Purpose of Submittal:

Ray Thompson, Vice President, Higher Education Services, MGT Consulting Group, will provide a progress report on an ongoing feasibility study of expanding Western Washington University’s educational delivery and presence on the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas. The presentation will focus on information collected on regional educational and workforce demands collected through meetings and surveys conducted with stakeholders from across the Peninsulas, including educational leaders, workforce and economic development councils, community and tribal leaders, faculty and staff at existing WWU learning sites, and community members.

Background:

Approximately 450,000 people live on the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas, with 254,000 living in Kitsap County alone. At 448 square miles, Kitsap County has the fourth greatest population density in Washington State, and is the most densely populated area in the U.S. that lacks a four year institution of higher education. The remainder of the population is distributed across a 5,000 square mile area of snow-capped mountains, dense rainforest, and rocky coastlines served by relatively few roads. Timely, frequent travel to and from population centers is difficult for most of these citizens, and dependable, high quality internet service is not universally available. As such, most in these more remote areas continue to lack access to higher education programs and services.

In response to these regional needs, the Washington State Legislature appropriated one-time funding in 2018 for WWU to study the feasibility of expanding its educational offerings on the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas, specifically the feasibility of creating a four-year degree-granting campus. WWU is required to submit a report on the findings to the Governor and appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 2018.

WWU contracted in May 2018 with MGT Consulting Group to assist in conducting a comprehensive feasibility analysis. The primary objectives of the study are:

- Assessment of the four-year higher education needs and demand in the region, taking into account student demand and economic and workforce needs.
• Assessment of the current limitations to physical and online access to higher education in the region, including transportation and commuting challenges, inconsistent availability of high quality internet service, and other impediments to access.
• Assessment and comparison of the feasibility of multiple options for expanding baccalaureate and other higher education services in the region, including but not limited to one or more of the following: the development of a four-year university campus, the expansion of current degree and certificate programs in partnership with local community and technical colleges, and/or online and distance education programs.
• Determine optimal location(s) for providing additional higher education services, if feasible, taking into account population, demand, and access, as well as existing higher education capital resources.

Strategic Questions:

1. What do the Trustees believe to be the elements of the analysis that deserve special or prioritized attention by Western?
2. For the Board, are there any big surprises in the study thus far?