

Standard 1 Institutional Mission and Goals; Planning and Effectiveness

Mission and goals

Western Washington University has just revised its mission statement and strategic plan.

The university's previous mission statement was adopted in 1987 after extensive university review. The strategic action guidelines, adopted by the Board of Trustees in February 1992, were the outcome of 131 public meetings of the Strategic Planning Committee, chaired by the provost, and its subcommittees. (Preliminary summaries of the committee and subcommittee reports were published in *FAST*, with public comment requested. One subcommittee report was published in the *Western Front* and discussions were sought with other university groups and individuals.) All recommendations relating to the guidelines' academic and faculty matters were reviewed and approved by the Faculty Senate governance struc-

ture. The Academic Coordinating Commission and the University Planning Council were involved in the review process, as well. A summary of planning recommendations was drafted and published in *FAST*; an open forum was held; and comments were sought from the vice presidents, deans, faculty, the Associated Students, the Faculty Senate, the Staff Employees' Council, the Administrators' Association (now Exempt Professional Staff Organization), and others. The final guidelines were the result of extensive communication and discussion on campus.

These documents were reexamined in 1996-97 by a task force, led again by the provost. In undertaking the task of revising both the strategic guidelines and the role and mission statement, the task force attempted to broaden the concept of a quality Western education to include the contribu-

Public service is a significant part of Western's role as an institution of higher education ... Moreover, at Western, public service is set forth as having particular value in student learning.

tions made by all divisions of the university to the students' experience at Western. Thus, student support services, residence hall life, and the physical environment, both in the classroom and outdoors, were considered to be of importance to students' educational experience as well as the classroom education. These were explicitly included in the assumptions, goals, and strategic actions.

Likewise, the goals of diversity and public service were woven into the assumptions and strategic actions so as to be pervasive throughout the Western educational experience. The task force felt these goals were a fundamental part of the quality educational experience offered at Western.

Other principal changes are a stronger emphasis on the university's national and international role and a greater focus on the emerging importance of distance education and instructional technology.

The task force recommended a shortened, clarified mission statement as well as a number of small revisions to the existing strategic action guidelines. (See Volume 2.)

As with the current strategic guidelines, the newly revised mission statement and strategic plan were reviewed by representative bodies of the university's constituencies before being presented to the Board of Trustees for approval. Final approval was given by the Board at the close of the fall 1997 term.

The university's mission statement and strategic plan are printed in *FAST*, the university's faculty and staff publication, as an official publication of the university. Copies are distributed to all employees. The general principles of these documents appear in a

brief summary in the *Bulletin*, and the 1998-99 *Bulletin* will contain the full text of both documents. The documents will also be included in the next version of the academic affairs' policy and procedure manual.

Public service

Public service is a significant part of Western's role as an institution of higher education. It is embraced fully in the university's strategic guidelines within the category of "community service." It is fully acknowledged as part of the expected role of faculty in the *Faculty Handbook's* tenure, promotion, and salary policies. Moreover, at Western, public service is set forth as having particular value in student learning. The university has a Center for Service-Learning, which works closely with the university's volunteer community-service program in the Center for Student Work Experience. Students during this past academic year contributed more than 600,000 hours to benefit the local and other communities within the state.

Planning

Annual reports are prepared by each of the university's divisions. These reports, detailing accomplishments met and goals set, are based on the three main goals identified within the Strategic Action Guidelines: a quality undergraduate education; diversity in the university's students, faculty, staff, and educational experiences; and community service. Information about progress in these and other areas is presented in a public meeting to the Board of Trustees annually and published in the board's meeting minutes.

The university's goals, which relate to excellence in undergraduate education, diversity, and community service, are clearly spelled out in its strategic action guidelines. In turn, these goals serve as a foundation for biennial budget requests.

The provost and budget director develop the university's budget requests and subsequent budget plan. These are based on budget requests submitted by the deans and academic program directors and by the vice presidents of student affairs, business and financial affairs, and external affairs.

The Budget Advisory Council, an all-university body with representatives from each constituency, reviews the draft budget and provides recommendations.

The University Planning Council, a committee of the Faculty Senate, also reviews the draft budget and provides the provost with recommendations. Accompanying capital budget requests are compiled by the vice president for business and financial affairs and rest on recommendations from the Capital Budget Advisory Committee, also an all-university group.

All of the activities of the university, including policies, procedures, selection of faculty, allocation of resources, and institutional planning, stem directly from the university's strategic planning goals and objectives.

Western has no plans to introduce changes that would alter its mission, autonomy, ownership, or

Evaluating accomplishment of annual goals

In organizing its research, program evaluation, and outcomes assessment activities, the OIAT strives to generate information relevant to the following fundamental questions:

- What does Western look like as an institution and how can it improve the quality of its academic and socio-cultural climate?
- What factors contribute to general and specific changes in Western students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills?
- How can the university enrich classroom and instructional experiences in order to promote effective learning?
- How successful are curricular and program activity components and how do they benefit from changes suggested by assessment findings?
- What are the effects of administrative decisions on faculty, students, alumni, parents, boards, agencies, and the communities in which Western functions?

Additionally, Western's assessment activities are influenced and driven by:

- Strategic action plans contained in Western's strategic plan, adopted in February 1992;
- General assessment categories identified by the Washington's Higher Education Coordinating Board;
- Recommendations forwarded by Western's academic and student-services programs and committees;
- Findings generated from previous assessment studies; and
- Information and recommendations found in the institutional research and assessment literature in higher education.

locus of control, nor to introduce a degree at a higher level than is included in its present accreditation. If the university were to con-

sider any of the above, it would fully review such plans with the commission, as well as with the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Assessment

At Western, analysis and appraisal of institutional outcomes is a multifaceted endeavor, involving many offices and programs. The Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing (OIAT) is one such office.

Its personnel, funded by the assessment budget, devote most of their time to analyzing data, producing reports, and otherwise responding to the needs of other offices and programs that also analyze and appraise institutional outcomes.

The OIAT works especially closely with the Office of Survey Research (OSR), which conducts cost-effective and in-depth surveys and performs thorough and valuable data analyses of the findings. The OIAT also collates findings and reports generated by other offices and serves as a clearinghouse for data inquiries from on and off campus. In addition to the source materials cited in the text below, a complete listing of all OIAT reports and focus summaries is included in the appendices. (See Volume 2.)

Since 1990, the OIAT has published 45 technical reports and 17 focus research summaries (as of August 1997). It has edited and published Western's highly popular *InfoFact* series, which provides brief summaries of assessment findings. Each year, *InfoFact* is widely distributed to the public and the members of the Washington State Legislature. (See sample in Volume 2.)

In each of the past seven years, the OIAT has been called upon to produce scores of data-based memoranda, some as long as 10 or 12 pages and some as brief as a page or two. The OIAT now contributes significantly to budget requests and, in the current 1997-99 biennium, is playing a significant role in Western's accreditation review and self-study process.

Along with conducting surveys and collecting data from a variety of respondents, the OIAT shares maintenance of the student information system (SIS) with the registrar's office. The OIAT regularly tracks enrollment patterns, persistence to degree, and factors that contribute to retention and academic progress. Freshmen surveys and graduating student profiles are conducted annually; senior surveys are currently conducted semiannually but are soon to be conducted annually; and health and wellness surveys are conducted semiannually. Informally, OIAT staff support numerous graduate student projects by sharing their expertise in the area of data analysis and management.

In addition, the OIAT maintains close relationships with Western's governance committees, including the Enrollment Management Group, the General University Requirements Committee, and the Academic Coordinating Commission. Such groups are an integral component of Western's shared governance system. The activities, programs, and policies generated by these groups are grounded in assessment and research findings.

Studies of alumni

Since 1989, Western has conducted biannual surveys of its alumni 12 to 18 months after

The OIAT maintains close relationships with Western's governance committees, including the Enrollment Management Group, the General University Requirements Committee, and the Academic Coordinating Commission. Such groups are an integral component of Western's shared governance system.

graduation. These surveys are extensive and thorough; participation rates are highly satisfactory; and findings are abundant and have informed very nearly every academic, administrative, and support service office on campus. One ambitious use of these findings was a 1992 report on alumni satisfaction tailored to all but the smallest academic department (*Western Washington University Alumni Attitudes and Perceptions of Their Undergraduate Experiences, 1987 and 1989 - Report 1992-04*).

In addition to the biannual alumni surveys, other studies of alumni are conducted. For instance, in 1995, a survey was conducted of 1992 alumni (*Focus Research Summary, volume 2, issue 5: Profile of Alumni from the Class of 1992, Survey Results Three Years after Graduation*). This study has proven useful, prompting the planning of a second such survey for 1998-99.

In 1988, a survey of non-returning students was conducted. From the findings of this survey plus related surveys, three studies were released: *The Western Washington University Student Survey Series - Volume One: Western Washington University Students; Volume Two: Student Experiences and Perceptions; and Volume Three: Western Washington University Students Five Years Later*. A second survey of non-returning students will be conducted in 1997-98.

In 1992, a survey was conducted of students who had been accepted for enrollment at Western but who chose not to attend (*Chose Not to Enroll: Survey Results of Non-enrolled Students Admitted to Western Washington University - Report 1992-07*). In 1993, a follow-up survey was conducted

of ethnic minorities who had been accepted for enrollment but who chose not to attend. This survey resulted in a data memo available through the admissions office. As a result of the findings, admissions has developed a short questionnaire that is circulated annually among students accepted for admission who are not enrolling at Western. Results are helping to improve the attractiveness and receptivity of Western to potential students.

In 1995, Western conducted a nine-year follow-up study of freshmen who had entered in 1985 (*1994 Follow-up of 1985 Western Washington University Freshmen - Report 1995-06*). This study was made possible by Western's participation in the Higher Education Research Institute's annual study of first-time, incoming freshmen. Between 1971 and 1989, Western administered this survey every four to five years; since 1990, the survey has been conducted annually. Western's participation in other nine-year-out studies, starting in 1998 with the class of 1989, is anticipated.

Alumni surveys of greater specificity have also been conducted. Two examples are the 1993 surveys of the Everett Human Services Program graduates (*The Everett Human Services Program: Alumni Attitudes and Perceptions - Report 1993-01*) and Western's Office of Academic Advising (*Academic Advising at Western: Some Feedback from Alumni - Report 1993-02*). Moreover, in 1994, Western conducted a survey of master's degree alumni (*The Master's Degree Program at Western: A Follow-up Survey of the Master's Class of 1993 - Report 1994-08*).

Placement

Annually, the Career Services Center polls recent Western graduates as to their current employment status. For any given graduating class, these reports generally collect information on employment from about half the bachelor-degree graduates, nearly all the teaching-certificate graduates, and more than half the master-degree graduates. The reports are available at the Career Services Center.

One ambitious study of graduates in the workplace was conducted in 1991 (*Survey of Employers' Satisfaction with Western Washington University Graduates - Report 1991-04*). This study assessed not just placement but also the satisfaction with the work of Western graduates as observed through both company personnel managers and direct supervisors. This sort of survey work is exceedingly difficult and is seldom utilized by Washington State institutions of higher education, but Western was satisfied with this report and plans another employer satisfaction study for 1997-98.

Western also conducts numerous studies directly related to graduate placement. For instance, studies have looked at the skills and/or degree programs most likely to fill the needs of employers in a given area of the state. Such studies have been conducted in the Port Angeles vicinity (*Port Angeles Area Employer Survey: Demand for Training in Environmental and Resource Management - Report 1994-06*) and Kitsap County (*Assessment of Kitsap Employers' Needs Regarding Computer Science Training: Summer 1996 - Focus Summary, volume 2, issue 3*). A related study explored the kinds of in-service training needed by science teachers in the Olympic Educational Service District (*Demand for Science Training in Olympic ESD Schools - Report 1997-01*).

Effectiveness of programs

One particularly extensive study regarding effectiveness of programs was conducted in 1994

and focused on improving time-to-degree efficiency (*Strategic Plans and Procedures to Improve Degree Progress and Persistence at Western Washington University - Report 1994-03*). This study combined data from alumni and other surveys with data from the student information system.

The annual studies of Western's graduates create baseline findings that are used by departments, administrators, and committees to measure program effectiveness. These studies began in 1990 (*Report 1990-01*) and include not only yearly outcomes (*Reports 1992-01, 1993-07, 1994-04, 1995-05*, plus *Focus Summaries volume 2, issue 1 and volume 2, issue 6*) but also a 10-year retrospective of graduating classes (*Selected Characteristics for a Decade of June Graduating Classes at Western Washington University: 1981 to 1991 - Report 1992-02*).

Other sources of baseline data related to program effectiveness are system-wide indicators required of all institutions of higher education by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB). The indicator report from 1991 (*System-wide Indicators for Western Washington University - Report 1991-02*) is an example of the kind of data collected for the HECB. An additional source of baseline data related to program effectiveness is the 1991 report on department admissions and graduation guidelines (*Summary Report of Admissions and Graduation Requirements of Selected Units and Programs at Western Washington University - Report 1991-03*). Though many of these guidelines have changed since its publication, this report helps to focus departmental debate, especially regarding outcomes measurement.

A new source for measuring overall program effectiveness was presented in a recent report on the graduation efficiency index, or GEI (*The Graduation Efficiency Index: an Alternative Measure of Time-to-Degree Progress - Focus Summary, volume 1, issue 11*). The GEI is a formula that considers graduation efficiency from the point of graduation rather than the point of entrance. This indicator was recently added to Washington State's list of statewide efficiency indicators.

Numerous studies of effectiveness within specific programs are also conducted at Western. For instance, the effectiveness of the math placement test program has been evaluated (*Reports 1991-06, 1991-06a, and 1992-03*). As well, student-writing skills have been assessed for the English department (*Analysis of Student Essay Writing Skills in Entry-Level English Composition Courses at Western Washington University - Report 1991-08*). Moreover, as mentioned in the previous section, both the Everett Human Services Program and Western's Office of Academic Advising have had studies conducted that measured their effectiveness.

Other studies of program effectiveness include those for the Access Program (*The Relationship between Participation in the Access Program and the Academic Achievement and Retention of Minority and Non-Minority First-Year Undergraduates - Report 1993-03*); Fairhaven College (*Portfolio Analysis and Cognitive Development at Fairhaven College - Report 1995-01*); and the general studies course University 101 (*A Comparative Profile of Enrollment Characteristics of University 101 Students - Focus Summary, volume 1, issue 1*).

Two major studies that are related to program effectiveness have been conducted regarding student alcohol and other drug consumption and consequences (*Reports 1993-06 and 1996-01*). These studies found a close link between alcohol abuse and lowered academic achievement. Another study is planned for 1997-98. In the same spirit of producing an extensive base of information on the factors affecting student performance, the National College Health Risk Behavior Survey was also conducted at Western (*Focus Summary, volume 1, issue 8*).

Competency tests

The usefulness of national standardized tests was effectively renounced in the report titled *The Validity and Usefulness of Three National Standardized Tests for Measuring the Communication, Computation, and Critical Thinking Skills of Washington State College Sophomores*, published by Western's Office of Publications in 1989. The three tests examined were the Academic Profile (AP), the College Outcome Measures Program (COMP), and the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP). None of the three tests studied measured the separate academic skills (communication, computation, and critical thinking) deemed by the Higher Education Coordinating Board as the most appropriate and useful for outcomes-based assessment. Rather, these tests primarily measured verbal and quantitative aptitude.

The tests added little reliable new information about students' academic performance. Results

Other student satisfaction studies have included a special look at women's satisfaction with Western ... as well as satisfaction with Western by ethnic minorities ...

essentially reiterated what is already known from admissions test data and student grades.

Test scores were not sensitive to specific aspects of the college experience, such as estimated time spent studying and credits earned, nor were they able to provide an adequate match with curricular content. The report concluded that national standardized multiple-choice tests have serious limitations in the assessment of teaching and learning.

In Standard Two of this report, information is presented delineating the program-level assessment measures used by each of Western's academic units, which include capstone courses, internships or student teaching, senior theses, and project, performance, or portfolio requirements.

Western also is conducting a long-range pre- and post-study of student writing. Based on the study of Fairhaven student portfolios (*Portfolio Analysis and Cognitive Development at Fairhaven College - Report 1995-01*), student portfolios generated in English 101 courses during fall 1995 and winter 1996 were collected, collated, and filed. During the academic year 1999-2000, appropriate writing samples will be collected from a cohort of those original participants and an analysis will be conducted of both sets of writing samples. New data will be generated, giving writing-assessment researchers at Western a new and insightful assessment tool for future use.

Surveys of satisfaction

Students

Central to Western's continuing effort to allow the student "voice" to be heard is its annual

survey of first-time, incoming freshmen, utilizing the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey. Each summer and early fall, large samples of Western freshmen fill out the CIRP questionnaire. These samples are revisited four years later when the College Student Survey (CSS) - the correlative follow-up to the CIRP freshman survey - is conducted. The CSS longitudinal study of Western students provides an invaluable glimpse into student satisfaction.

Three such studies have been conducted to date; two reports are complete (*The 1993 College Student Survey: a Longitudinal Study of 1989 CIRP Participants - Report 1994-01*; and *the 1995 Senior Survey: a Longitudinal Study of 1991 Freshmen - Focus Summary, volume 1, issue 7*).

The third in the series of reports will be available in the fall of 1997. As of spring 1997, the survey will be administered annually.

Yet assessing student satisfaction does not end with the CIRP/CSS administrations. Western conducts numerous other student-satisfaction surveys and studies, such as the student survey series described earlier in the "Studies of alumni and former students" section.

Other student satisfaction studies have included a special look at women's satisfaction with Western (*Western Experience Survey - Report 1992-05*), as well as satisfaction with Western by ethnic minorities (*Ethnic-Minority Student Opinion Survey - Report 1995-02*).

Students have also been surveyed regarding an expanded summer school (*Focus Summary, volume 1, issue 6*), extended library hours (*Focus Summary, volume 1,*

issue 9), library use, and enhanced recreational facilities (*Focus Summary, volume 1, issue 10*).

Besides the annual survey of student satisfaction with campus-housing facilities conducted by the Office of University Residences, an independent study of student satisfaction with residence halls was conducted (*Where Western Students Live and Study - Focus Summary, volume 1, issue 2*).

Alumni

Alumni, too, have been extensively surveyed as to their satisfaction with numerous facets of Western. These surveys and studies have already been covered in detail in the section titled "Studies of alumni and former students." (See also the complete summaries in the appendices.)

Employees

While not as much emphasis has been placed on employee surveys as on surveys of students and alumni, employee surveys have been conducted. The Faculty/Staff Environmental Alcohol and Other Drug Survey was conducted in 1994 by the Prevention and Wellness Center. This survey queried overall faculty/staff attitudes towards alcohol and other drugs, as well as awareness of campus programs focused on abuse treatment and prevention.

In spring 1996, the Women's Commission conducted a survey of faculty and staff that focused on issues related to the working and learning environment at Western, including child care, safety, leadership opportunities, relationships between other staff and faculty, and many other issues.

In 1991, the report titled *The Quality of Campus Life for Undergraduates at Western Washington University* was authored for Western by the Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning at Indiana University. Though this report focused primarily on undergraduates, classified staff were also interviewed and their concerns and ideas were an integral part of the report's findings. Recommendations included evaluating Western's orientation policies and practices to ensure that all students, faculty, and staff are welcomed and considered full members of the Western community.

During the 1997-98 academic year, the Faculty Senate, in collaboration with the OIAT, will be reviewing questionnaires for possible use as faculty survey instruments. Similar questionnaires are being reviewed by the OIAT and OSR in consultation with the vice president for academic affairs for use with staff and administrative-exempt personnel.