TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: President Sabah Randhawa by Donna Gibbs, V.P. for University Relations and Marketing

DATE: June 14, 2018

SUBJECT: Waterfront Expansion Update

PURPOSE: Discussion Item

Purpose of Submittal:

Donna Gibbs, Vice President for University Relations and Marketing will give a presentation on one possible vision for Western’s future on the Bellingham waterfront.

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

A Vision for Western on the Waterfront

Background

For more than a decade, Western Washington University has worked with the Port of Bellingham, community partners, and engaged campus stakeholders in planning to extend its main campus to the Bellingham waterfront. As the third-largest public university in Washington in terms of enrollment yet the smallest in terms of geographic footprint, expanding to the waterfront provides a unique opportunity to perhaps alleviate some space constraints and to expand capacity and visibility for academic programming. Establishing a presence at the waterfront supports Western in carrying out its mission and strategic plan and provides an opportunity to strengthen community partnerships in private industry, non-profits, government and education.

Mission statement developed by the 2014 WWU Waterfront Planning Committee:

Leverage the creativity and expertise of Western and its partners to empower and sustain local, regional and global innovation for the well-being of individuals and communities.
Recent Progress

In September 2016, Western published a white paper that outlined a three-phase process for Western on the Waterfront. Phase I is the Technology Development Center, a state- and federally-funded initiative shared with partner Bellingham Technical College, which was dedicated in fall 2009 and is now home to a research arm of Western’s College of Science and Engineering.

Phase II envisioned the construction of a multi-purpose facility that would focus on academic engagement and innovation, and bring people together through conferences and other large gatherings. Since that time, Waterfront District master developer Harcourt Bellingham LLC has put forth a plan for a hotel, convention and meeting center modeled after its successful Titanic Belfast, one of Europe’s largest waterfront redevelopment projects.

Phase III of Western’s 2016 white paper proposed the development and construction of new academic facilities on the six-acre plot that will be determined by emerging enrollment growth, academic programming and community needs, and by opportunities with potential private and public partners. Given the recent completion of Western’s 2018-2024 strategic plan coupled with the growing momentum at the waterfront, including completion of the Granary Building and construction of roadways, parks and a first phase of residential development, we are convinced that now is an opportune time to more clearly define a new future for Western at the Waterfront.

2018 Western on the Waterfront Ideation Process

In response to what we understand to be the Port’s and the City’s vision for an “innovation economy” that creates conditions attractive to jobs of the future, an interdisciplinary group of faculty leaders came together to develop a prototype Waterfront presence that addresses societal “grand challenges,” from global climate change and social justice issues, to regional economic opportunity and sustainable development.

Faculty members with expertise in Biology, Business & Sustainability, Chemistry, Computer Science, Energy Studies, Engineering, Entrepreneurship & Innovation Studies, and Environmental Studies contributed to this effort, along with more than 90 students engaged in Western’s Entrepreneurship & Innovation Studies Program, who worked in teams to develop their own prototype Waterfront projects, giving us a valuable glimpse into student needs and desires.

The ideation work will continue in the fall 2018 quarter with a greater diversity of perspectives from the College of Humanities & Social Sciences, the College of Fine & Performing Arts and Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies.

Waterfront Futures Group Vision

Guiding our work are the following principles outlined in the 2013 Waterfront District Master Plan:
Reinforce the Inherent Qualities of Each Place on the Waterfront:

- Make the waterfront a regular part of the lives of more people.
- Respect history, cultures, and the arts.
- Make the waterfront inviting to pedestrians.
- Reinforce a unique “sense of place” at different waterfront locations.
- Complement adjacent uses.

Restore the Health of Land & Water:

- Enhance or reintroduce natural systems.
- Create and restore habitat wherever possible.
- Protect existing natural shorelines.
- Seek opportunities to soften existing hardened shorelines.
- Manage storm water to support estuarine habitats.
- Conserve and renewably produce energy.
- Require sustainable practices in all development.
- Connect proposed open space and natural areas to regional open space network and natural wildlife corridors.

Improve Waterfront Access:

- Develop strong connections between uplands and the Puget Sound.
- Provide multiple modes of access to each area of the waterfront.
- Create and connect large and small parks and open spaces with a “braided” system of pedestrian trails.
- Enhance opportunities for visual access to waterfront areas.
- Provide the opportunity to walk the waterfront while respecting the natural habitat.
- Protect and enhance environmental resources when designing shoreline access and upland development.

Promote a Healthy and Dynamic Waterfront Economy:

- Create new mixed-use areas on the waterfront for commercial, industrial, educational, recreational, and residential uses.
- Ensure the built environment conforms to the highest sustainability standards.
- Support water-dependent activities and uses.
- Create conditions attractive to jobs of the future.
- Strengthen the tie between local jobs and resources.
- Connect to academic thought leadership and nurture a culture of innovation.

At the Intersection of Industry, Innovation and Humanity
The WWU ideation group envisions a complex at the Waterfront that would help foster a next generation of leaders and changemakers, where students would gain interdisciplinary skills, knowledge and connections in STEM, as well as related fields in the arts, humanities, and business, all with an overarching commitment to sustainability. Experiential learning would empower students to make significant contributions to society while also acknowledging and honoring the richness and multiple meanings of place. The new complex would be a place where students, faculty and community members would be inspired to study with rigor and precision the complexity, vibrancy and beauty of land and sea; to recognize debts and obligations to the environment and sustainability; and to envision the future with curiosity, innovation and creativity.

**Creating a Clean Energy Ecosystem**

We envision the new complex housing cutting-edge interdisciplinary facilities where undergraduate and graduate students would perform scientific and technical investigations into novel solutions to address key societal challenges. Under the auspices of WWU’s IDEA (InterDisciplinary Education in Action) Institute, students would brainstorm and create in studio spaces configured for uses from business incubation to artistic expression, and work alongside faculty members and industry partners in dynamic maker-spaces designed for hands-on, experiential learning where they would explore, design and implement new technologies and business models.

We imagine this complex to be a home for the WWU Institute for Energy Studies, allowing the university to meet student and industry demand for a portfolio of degrees that address the science, technology, business, economic, policy, design and ethical aspects of energy production and use. The facility is envisioned to be a zero net energy building, highly instrumented, and linked to clean energy projects developed by the City and Port of Bellingham, extending the Institute’s “Campus as a Living Lab” initiative. Dedicated facilities would enable future graduate degrees and expanded research, and would house interdisciplinary faculty with expertise in building science, energy efficiency, electric power, utility planning and energy-related business and economics.

We also envision this facility supporting the proposed expansion of Western’s Electrical Engineering program and the addition of a computer engineering concentration.

**Washington State Leads the Nation in Energy Efficiency Jobs**

The latest U.S. Energy and Employment report shows Washington State leading the country in energy efficiency jobs. According to the report, these energy jobs in Washington make up 2.8 percent of the entire country’s energy efficiency workforce – the highest percentage of any single state.

When looking at nationwide trends, data from the report shows that in 2017 the energy industry employed 6.5 million Americans and saw a growth of 133,000 net new jobs. These new energy-related jobs make up almost 7 percent of all new jobs in the country. The report also estimates that jobs related to energy efficiency will grow by 9 percent in 2018 and predicts construction related to these projects will increase by 11 percent.

In Washington state specifically, there are 150,000 energy jobs. Of those, 54,532 are related to traditional energy, 62,519 jobs are in the energy efficiency sector, and 32,238 are motor vehicle jobs. Traditional energy includes jobs related to electric power generation, fuels, and energy transmission, distribution, and storage.
For those employed in electric power generation, the largest segments of those workers are in solar (5,246 jobs) and wind jobs (3,228 jobs).

In the energy efficiency sector, the jobs are primarily related to ENERGY STAR and efficient lighting, traditional HVAC, renewable energy, and advanced materials.

Data from the report also shows that for all energy-related jobs in Washington, the majority of employers said they had difficulty hiring employees. This is especially true for energy efficiency jobs where nearly 75 percent of employers said it was either very difficult (27.3 percent) or somewhat difficult (47.3 percent) to hire their workforce.
Creating Vibrant Community Connections

Western's commitment to interdisciplinary problem-solving and expertise in facilitating ongoing dialogue and collaboration across boundaries of culture and political geography is exemplified in the Salish Sea Institute and the Border Policy Research Institute, two entities that we also envision finding a home at the new complex. As with Western's Institute for Energy Studies and the IDEA Institute, these teams would expand undergraduate and graduate education programs in collaboration with Western and other academic institutions throughout the region to address the health of the Salish Sea, and to inform policymakers on matters related to trade and transportation, human mobility, border security and other critical policy issues affecting the Pacific Northwest region.

Tying the entire complex together would be the Northwest Museum of Science and Nature – a visually stunning and accessible museum with technologically innovative, interactive, and engaging exhibits that draw from Western’s important and irreplaceable natural history collections and showcase our cutting-edge research in ecology, environmental science, conservation biology, energy science and sustainability. The museum would foster an incredible variety of cross-disciplinary collaborations from the sciences to the arts, building on Western’s tradition of excellence in environmental scholarship and teaching, pre-K-12 teacher training and educational outreach, and student involvement in community-engaged learning activities.

Finally, flexible indoor and covered outdoor spaces would be configured to host conferences and other public events, making it a premier waterfront venue showcasing the natural splendors of the location for both public and private gatherings. And, given the site’s proximity to the old shipping dock, we envision university research vessels moving to and from Western’s Shannon Point Marine Center in Anacortes and allowing easy outings to the Bay for field-based classes on the main campus.

Supporting State Workforce Needs and Creating Livable Communities

The state of Washington’s continued role as an innovator in such fields as energy efficiency, business and sustainability, autonomous vehicles and electrification of vehicles, aerospace, machine learning, and the Internet of Things depends on the development and maintenance of a robust workforce.

The Roadmap Report produced by the Washington Student Achievement Council, and adopted by the Washington legislature in 2013, set the foundation for Washington’s educational attainment goals, that by 2023:

- All adults in Washington, ages 25–44, will have a high school diploma or equivalent.
- At least 70 percent of Washington adults, ages 25–44, will have a postsecondary credential.

Currently, these numbers are 90 percent and 51 percent, respectively. In the next decade, workforce projections in Washington indicate that two-thirds of the jobs in the state will require some form of post-secondary education, yet Washington currently ranks 46th in the nation in college continuation rates.

Expanding Western’s campus to the Waterfront District would allow the university to increase student access in key STEM fields, to expand STEM education in the state of
Washington, and to address unmet need for workforce skills in the state and the nation. At the same time, we recognize that the innovation economy requires the next generation of Western graduates to go beyond STEM; it requires bringing together STEM disciplines with the Humanities and the Social Sciences to look at societal problems more holistically, with a unique focus on the human dimension. We expect to develop and offer master’s degree programs which would focus on the intersection of these disciplines to deliver a 21st century education that is hands-on and collaborative across disciplines and focused on solutions to the world’s most pressing needs.

Additionally, the Western complex would allow the Waterfront District to host a vibrant hub of innovation and community connection, making the Waterfront an inviting place for students, businesses and visitors; create conditions attractive to employers of the future; and strengthen the ties between local jobs, natural resources and economic and social development.

**Interim Next Steps**

**May-June 2018:** Review initial vision with the WWU Board of Trustees, City and Port of Bellingham, WWU Foundation Board, campus stakeholders and community partners.

**Summer 2018:** Visit other university-industry partnerships including the University of Washington's Global Innovation Exchange, the Port of Skagit’s value-added agriculture collaboration with Washington State University, and the Clean Energy Research Centre at the University of British Columbia.

**Fall 2018:** Continue to refine with broader campus stakeholder input, including development of a set of filters to apply to additional ideas that may emerge. Validate updated vision with strategic industry and community partners.

**Winter/Spring 2019:** Programmatic and capital needs feasibility analysis, including project scope and artistic renderings. Finalize private capital sourcing strategic plan.

**June 2019:** Board of Trustees review.

**Summer 2019:** Port of Bellingham Commission presentation.

**2020-21:** Engage private capital strategy and determine needs for 2021-23 biennium capital request.