

**WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
ITEM SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

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

DATE: October 9, 2020

SUBJECT: **University Relations and Marketing Report**

PURPOSE: Information Item

Purpose of Submittal:

A written report is provided on the recent activities of University Relations and Marketing.

Supporting Information:

Report Attached

**WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR UNIVERSITY RELATIONS
AND MARKETING**

Following is a summary of activities undertaken across the University Relations & Marketing division since the last Board of Trustees update. A couple of items of note:

COVID-19 Resources

The rapid pivot to “virtual everything” over the past six months has created an outsized need for the resources and talents of the URM division. From fast and accurate communications to multiple constituencies, to new websites built in a matter of hours and inspiring video storytelling, to critical support for our region’s small businesses and economic recovery efforts, this division has repeatedly shown up in remarkable and reliably consistent ways.

Some examples are the [coronavirus website](#), helping departments update their own content as employees choose to enroll in voluntary furlough opportunities, [online orientation](#), and building out a workflow and presentation for commencement moving fully online. This pivot has created an especially acute need for additional video production and web design expertise. In addition, increased online teaching has generated a large increase in work involving digital accessibility. The increased workload is both impacting the time required to review websites before they are launched for the public as well as putting pressure on providing Canvas Learning Tool Interoperability for faculty teaching courses.

We are grateful to be able to tap one-time CARES Act funding to hire a temporary videographer and web developer, and to alter the employment contract of our digital accessibility expert from .20 FTE to 1.0 FTE for the remainder of FY21 to deal with the increased workload.

Cohesive Institutional Marketing

As I reflect back on my early impressions and assessments when I joined Western in 2017, one of the greatest challenges I identified was the highly decentralized and siloed approach to marketing and communications at Western, and an entrenched do-it-yourself mentality across colleges and departments that lacked cohesion and coordination.

Since then, we have made steady progress in developing a cohesive brand strategy and more integrated institutional marketing, but it took a global pandemic to accelerate that progress. As the coronavirus response forces us to cut costs and find efficiencies, collaboration is at an all-time high because it *has to be*. The real and imagined barriers that used to prevent departments from working together are crumbling and this, too, has put additional pressure on URM.

As we work to expand enrollments – across the state, on the main Bellingham campus and in regional locations, and among non-resident and graduate students – we are accelerating our efforts at an integrated marketing strategy.

During the 19-20 recruitment cycle, we had an opportunity to test a more integrated approach to non-resident marketing supported by dedicated funding from institutional and WWU Foundation sources. We believe this approach has mitigated losses of non-resident enrollments and that this, combined with ongoing recruitment strategies, are an important

start to building awareness among high school sophomores and juniors in targeted geographies outside of Washington state that will help us build enrollment pipelines for future years.

Of course, recruitment for Fall 2020 has been impacted in unprecedented ways by the global pandemic. In colleges across the country, non-resident enrollment was expected to be down by several percentage points this year; with COVID-19, it is anticipated to be significantly lower. That said, prior to the COVID-19 period, we were seeing initial signs of success from our 2019-20 investment in non-resident recruitment marketing. Building brand awareness and market penetration takes time. Even so, our efforts to catch the attention of out-of-state seniors and bring them to Western was reflected in pre-COVID increases in applications and offers of admission during an otherwise down year for college applications.

We look forward to sharing an enrollment report for Fall 2020 and a look at new recruitment campaigns underway for Fall 2021 during the Board of Trustees meeting.

Status of the Western Crossing Project in the Bellingham Waterfront District

In December 2019, the Port of Bellingham and WWU defined a public-private partnership model that proposed a mix of private sector industries and developers, public agencies and a multi-institutional higher education presence. The goal we laid out was a set of facilities that would both expand the employer base and provide potential opportunities for applied learning, integrated research in undergraduate and graduate programs, and desirable jobs for Whatcom County residents.

Our to-do list for 2020 was to establish a Port/WWU P3 team, determine development commitments that each entity was willing to make to catalyze the project, and issue RFPs to private development partners. The P3 team was established in January and we were making good progress via twice-monthly meetings until the coronavirus pandemic took everyone's attention starting in March.

Prior to that time, we visited and evaluated other public-private innovation parks and engaged interest among some of Western's research partners in private industry and among state and federal agencies.

Given the immediate impacts of the coronavirus and the uncertainty of the economic recovery timeline, we have decided to slow our pace a bit and move to quarterly meetings of the P3 team. The University and the Port continue to believe that expanding academic programming on Bellingham's revitalized waterfront provides a unique opportunity to expand capacity and visibility, and strengthen partnerships in private industry and with non-profits, government and other education entities.

As our state and region emerges from the current recession, we will continue to gauge interest among private developers and potential tenants. We're interested also in how new remote work patterns may endure in a post-pandemic economy, and how ongoing affordable housing and traffic congestion issues continue to impact migration patterns away from dense urban areas.

A recent report issued by the Cascadia Innovation Corridor predicts that by 2050, 3-4 million more people expect to inhabit the Cascadia region, connecting Portland, Seattle and Vancouver, B.C—that's on top of the more than 9 million people in the region now, representing a population increase of more than 30% over the next 30 years. We remain committed to carving out a meaningful position for Bellingham and Western in the Cascadia region and we continue to plan for the inevitable growth to come and work together to determine ways to preserve our region for future generations.

Office of University Communications

Our skilled professionals worked on a wide range of online, media relations, social media, video and graphic design projects, which included:

Coronavirus Communications

- Coordinated with WWU Prevention and Wellness to assist with a wide range of COVID-19 health messages via social media, digital signage, posters and banners. See examples of those materials at: <https://www.wvu.edu/safe-start/posters>.
- Assisted Associated Students Communications Director (and Student Trustee) Hunter Stuehm in the AS innovative peer-to-peer social media outreach from students to students on COVID-19 health precautions. KING 5 TV had a story on this, quoting both Stuehm and Steve Bennett, WWU assistant professor of Public Health. See: <https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/western-washington-university-students-use-social-media-to-educate-incoming-students/281-6949baa4-e99e-4251-b88c-04bbf4840d50>.
- Our office, Prevention & Wellness and AS Communications also are working closely with the county Health Department as they reach out to people in the community aged 16-26 with COVID-19 health information via social media. Professor Bennett is helping with those efforts via a survey he is conducting. The Bellingham Herald reported on this. See: <https://www.bellinghamherald.com/news/coronavirus/article245777740.html>.
- President Randhawa; Dr. Sislina Ledbetter, Western's executive director for Counseling, Health and Wellness; and Dr. David Hansen, Western's associate medical director, conducted a briefing with the City Council on September 14 regarding our COVID-19 planning, medical protocols and answered questions from the Council.
- Our skilled videographers led by Suzanne Blais have responded to the continuing high demand for video at Western. Their work included: COVID-19 information/prevention videos; recreating the campus virtual tour into a tour with 360-degree photos of all the buildings and key interest points across campus; creating a virtual New Student Orientation; working on the many elements of Student Convocation, and student recruitment campaigns. Here is an example, working with Hunter Stuehm and AS, of one of their peer-to-peer student COVID health videos on wearing face coverings: <https://vimeo.com/457044538/bdbed97187>.
- Continued to provide communications support for Western's Incident Command Structure (ICS), Student Health Center, Admissions, University Residences, and other campus offices for messaging, response to parent, student and community inquiries, media response and other communications requests. This included working closely with colleagues in WebTech to transfer guidance and protocols from ICS to the web via informational pages and FAQs, especially around fall procedures for testing, isolation and quarantine, and student services.
- In other areas, in media relations, we assisted with placing an op-ed column authored by President Randhawa and Senator Christine Rolfes on Western's successful efforts on the Peninsulas to expand student access: See:

<https://www.kitsapsun.com/story/opinion/columnists/2020/09/20/expanded-education-kitsap-helps-mitigate-pandemics-insecurity/5829975002/>

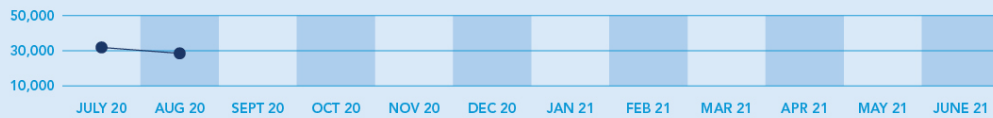
- In Publications, Editor Mary Gallagher is in the beginning stages of the next edition of Window magazine, scheduled for publication later this year. The September edition of the Family Connection newsletter was well received, with more than 41 percent of recipients opening the emails. Meanwhile, Mary is producing the President's Annual Report for publication in November and working with New Student Services/Family Outreach on a multimedia project exploring how families can support their college-age students.
- University Communications graphic designers also provided a range of support, including: digital ad campaigns by the Division of University Relations and Marketing; WWU Family Calendar for New Student Services/Family Outreach; New Student Handbook, New Family Handbook; Counseling Center website design; Freshman Interest Groups (FIGS) booklet and postcard; design and layout of Window magazine; complete redesign of the Western Gallery sculpture brochure; new templates for Woodring College; and design for a Political Science Department newsletter.

WESTERN TODAY

TOTAL SESSIONS

60,214

July: +12,400 vs same month 2019
August: +6,563 vs same month 2019



TOP STORIES

- Fall 2020 Update from the President
- In Memoriam: Molly Fury
- The Coronavirus Vaccine: Myths and Realities with WWU's Gerry Prody

SOCIAL MEDIA



TWITTER



FACEBOOK



INSTAGRAM

STATISTICS AT A GLANCE

22,474
 Total followers
-19
 New followers
-0.1%
 % gained
380
 Engagements

50,466
 Total followers
16
 New followers
0.0003%
 % gained
3,841
 Engagements

22,752
 Total followers
222
 New followers
1%
 % gained
17,465
 Engagements

FAMILY CONNECTION NEWSLETTER

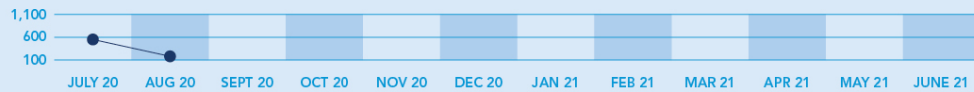
<u>Edition and Date</u>	<u>Number Sent</u>	<u>Percent Opened</u>	<u>Top Clicks</u>
July 30 - Fall Quarter Plans	12,015	43.6 percent	Fall Housing information, Western Alert signups, Student Business Office
Aug. 21 - New Families	4,406	49 percent	Orientation website, Fall Housing info, Western Alert signups, New Student Checklist
Aug. 28 - Fall Quarter Safety Procedures	9,179	38.9 percent	Fall Guide, Western Alert signups

MEDIA STORIES

714
Total Stories

TOP STORIES

- Nasa Mars rover: How Perseverance will hunt for signs of past life (Yahoo! News)
- NASA Mars Perseverance rover to pave the way for humanity's trip to Red Planet (The Express (UK))
- The owl pellet economy: Meet the entrepreneurs who've devoted their lives to bird vomit (Washington Post)



CREATIVE SERVICES

GRAPHIC DESIGN



66 Total Projects

FEATURING

- Window Magazine - Summer 2020
- Make Waves campaign - The World Can't Wait digital ads
- Western Sculpture Collection brochure
- Fairhaven College - Website homepage design



PHOTO & VIDEO



FEATURING

- Since Covid we have been tasked with moving everything over to digital formats and video. We have covered everything from Covid information/prevention videos, recreating the campus virtual tour into a tour with 360 degree photos of all the buildings and key interest points across campus, creating a virtual New Student Orientation, to working on the many elements of Student Convocation. And we've been moving forward with our Fall student recruitment campaigns.
- Video editing and production for Real Classes as Western continues conversion to online and distance learning
- WINDOW magazine photography for magazine production
- Field work covered for Huxley and drone usage of student/prof research projects,
- Field work coverage for northwest regional programming with Duwamish river and moss sampling for air quality and pollution
- Mask Up videos

Community Relations

Notable projects and connections that enhance WWU visibility, improve community access, and increase community-to-university partnerships.

Campus Support during COVID-19

During this unprecedented time, Community Relations has pivoted to serve the university where needed while remaining engaged with the community.

- 50 COVID-themed posters were distributed throughout Bellingham businesses highlighting the importance of washing hands, watching distance and wearing a mask (the three Ws).
- Partnered with the City of Bellingham on an email to all landlords on COVID-19 safety guidelines to share with tenants, many of whom are WWU students.
- Created an “Experience Bellingham” Zoom Room as a part of the 2020 Student Convocation. 40 students learned about the many stores, parks, restaurants, coffee shops and services that are open and available in our community during COVID-19. Community Relations partnered with WWU alumni who work for Tourism and Downtown Bellingham Partnership to answer student inquiries.
- Coordinated with the Puget and South Hill neighborhoods to schedule presentations by Dr. David Hansen and Dr. Sislana Ledbetter about WWU’s health and safety guidelines as the University prepared for the start of fall quarter.
- Partnered with Lettered Streets, York, Happy Valley and Puget neighborhoods on sharing Western’s health and safety guidelines through neighborhood newsletters and email listservs.

Community Connections and Engagement

- Collaborated with Whatcom County Tourism to distribute more than 5,000 WWU campus maps/brochures to 30 Whatcom County hotel and tourism locations. This is the first time in more than a decade that WWU has provided area hotels with brochures for its visitors.
- Connected multiple entities with WWU students and programs including:
 - The Department of Commerce with CBE Professor Hart Hodges to sit on a statewide roundtable to discuss the impacts of COVID on higher education.
 - L.K. Langley, director of LGBTQ+ Western, with the CEO of Woods Coffee to discuss reported incidents of bias.
 - New Student Services/Family Outreach with Tourism to highlight all local restaurants providing dine in and take out options during Fall Family Weekend.
 - Western’s Outdoor Center with local gear shops, a countywide outdoor recreation committee, and Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism to promote their services to the community while improving access to a broader library of maps to provide students.
 - A WWU student with the Whatcom Women’s Network to assist in their efforts while helping expand her professional network.
 - A WWU student with Share, a nonprofit in Vancouver, WA where he will start an internship while earning his WWU degree remotely from home.
 - The League of Women Voters of Bellingham and Whatcom County with the Associated Students’ Vice President for Governmental Affairs to collaborate on both entity’s get out the vote campaigns.

- Partnered with the Downtown Bellingham Partnership to invite downtown businesses to participate in the Virtual A.S. Info Fair.
- Secured four donated prizes for WWU Viking Night from the Lynden Inn, Lopez Islander Resort, and the NW Washington Fair.
- Concluded WWU's months-long partnership and outreach efforts with the U.S. Census which included emails, social media, collaboration with on-campus housing, partnerships with area schools, website, a podcast and more. Washington State currently ranks #2 in U.S. Census response rates and Whatcom County surpassed its own 2010 participation rates.

- including expansion of cross-cultural competencies of students and faculty through learning experiences on both campuses.
- Progress has been made by Enrollment and Student Services on a project collecting student data needed for verification of tribal enrollment, per the request of the 2016 Native American Student Union letter of urgent needs. The project will begin in Fall 2021 and collect the required data to verify Native student enrollment information.
- The Tribal Liaison is building partnerships on the Peninsulas working with Olympic College, Huxley College on the Peninsula, and Grays Harbor College. This collaboration will focus on recruiting junior and senior high school students, providing educational opportunities in advising, support, and community connections.

Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

Pandemic Support

Pandemic support continues to occupy the frontline of the SBDC activities. We have adapted and pivoted our services to respond to the needs of our clients.

Pandemic Pivot – Responding to Emerging Needs

- Connect with partners - participate in developing a county-wide response strategy
- Revise core service model - phone / Zoom / email / webinar model
- Develop information dissemination - webinars, social media, newsletters and Coronavirus Resource Community webpage
- Add service capacity - via SBA CARES Act funding
- Immersive professional development - build skills in innovation, presentation, SBA/Treasury products (EIDL/PPP), Return to Work guidelines

WWU SBDC Bellingham Highlights

- Presented Pandemic Response Report to local funders: Port of Bellingham, City of Bellingham and Whatcom County
- Attended Small City Mayor Meeting
- Safer Stronger Together Campaign / Employer Task Force
- Attended Ferndale Chamber Economic Recovery Forum

Coronavirus Crisis Training Events Hosted since July 2020

Date	Event Title	Attendees
7/21/2020	Whatcom ReStart Grant Application Q&A	28
7/7/2020	Recovery Q&A and Roundtable	20
Total		48

In the Media

[Helping businesses weather the storm](#)

WWU SBDC Kitsap Count Highlights Co-sponsored Webinars

- Special guest for Kitsap Regional Library's Lunch with a Librarian event
- Guest panelist on weekly webinars with Kitsap Economic Development Alliance (KEDA)
- Poulsbo Chamber of Commerce guest speaker

In the Media

[Navigating uncharted waters for small businesses](#)

Tribal Liaison

Planning

- The Tribal Liaison and President Randhawa met with Representative Debra Lekanoff to discuss continued support of the longhouse project for Western's main campus.
- A \$5 million request for Coast Salish Longhouse funding was developed for the 2021-23 biennium with support from Becca Kenna-Schenk, executive director of Government Relations; Rick Benner, director of Capital Planning and Development; and Brian Ross, Assistant Director of Capital Budgeting. The "House of Healing" is intended to serve as a learning center for Western's Indigenous students, faculty and staff and neighboring communities, as well as a place of support for all people of color.
- The Tribal Liaison, with support from Government Relations, is working on a video to accompany legislative lobbying efforts for the Coast Salish Longhouse project. The video will include interviews with tribal leaders, Native American students, and the Bellingham Mayor.

Events

- The Tribal Liaison will attend the Fairhaven College World Issues Forum on Sept 30, 2020. This event will include Dr. Dakotah Lane of the Lummi Health Center hosting a panel and forum discussing their response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Training

- The Tribal Liaison continues to participate in New Employee Orientation sessions to share the goals and objectives of the Tribal Relations Office in its support of diversity, equity, and inclusion goals included in the WWU strategic plan.
- The Tribal Liaison continues to visit with departments upon request and participated in New Student Convocation and New Faculty Orientation presenting on the development of the office and how it supports Western's Native American students.
- The Woodring College of Education Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion invited the Tribal Liaison to present new student employees and mentors for the Pathways program with resources available to Native American students.

Relationship-building

- The Tribal Liaison continues to meet with the Tribal Leaders Congress monthly via virtual meetings and serve on the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indian Education committee.
- A final MOU between Northwest Indian College and Western has been completed that encourages cooperation between the two institutions in any discipline which is studied in both in order to promote teaching, research and understanding in areas deemed to promote the sustainability of our shared region. Among the areas of exchange are academic and administrative staff, research staff, visiting scholars and student

Washington Campus Contact

- Washington Campus Compact received a new grant for \$318,000. The **College Support Services Corps** will place full time AmeriCorps members on campuses to support wrap around services (food security, mental health, academic support, civic engagement) for underrepresented higher education students. In addition, there will be part time AmeriCorps positions available for college/university students to participate and earn an education award for their service activities.

As part of a pilot project, students from Huxley College and Northwest Indian College will have the opportunity to serve in the Civilian Conservation Corps on Orcas Island. This project will integrate Western and Indigenous science to teach students forest restoration, biomass processing, native landscapes for pollinator health and drought resistance, and riparian zone replanting and restoration.

A second pilot project will also be incorporated into this grant program. Partnerships between higher education institutions, high schools and cities will be developed to create civic apprenticeships for student to participate in civic leadership activities in their local communities.

- Washington Campus Compact will hold a virtual **Fall Service Symposium** for student civic fellows from across Washington state on November 14, 2020. Over 100 student civic fellows will gather and learn about critical issues facing campuses and communities and develop service projects to work on those issues. Becca Kenna-Schenk, Western's executive director of government relations, will participate on a panel to teach the student civic fellows how to work with legislators to encourage policy changes that support campus and community issues. In the spring, these students will present their projects at the Spring Service Symposium.

Web Communication Technologies

Summary

As the university clarified the plan for the fall quarter, WebTech updated and transformed content provided into accessible and functional web pages. The culmination of the planning was the deployment of the COVID-19 Symptom Attestation banner across 270+ websites at the institution to make it as easy as possible to [properly attest](#) before arriving on campus each day. We provided accessibility testing for Enterprise Application Services who built the employee and visitor attestation forms.

The attestation work overlapped with the development of the web pages for the new [Structural Equity Bias Response Team](#) (SEBRT) and the Report Bias link in the header of all modern sites and new sites moving forward. We also collaborated with the SEBRT team on providing feedback on the bias reporting form on both user experience and digital accessibility concerns. The form appears in the Quick Links navigation of every page on the WWU website.

As commencement is now a virtual experience, we have been asked to continue working with the Registrar to provide a digital graduation ceremony in-house without vendor support. The first phase of that has been completed where eligible graduating students can register on the commencement website with the appropriate details needed for the future ceremony. Work will continue throughout the coming months to provide a commencement that is produced and hosted from Western. Building upon what worked in the Spring from the third-party vendor and improving what didn't work is the task moving forward.

Finally, perhaps the most visible event from this past period was New Student Convocation. WebTech worked with the convocation team in developing a webpage, schedule of events, and the layout of the Zoom rooms that followed the video portion of convocation. The event went very well from a technical perspective and data gathered from the traffic on the site is being used to make the web infrastructure more resilient moving forward in anticipation of an even greater traffic load during December commencement at the end of the term.

Beyond that work, WebTech continues to bring departments and offices into the updated brand by migrating or assisting with the migration into the newer version of Drupal. Over the past month and a half, the websites for the following have been migrated:

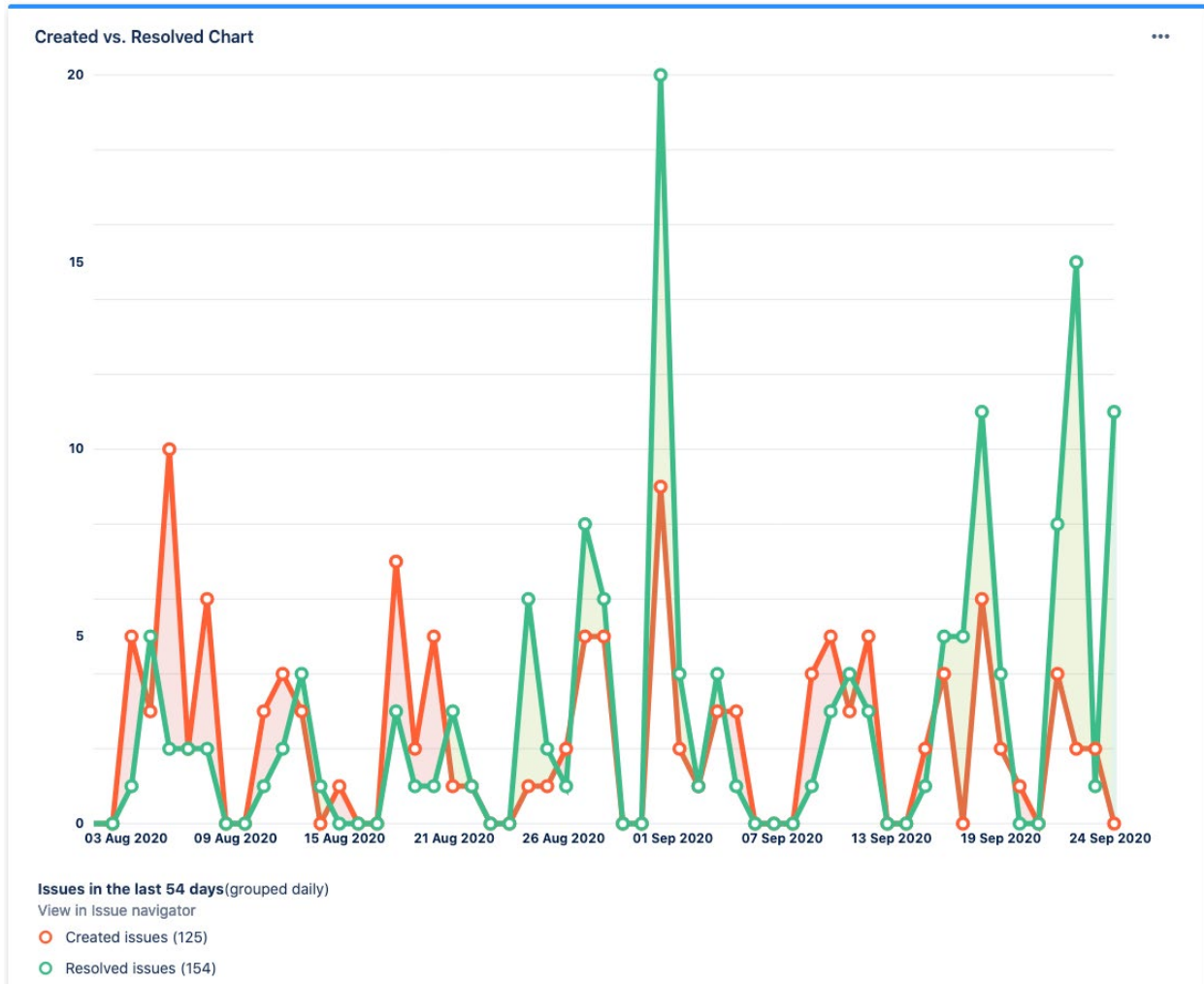
- [Woodring College of Education](#)
- [Environmental Health & Safety](#)
- [New Faculty Orientation](#)
- [Counseling Center](#)
- [Prevention and Wellness Services](#) which also included migrating Men's Resiliency, a separate website, into the new PWS website
- [First Year Interest Groups](#) – This registration site, after being inherited from another campus group, is being modernized behind the scenes and the design is slated to be upgraded prior to FIGs registration next year.

WebTech held a department annual retreat on August 10th. We spent half the day working on team dynamics and diversity, equity, and inclusion training led by Dennis Dashiell from Human Resources. We identified areas of growth and look to tie that in with our digital accessibility work as well as the diversity, equity, and inclusion training at the division level.

The official digital accessibility committee began meeting in August led by WebTech Director Max Bronsema, and John Farquha, director of Academic Technology & User Services (ATUS). The committee is working to provide procedures and guidelines to help support Policy U1600.07

Ensuring Accessible Electronic Information Technology. Upon final feedback from the federal Office of Civil Rights, that policy will be updated, and the procedures and guidelines being developed will support that updated policy.

WebTech Workload



Formal tickets are staying steady. We continue to resolve approximately 150 tickets every 55 days. As noted last month, the informal contact through the Teams platform I believe allows resolution of minor issues quickly without the need to file the work as a ticket. Web Help, our email support channel, saw a doubling of average traffic to 300 support requests in the last 54 days. Those messages all receive individual responses and fixes to the reported issue.