TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: President Sabah Randhawa on behalf of Provost Brad Johnson

DATE: December 8, 2022

SUBJECT: Showcasing the Humanities at WWU

PURPOSE: Discussion Item

Purpose of Submittal:
In this interactive session, Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Paqui Paredes Méndez will present general information about humanities departments and programs at WWU and will generally speak to the integral role that humanities disciplines play in fulfilling Western’s liberal arts education mission. Additionally, Associate Professor Jane Wong from the English Department and Professor Neal Tognazzini from the Philosophy Department will share with the Board the work they do as researchers and, most especially, as teachers in the classroom. In doing so, they will showcase a sample of the work and training that enables the transformational education that our students experience in the humanities classrooms.

Background:
The College of Humanities and Social Sciences was founded as such in 2003 after the split of what was the College of Arts and Sciences. It is the largest college at Western, awarding about 4400 degrees per year or about 39% of the overall number of degrees at Western. We also award close to 50% of the minors granted at Western. The college is a core contributor to the General University Requirements (GUR), producing about 240,000 Student Credit Hours (SCH) per year or about 40% of the total SCH at Western, of which about 50% are in lower division courses that directly serve our GUR program. The college houses both humanities departments and social sciences departments. Our humanities departments are: Communication Studies, English, Global Humanities and Religions, History, Journalism, Modern and Classical Languages, and Philosophy. Departments such as English, Philosophy, and History are among the founding departments at Western and integral to how we have defined our identity and our mission as a liberal arts institution. Distinctive to Western are the continued stability, size, and strength the humanities majors have maintained in a national landscape that has seen significant decreases in the number of students who decide to graduate with degrees in English, History, or Philosophy. The strength and vitality of our programs is due in large part to the outstanding faculty that teach in humanities departments at Western, its innovative and expanding curricula, as well as to a student body that readily embraces the transformational opportunities offered to them in the humanities classrooms.

Strategic Questions:
1. What do Trustees know about the humanities departments and disciplines at Western?

2. How do humanities disciplines fit into Western’s idea of a liberal arts and sciences education in the future?

3. What are the benefits or drawbacks of the type of learning that students experience in the humanities classroom?