

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Strategic Plan 2018-2024

Executive Summary

Western Washington University has a clear mission. As a public comprehensive institution, Western Washington University brings positive impact to the state of Washington and beyond through a focus on academic excellence and inclusive achievement by its students, staff, and faculty.

Established in 1993, Western is one of the top public Master's granting university in the nation. Western prides itself on providing quality education and a broad range of programs that lead to professional and academic careers. Western grounds every program in the liberal arts and sciences, enhancing student knowledge, skills, and creativity, and developing engaged citizens who can solve the challenges facing the state, the nation, and the world.

Western's Strategic Plan provides a roadmap and vision for our future. Led by a university-wide Strategic Planning Committee, the process actively and extensively engaged the university community and relevant external stakeholders in the development of the plan.

The plan recognizes that higher education in the U.S. faces significant challenges, including affordability and student debt, low graduation and retention rates, growing achievement gaps, public skepticism of the value of college education, globalization and the role of technology, and stagnating state and federal investments in higher education. It is informed by the Washington Student Achievement Council's Roadmap Report on education attainment goals and the projected workforce trends in the state. The plan reaffirms our commitment to higher education as a public good, which should be accessible to all qualified students.

The Strategic Plan (SP) articulates four goals to advance Western:

1. Provide a transformative education grounded in the liberal arts and sciences and based on innovative scholarship, research, and creative activity.
2. Advance a deeper understanding of and engagement with place.
3. Foster a caring and supportive environment where all members are respected and treated fairly.
4. Pursue justice and equity in its policies, practices, and impacts.

The strategic goals and objectives make good on our commitment to an equitable and transformative education for all our students and on our commitment to increasing Western's impact in Washington and beyond. The three over-arching themes that emerge from the four goals and associated objectives—Advancing Inclusive Success, Increasing Washington Impact, and Enhancing Academic Excellence—reflect our commitment as a community to each other and to the state of Washington.

Goals and Objectives

See document from the SP Committee.

Signature Themes

Three signature themes emerge from the collective set of goals and objectives—Advancing Inclusive Success, Increasing Washington Impact, and Enhancing Academic Excellence. The themes provide Western with an opportunity for distinction, a stronger institutional identity and increased opportunity to have a positive impact in Washington State, nationally and internationally.

Advancing Inclusive Success

Education is our most powerful social and economic equalizer, a true engine for upward mobility. For example, workers with a bachelor’ degree or higher accounted for 73 percent of the 11.6 million jobs gained in the recovery after the great recession. In a 2013 report, “Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirement through 2020,” the Center on Education and the Workforce predicted that by 2020, more than 65 percent of all jobs will require some form of postsecondary education and training, and that without major changes in our colleges and universities, the U.S. will be 5 million degrees short of what is needed by 2020.

Higher education is faced with pressures and challenges that we must address, intentionally and effectively, particularly regarding persistence and success of underrepresented students. Only 53 percent of students who enrolled in 2009 in four-year college degree programs graduated in 2015. Between 1970 and 2010, bachelor’s degree attainment rates for students from families with income in the top quartile nearly doubled from 40% to about 78%. In contrast, degree attainment for students from the bottom family income quartile has remained essentially constant at about 9%. We are going to see increasingly more students attending our universities from the bottom family income quartiles, which also are more ethnically and racially diverse. The Census, for example, shows a steady rise in Latinx population in Washington, up about 20 percent in the past five years.

We recognize that our most important challenge is to advance inclusive excellence, that is, increase the number of graduates and student success, while eliminating achievement gaps for students from diverse and under-represented socio-economic backgrounds. We have a great platform to advance access and completion, starting with six-year graduation rate of 70 percent that is one of the best in the region.

Increasing Washington Impact

In the next decade, two-thirds of the jobs in Washington will require some form of post-secondary education, yet Washington currently ranks 48th in the nation in participation in four-year public undergraduate education. And, according to the Washington Roundtable, there will be 740,000 job openings in Washington in the next five years, yet only 31 percent of Washington high school seniors go on to earn a postsecondary credential today. Additionally, there are about 700,000 adults in the state who have earned some college credits, but haven’t completed a degree; nationally, this number is nearly 40 million.

The Roadmap Report (2013) by the Washington Achievement Council, and adopted by the Washington legislature, calls for education attainment goals that by 2023, all adults in Washington, ages 25-44, will have a high school diploma or equivalent and at least 70 percent of Washington adults will have a postsecondary credential. Currently, these numbers are 90 percent and 51 percent, respectively.

January 26, 2018

We recognize that to contribute to the future workforce needs in Washington and the region, we need to expand access to our programs, increase persistence and graduation rates, and partner with other education providers to offer programs and credentials to place-bound and non-traditional students.

At the same time, we must prepare our students so they can be successful in a continuously changing work and social environment, where technology and automation are driving employment trends. Western's commitment to faculty-mentored research, creative work and innovative partnerships with public and private organizations will prepare our graduates to thrive in the workplace and provide leadership in the face of rapid change and ambiguity.

Enhancing Academic Excellence

Western provides a transformational education founded on the liberal arts and sciences and based on innovative scholarship, research and creative activity to foster the development of engaged members of a global community.

Making progress on critical issues—from environmental sustainability and climate change, to human health, economic vitality and cultural diversity—requires investing in and nurturing a faculty culture of innovation that cuts across disciplines and integrates knowledge and exploration in our undergraduate and graduate programs.

Western is well positioned to increase its impact and contributions in ways that build upon and maintain the essence of what has made us distinctive. We will continue to enhance the high quality of our undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts and professional programs, while simultaneously extending our reach to become a greater catalyst for regional economic and social development.

Excellence and diversity go hand in hand. Our community will be richer and stronger if members of our community—students, faculty, staff and administrators—are drawn from the widest possible range of socioeconomic and multicultural groups. We strive to expand and deepen our work to build a diverse, inclusive and equitable community and culture: in terms of access and success, curriculum, learning, shared experiences, embedded values and beliefs, and engagement opportunities to create enduring change.

Benchmarks for Success

The plan details metrics associated with institutional goals and objectives. Providing access to high quality academic programs, ensuring success of all students, and creating a culture of inclusive excellence will be critical to achieving our aspirations. The metrics below are designed to capture critical elements of our overall mission.

Metric	2015-16	2016-17	Current 2017-18	Target 2024-25
<u>INCLUSIVE SUCCESS</u>				
First-year Retention Rate				
Overall	82.6%	82.1%		≥90%
Students of Color, Underrepresented	80.0%	79.8%		≥90%
Pell Grant Eligible	78.4%	79.5%		≥90%
Six-year Graduation Rate				
Overall	71.2%	69.5%		75-80%
Students of Color, Underrepresented	61.8%	64.8%		75-80%
Pell Grant Eligible	65.4%	65.4%		75-80%
Transfer Four-year Graduation Rate				
Overall	77.6%	71.9%		75-80%
Students of Color, Underrepresented	72.6%	69.5%		75-80%
Pell Grant Eligible	73.6%	72.4%		75-80%
<u>WASHINGTON IMPACT</u>				
Degrees Awarded	3,645	3,783		4,300-4,500
Percent U.S. Students of Color	24.9%	25.3%		30-35%
Percent U.S. Faculty of Color	15.2%	15.7%		20-25%
<u>ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE</u>				
Tenure/Tenure-track Faculty	500	514		600-625
Percent Students Graduating with High-Impact Experiences				
Research Revenue	\$10.0M	\$10.5M		\$20-25M
Private Gifts and Commitments	\$7.3M	\$15.7M		\$30-35M

Metrics are important reflections of institutional accountability. Yet, they do not fully answer the question, “What should Western be and do in the future?” We believe that Western has a moral imperative to expand access to higher education, particularly for those from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds, including first generation and ethnically diverse students. We are committed to enhancing Western’s distinctive approach to education—grounded in the liberal arts and sciences and emphasizing critical thinking and problem solving, diverse experiences and beliefs, ability to communicate across cultural lines, and high-impact learning experiences. We also need to make sure that Western more closely reflects the global society in which we live and which we seek to advance.

Western aspires to create and sustain a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment. Enhancing diversity and inclusivity on our campus is essential to attaining the excellence we are striving to achieve. Our ultimate success will be measured by our ability to create and sustain a nurturing campus

January 26, 2018

community, characterized by respect, caring, service and excellence, and with a deep commitment to equitable and inclusive practices and to the principles of shared governance and alignment of values in advancing our priorities.