

**Western State Colorado University
2015-2018 Strategic Plan**

**Submitted by President Salsbury and Cabinet
Approved by Western State Colorado Board of Trustees**

Dec. 12, 2014



Western State Colorado University
2015-2018 Draft Strategic Plan

Introduction and Overview

This 2015-2018 Western Strategic Plan outlines initiatives to raise the visibility and reputation of the university and better enable the institution to fulfill its mission, while adhering to the five Board of Trustees' values: quality, achievement, innovation, growth and fiscal responsibility. Related to every part of the campus, the goals of the strategic plan aim to leverage the university's distinctive advantages: **first**, the special bonds cultivated among students, faculty, staff and Western's stakeholders; **second**, the natural, social and cultural environment that provides a world-class setting for education; and **third**, the value of an affordable, high-quality education.

The strategic plan goals below are critical for the campus. As we realize them, Western's fiscal health, the vibrancy and energy that come from more students, and its reputation will all improve, elevating the entire university community. Responsibilities associated with coordinating efforts to achieve each strategic plan goal, or "lead," will be assigned to one administrative unit and vice president on campus. But nearly all initiatives will require the collaboration of two or more units. Assigning leads will not affect reporting lines within the collaborating units.

The strategic plan's five goals, with associated metrics and initiatives, are:

- 1. Increased Enrollment**, as measured by annual increases in headcount, Full Time Equivalent Students (FTES) and number of diverse students. Increased enrollment will lead to higher tuition revenues, along with more efficient use of facilities and staff resources. This aligns with the Trustees' value of growth. Initiatives include:
 - Marketing-mix and advancement-development efforts.
 - Growth of Concurrent Enrollment programming.
 - Expansion of the School of Business.
 - Increased enrollment of diverse students.
 - Increased enrollment of international students.
 - Expansion of graduate programs.

Lead: Marketing & Institutional Advancement.

- 2. Improved Institutional Outcomes**, as measured by either annual improvement and/or continued favorable peer-group comparisons, regarding: freshman-to-sophomore retention rate, six-year graduation rate, student debt levels and student-loan-default rates. Furthermore, during the period of the strategic plan, we will establish a post-graduate-placement tracking system, along with metrics detailing graduate school attendance and employment. Improved institutional outcomes include



growth in student success, faculty productivity, and academic integrity and quality. This aligns with the Trustees' values of quality and achievement. Initiatives include:

- Retention programs for first- and second-year students.
- Engagement of students through intensive coursework, undergraduate research experiences, co- and extra-curricular activities, and leadership development.
- Exploring bridge programs, summer school and gap-year options.
- Internationalization and diversification of curricula.
- Ensuring a safe and secure campus environment.
- Campus-to-career programming.

Lead: Academic Affairs.

- 3. Increased Funding**, as measured by growth in annual revenues from donor support, partnerships and collaborations, grants and sponsored programs, and cash-funded programs. Facing uncertain state contributions, Western must aggressively pursue funding sources beyond increased tuition and student fees, such as gifts and donations, industry collaborations, grants, and sponsored research. This effort aligns with the Trustees' value of fiscal responsibility.

- Marketing & Institutional Advancement and School of Business outreach to potential donors and partners.
- Increasing the reach of the Office of Sponsored Programs to promote grant activity.
- Increased graduate programming.

Lead: President.

- 4. Enhanced Organizational Efficiency**, as measured by administrative expense as a portion of overall costs, when compared with peers. Concurrent with efforts to broaden the financial base through increased enrollment and other funding, resources should be used optimally and responsibly. Western aspires to be the most efficient institution possible in this context, maximizing operational and fiscal efficiency. This priority aligns with the Trustees' values of fiscal responsibility, innovation and quality. Initiatives include:

- Process improvements and administrative effectiveness.
- Evolution of the academic administrative structure.

Lead: Finance & Administration.

- 5. Improved Third-Party Assessments**, as measured by annual accumulative awards, rankings and evaluations by third parties, as tracked by the university. Western's reputation plays a major role in: student and faculty recruitment; donors' and grant agencies' willingness to support the institution; and public and private entities' interest in partnering with us. Such external evaluations are often widely shared. Institutional action can, to some degree, influence such reviews. These efforts align with the Trustees' value of achievement. Initiatives include:



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Learning, Elevated.

- Revisiting Western's mission statement to include distance education and graduate programs.
- Strengthening the General Education curriculum to reflect the values of a liberal arts education.
- Increasing the diversity of students, faculty and staff (see separate Strategic Planning Initiative).
- Strengthening support for faculty and student research.
- Improving the system of performance evaluation for faculty and staff.

Lead: Marketing & Institutional Advancement.



Initiatives and Tactics for Goals

Goal 1: Increased Enrollment

Enrollment growth is a principal goal in Western's strategic plan. A decade of slow decline hurt the university, prompting concern among the community, alumni, legislators and other constituents. With steadily decreased state funding and limited tuition increases, growing enrollment offers the clearest path to revenue gains and fiscal health. Beyond financial benefits, higher enrollment helps fulfill Western's educational mission with synergies gained from a larger and more diverse student body. Finally, enrollment growth will provide opportunities for the campus community to realize objectives from the Board of Trustees' Value Statement. It could, for instance, attract investments for innovation and support student achievement.

The initiatives and tactics for increasing Western's enrollment include:

- a. Marketing-mix and advancement efforts.
- b. Growing concurrent-enrollment programming.
- c. Expanding the School of Business.
- d. Increasing enrollment of diverse students.
- e. Increasing enrollment of international students.
- f. Expanding graduate programs.

Increased enrollment will be measured by:

- Annual increases in total headcount.
- Annual increases in total FTES.
- Annual increases in headcount of diverse students.

Initiative 1a: Marketing-Mix and Advancement Efforts

Marketing and institutional advancement include messaging, outreach and relationship management to increase understanding and support among Western's key constituents. These include prospective students and their families, the news media, members of the community, and philanthropic entities of all types. Mobilizing alumni, students and friends of the university will be especially important in the marketing and advancement of the university, since an increase in reputation and achievement will affect the value of all Western degrees, past and present.

The university will create a division for Marketing & Institutional Advancement led by a vice president. The new division will include our existing Admissions, Student Financial Services, University Communications and Alumni Relations departments.

A primary responsibility of the Advancement team will include crafting *The Western Story* to effectively communicate the value of a Western education; at the core of *The Western Story* are the stories of Western student and alumni successes. The Advancement team will engage and train the campus community, including some of our students, to deliver *The Western Story*,



helping all become expert recruiters. This will position the university for ongoing success in student recruitment, fundraising, general awareness and brand building, all of which support Western's role and mission, along with the values established by the Board of Trustees.

Development of the university advancement area will include, but not be limited to, expanding recruitment in Western's primary markets, brand building, donor development, engagement of faculty and staff in the recruitment and fundraising processes, and meaningful engagement of alumni.

Initiative 1b: Growing Concurrent Enrollment Programming

Concurrent Enrollment includes high school students taking university courses that lead to dual credits – contributing to both high school and higher-education degrees. Concurrent Enrollment counts directly toward Western's headcount and credit-hour production for participating academic programs. It is included in FTES metrics. For all courses, except those at the remedial level in schools beyond Gunnison and Chaffee counties, the university is also eligible to receive College Opportunity Fund stipends for participating high school students.

A principal advantage of Concurrent Enrollment includes building relationships with high school students early on toward our goal of their matriculation to Western, since they receive classes and on-campus programming. Successful concurrent students also qualify for scholarships, which may encourage them to enroll as degree-seeking students at Western in future years. Given the diversity of school districts with which Western collaborates, the Concurrent Enrollment program may draw more diverse and higher-ability students.

Western has a distinctive model for Concurrent Enrollment that helps participating teachers gain professional development. This teacher-mentor program allows Western to build productive relationships with high school instructors and administrators across the region. This helps the university recruit master's degree-seeking teachers, place student teachers in the districts, expand Teacher Institute programming, and find partners for grants and research projects in the region.

Initiative 1c: Expanding the School of Business

Expanding the School of Business aims to increase the enrollment in and reputation of Western's Business Administration, Accounting, and Economics programs. This will help attract needed resources and top-notch faculty. The school will pay particular attention to increasing career success, retention and graduation rates, to the internationalization of its programs, and to the continued development of their curricula. The school will investigate the feasibility of adding master programs, degree-completion programs and specialized accreditation.

A second, important aspect of the expansion will be the building and strengthening of relationships with alumni, donors and corporate partners. As part of this initiative, the school has added a speaker series that features alumni and other prominent business leaders.



Initiative 1d: Increasing Enrollment of Diverse Students

This initiative proposes a range of measures to recruit and retain more diverse students. It aligns with *Colorado Competes*, the state’s higher education master plan and Western’s performance contract with the State of Colorado, which requires increased diversity among Western students, as we seek to reach more underserved populations, particularly Hispanic students. These initiatives also include plans to maintain and expand outreach to the Ute tribes. Few Native American students enroll at Western, because other institutions in the state are designated and funded to support them. Those who, nonetheless, come to us are academically successful and report a positive educational experience.

Statistically, those from underrepresented groups are often first-generation college students, often know little about higher education and may face linguistic challenges, both in their native language and in English. In Colorado, they also tend to come from economically disadvantaged households. While the proposed initiative contains a range of interventions to address these challenges, it is important to acknowledge that “diverse” students are not a homogeneous group. Western must create specific promotions and programming geared toward their unique needs. We must also adopt best practices to consistently avoid inadvertent stereotyping and discrimination.

Along with ethnic diversity, Western’s enrollment team will focus more strongly on gender balance across campus, exploring opportunities to better reach out to prospective female students in order to close Western’s gender gap.

This is a large and transformative initiative that requires contributions and support from units and offices across the campus. The different goals for this initiative are divided into the following categories, each with a list of specific tactics. They include:

- Targeted university communications, marketing and outreach.
- Recruitment and retention of diverse students.
- Academic programs that support diversity education.
- Expansion of graduate programs built on cash-funded models.
- Efforts to internationalize have already started, having been absorbed by ARC with small FTE (0.5) transfer within Academic Affairs.

Initiative 1e: Increasing Enrollment of International Students

Traditionally, Western has not attracted many international students. We recruit most based on their athletic talents. So far, we have not offered specific services and programs to support them. Nevertheless, most students who come here from overseas have been successful. They have graduated at significantly higher rates than domestic students.

Western presents an extraordinarily attractive destination for international students, because the campus and community are perceived as safe, we are in an amazing environment, and we offer



outstanding educational value. With some enhancements in services and the addition of support for English-language learners, it should be possible to significantly increase their numbers.

Since international students, by and large, require the same types of support as diverse domestic students, Western should capitalize on services geared toward increasing diversity. In addition to the benefit of the university receiving higher out-of-state tuition rates from international students, there are advantages in bringing the world to Gunnison. Internationalization allows all our students the opportunity to encounter cultural and linguistic diversity in our classrooms, preparing them for success in an increasingly diverse society and global economy.

Initiative 1f: Expanding Graduate Programs

The reintroduction of graduate programs at Western since 2010 has been an unmitigated success. High-quality programs, with steady growth and high returns on investment, have added to the university's visibility and reputation. They have facilitated connections to several regional, national and international partners, to whom Western and its students would otherwise have less access. Further, graduate programs provide opportunities to connect with and engage undergraduate alumni. They help the university successfully seek grants and private contributions.

In the next three years, we will consider or add four or five additional graduate programs: Master of Science in High Altitude Exercise Physiology, Master of Arts in Health Education, Master of Arts in Gallery Management and Exhibits Specialization, and possibly a Master of Business Administration or similar programming. Further, the Master of Fine Arts program is contemplating an additional, possibly residential track; Education is exploring the addition of a Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics or Environmental Education track, and the feasibility of a terminal degree; and the Master of Arts in Gallery Management program could easily add a track in Museum Management, collaborating with History and Anthropology faculty. As we consider this programming, the principal objective is expanded graduate enrollment in high-quality and visible graduate programs.

Budget Discussion

In developing this strategic plan, we have considered as high priorities investments that significantly and immediately improve recruiting, while also considering opportunities for alternative sources of funding to the general fund.

- The development of Marketing & Institutional Advancement includes 1 FTE for the Vice President and an operating budget, now in place. The *Western State Colorado University Foundation* has generously pledged \$1.471 million to promote the university.
- The growth of Concurrent Enrollment programming will require additional staffing to support high school instructors, as well as further administrative support.
- The School of Business includes 1 FTE for the Dean, along with an operating budget for promotion, recruitment and support for initiatives, now in place.



- Diversity and international recruitment can begin with existing resources. However, growth in these areas implies additional student support in the Multi-Cultural Center and English as a Second Language support.
- Existing resources can initially support growing numbers of students and graduate programming. Eventually, this will require more administrative support from cash-funded sources.

Goal 2: Improved Institutional Outcomes

Improved Institutional Outcomes quantify the academic success of students and faculty. They focus on ways in which students move through their academic programs, the quality of their instruction and support they receive, and the success they find after graduation.

These metrics measure accreditation, financial aid eligibility and levels of state support. More importantly, the qualities measured indirectly by these metrics relate to the heart of Western's mission and purpose, which are to strive for excellence in instruction and serve students to the best of our abilities. The initiatives and tactics for improving Western's core institutional outcomes include:

- a. Retention programs for first- and second-year students.
- b. Engagement of students through intensive coursework, undergraduate research experiences, co- and extra-curricular activities, and student leadership development.
- c. Exploring bridge programs, summer school and gap-year options.
- d. Internationalization and diversification of curricula.
- e. Ensuring a safe and secure campus.
- f. Campus-to-career programming.

Measures of Improved Institutional Outcomes include:

- Freshman-to-sophomore retention rates, with either increased annual improvement and/or continued, favorable, peer-group comparisons.
- Six-year graduation rates, with either annual improvement and/or continued, favorable, peer-group comparison.
- Establishment of a post-graduate placement tracking system and metrics quantifying graduate school attendance and employment.
- Student-debt levels falling annually and/or continuing to compare favorably with our peer group.
- Loan-default rates falling annually and/or continuing to compare favorably with our peer group.

Initiative 2a: Retention Programs for First- and Second-Year Students

Every experience a student has on campus – from classroom learning to co-curricular activities to interactions within the Residence Life system – is likely to affect a student's decision to stay for another semester. To the degree it is within the university's control, faculty and staff must



identify and remove obstacles to persistence, creating a positive and supportive environment conducive to engagement and success.

Western's retention has grown by almost 20 percent in recent years, earning an improvement by 100 points in *Forbes'* annual rankings, and catapulting us into the lists of top 500 U.S. colleges and top 100 institutions in the West. We seek to build on these gains and translate them into correlating graduation numbers in the coming years.

Tactical objectives to support increasing retention and graduation rates of Western students include:

- Further assessment and development of the First-Year Experience and Sophomore Experience.
- Investigating further implementation of Living/Learning Communities.
- Academic program building for retention.
- Recruiting and coaching to engage and retain, along with investigating assessment, coaching and engagement software solutions.

Born from the previous Western strategic plan, the First-Year Experience has improved retention. However, the program needs additional development, particularly with Living/Learning Communities. A few such communities, such as the Honors grouping, have thrived. But all have not. Also worth exploring, are communities that revolve around lifestyle interests, such as outdoor recreation or sustainability. We must further assess and consider FYE development.

Institutional Research shows successful completion of Essential Skills courses (Mathematics and Writing) in the General Education curriculum forms a foundation for student success. Hence, in 2014-2015, Western is piloting Supplemental Academic Instruction to help qualified students have success in college gateway English and Mathematics courses while avoiding remediation. For GE courses with higher DFW rates (the percentage of a class that earns a D, F or withdraws without completing), Western offers Supplemental Instruction. SI provides academic support through peer-assisted study sessions. The SI program expanded over the past two years, and faculty and administrators should continue assessment of this investment.

Finally, Western will assess development of Third-Year and Fourth-Year experiences. Consistent with developing federal policies around outcomes for graduates, the Third- and Fourth-Year experiences can focus on major-specific advising. This will encourage appropriate academic achievement, participation in the academic communities within students' disciplines and access to resources focused on post-graduate opportunities. This effort includes developing a new Career & Internship Center, offering more students internships during their junior and senior years, career- and graduate school-related programming, as well as implementing academic capstones in all majors, forming signature experiences for a completed Western education.



Initiative 2b: Engagement of Students Through Intensive Coursework, Undergraduate Research Experiences, Co- and Extra-curricular Activities and Student Leadership Development

Students only spend 12 to 18 hours each week in the classroom, leaving engagement outside class as a core opportunity to build a successful, residential-campus learning experience. This initiative and its tactics grow from research that shows how campus involvement leads to student development.

Both faculty and support staff will lead the engagement effort, which will include intensive coursework, hands-on research experiences, co- and extra-curricular activities, along with enhanced training and opportunities for student leadership.

Academic departments and academic support staff must continually improve programming aimed at engaging students and boosting the quality of student interactions with faculty and staff. They must document in their program assessments and reviews showing how their programs' rigor compares to national standards, which practical and hands-on experiences they offer, how they support students in undergraduate research, and how they engage students in co-curricular programming. Metrics related to recruitment, retention, persistence, and completion in each department will be used in program reviews to assess the efficacy of new and existing efforts. Likewise, all Student Affairs staff must engage in offering campus activities, enabling involvement, creating community, and developing personal and leadership skills in Western students.

We will also evaluate the introduction of a co-curricular transcript, in the light of new research and best practices in student engagement.

Initiative 2c: Exploring Bridge Programs, Summer School and Gap-Year Options

Offering credit-bearing activities outside traditional fall- and spring-semester schedules provides several advantages for students. These offerings can take the form of:

- Summer bridge programming.
- Summer school programming development.
- Gap-semester programming.

Summer bridge programming could include remedial courses for incoming freshmen before they begin their first semester at Western, providing an opportunity to earn more credits in a shorter time and/or distribute academic workloads more conveniently. This programming, combined with a Wilderness Education course, could create community, engagement and a sense of accomplishment. It could ensure academically underprepared students have good starts. With five or six credits successfully earned, these students would also be less vulnerable to Financial Aid probation or suspension if their first semesters do not go well. This would help a challenged student through his or her crucial first year.



Summer school could attract students from across the country and from abroad for a one-of-a-kind academic experience deep in the heart of the Rockies. Such programming could enhance Western's visibility and reputation. It would help recruitment of transfer students. Summer school could also offer programming for middle and high school students, and it could further help alleviate capacity issues experienced with popular introductory courses – without having to increase full-time-equivalent faculty.

Gap-semester programming consists of a semester or year of credit-bearing learning experiences outside the classroom. Extended Studies could offer courses such as wilderness-based education, service learning and/or study-abroad options. Such semesters could appeal particularly to incoming, undecided freshmen, as well as to students seeking a break or a fresh experience. It could bolster recruitment and retention of students.

Initiative 2d: Internationalization and Diversification of Curricula

Diversifying academic programming and internationalizing the curricula aim to offer opportunities for global engagement for faculty, staff and students. It could increase Western's reach and reputation among local and prospective students interested in other cultures and study abroad, and conversely, international students seeking academic opportunities at Western. Ultimately, this initiative will engage all students in coursework and/or co-curricular programming related to multicultural and global issues. It will improve the currency and value of Western degrees in an increasingly globalized culture and economy.

Initiative 2e: Ensuring a Safe and Secure Campus

A safe and secure campus is fundamental to student success. To recruit, retain and help students persist to graduation, we must ensure their basic needs for a safe and orderly environment. According to a recent, online student survey by Strategic Enrollment Management, campus safety perceptions were key to many students' and parents' decisions for or against particular colleges and locations¹. In a survey of more than 12,000 college-bound students in 20 states, more than 80 percent said safety was a very important factor when choosing a college. Among female students, safety was the second or third most important factor when considering a university.

The following strategies can ensure a safe and secure campus: enhancing the security of our campus facilities, offering more preventive education focused on social interactions, and increasing the number of campus constituents participating in wellness training and activities. We must communicate these efforts and outcomes to various constituents, prospective students and the public, in a positive manner that reflects Western's core values.

¹ SEM Works, <http://www.semworks.net/papers/sem-works-report-campus-safety.php>



Tactical objectives to support this initiative include, among others: safe university transportation; enhanced campus-safety promotional campaigns; increased security services, with 24/7/365 professional staffing; full implementation of federally mandated Title IX education; and holistic wellness programs.

Initiative 2f: Campus-to-Career Programming

Institutions of higher education face increasing pressure from federal and state agencies to produce high career-placement rates. More importantly, many of today's incoming students enroll in college for the primary purpose of career placement or advancement.

This impetus aligns well with our institutional mission to deliver academic programs that provide a foundation for professional careers or graduate study. This initiative proposes expansion of the Career Services office, which will help students transition into their chosen professions, better align academic programming such as internships with regional and national employers, and help improve tracking and documentation of students as they move from campus to career.

An enhanced Career & Internship Center will further benefit the university by increasing the job-placement rate of graduating seniors, employer and alumni involvement, and the number of internship providers. It will bolster our ability to track students' success after graduation. It will fundamentally increase the value proposition of a Western education.

Tactical objectives to support this initiative include:

- Marketing and outreach to employers and internship providers.
- Streamlining administrative processes.
- Enhanced career-readiness programming.
- Exchange programs and internationalization agreements.
- Tracking student placement.
- Better use of alumni to build professional networks.

Budget Discussion

We conceived these initiatives based on flat budgets or alternative sources of funding, although success in some cases will create longer-term General Fund commitments. Details include:

- We can further assess first- and sophomore-year experiences with existing resources. Third- and fourth-year experiences and additional development of existing campus retention efforts have modest operating-budget implications.
- To enhance diversity enrolment, an administrative group is applying to the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI) for \$250,000 to fund two years of programming. Sustaining this programming implies a future, 2 FTE commitment from the university after grant expires. We appear to have strong prospects for attaining the COSI grant. We seek further support for student



retention from a federal Student Services Support (SSS) grant, which aims to help disadvantaged, low-income, first-generation and disabled college students successfully complete postsecondary programs of study. If we are successful (first attempts are often not), the SSS grant would bring in roughly \$300,000 over two years.

- Bridge, summer and gap programming is either self-funding or from cash-funded sources.
- Ensuring a safe and secure campus includes assessing a potential increase in security with existing resources.
- Campus-to-career programming includes developing the Career & Internship Center, already in place with a 0.5 FTE infusion and modest operating budget from reallocated resources.

Goal 3: Increased Funding

Facing a long-term, continuing decline in state contributions, Western must aggressively pursue sources of revenue beyond tuition and student fees. Such sources include gifts, donations, industry collaborations, grants and sponsored research. This effort aligns with the Trustees' value of fiscal responsibility.

Increased funding will be measured as growth in annual revenues from:

- Donor support.
- Partnerships and collaborations.
- Grants and sponsored programs.
- Cash-funded programs.

The Western State Colorado University Foundation will play a critical role in helping the campus achieve its funding goals; hence, Western's Board of Trustees and Administration must closely collaborate with the Foundation Board.

While the Western Foundation manages donations, the entire campus is responsible for relationships with donors and university supporters. Managing these relationships falls partially to the Advancement unit on campus, but faculty and staff must represent the university well to constituents. They must positively and productively engage graduates and alumni for the long term. Furthermore, we must establish and maintain a prioritization process for campus projects that optimally align the university's objectives and donors' interest.

Partnerships and collaborations that provide opportunities for faculty, staff and students to participate in paid or supported projects with external partners offer yet more ways to expand funding for facilities and equipment, as well as for student and faculty summer employment. Many additional advantages flow from such collaborations with private and public partners. They range from keeping faculty current in their professional fields to creating internship opportunities and campus-to-career bridges for graduates.



Grants and sponsored programs are ways to receive outside funding, not only for faculty but also for many other groups on campus. Compliance with state and federal guidelines and proper documentation are imperative, and current processes need improvement. To help faculty compete more effectively for major grants, the university must recognize and support faculty and student research. Such improvements may result not only in higher grant-funding rates but also in greater faculty satisfaction and retention – as well as increased visibility, reputation and third-party assessments of the university.

Cash-funded programs have successfully expanded the university's funding base and ability to support facilities and programming. As noted above, the growth of graduate programs, of wilderness-based education in collaboration with NOLS, of community education, of summer programs, of remedial education at collaborating high schools and possibly of study abroad are all likely to increase funding for the university as a whole. This will help entrepreneurial departments expand their programming beyond the confines of general budgets.

Initiatives include:

- a. Advancement and School of Business outreach to potential donors and partners.
- b. Increasing the reach of Office of Sponsored Programs to promote grant activity.
- c. Increased graduate programming.

Initiative 3a Advancement and School of Business Outreach to Potential Donors and Partners

Among the principal reasons for developing the Marketing & Institutional Advancement department and the School of Business is to identify and recruit donors who will support the university. Hiring a vice president for Marketing & Institutional Advancement and a dean for the School of Business represent first steps toward this objective. We also must involve faculty in fundraising, increase on-campus giving, cultivate second-tier donors and develop more meaningful relationships with alumni.

Initiative 3b: Increasing the Reach of Office of Sponsored Programs to Promote Grant Activity

Increasing grant revenue to the campus must take place within the context of pursuing Western's mission, the Trustees' objectives and our strategic goals. Several steps will ensure support for grant applications across the campus and support faculty research. These include: further coordination of the Institutional Review Board with the Human Subject Research Committee and the Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee; fully documenting the grant review process; offering incentives to increase grant applications; ensuring post-grant documentation; strategically using the Office of Sponsored Program resources; and more recognition for faculty and student research to promote engagement, visibility and achievement.



Initiative 3c: Increased Graduate Programming

As noted in Goal 1, reintroducing graduate programs at Western has been a success. Graduate programming has shown consistent student growth, generated revenue for the campus, and increased both the university's visibility and reputation. Over the life of this strategic plan and consistent with the campus process, high-quality graduate programs and other cash-funded programs will continue to develop.

Budget Discussion

These initiatives aim to enhance campus funding through outreach. Achieving them may require initial investments, such as those in Marketing & Institutional Advancement and in the School of Business. Expansion of Grant pursuit implies more support for Sponsored Programs, which will be assessed based on success and need.

Goal 4: Enhanced Organizational Efficiency

Efficient spending and cost cutting are as important as increased funding for the university. To remain viable, we must regularly evaluate costs and returns on investments in administrative processes.

Customer satisfaction is equally important. Serving every constituent with the utmost professionalism and reliability will directly contribute to student and staff satisfaction, increase positive engagement, and reduce costs for recruiting students and employees. The same is true for engaging all outside constituents, from town-and-gown relationships to donors.

Initiatives and tactics to enhance organizational and operational efficiency include:

- a. Improvements in process and administrative effectiveness.
- b. Evolution of the academic administrative structure.
- c. Better education and use of student workers

Improved organizational and operational efficiency is measured by:

- Administrative costs as a portion of overall costs, when compared with peers.

Initiative 4a: Improvements in Process and Administrative Effectiveness

Organizational efficiencies are always important, and Western takes pride in keeping its operation costs lower than at peer institutions. But we must further improve as we face financial constraints and sensitivity to tuition increases.

To improve efficiency, we must evaluate all processes and systems. A committee of mid-managers and faculty will document, measure and evaluate every critical process at Western.

Tactical objectives to support this goal include:

- Digital workflow and document management.



- Coordinating institutional scheduling.
- Improving organizational efficiencies and service delivery (e.g., electronic timecards, purchasing).
- Providing a mechanism for gathering employees' suggestions to save money, staff time, resources, or improve service and outcomes.

Initiative 4b: Evolution of the Academic Administrative Structure

When opportunities for program building appear, the academic administrative structure at Western should continue to evolve to better serve academic programming through opportunistic growth and restructuring. It will be especially important in the coming three years to develop and staff a strong and efficient administrative structure for the graduate programs at Western.

Further, the department chair structure merits renewed scrutiny. The previous strategic plan assessed the chairs structure at Western. Its strengths include: a flat administrative structure; accountability to faculty through the existing system for recommending chairs; and cost efficiency. The greatest drawback is the sometimes overwhelming amount of trivial but necessary matters chairs must manage, reducing time and vision for strategic leadership. This can lead to neglecting student recruitment, pursuing grants and donor development. Lacking a deep bench of potential department leaders results in faculty members accepting chair positions out of a sense of duty, rather than from a desire to contribute. Additionally, there is a potential for conflicts of interest when a chair evaluates his or her colleagues and then rejoins the faculty to be evaluated by a colleague who is the new chair.

Given weaknesses in the existing structure, the preparation of this strategic plan included assessing the value of a dean model. A new structure of four schools or colleges with deans would be considerably more expensive than the chair model, the advantages of which would be lost. Finally, that structure might promote a “silo effect” on a small campus, leading to less, rather than more, collaboration.

The best solution to this conundrum lies in accepting an asymmetrical administrative structure, constituted by dean(s), chairs, directors and/or executive directors. Where a change in leadership structure offers significant strategic gains, and where entrepreneurial solutions can pay for it, we should pursue such restructuring. Departments, centers and programs – such as Education, Environment & Sustainability and Recreation, Exercise & Sport Science – have grown in complexity while cash-funded graduate programs have provided resources and opportunities to create dean or executive director positions to better address external constituencies. When such opportunities occur during the life of this strategic plan, we will assess whether and which solutions to implement. Additionally, the 2012-13 Higher Learning Commission report emphasized the need for more professional development for academic managers, which we must systematically address.



A second area of administrative structure relates to optimal grouping of academic programs. Along this line, Western will explore the potential for a Department of Visual and Performing Arts, which would include grouping programs such as Art, Music, Communication and Theatre. Advantages include the potential for cross-curricular fertilization and a larger pool of potential leaders.

Initiative 4c: Better Education and Use of Student Workers

Every year, hundreds of students work across campus. An effort to better train these students and introduce them to varied and challenging assignments will help units that rely on student work. Also, such efforts would improve customer service and the experience of external stakeholders interacting with the University. Most importantly, a systematic effort in this area, when done well, will likely better educate participating students in professional skills and career readiness.

Budget Discussion

The objective of these initiatives is budget enhancement. Academic restructuring may require additional staffing, but cash-funded programs will pay for a part of this growth, which will add urgently needed resources to our overall goals of fundraising, grant writing, outreach, and recruitment.

Goal 5: Improved Third-Party Assessment

Western's reputation plays a major role as students and their families choose which campus to attend. Our reputation is also important when recruiting faculty, attracting donors and grants, and encouraging partnerships, both public and private. External evaluations are often shared widely, and the Western community can, to some degree, influence them by actions we take or avoid. Such efforts align with the Trustees' value of achievement.

Three primary types of external assessments play a role for the university:

- a. Accrediting bodies.
- b. Awards and rankings from academic organizations and other agencies.
- c. Rankings and evaluations in popular print and online media, from which students and their parents often decide which university to attend.

The metric for this initiative will be the annual accumulative awards, rankings and evaluations by third parties, as tracked by the university.

Initiative 5a: Accrediting Bodies and National Standards

Accreditation plays an important role to ensure Western meets high standards, as judged externally. It is significant to the university's reputation. Some prospective students and their families also look for accreditations when choosing a university or academic program. The most important accrediting body for Western is the Higher Learning Commission. To move academic



excellence and integrity forward, we will implement the following 2012-13 Self-Study recommendations advanced through Higher Learning Commission review:

- Revisit Western's mission statement to include distance education and graduate programs.
- Strengthen the General Education curriculum to reflect the values of a liberal arts education.
- Increase the diversity of students, faculty and staff (see separate Strategic Planning Initiative).
- Strengthen support for faculty and student research.
- Improve performance evaluations for faculty and staff.

Further, several departments are pursuing or considering additional, specialized accreditation. The Education Department is planning to apply for CAEP accreditation in 2016-17. Exercise & Sport Science is considering accreditation of their Sport Management program through COSMA. Music Education is accredited through NASM. The Business School is assessing accreditation through AACSB or ACBSP. And the proposed pre-engineering program must ensure students' successful transitions to ABET-accredited programs.

Initiative 5b: Awards and Rankings

Various organizations provide contests or invite regional, state or national comparisons in many categories. In general, the university encourages participation when it aligns with institutional goals and does not distract from a unit's core objectives.

When we earn awards or favorable rankings, the university must publicize such outcomes to fully capitalize on the achievement of students, faculty and staff at Western.

Initiative 5c: Popular Rankings and Assessments

It benefits the institution to collect and analyze all popular rankings and evaluations that include Western, from websites viewed by students to rankings in national news media. It is especially important to correct false or outdated information on such websites, and to consider criticisms presented in such forums.

For rankings built on categories that matter to us, we should consider how to improve outcomes and become more competitive. We should include favorable rankings more intentionally in recruitment, alumni and donor-engagement publications.

Budget Discussion

The budget implications of these initiatives are principally modest and can be achieved with existing resources, including tracking and memberships. Accreditations (especially business) have associated costs, particularly if they require program building, and will require additional, careful assessment.