

# Standard Nine

## Institutional Integrity



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In every aspect of the University's operations, Western demonstrates strong principles of ethics, academic freedom, and integrity in the pursuit of knowledge. At the most foundational level, Western's mission—rooted in the values of excellence, engagement, diversity, community service, integrity, and innovation—serves as a concrete guide for the institution's actions, and the Strategic Action Plan sets forth specific and attainable ways for the entire community to participate and to function with integrity (see Standard One.) In fact, this plan highlights integrity as one of its core values: *Western expects all members of the campus community to interact honestly and ethically. We value and expect open, fair, and straightforward behavior and take personal and collective responsibility for our words and our actions.* (See Core Exhibit: *Engaged Excellence, Strategic Action Plan, 2006.*)

Throughout the Standards in this self-study, Western has shown that ethics and academic freedom both play important roles in University planning and in day-to-day operations. The *Faculty Handbook* serves as a valuable resource for written policies on both faculty ethics and academic freedom (see Core Exhibit: *Faculty Handbook*), and the Faculty Senate has taken a forceful and proactive leadership role in ethical behavior and academic freedom issues (see also Standards Four and Six). Furthermore, the Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support Services provides specific codes of conduct for its employees and for Western Students, while the Associated Students have also taken a leadership role in steering the ethical behavior of both students and the University as a whole (see Standard Three). Western plans its growth—and the facilities needed to accommodate that growth—in line with both the Mission and Institutional Master Plan, creating a cohesive design of action throughout the administration (see Standard Eight). Finally,

the Business and Financial Affairs Division ensures that all of Western's financial operations are handled ethically, with sound financial practices and oversights in place to ensure the stability of the University in all its operations (see Standard Seven).

### *Ethical Behavior Beyond the University Campus*

Western's guiding principle of "Engaged Excellence" spurs the University to act ethically not only locally, but globally. For example, Western has participated for several years in the American Democracy Project, which encourages civil discourse about difficult issues confronting the nation. This project is aimed at helping students become more active citizens in both the local community and the world.

Through the foresight of both students and administration, Western also strives to be a national, ethical leader in environmental sustainability. As defined by Western's Sustainability Committee, a sustainable university protects local and global ecology, upholds social equity, creates economic vitality, and protects the health of its inhabitants. Western has a long history of integrating sustainability into many areas of campus operations and academics. For example, gardeners and custodians have been using "green" practices for years, and the campus community has been recognized by the EPA for making a commitment to 100% green energy (see also Standard Eight). Western is also one of the first 100 universities in the nation to sign the President's Climate Commitment. The University has also committed to waste reduction, and Western was one of the earliest adopters of a campus recycling program (see also Standard One).

Western also boasts an excellent reputation with regulatory and accrediting agencies, based on honest, thorough and timely responses to requests and implementation of directives and policies. For example, all of Western's capital projects have been on time, within budget, and enacted without injury or litigation.

### **Policies and Procedures**

Western's policies and procedures strive to ensure that all voices and stances are heard and taken into account when the University must make difficult decisions; this stance lies at the heart of collegial self-governance, creating a workplace that is supportive, respectful, and free of harassment or intimidation. For example, the processes that led to the creation of a new Mission and Strategic Action Plan (see Standard One) and an Institutional Master Plan (see Standard Eight) included intensive and broad input from all interested constituencies. Both processes led to documents that guide Western in all its actions.

Also, in 2006, the President charged a committee to recommend a policy process that would ensure broad representation of interests and perspectives in policy formulation and review, as well as improve the University's ability to record, monitor, and update policies. The new policy—*Developing and*

*Maintaining University Policies*—was reviewed and approved through the proposed process (see Exhibit 9.1: University Policies; see also Standard Six).

The new policy established an Executive Policy Group, a recommending body that includes the President's and Provost's Councils, as well as the Presidents of the Faculty Senate, Professional Staff Organization, and Associated Students. Previously, only the President's Council approved policies; the new process establishes a format for all new and substantially revised University policies using the "Peabody Method," the standard policy format approved by the state of Washington and local municipal governments. The process involves stakeholder review by faculty, staff, and students, and it includes a thirty-day open comment period prior to final consideration and approval.

The University does not have a timetable that requires policy review at set intervals. Rather, Western reviews policies in response to changes in law, external circumstances, administrative changes, or issues that arise in the context of implementation. For example, the creation of an Internal Controls Officer in 2005 and the change in reporting of the Internal Auditor to the Board of Trustees in 2006 (see Standard Seven) both gave rise to new policies and procedures governing financial management.

Western's policies are available to all faculty, staff, and students on the University's website ([www.wvu.edu/policies/](http://www.wvu.edu/policies/)). Key policies cover the ethical use of university resources; financial investment, expenditure, purchasing, and accounting expectations; safeguarding non-public financial information; responsibilities of financial managers; safeguarding and accounting for assets; reporting losses of University funds or property; faculty and professional staff outside consulting; and appropriate cash handling processes.

Western also designates a Public Records Officer who processes requests for public information in accordance with the Public Disclosure Act. The university is in the process of combining support for public records and policy coordination under the aegis of the campus Assistant Attorney General.

#### Office of the Internal Auditor

The Office of the Internal Auditor is an integral part of Western, as this unit measures and evaluates policies, procedures, and compliance with ethical standards throughout the University. The Office provides all final audit reports to the President and to the Audit Committee of the Board of Trustees. In addition, the Office of the Internal Audit makes an annual report to the Audit Committee of the Board of Trustees summarizing the Internal Audit program and recent audit activity. This report is made available to the entire board. (See also Standard Seven Exhibits for Internal Audit Charter.)

#### **Ethical Standards**

Western sets expectations for ethical behaviors in many written policies, and these are published in employee handbooks, collective bargaining

*"I believe that I am well prepared for any kind of terrain."*

*– Western graduate*

agreements, the *Bulletin*, and *FAST*. (See Exhibit 9.2: Codes of Conduct.) All University employees are bound by the Washington State Ethics In Public Service Act, which addresses important aspects of public employment including objectivity, selflessness, stewardship, transparency, and integrity. Western's Board of Trustees sets the ethical tone for the University, as section 020(4) of the Rules of Operations stipulates Conflict of Interest Standards that outline each Board member's fiduciary responsibilities as well as requirements to disclose any potential or real conflict of interest (see Core Exhibit: Board of Trustees Rules of Operation). This rule provides guidance in exercising fiduciary responsibilities, and requires annual public disclosure of business interests and receipt of gifts to avoid perceived, potential, or real conflicts of interest. A trustee who is aware of potential or real conflict of interest concerning any matter brought to the Board does not vote or participate in discussions connected with the matter.

Administrators, faculty, and staff are also expected to avoid any "Conflict of Interest" or "Conflict of Commitment" as defined in POL-U5400.20 *University Policy on Financial Disclosure*, and to comply with that policy. (See Exhibit 9.1: University Policies.)

#### Faculty and Staff Codes of Conduct and Ethical Behavior

*See also Standard Four*

In conducting research, scholarly, and creative activities, faculty and staff must comply with several policies concerning ethical behavior, including:

- *The Code of Faculty Ethics for the Faculty of Western Washington University* (Appendix F of the *Faculty Handbook*, 2005-07)
- The University's *Policy on Consulting and Other Compensated Professional Activities* (Section XII.B of the *Faculty Handbook*, 2005-07 edition)
- *The Policies Governing Procedures for the Use of Animals in Research and Teaching at Western Washington University* (RSP)
- *Policies & Procedures for the Review of Research Involving Human Subjects* (Appendix L of the *Faculty Handbook*, 2005-07 edition)
- The University's *Policy and Procedural Guidelines for Misconduct in Research and Scholarship* (Appendix G of the *Faculty Handbook*, 2005-07 edition)

#### Student Codes of Conduct

*See also Standard Three*

Western's Student Rights and Responsibilities Code and the Academic Dishonesty Policy are published annually in the *University Bulletin* and are available online via the Judicial Affairs website. Additional policies/procedures for students living in campus-owned residential facilities are clearly delineated in the *Residential Community Handbook* and are posted on the University Residences Policies and Procedures website. Since Western's

last accreditation review in 1998, the Student Rights and Responsibilities Code has undergone a significant revision. In a proactive effort to make the Code more user-friendly, provide a more positive approach to student conduct, and to clarify the relationship of the Code to University Residences, Western made changes that included new sections on positive behaviors, student responsibility for guests, and the opportunity to appeal either to an Appeal Board *or* to the Dean of Students. The Code was revised by the Committee on Student Rights and Responsibilities, which included students, faculty, and staff. The committee presented all changes to the Associated Students for input and review. (See also Standard Three for a more thorough discussion on ethical standards for student conduct.)

### Due Process

Western has in place written policies and procedures to assure fair and equitable treatment of faculty, staff, and students to ensure a learning and working environment that allows individuals to conduct themselves and express ideas with personal and professional integrity, free of harassment. Related policies include affirmative action, equal opportunity, nondiscrimination, conflict of interest, hiring and promotion, faculty and professional staff handbooks, and classified collective bargaining agreements including grievance and disciplinary procedures and a student-conduct code. (See Exhibit 9.1 and Exhibit 9.2.)

### Training

Western's Human Resources Department maintains online training that educates employees and assists them in maintaining compliance with the Ethics In Public Service Act. The Office of the Internal Auditor also performs training sessions concerning key ethics and accountability issues at New Staff Employee Orientation trainings. In addition, the Internal Audit Office provides training to departments, upon request, about ethics topics. Western also provides online training for the University's cash handling procedure and for any procedures that safeguard non-public financial information policies and procedures.

### **Academic Freedom**

*See also Standard Four*

Freedom of inquiry in academic pursuits is guaranteed at Western, in writing and in practice, and Western adheres to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) guidelines on academic freedom. The University encourages faculty to offer a wide variety of courses, and Western's faculty members control the curriculum. Faculty and students regularly participate in national and international gatherings, and diverse viewpoints are represented by campus speakers and cultural events. Promotion and tenure policies specify performance standards that are to be applied uniformly. In the face of perceived threats to academic freedom nationwide following

9/11, President Morse reaffirmed Western's commitment to free inquiry and civil discourse. The Faculty Senate and Associated Students also both passed resolutions concerning academic freedom (see Exhibit 9.3: Academic Freedom documents). In one representative case of the application of Western's standards, Western Professor Larry Estrada, who was included in "The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America," by David Horowitz, has been well supported in his work on campus, and throughout the controversy, by the faculty and administration.

The Faculty Senate, in collaboration with the Student Senate, also established an Academic Freedom Task Force in 2006. This committee is comprised of faculty, staff, and student representatives who work with administrative representatives to study the status of academic freedom at Western. The committee is charged to:

- Examine appropriate avenues for discourse on rights and responsibilities; associated with academic freedom, open scholarship, and democratic structures.
- Examine internal and external surveillance pressures including both existing and potential means for monitoring forms of communications.
- Examine security concerns associated with research.
- Examine accessible means for ongoing dissemination of information around sensitive issues.

The task force has sponsored—with support from the President's and Provost's offices—various programs and forums on academic freedom, and ongoing articles of interest are published on the Faculty Senate website. There is a shared recognition that this vigilance, even in the absence of complaints or grievances, is important to maintain a university that supports and encourages free expression of ideas. (See also Standard Four.)

In concert with these efforts, the Western Libraries have instituted practices that protect the confidentiality of library borrowing records and of other information relating to personal use of library information and services. These and other protections follow the "Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights" approved by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in June 29, 1999. These principles are included in the Libraries' unit plan in the *Faculty Handbook*, and they will also be part of the Libraries' updated mission statement. (See also Standard Five.)

## **Publications**

The Office of University Communications (OUC) serves as the official conduit for news releases and other documents distributed to the media, and it also serves as a resource for all Colleges and departments. The office conveys information about Western's mission, goals, programs, faculty, staff, and students to a number of audiences including parents, alumni, legislators,

the Western community, and the general public. The office produces, in cooperation with the Alumni Association and Western Washington University Foundation, a number of publications such as the alumni quarterly newsletter, parents' newsletter, and brochures. These documents regularly refer to Western's Mission and Strategic Action Plan in order to support and illustrate Western's goals.

The "Western Experience" is articulated in the Mission and Strategic Action Plan, and this concept is supported by survey information derived from students, alumni, faculty, and staff. The President and other University officials promote a clear vision of Western in public presentations and documents, and a Communications/Marketing Committee with broad membership reviews publications periodically to ensure accuracy, consistency, development of the "Western Experience" concept, and visual identity. OUC staff members regularly meet with departments across the University to provide guidance related to publications and various methods of outside communications, and a University Communications/Marketing Committee is currently reviewing a wide spectrum of University messages and visual identity. The office is also currently updating content style guidelines for publications.

*"Western was the best time of my life. I couldn't have gone to a better school."*

*– Western graduate*

#### Graphic Identity Guidelines

Western has taken several steps to improve the institutional character of its publications over the last decade. The first Graphic Identity Guidelines were issued in 1998 to ensure a cohesive visual identity for University publications and correspondence (see Exhibit 9.4: Graphic Identity Guidelines). The Guidelines cover use of Western's logo, seal, and other marks, and they have been widely followed. Western's logo appears on all official stationery and publications, and the Guidelines are continually updated through the years to ensure a unified image. A comprehensive revision that reflects the emerging importance of the graphic identity on the web is currently underway. Western's various publishing and printing entities are encouraged to adhere to Western's Graphic Identity Guidelines. In addition, catalogs, publications, media releases, and official statements are reviewed for accuracy and consistency by a range of offices, including the President's Office, Communications/Marketing Committee, Office of University Communications, Admissions, Publishing Services, Associated Students Publicity, Student Publications Council at the Department of Journalism, Alumni, and Athletics. University editors and publicists work across department lines to collaborate on messages and develop print and web-based materials that strengthen the public image of the University.

A consistent graphic design of publications such as the University *Bulletin*, Admissions materials, the President's Report, *Window on Western*, *Soundings*, and Extended Education and Summer Programs publications reinforces Western's image. (See Exhibit 9.5 for samples of publications.) The Equal Opportunity Office also establishes the language regarding affirmative

action and equal opportunity notification to be used in documents and all advertisements.

Publishing Services has been designated as the official agent for the production and purchase of the University's printing and copying. This unit oversees the work of the University's graphic artists, and these artists meet regularly with faculty and staff, assisting in choices of graphics and other products that will enhance cohesiveness of the University's messages and public image. Publishing Services was recently restructured to report to the Vice President of External Affairs, thus providing a closer link with University Communications. Western expects that a greater coordination of effort will enhance the consistency of University publications.

The Copyright Services Office administers the University's copyright policy. Western has published guidelines for use of the copyrighted University logo, official seal, and library of photos, and encourages the use of Associated Press (AP) style in outside publications.

### Student Publications

Student publications operate under the Student Publications Charter, initially approved by the Board of Trustees in 1979 and updated/approved by the President, on behalf of the Board, in June 2006. All daily editorial and operational decisions are clearly assigned to the editor of each publication by the charter's provision on freedom, and ethical behavior is described in a section on responsibility (see Exhibit 9.6).

### Web Pages

The current Western website homepage shares a consistent design with major print publications representing the University. This design was reviewed and approved by the President's Council. Also, to encourage a more uniform appearance of department and faculty websites, the University recently purchased a template that is user friendly, requiring minimal technical skills for content and graphics editing. The University has provided training assistance in use of the template to interested faculty and staff.

Units across the institution have increasingly adopted the web template as it allows for compliance within a wide range of standards, such as accessibility and branding, while also providing significant flexibility in the presentation of a unit's own message. Since units are individually responsible for their web publications, the University's central web office provides departments with the tools, assistance, and advice prior to and during the release of new websites. The Web Services Office publishes and disseminates web publication standards and is involved in the user-interface design of most enterprise web applications developed by the University.

**STANDARD NINE**  
*SUMMARY & ANALYSIS*

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**Significant Changes Since 1998**

- In 2007, Western implements the new policy—*Developing and Maintaining University Policies*—that ensures a greater voice for campus constituencies in the policy-making process. The policy establishes an Executive Policy Group that includes the President’s and Provost’s Councils, as well as the Presidents of the Faculty Senate, Professional Staff Organization, and Associated Students.
- In 2005, the Board of Trustees adopts the Audit Committee Charter, which adopts best practices in accord with Sarbanes-Oxley legislation. The Office of Internal Audit now reports functionally to the Audit Committee of the Board of Trustees and administratively to the President. Western adds an additional staff auditor and a half-time administrative assistant, and also hires an internal controls officer. The President moves the Internal Auditor reportage from the VP for Business and Financial Affairs to the President.
- In 1998, Western creates Graphic Identity Guidelines to ensure coherent and accurate representations of the University in all its publications.

**Strengths**

- Western engaged the entire University community to update the Mission and Strategic Action Plan. The theme of “Engaged Excellence” permeates the University’s operations and provides guidelines for ethical actions, both locally and globally.
- Western has increased its emphasis on global citizenship through its commitment to a wide variety of sustainable practices.
- Western has clear guidelines and policies in place concerning ethical behavior of administrators, the Board of Trustees, faculty, students, and staff. These guidelines are published, and training is provided as needed.
- Western evaluates and updates its policies as needed to reflect current issues.
- Western strongly supports faculty and students in regard to Academic Freedom and integrity in the research and learning process.

**Challenges and Next Steps**

- Western will continue to evaluate whether all employees should be required to obtain ethics training.

- Western will continue to work on engaging all members of the campus community—faculty, students, staff, and administration—in coordinated efforts to define, articulate, and enact the tenets of Western’s Mission, Vision, and Strategic Action Plan.

### **Progress on Recommendations from 1998 Accreditation Report**

No formal recommendations were made for Standard Nine in the 1998 Accreditation Report. However, a few comments in the text of the report have been addressed.

*“The committee did not find evidence of violations of academic freedom, conflict of interest, or major inconsistencies between official documents and statements and practices and publications. This said, it is prudent to recognize that individual parts of the institution or individuals are not always cognizant of institutional goals and practices that are required in times of rapid change at universities everywhere...In other words, the desire and actions of the separate units sometimes supersede the commons.”*

- With the update of Western’s Mission and Strategic Action Plan—a process that engaged all parts of the University community—Western has made inroads in creating stronger ties between unit goals and institutional goals. As evidenced by unit reports in Standard Two—and through annual reports submitted by Vice Presidents—Western’s mission and goals now form the basis for strategic planning at all levels (see also Standard One). The process of clear communication between different units at the University will continue to be a priority for Western’s administration.

*“There was also an impression derived from some statements to the committee that some institutional actions might be motivated primarily by the need to address the Commission’s requirements, including previous evaluation recommendations. Irrespective of motivation, the test will be in the institution’s continuing record of actions to foster continual institutional improvement.”*

- Western views the Accreditation standards—and the self-study process, itself—as one of many tools the University may use to reach its goals. Evidence that the University’s strategic objectives and actions dovetail with accreditation standards shows Western’s agreement with NWCCU on important aspects of strong institutional performance. In the last decade, Western has articulated its core values and goals more clearly, and these actions have naturally led to improvements in key areas related to Commission requirements for a quality university. Most notably, Western has built, acquired, and renovated several buildings to accommodate planned growth, and the University has made great strides in using assessment methods at all levels throughout the institution to promote positive change.

The University has focused attention on General Education Requirements and the retention of first-year students, and has made gains in the diversity of students, faculty, and staff. Western has also maintained focus on increasing salaries to recruit and retain high-quality, diverse faculty members. Western has kept pace of technological innovations for information resources, and the administration has created the President's Planning and Resource Council, as well as the Executive Policy Group, to incorporate more voices in institutional governance. The University has strengthened an already strong financial system, with enhanced oversight and fundraising capabilities. Western's focus on sustainability and community service permeates the University's programs and actions. Each of these actions, which also fulfill standards of accreditation, demonstrate a strong commitment to Western's principles of "Engaged Excellence."

## STANDARD NINE

### SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

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#### Exhibits (located in Standard Nine Exhibit Binders, Committee Room)

- 9.1: University Policies, including the new *Developing and Maintaining University Policies*, as well as policies on ethical behavior and conflict of interest
- 9.2: Student Codes of Conduct
- 9.3: Academic Freedom documents, including President Morse's Letter to the Community Concerning Academic Freedom, and Faculty and Student Senate Resolutions Concerning Academic Freedom
- 9.4: Graphic Identity Guidelines
- 9.5: Samples of Western Publications (includes University *Timetable*)
- 9.6: Student Publications Charter
- 9.7: Professional Staff Handbook

#### "WWU Core Exhibits"

(located on Core Exhibit Shelves, Committee Room)

*Engaged Excellence: Strategic Action Plan, 2006*

Western Washington University, Board of Trustees, Rules of Operations

Western Washington University Catalog, 2007-08

Western Washington University, 2006-07 Operating Budget

Western Washington University, Capital Plan

Western Washington University, 2007-08 Fees and Rates Book

Western Washington University, Institutional Master Plan

Western Washington University, *Faculty Handbook*

