

YEAR ONE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

Submitted to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

Western Washington University

March 1, 2011

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NWCCU YEAR-ONE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This document comprises Western Washington University's Year-One Self-Evaluation Report to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Following the commission's guidelines, this report describes our institutional context, our response to commission recommendations, and our recent strategic planning process. The report also describes our mission, core themes, objectives and indicators.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Western Washington University (Western) is located in Bellingham, Washington, a city of 75,000 nestled in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains on Puget Sound, 50 miles south of Vancouver, British Columbia, and 90 miles north of Seattle. Fall, 2010, enrollment was 14,979, with 94% undergraduate students. Females made up 55% and males 45% of the 2010 class. Students of color made up 19.6%. Western is the third largest institution of higher education in the state.

In 2010, Western had 665 full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty, 90% holding the highest degree in their fields. The student-to-faculty ratio was 21:1, and 74% of classes have 30 or fewer students, while only 4% of classes have 75 or more students.

In 2010, Western was the highest ranking public, master's-granting university in the Pacific Northwest, according to U.S. News & World Report. Since the first U.S. News rankings in 1987, Western has been highly rated in 21 of 23 years and continues to improve, relative to its peers. At 85%, Western's freshman-to-sophomore retention rate has climbed past that of the state's other comprehensives and land-grant institution; moreover, its graduation rate for students of color is now more than 12% higher than the average of 20 IPEDS comparison institutions. As President Bruce Shepard points out: "Western is the premier public masters-granting university in the Pacific Northwest and we seek to be the best in the nation."

Western is organized into a Graduate School and seven undergraduate colleges: the College of Business and Economics, the College of Fine and Performing Arts, Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Huxley College of the Environment, the College of Sciences and Technology, and Woodring College of Education.

To fulfill its academic objectives, Western's curriculum includes a program of broad general education; intensive studies designed to develop scholarly competence in the arts and sciences; professional programs for public school personnel and other professionals; and graduate programs in professional education, the arts, the sciences, humanities, and business.

Western offers the following degrees: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Arts in Education, Bachelor of Fine Arts, Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Science, Master of Arts, Master of Business Administration, Master of Education, Master of Music, Master in Teaching, Master of Science, Master of Professional Accounting, and Master of Arts in Rehabilitation Counseling.

PREFACE

Brief Update on Institutional Changes Since the Last Report

Western's last accreditation under the previous Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) model (the ten-year cycle) was completed in the winter, 2008. In July, 2008, the NWCCU reaffirmed the accreditation of Western Washington University. At the same time, the Commission requested that Western prepare a focused interim report and host a Commission representative in fall, 2010, to address progress made regarding those recommendations. The NWCCU recommendations addressed:

- Transparency and faculty participation in resource decisions.
- Assessment.
- Library strategic plan.
- The University's committee structure.

Western submitted its interim report and hosted an interim evaluation visit by a Commission evaluator in the fall, 2010. The changes and improvements described in the report were structural as well as procedural, establishing new norms and standards for collegiality, transparency, and service to students and the state. The Commission evaluator noted in his concluding report and public exit interview that the university had made significant progress in each of the four areas enumerated by the NWCCU. Indeed, he provided three "commendations," one each for Western's progress on transparency and faculty participation in resource decisions, for the library's development and implementation of its strategic plan, and for the revision of Western's committee structure. Regarding assessment, the evaluator cited significant progress toward development of a university-wide plan of assessment, and the use of assessment data to inform program improvements and resource decisions. He recommended "continued progress in this area."

On February 10, 2011, Western received notification that its accreditation had been reaffirmed. In affirming accreditation, the Commission requested that the University submit an addendum to its Spring 2013 Year Three Self-Evaluation Report to address the recommendation of "continued progress" in course and program assessment. Following the Interim Report and visit, Western made additional institutional changes

in the areas of transparency and faculty participation in resource decisions, community engagement, and strategic planning.

Transparency and Faculty Participation in Resource Decisions

In response to recent and drastic reductions in state support, Western extended its participatory, “bottom up” budgeting approach to current state requirements for designating current and future budget reductions. This on-going process includes campus-wide budgetary meetings, division and unit budget planning, departmental efficiency assessments and a confidential process by which anyone on the campus can make budget reduction suggestions directly to the Provost. Unit reduction planning follows a standardized format wherein participants begin by updating the unit’s SCOT¹ analysis and assessing the strengths of its contributions to the university mission. Faculty are represented at each level of the process, including University Planning and Resource Council (UPRC), a committee comprised of faculty and the vice presidents. Western also recently expanded faculty participation in administrative bodies. For instance, the Faculty Senate President has been added to the Provost Council.

Community Engagement

Western’s strategic planning efforts flow directly from its community engagement. Beginning two years ago, the University initiated its “100 Community Conversations” campaign. Through this effort, the University gathered data from more than one hundred focus group discussions among Western faculty, students, alumni, business people, community leaders and elected state officials. Each discussion focused on a consistent theme and question: What public purpose should help shape the future of the University as it continues to be a premier “publicly purposed” institution? A resounding result of the “100 Conversations” initiative was heightened recognition of the value of Western’s many service and community contributions, and a renewed commitment to focus even more intently upon serving our community, state and nation. Affirming this renewed commitment, Western was awarded the Carnegie Foundation’s “Elective Classification for Community Engagement” and recognized by President Obama’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll.

Strategic Planning

Since the fall, 2010, Interim Report, Western has been actively engaged in strategic planning. This effort has been led by the faculty chair of the UPRC and informed by the “100 Conversations” initiative. Through this effort, the University gathered data from more than one hundred focus group discussions among Western faculty, students, alumni, business people, community leaders and elected state officials concerning how Western can better serve the state and nation. Following Western’s “bottom up” processes, strategic planning included departmental and unit meetings, as well as all-campus town-hall meetings. The new strategic plan was written by the UPRC and recently approved by the Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees.

¹SCOT Analysis = an analysis of a unit’s *Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats*.

In coordination with the strategic planning process, the Accreditation and Assessment Advisory Committee (AAAC) has worked throughout the fall and winter on the NWCCU Year-One Report. This majority-faculty committee has worked closely with the UPRC to see that strategic planning and accreditation are aligned and mutually reinforcing. In fact, the designation of theme objectives was initiated by the UPRC and sent to the AAAC for development. Each of the divisions of the university also forwarded objective and indicator suggestions to the AAAC, which assisted the Vice Provost in drafting the report. The report was then sent back to the UPRC where and divisions for comment.

Response to Recommendations/Issues Requested by the Commission

Western received the formal NWCCU request to include an addendum concerning progress on assessment in its Year Three report on February 10, 2011. The Commission evaluator indicated that he would recommend continued progress on assessment in his exit interview in November, 2010. Immediately following that interview, the AAAC met to outline a plan for carrying out this recommendation. In the three months since that meeting, the AAAC has:

- Reviewed and inventoried existing campus assessment tools, including the Western Educational Longitudinal Studies (Senior Exit Survey; Alumni Survey; Freshmen Baseline Survey; Sophomore Survey).
- Reviewed departmental assessment plans and selected exemplary plans to be used as “best practice” models on campus.
- Reviewed Barbara Walvoord’s *Assessment Clear and Simple* and tentatively accepted its emphasis upon faculty judgments and course-embedded assessment activities as guiding parameters for the improvement of the campus assessment plan.
- Established a three-year timeline for the review and improvement of departmental missions, outcomes and assessment plans.

In addition to these activities, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Accreditation Liaison Officer has:

- Met with the associate deans to align and coordinate the end-of-year Department Chair reports with the annual AAAC assessment reports.
- Communicated the AAAC three-year timeline to departmental and program assessment coordinators.

Date of Most Recent Review of Mission and Core Themes

The new university mission was crafted over fall term, 2010, then reviewed and approved by the UPRC on November 11, 2010, the Faculty Senate on November 22, 2010, and by the Board of Trustees December 10, 2010. The core themes were affirmed by the UPRC on February 23rd, 2011.

CHAPTER ONE: MISSION, CORE THEMES, AND EXPECTATION

SECTION I: STANDARD 1.A

MISSION STATEMENT

Western Washington University serves the people of the State of Washington, the nation, and the world by bringing together individuals of diverse backgrounds and perspectives in an inclusive, student-centered university that develops the potential of learners and the well-being of communities.

VISION

Western will build a stronger Washington by being an international leader in active learning, critical thinking, and societal problem solving.

STATEMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Build upon Western's strengths to address critical needs in the State of Washington.
2. Expand student access and opportunities in baccalaureate and graduate education.
3. Foster and promote life-long learning and success in an ever-changing world.
4. Apply Western's expertise and collaborative approach to scholarship, creativity, and research in ways that strengthen communities beyond the campus.
5. Serve as a model for institutional effectiveness, innovation, diversity, and sustainability.

INTERPRETATION OF FULFILLMENT OF THE INSTITUTION'S MISSION

Our mission will be fulfilled when we have significantly improved our service to the state of Washington and become a premier undergraduate-centered university that fosters a dynamic, inclusive and collaborative environment at an intimate scale, where students fully engage in their education, and whose alumni and faculty serve as leaders, global citizens, and societal problem solvers.

ARTICULATION OF AN ACCEPTABLE THRESHOLD OR EXTENT OF MISSION FULFILLMENT

Western is currently experiencing a radical restructuring in state support. Over the last three years, the proportion of the operating budget provided by the state has fallen from more than 60% to just over 30% and promises to decline even further. Given this rapid and continued reduction in resources, Western will have fulfilled its mission if it can *continue* to be recognized as a premier, undergraduate-centered university that fosters engagement, citizenship and collaboration among a diverse student body. This current reputation as a premier institution rests on assessable indicators of university quality. These indicators include quantitative data, such as graduation and retention

rates, as well as qualitative data, such as how we are spoken about and the significance of our impact within our community.

Quantitative Standards

- 85-90% of our seniors continue to rate their entire educational experience as good or excellent (NSSE).
- 90-95% of our seniors continue to report that they collaborate on assignments with peers outside of class (NSSE).
- Graduation rates for students of color continue to remain at least 10% better than the mean rate of our IPEDS comparison group.
- Freshmen-to-sophomore retention rates remain above 80% or better.

However, and regardless of the radical restructuring in state support, mission fulfillment will mean improvement in key areas. Specifically, we will take great pride in mission fulfillment if we can:

- document 1,000,000 annual hours of community service and engagement by faculty, students and staff; and
- see a statistically significant increase in our 4-year graduation rates.

Qualitative Standards (Rubric)

Western develops well-being of communities:	Qualitative Description of Mission Fulfillment
Through research.	Faculty published research contributes to advances in discipline methodology and knowledge and is cited by other researchers. Research leads to a variety of real-world applications (schools, medicine, industry, etc.). Faculty researchers respond to community requests for consultation and analysis—planning and safety, for example.
Through access to arts events.	Faculty and students provide quality arts performances and events for the community. Audiences and local school and community partners speak highly of these events.
Through business consultation services.	Faculty and staff consult with and advise local businesses to enable business to survive and grow. Participants report that our assistance sustains and creates jobs in the community and state.
Through engagement and service to local schools.	Student engagement and service in local schools can be shown to improve performance and positively shape life trajectories, permitting more K-12 students to graduate and go on to college.
Through engagement and service to local non-profits.	Student engagement and service in local non-profit agencies (for example, Boys & Girls Club) has a positive effect upon service recipients and the organizations themselves. Non-profits report that Western student-developed business plans benefitted constituents and programs.
Through public health services.	Western faculty and students promote public health in the community through on-campus clinics and services in counseling, speech and hearing, human services and rehabilitation.

Qualitative Standards (Rationale)

In addition to our numeric indicators of mission fulfillment, Western will also look for qualitative indicators of mission fulfillment. Our “100 Conversations” focus groups initiative provided key qualitative data regarding our performance and helped establish a strategic plan that emphasized increased service to developing the well-being of communities. Because these conversations initiated our strategic planning process, we would like to conclude our seven-year accreditation review with a follow-up opportunity to solicit qualitative data and comments regarding our performance in developing the well-being of communities. To this end, we will look for naturalistic data and listen for unsolicited comments in focus groups, among alums and supporters, and with legislators that indicate whether we have become a university recognized for developing the well-being of communities. These qualitative standards will emphasize the significance of our contributions to our state and communities, rather than the frequency or number of contributions. With respect to research, for instance, we will look not for the number of published findings but for research that has been of significant use and practical value. Specifically, we will look for comments that demonstrate our contributions to the development of communities and which meet the descriptive criteria described above in each of these six areas. We will have fulfilled our mission if it is “easy” to document examples that meet these criteria in four of these six areas. For instance, with respect to research, we frequently hear from community members regarding their appreciation for the research we conduct on toxicity levels in Lake Whatcom, which provides the city of Bellingham’s drinking water. If we achieve the qualitative criteria specified for developing “the well-being of communities through research,” it should be “easy” to find examples of other research contributions our constituents praise and value.

SECTION II: STANDARD 1.B

CORE THEME 1: SERVE THE STATE OF WASHINGTON BY EXPANDING STUDENT ACCESS

Western's definition of access refers to the gamut of a student's academic career: from admission to graduation. As stated in its mission, Western is a "student-centered university that develops the potential of learners." In order to develop the potential of learners, Western must first identify, recruit, admit and assemble an appropriate student body. To this end, Western's admission processes consider not only an applicant's academics—both rigor and history—but also talents and experience. Western tries to find "good fits," and to keep access both flexible and sensible. Western promotes itself as an inclusive and supportive institution. The manifestation of this principle begins with admissions.

Once enrolled, nurturing a student's potential must begin with the basics: course access and student success. It is essential that students can access courses, majors, and academic-support and co-curricular programs. Many of Western's majors are currently operating beyond capacity. Given decreasing state support, it will be difficult to ensure access to high demand fields—such as the STEM areas—identified by the state as high priority. Similarly, Western will be challenged to sustain academic and co-curricular support programs. Nevertheless, access to courses, majors and support remains key to the overall success of the student, and therefore the mission of the University.

Access to fiscal resources is similarly essential. A student's success may hinge solely on finances. Can they pay their tuition, fees, and housing? Are they in a position to accept a non-paying but noteworthy internship? To this end, Western must actively pursue revenue streams that can support its student-centered mission: scholarships and grants, prevailing high-end technologies, reasonably priced overseas service-learning opportunities—to name just a few.

Expanding access is essential to the success of our students, our university and our state. Indeed, Washington has one of the nation's lowest rates of access to higher education. To serve the state Western must expand educational access to more students, and to a more diverse array of students. However, access does not stop at admission. To fully provide access to a rigorous and engaging education, Western must also provide access to courses, majors, and academic and co-curricular support.

Objectives and Indicators of Achievement:

- Objective 1a = Sustain total enrollment of academically-talented students, while expanding the percentage of students from underrepresented groups (students of color, students with disabilities, veterans, Pell Grant recipients, and first-generation students).

Indicators

1. Undergraduate and graduate headcount.
2. Headcount of students served through EESP.

3. Students of color (SOC), students with disabilities, veterans, Pell Grant recipients, and first-generation students (separately) as percent of total enrollment.
 4. Annual private contributions to student financial aid.
- Objective 1b = Students successfully negotiate the academic and personal opportunities and challenges of their first year.

Indicators

1. Percentage of freshmen retained to 2nd year.
 2. Predicted versus actual retention for SOC, Pell Grant recipients, first-generation students and veterans.
 3. Student/faculty interaction (NSSE).
- Objective 1c = Students progress toward graduation in a timely manner.

Indicators

1. Average time to degree.
2. Percentage of students graduating in 4, 5 & 6-years.
3. SOC graduation rate as compared to IPEDS comparison group.
4. Number of graduates in majors designated by the state as “high demand.”

Rationale for Core Theme #1 Indicators

The indicators for Objective 1a are assessable because each enumerated category is indicated in admissions or foundations data and accessible via our data warehouse. The indicators are meaningful because they are direct measures that target the goals described in the objective. For example, tracking the percentage of our students who are among the first-generation of their families to attend college will help us determine whether we are successfully expanding access to this population.

The indicators for Objective 1b are assessable because they are easily accessible via registrar records and learning/tutorial center assessment data. The indicators are meaningful because they are direct measures that target appropriate populations and control for appropriate variables. Contrasting actual versus predicted retention permits control for academic index—which is very highly correlated with retention.

The indicators for Objective 1c are assessable. Indicators 1c.1, 1c.2, and 1c.4 are annually calculated by Western’s on-line fact book from verified registration and graduation records. Indicator 1c.3 is similarly calculated and then tabulated by IPEDS for us. The indicators are meaningful because they are direct measures of how successfully we have met the goals of access: bringing a broader population of students to Western and supporting them from their first year through graduation, and graduating more students in areas deemed “high demand” by our state.

CORE THEME 2: FOSTER STUDENT SUCCESS

In order for Western to serve "...the people of the State of Washington, the nation, and the world" it must serve first the students it welcomes into its community. Fostering student success is paramount to its mission to "develop the potential of learners." Only by accomplishing this central tenet can Western expect to also develop the "well-being of communities." Western branding indicates that "...for ambitious, open-minded learners, (it) is the premier undergraduate-centered university that fosters a dynamic collaborative environment at an intimate scale, where students fully engage, reveling in the freedom to develop their intellectual potential and achieve their personal goals."

In service to the State of Washington, the nation, and the world, Western aspires to be a model for institutional effectiveness and innovation, and to become an international leader in advancing active learning, critical thinking, and societal problem solving. The affirmation of these aspirations will become manifest in student success.

Objectives and Indicators of Achievement:

- Objective 2a = Students are able to acquire, construct, and apply complex knowledge and theories.

Indicators

1. NSSE section 11 and Western Senior Exit Survey section B.12, asking about the frequency with which Western students are asked to think critically, synthesize information, form complex interpretations, judge the value of information, arguments and methods, and apply course concepts and theories to new problems.
 2. Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) "value added" score assessing growth between freshman and senior year in Western student's problem solving, analytical, and critical thinking skills.
 3. Annual number of students who co-author published articles, book chapters, or papers with faculty.
- Objective 2b = Students are adequately prepared to succeed in their chosen fields.

Indicators

1. Admission rates to graduate schools.
 2. Career Services employment survey.
 3. Alumni survey.
 4. Employer surveys and feedback.
 5. NSSE #11b = "Acquiring job and work-related knowledge and skills."
- Objective 2c = Students apply their classroom learning to co-curricular, employment, and residential experiences.

Indicators

1. Total service-learning and community engagement hours served by students.

2. NSSE question 7 = “Have done practicum/internship, community service or volunteer work.”
3. Student Voices survey of student employment experiences.
4. Data from Residence Life Education Assessment Model.

Rationale for Core Theme #2 Indicators

The indicators for Objective 2a assess the opportunities students have to acquire, construct, and apply complex knowledge and theories, and how well students perform in using, applying and demonstrating this knowledge. Indicators 2a.1 and 2a.2 are assessable because they rely on established assessments for which validity and reliability have been demonstrated. They are meaningful because they generate data that allow Western to assess its progress on the objective relative to its previous performance and relative to other universities. The Collegiate Learning Assessment, for instance, reports improvement in critical thinking, problem solving and analysis between the freshman and senior year and compares this improvement to the improvement demonstrated by students at other universities. Indicator 2a.3 is assessable because it is annually tracked by each college and aggregated for the University. It is meaningful because research is the quintessential example of acquiring, constructing, and applying complex knowledge and theories.

The indicators for Objective 2b are assessable because they track metrics that can be collected, quantified, and compared over time. They are meaningful because they triangulate 1) student self-perception of whether the objective has been achieved, 2) employment evidence of whether the objective was achieved, and 3) employer reports of whether the objective has been achieved. In addition, this triangulation achieves increasing validity, moving from perception upon graduation, to acquiring employment, to success in employment over time. Our employer report, documenting professional assessments of our students in the workplace, is a particularly meaningful indicator for this objective.

The indicators for Objective 2c are assessable because they track metrics that are easily tracked over time. They are meaningful because they combine direct measures of total participation in service, practica, and internships with self-report data regarding the application of classroom learning to co-curricular activities and experience in the residence halls. Indicators 2c.1 and 2c.2 permit Western to track its success on this objective over time; 2c.3 provides meaningful benchmark data to allow Western to compare its success on this objective to that of other universities; 2c.4 provides meaningful indirect data that permits Western to track its success on this objective over time.

CORE THEME 3: STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES BEYOND THE CAMPUS

As stated in its mission, “Western serves the people of the State of Washington, the nation, and the world...” Strengthening communities beyond Western’s campus purposefully addresses this stated mission. Accomplishing this goal requires understanding the needs, resources, and cultures of those communities. Understanding a community, wherever it may exist, means understanding that the world, however large or small, is diverse. Thus strengthening a community entails understanding its diversity. And the commitment to the concept of diversity is equally part of Western’s mission of “...bringing together individuals of diverse backgrounds and perspectives in an inclusive, student-centered university.”

Once part of the Western community, Western strives to provide students from these diverse communities with a positive experience and to integrate those experiences as much as possible through a liberal arts education and co-curricular programs. The cornerstone of the Western experience is the idea that a Western student will take with them when they leave experiences of diversity that they wouldn’t have experienced otherwise. President Shepard notes that Western is itself a community that values diversity in all its forms, and where “...themes of civic engagement and giving back to the community run deep.” Western expects students to be actively involved in their own learning and all its community members to be actively involved in collaborative scholarship and creative activities, but always with an overarching commitment to service to the broader community.

Objectives and Indicators of Achievement:

- Objective 3a = Students develop respect for and integrate diverse perspectives of others.

Indicators

1. Number of Western students participating in study abroad programs.
 2. Number of exchange, international and non-resident students attending Western.
 3. NSSE question 11 = “Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds” and “Working effectively with others.”
- Objective 3b = Students contribute to positive change as citizens in diverse communities.

Indicators

1. Student community service hours (number of hours contributed)
2. Student community service participation (number of participants)
3. NSSE questions 7 and 11 = volunteerism, voting in elections, contributing to welfare of community.
4. Peace Corps and Fulbright placement data.

- Objective 3c = The Western community (faculty, staff, and administrators) contributes to positive change in communities beyond the campus.

Indicators

1. Western community service hours (number of hours contributed)
2. Western community service programs (list of examples)
3. Western community service participation (number of participants)

Rationale for Core Theme #3 Indicators

The indicators for Objective 3a track participation in study abroad programs, trends in the number of international and non-resident students who attend Western, and survey data concerning student opportunities to understand interact and hold serious conversations with students who hold a different point of view or who are from a different race or ethnicity. Indicators 3a.1 and 3a.2 are assessable because they are coded and counted in our registration data and data warehouse. Indicators included in 3a.3 are assessable because they are derived from the NSSE and asked of our seniors. These indicators are meaningful because experiences abroad and with international and non-resident students help to strengthen respect for diverse perspectives within the campus. Moreover, when diverse groups become part of Western’s community, not only do they bring new and different perspectives to the campus, thus influencing respect for diverse perspectives locally, they take the Western experience back to a community beyond Western’s campus. More specifically, indicator 3a.1 is meaningful because students are motivated to study abroad by respecting diverse perspectives and because the experience of studying abroad further develops respect for such perspectives and assists students in integrating diverse perspectives. Indicator 3a.2 is meaningful because bringing international and non-resident students to campus increases the diversity of perspectives in our classrooms and on our campus, thereby fostering respect and the integration of such perspectives. Indicator 3a.3 is meaningful because it assesses how often students try to understand someone else’s point of view, how their Western education contributed to their understanding of people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds, and what percentage of students had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity. Moreover, indicator 3a.3 permits us to 1) compare our progress on these self-report metrics over time because these questions are asked of both freshmen and seniors and, 2) to compare our progress with that of other universities because the results are benchmarked.

The indicators for Objectives 3b and 3c are assessable because they are coded and counted as part of our program assessment, our participation in NSSE, and the data reported by the Peace Corps and Fulbright Fellowship program. The indicators are meaningful because they provide both direct and indirect measures of the target objective. Whereas Objective 3a focuses on Western’s ability to draw to and send forth from its campus populations of students appropriate to the objective, Objectives 3b and 3c are concerned with tracking the potential for positive change via action—by the entire Western community: students, faculty, administrators, and staff. Six out of seven of the combined indicators are assessable because they are number counts. They are meaningful because they are direct measures that target appropriate actions: the number of hours, programs, and participants. Indicator 3b.3 is meaningful because it is an indirect measure of self-reflection appropriate to the intent of the objective.

CONCLUSION

Over the past two years Western Washington University has deliberately assessed, discussed, evaluated and revised its mission and strategic plan. This work, informed by more than 100 formal conversations among alumni, students, community constituents and stakeholders, was a lengthy, participatory process involving more than a thousand individuals. The establishment of Western's core themes, objectives and indicators was carried out as a natural extension of the strategic planning process with careful consideration of their alignment and fit.

Strategic planning and accreditation are not identical. Strategic planning directs a university's actions; to this end, it is prescriptive. Accreditation establishes accountability. Its focus is not upon the university's actions but upon the student outcomes and achievements that result from these actions; to this end, it must be descriptive.

Yet in both our strategic planning and our accreditation planning we have sought to state our intentions boldly and concisely, the better to clarify exactly what we intend to do and exactly how we seek to be held accountable. Some of the hardest work of these efforts is most evident in what is not in this report: in the many goals, objectives and indicators we added and then removed from the document in our effort to focus on our core essence, and to concentrate our core focus. For this reason we worked especially hard to limit our indicators of mission fulfillment, our core themes, objectives and indicators. The result, we believe, is a concise, focused document that makes no mistake about what we wish to accomplish and to be held accountable for.

While aspirational and visionary, our mission is clarified in a concise interpretation of fulfillment and articulated in concrete definitions of acceptable thresholds or demonstrations of mission fulfillment. The essential elements of the mission are articulated in brief and declarative core themes. Concise, clear, assessable and meaningful indicators of achievement are established for each theme. These form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of each core theme.

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