If participation rates do not improve at the rate anticipated by the HECB, and the predicted decline in high school graduates materializes, meeting future enrollment targets could be a concern.
 - Changing enrollment needs in surrounding states may impact WWU’s enrollment; as well as competition from online programs and privates as a drop in K-12 enrollments occur in the Northwest.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT – THREATS (continued)

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- 3 • Changing state financial aid programs could eventually generate more low income
- 4 students, with state-paid tuition, room & board, requiring more academic and student
- 5 support services.
- 6
- 7 • Economic decline encourages potential for more non-traditional students, requiring more
- 8 support.
- 9
- 10 • WWU lacks private scholarships dollars when compared to competition such as the
- 11 University of Washington.
- 12
- 13 • Demographics that may impact WWU's enrollment
- 14
- 15 • A drop in K-12 enrollment in the state of Washington, the Northwest and across the
- 16 country, increasing competition for a shrinking pool of resident and non-resident
- 17 students.
- 18
- 19 • Increasing diversity in the region: an increase in the number of historically under-
- 20 served populations such as Hispanic students, first generation, low income, ESL,
- 21 learning disabled and undocumented students; in short, freshmen may be less well
- 22 prepared.
- 23
- 24 • More international students, requiring more support, due to WWU's increasing focus
- 25 on international exchange programs.
- 26
- 27 • **Accreditation revisit in two years**
- 28 • Review and revision of operating budget processes
- 29 • Program assessment especially related to GURs
- 30 • Library plan
- 31 • Review of structure and working relationships of committees, processes and reports
- 32 institution-wide
- 33
- 34 • **Implementation of new state and/or federal accountability requirements without**
- 35 **requisite funding.**