TO: Members of the Board of Trustees
FROM: President Sabah Randhawa on behalf of Melynda Huskey
DATE: August 19, 2022
SUBJECT: Enrollment Management
PURPOSE: Information Item

I. Enrollment

We enthusiastically move into the 2022-23 academic year with a recovery of enrollment in our first-year cohort and strong interest from students in our graduate programs. This comes alongside continuing challenges for transfer enrollment and smaller total enrollment as our pandemic cohorts of the two prior years progress through their studies.

Summer 2022 Enrollment
Unfortunately, summer enrollment has not materialized in the way that we expected early in the summer registration process. As of August 3rd, we had 3,618 students enrolled in summer courses, as compared to 3,897 as of the same time in Summer 2021—approximately a 7% decline in enrollment. FTE levels are down a bit more, as the average number of credits per student has declined slightly to 7.72 credits per student, compared to 7.97 in Summer 2021. Though we are six weeks into summer term, census day has not yet passed. It falls on Monday, August 15th this year.

Fall 2022 Enrollment Outlook
New student enrollment is a critical piece of the enrollment outlook, and the next section provides some insight to that work. Total enrollment will continue to be impacted by the pandemic as our smaller new student cohorts of recent years cycle through to graduation, while we are graduating some of our larger classes. Additionally, the increasing mental health challenges that students are experiencing and the continuing impact of learning loss are significantly impacting academic work, and we are seeing academic distress among our students that is further impacting retention and enrollment.

The confluence of these factors is resulting in lower-than-expected rates of enrollment of continuing students this fall. At the current rate of enrollment, we expect to have approximately 14,600 students enrolled in Fall 2022. However, there is still opportunity to impact those numbers. We will be engaging in a campaign in the next few weeks to reach out to continuing students eligible to enroll in fall who have not taken the steps to register for classes.

Fall 2022 Recruitment and the Outlook for New Student Enrollment
Many aspects of our work and circumstances of the last year have contributed to the strong showing of new first-year students for Fall 2022: prominent digital marketing campaigns; targeted/strategic use of supplemental recruitment scholarship dollars; enhanced messaging campaigns as we build out our CRM; joining the same application platform that the University of
Washington uses (the Coalition); returning to in-person experiences for on-campus events and off-campus activities; launching the pilot Guaranteed Admissions Program (alongside nearly 40 high schools from across the state, including Mt Baker High School in Whatcom County, and Skagit County’s Mt Vernon High School).

New first-year students are registering for fall courses throughout the month of August during Advising & Registration (A&R—further detailed in Section III of this report), so enrollment is not yet determined. We are still watching the confirmations, working with those students and families, and closely monitoring all of the indicators of the strength of those commitments. The key indicators at this point are FAFSA submission, commitments to on-campus housing, reservations in A&R sessions, and the submission of immunization records (measles and COVID-19). Each of these indicators and the intersections of them currently provide a high level of confidence in the projection that our new first-year student population will be in the range of our pre-pandemic enrollment levels in 2018 and 2019.

Western’s performance compares favorably against the state’s public baccalaureate institutions. Most of our colleagues from other institutions have shared that they expect to be down in new first-year enrollment or flat compared with Fall 2021, whereas we are nearing all-time record numbers for new first-year enrollment (and recording a double-digit increase compared to Fall 2021). The fact that we are measuring our success against Fall 2019 is, frankly, not something the other schools are doing.

Totals as of Week -7 (August 3, 2022):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>10,574</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10,206</td>
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<td>Confirmed</td>
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<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>2,076</td>
<td>1,599</td>
<td>988</td>
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<tr>
<td>2021</td>
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<td>1,633</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
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New transfers—other locations

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<tr>
<td>2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>2020</td>
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<tr>
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<td>219</td>
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New graduate students

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<td>359</td>
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<tr>
<td>2021</td>
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<td>2020</td>
<td>806</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>327</td>
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Important notes on New First-year Applications, Offers, and Confirmations for Fall 2022

- Application numbers are up (12.1% compared to this time last year in the Fall 2021 cycle).
- While the number of offers is larger than last year, as a percentage our offer rate is down slightly, reflecting an increase in selectivity—92.7% as compared to 96.2% for Fall 2021.
- We are securing confirmations from more of those students to whom we have offered admission--yield (31.4% compared to 30.4% for Fall 2021).
- Confirmations are up by 11.6% over last year at this time in the cycle.
- Students of Color comprise 31.6% of the confirmed student population this year (compared to 29.8% this time last year).
- Running Start numbers are still down, but we expect to see recovery in those numbers as high school students return to college classes and regain more normalcy in their academic pursuits. Data on self-reported college credits (Fall 2022 current compared to Fall 2019 end of cycle) provides some additional perspective.

- First-generation students comprise 17.9% of the confirmed first-year population this year (compared to 26.4% last year).
Confirmations from nonresidents remain strong, up 10.2% from this time for Fall 2021.

Important notes on Transfer Applications, Offers, and Confirmations for Fall 2022

- The proportion of our transfer student population that is coming from other 4-year institutions and from colleges and universities outside of Washington continues to rise (37.5% compared to 32.2% at this time in the Fall 2021 cycle).
- Students transferring from Washington community and technical colleges yield at a higher rate, but they are a declining population.
  - The yield rate for transfers from Washington community and technical colleges is 67.1% this year, compared to 71.1% for Fall 2021.
  - Our yield rate for transfers from all other institutions is 54.8%, compared to 59.7% in Fall 2021.
- Students of color make up 29.3% of the confirmed transfer student population (compared to 26.5% in Fall 2021).
- A smaller proportion of confirmed transfer students are coming from first generation backgrounds (18.2% compared to 34.3% last year).

Struggles in enrolling students from two-year institutions feature prominently in the national and statewide conversation. In fact, our University of Washington colleagues shared recently that they are seeing a second year of declines in transfer enrollment, attributing the decline almost entirely to drops in applications from the community and technical colleges.

Looking Ahead to Fall 2023

Two recent articles highlight national trends of note as we enter the Fall 2023 recruitment cycle. First, as reported by the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), undergraduate enrollment experienced a 4.7 percent decline during the spring compared to the previous year, with the two-year sector (community and technical colleges) hit hardest (Drop in Spring-2022 Enrollment Is Worse Than Expected (chronicle.com)). Second, also featured by the NSC, is a story which underscores the challenges to attract and enroll students graduating from high school, citing “barriers like cost, lack of support in high school, mental-health concerns, competing options, and a shifting perspective on the benefits of college — all of which disproportionately affect disadvantaged students.” (Why Fewer High-School Graduates Are Going Straight to College (chronicle.com)).

What we can anticipate is increased competition for a gradually declining number of students across the national landscape. This adds to the concern that enrollment officers have had about declining birthrates and the resultant decline in the number of high school graduates that has been part of the discussion for more than a decade.

As mentioned in our last report to this body, Western has established membership in the Common Application, a consortium of over 1,000 of the nation’s leading institutions. We will launch the Fall 2023 application on September 1 and will benefit from leveraging the Common App’s position as a global platform for students applying for college. On the technical side, the user experience is a well-known one for students and high school counselors; and on the marketing front, Western will be listed and co-branded alongside a broad range of colleges and universities, including all of Washington’s public baccalaureate institutions. We benefited in the Fall 2022 cycle from positioning ourselves on the same application platform as the University of Washington (The Coalition). The impact of UW and Western moving to the Common Application will become clearer in the coming months.

In addition to exciting opportunities that will come through broadcasting our institutional brand more widely—and appealing to a broader swath of students—the national and international
exposure will bring a few challenges. Among them will be the increased competition from a much wider set of institutions: effectively, Western will be thrust into a competitive arena where student choice will be as varied as the number of colleges featured on the Common App's menu selection. Our ability to successfully recruit and enroll future cohorts will be predicated on our ability to deliver on every touchpoint of our enrollment lifecycle—from delivering engaging on-/off-campus experiences and more quickly sending offers of admission, to strategically leveraging recruitment scholarship dollars and minimizing customer service bottlenecks.

Transfer enrollment continues to present challenges, inviting us to focus on strategy, planning, and execution. Going forward, we are eager to explore action priorities identified during the Transfer Intensive program that Western is engaged in with Olympic College. This program, hosted by AASCU and The Aspen Institute, centers around building stronger partnerships between four-year institutions and two-year partners and focuses on aspects of access, support, success, and achievement.

II. Student Aid

2022-23 FAFSA Filing Updates
According to the National College Attainment Network, approximately 52% of the country’s high school class of 2022 has completed a FAFSA, an increase of about 4.5% compared to the class of 2021. In Washington, just under 47% of students from the class of 2022 have filed the FAFSA, as reported by the Washington Student Achievement Council, representing a 3% increase from last year.

Western is clearly outperforming the market. Records show that 80.2% of first-year students scheduled to begin attendance at Western in Fall 2022 have filed a 2022-23 FAFSA, compared to 78.7% at the same time last year for the 2021-22 year. FAFSA filing among transfer and returning students is about the same as last year at approximately 53%. Among a host of outreach activities, Financial Aid regularly identifies students who have not filed the FAFSA and sends targeted notifications to them, urging them to file.

Western’s partnership between Financial Aid and University Marketing has prompted a higher proportion of enrolled Western students to file their FAFSAs earlier than in past years. By the beginning of February, 31.5% of enrolled Western students filed a FAFSA, compared to 24.7% at the same time in 2021 and 20.6%, 18.1% and 18.9% respectively for prior years.

This reveals that the most significant impact of our FAFSA marketing efforts has been that more students and families are completing the FAFSA earlier in the process. Benefits of early FAFSA filing include early notification of the need to resolve any reporting inconsistencies with the Financial Aid department to facilitate an expedited aid offer and consideration for more grant and scholarship aid, as some programs run out of funds. In addition, the better time management provides increased opportunity for the student to focus on other aspects of preparing for college.

2022-23 Awarding Update
Financial Aid has notified new first-year and transfer students and families of revised financial aid offers, which incorporated Board-approved updates to 2022-23 tuition and fees and adjustments to aid eligibilities. Returning students have been awarded as well, with subsequent awards to be made on a recurring basis throughout the 2022-23 academic year.
The new Washington Bridge Grant has been fully implemented. Bridge Grants consist of awards that are typically $500 per year to Washington College Grant-eligible students with median family incomes from 0-60% who are not eligible for the College Bound Scholarship. Implementation required working with WSAC to understand and develop eligibility criteria, working with systems analysts to program eligibility determinations into our systems software, and providing related training to the Financial Aid team. So far, Bridge Grants totaling $605,889 have been awarded to 1,215 Western students for 2022-23.

**Targeted Outreach to Aid-suspended Students**

Financial Aid is in the process of reaching out to approximately 200 students who were placed on financial aid suspension during the 2021-22 school year, did not petition for aid reinstatement, and appear to be good candidates for reinstatement. These students will be encouraged to submit a petition so that financial aid counselors and others can help them re-enroll and get back on track to graduation.

**New Webinar: Financial Aid, Payments & Housing: Navigating a Successful First Year at Western**

Financial Aid collaborated with University Residences and the Student Business Office to create a series of new webinars, entitled “Financial Aid, Payments & Housing: Navigating a Successful First Year at Western”. The first webinar was offered on July 27, with upcoming sessions on August 16 and 17 and September 7. The webinars were created to provide a welcoming and interactive platform for new students and families to receive information they need to know in order to transition successfully to Western, to convey their questions and concerns, and to have them expeditiously addressed.

The interest has been high. As of early August, nearly 800 individuals have registered. Over 350 students and parents/families attended the first webinar in July, with an approximate composition of 70% parents/families and 30% incoming first-year and transfer students.
Federal HEERF Update – Student Portion
So far, a total of 890 Western students enrolled this summer have been awarded $599,500 in Federal HEERF (Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund) grants, based on having demonstrated exceptional financial need. Most awards ranged from $500 to $1,200. Although the majority of HEERF awards have been made for the summer, Financial Aid Counselors will continue to award HEERF grants based on exceptional need and extenuating circumstances.

Financial Aid will have awarded approximately $23.6 million of our $27.7 Federal HEERF allocation by the end of August 2022, leaving $4.1 million to award for Fall 2022.

Two Additional Locations Approved
The U.S. Department of Education has recently approved Western to provide Federal Title IV aid to students attending two new locations:

- The Puget Sound Educational Service District in Renton, where a BAE, English Language Learners and Bilingual Education will be offered; and
- Western Washington University at Lake Washington Institute of Technology in Kirkland, where a Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity 2+2 program will be offered.

III. New Student Services/Family Outreach

Orientation, Advising, and Registration (OAR) Programs for New Students
The 2022 Fall Advising & Registration (A&R) Sessions for new first-year, transfer, and post-baccalaureate students kicked off in July. Over the course of 5 sessions, 750 new transfers and post-baccs attended, completing small group academic advising, departmental/major advising, and registering for fall quarter classes. While attendance at an A&R Session is not required for transfers or post-baccs, there was strong participation.

Similarly, the first-year/Running Start student sessions began on August 1, and 17 sessions for new first-year students are being offered this year. Almost all of the session in August are full, and we’ll host one remaining A&R session the Monday before classes start. As attendance is required for first-year students, the sessions are designed to maximize capacity to accommodate all first-year students while working to offer small group advising and individual time with advisors for the registration process. Looking ahead through August, reservation numbers for first-year students are running very high—currently over 3,100 reservations—exceeding some previous trends and expectations. Tracking the “no show” rate for sessions and designing strategic communications to prompt action are key through August in supporting student enrollment and retention.

Western Welcome (formerly “Western Welcome Week”)
Building from changes adopted last year, the Western Welcome collaboration team is continuing work this year to develop a robust and intentional set of programs, events, and resources to welcome new and returning students to campus. This year, the Western Welcome team has more deeply explored intentional planning efforts. Using the overarching theme of creating a “Western Welcome”, team members have identified the value of creating a “welcome timeframe” that is more than one week and are planning a program that spans a period of time (~3-6 weeks) at the beginning of each quarter. Also shifting the name from “Western Welcome Week” to “Western Welcome” allows greater flexibility from quarter to quarter to accommodate event possibilities outside of the first week of the quarter.

Event planners and resource departments from across campus are also adding two important layers in the development of the Western Welcome vision: intentionally connecting events and
activities to strategic planning goals and assessment tool development to gather feedback on outcomes, purpose, needs, and interests. The Western Welcome team uses and applies these guiding goals as the basis for evaluating programs and activities that form Western Welcome:

- Center access, diversity, equity, and inclusion in the programming.
- Increase new students’ understanding of opportunities available at Western.
- Strengthen all new students’ sense of belonging to the Western community and beyond.
- Ensure the program’s activities and events reflect the values of the institution.
- Build a program that supports all new students in their personal, social, and academic transition to the university experience.

The new Western Welcome concept is currently undergoing a rebranding/new visual identity development with the University Marketing team, after which a new format to the campus website will be redesigned and serve as a landing page for all students, any quarter, for welcome events and resources.

**Family Outreach**
Planning for Fall Family Weekend 2022 is in full swing, with an anticipated largely in-person slate of events. Fall Family Weekend will be October 21-23, 2022, and will showcase student events, campus resources, off-campus excursions and tours, academic departments, student research, and more for students and families to explore, connect, and celebrate the offerings of Western, Bellingham, and Whatcom County.