TO: Members of the Board of Trustees  
FROM: President Sabah Randhawa on behalf of Melynda Huskey  
DATE: August 20, 2021  
SUBJECT: Enrollment Management Summary  
PURPOSE: Information Item  

I. Enrollment

While there is still uncertainty surrounding Fall 2021, we are optimistic about enrollment and the return to campus. We are diligently working to manage student compliance with the COVID vaccine policy, optimize the on-campus experience, firm up new student commitments, onboard new students and those who have not yet had a campus experience at Western, ensure accurate and timely awarding of aid, and bring back students who sat out for some part of the pandemic. The landscape continues to change, and we remain nimble.

Summer 2021 Enrollment
Though we are six weeks into the summer term, census day has not yet passed, so we are not able to provide final numbers for Summer 2021. As of August 4th, we had a total of 3,897 students enrolled in summer classes. Our enrollment for summer is down 11.5% from the same time last year and is comparable to enrollment from Summer 2019 (though down slightly). Importantly, our current FTE levels for summer are still slightly up from 2019, with the average number of credits at 7.97 per student for this summer compared to 7.75 for Summer 2019 and 8.11 for Summer 2020.

Fall 2021 Applications and Recruitment
As we noted in June, we are closely monitoring comparisons to both Fall 2020 and Fall 2019. While some other public universities in the state are still seeing sizable drops (as much as 20%) in confirmations from new first-year students for Fall 2021 when compared to Fall 2020, our confirmations are up by 8.7% from Fall 2020. We are paying particular attention to confirmations as they compare to Fall 2019—overall down by 5.8% from Fall 2019.

Important notes on First-year Students as of August 4, 2021
- Admit Rate: 96.2% (Fall 2020: 93.5% / Fall 2019: 90.4%)
- Yield Rate: 30.4% (Fall 2020: 29.8% / Fall 2019: 34.6%)
- Confirmed Students of Color: 30.2% (Fall 2020: 31.2% / Fall 2019: 31.3%)
- Confirmed Nonresidents: 18.4% (Fall 2020: 15.3% / Fall 2019: 14.0%)
- Confirmed First Generation: 26.5% (Fall 2020: 28.5% / Fall 2019: 29.9%)
Important notes on Transfer Students (Bellingham) as of August 4, 2021

- Admit Rate: 82.7% (Fall 2020: 81.7% / Fall 2019: 82.2%)
- Yield Rate: 67.0% (Fall 2020: 62.6% / Fall 2019: 66.9%)
- Confirmed Students of Color: 27.5% (Fall 2020: 26.9% / Fall 2019: 25.7%)
- Confirmed Nonresidents: 16.2% (Fall 2020: 10.5% / Fall 2019: 8.3%)
- Confirmed First Generation: 34.3% (Fall 2020: 36.7% / Fall 2019: 39.9%)
- Noticeable increase in nonresident yield, even with significantly larger number of admits
- We continue to see more students transferring from other four-year institutions, while experiencing the impact of declines in enrollment in the state’s community colleges. Our transfer confirmations from Washington community colleges are down 12.4% compared to Fall 2019, and transfer confirmations from other institutions are up 16.4% compared to Fall 2019.

Totals as of August 4, 2021

New first-year students—Bellingham

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<tr>
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<th>Applied</th>
<th>Admitted</th>
<th>Confirmed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>10,574</td>
<td>10,167</td>
<td>3,093</td>
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<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>10,206</td>
<td>9,538</td>
<td>2,845</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>10,501</td>
<td>9,492</td>
<td>3,285</td>
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New transfers—Bellingham

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>1,972</td>
<td>1,633</td>
<td>1,092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>2,030</td>
<td>1,659</td>
<td>1,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>2,069</td>
<td>1,699</td>
<td>1,137</td>
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New transfers—other locations

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<tr>
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<th>Applied</th>
<th>Admitted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
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</table>

We continue to support several outreach and communication efforts to hold confirmations and convert them to enrollments: postcard writing campaign, social media contests, as well as messaging about COVID-19 vaccination policies, and phone calls by OIE graduate students (to follow up with students about advising and registration sessions and on-campus housing applications). Additionally, we ramped up on-campus tours—with opportunities to see residence hall rooms—offering an experiential component that had been absent since March 2020. Trying to reach as many nonresident first-years and their families as possible is a focus of our work. This year, they represent a larger number and percentage of both our first-year and transfer new student cohorts, thus representing a more sizeable risk to enrollment, which is magnified by the pandemic.

Recruitment Scholarships—New Model Used for Fall 2021

We are also taking stock of some of the tactics deployed this year, with special attention on the new recruitment scholarship awarding plan. With this year’s ratification of a permanent test-optional policy for reviewing applications for admission, the practice of using standardized test scores in the awarding of recruitment scholarships had to be reimagined. The process of
creating a scholarship model is challenging enough, but we had multiple variables that were changing at the same time—beyond the elimination of standardized test scores. We had little ability to rely on trends, since the pandemic had upended common expectations about student preference and behavior. Additionally, we were making the shift to a process of awarding dollars from a placeholder account rather than directly awarding specific funded accounts. This is a more streamlined process and allows for better matching of students with donors. Assigning specific funds to students at the time of admission requires ongoing re-awarding as students make their college choices. We also had a lack of reliable data tracking the impact of recruitment dollars on student enrollment.

Our foundational goal was to strategically extend institutional dollars to as many new first-year students as possible, making the Western proposition more attractive and attainable (considering our competitive tuition price point). We have been able to extend recruitment dollars to more students and have stayed within our scholarship budget. This will give us an excellent foundation on which to further develop our new scholarship model.

Fall Insights
Much time and attention are being focused on moving students toward compliance with the COVID vaccine policy. We continue to message the different categories of students with instructions and information; work to make the necessary systems adaptations to allow internal tracking and communication; and coordinate with the Student Health Center, Academic Affairs, and COVID Support to ensure that we are addressing all points of concern and making that information available to students and families. This work is challenging in scope and made more challenging by the varied positions that individuals have about the virus and the vaccine, but we understand deeply its importance in allowing us to achieve our vision for the move back onto campus this fall. So far, we have more than 8,500 students who have met the requirements of the COVID vaccination policy.

Enrollment Management has partnered with University Marketing and Communications, Admissions, Financial Aid, and the Registrar’s Office to organize the “come-back campaign” to get the students who have sat on the sidelines during the pandemic to return this fall. We appreciate the work of Western’s marketing team. Donna Gibbs and her group worked with our marketing vendor to set up the ads, and a beautiful landing page is live with the new welcome back anthem that the Communications team developed. In late June and throughout July, the vendor delivered advertisements to the IP addresses of the students that EM identified as viable targets (about 2,100 former students). Internally, we are also driving a direct email campaign to those students and hope to get many of them back to their studies at Western. So far, 551 former students have taken steps to come back in Fall 2021 after sitting out for some part of the pandemic. Nonresidents in the “come-back campaign” are registering at a higher rate than residents: 33% of nonresidents in the campaign have registered for fall classes, and 26% of residents.

Looking Ahead
While we remain focused on our Fall 2021 efforts, we are ramping up initiatives for the Fall 2022 recruitment year. In early September, we will be launching the Slate and Coalition applications. In late-September, we will be updating the Net Price Calculator within Slate. As allowed by campus policies regarding health and safety and with guidance from health officials and the CDC, we will be returning to off-campus and in-person recruitment activities.
We are watching with interest the demographic landscape that is emerging from the COVID-19 experience. Below are several takeaways copied from the WICHE report “COVID-19 and Public School Enrollments and Graduates”, available at https://knocking.wiche.edu/public-hsgs-covid-19/.

- “The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have had limited effect on the immediate potential number of public high school graduates. But the overall positive leading indicators may mask negative impacts, and some students may be short of needed material or credits to graduate on time. Fast action is needed to avoid graduation dips, and there should be extensive focus on helping recent and forthcoming high school graduates to continue or resume postsecondary pursuits.
- The widespread public school enrollment declines in fall 2020 varied by race and ethnicity. If these reductions persist with coming school years, the pre-pandemic predictions of declining numbers of white public high school graduates would amplify and the predicted increase in graduates of color could be dampened.
- Younger grades had substantial drops in enrollment last year. If this pattern persists, coupled with the declining birth rate, which steepened in 2020, the number of public high school graduates would be greatly impacted long after the pandemic.”

Below is the juxtaposition of two viewpoints of projected high school seniors and graduates in the state of Washington:

- Blue Line: Enrollment count, by grade (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.) and projecting forward to their respective high school senior year (2032 for 1st graders, 2031 for 2nd, and so on; source: OSPI data dashboard)
- Red Line: WICHE’s projected number of WA high school graduates (Source: WICHE data dashboard)
In both instances, there is a slight increase between 2022 and 2025/26, beyond which time both projections suggest a decline (the Enrollment Cliff or Demographic Cliff as touted by some: https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/blogs/online-trending-now/second-demographic-cliff-adds-urgency-change)

Additionally, Washington presents other environmental and systemic challenges, featured below and represented by the following tables and graphs:

Washington high school graduates are not enrolling in college at competitive rates (the continuation rate). Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)
The percentage of high school seniors who complete a FAFSA continues to be a concern. (Washington is currently at just under 42%, ranked 48th.) Source: FAFSA Tracker, sponsored by the National College Attainment Network at https://formyourfuture.org/fafsa-tracker/.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Washington's Competitive Landscape (Fall 2019 Data)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WA High School Graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Continue to College within 12 months</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Continuation Rate% (usually ranks in bottom 5</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Continue to College In-State</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Note: Ranked 22nd</em></td>
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| Number of Post-Secondary Institutions in Washington | 74 |
| *Note: Ranked 19th*                                |    |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Net Migration of High School Graduates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Migration (Entering WA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Out Migration (Leaving WA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Note: WA is among 13 states that &quot;export&quot; students</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Tables 219 and 309*

The percentage of high school seniors who complete a FAFSA continues to be a concern. (Washington is currently at just under 42%, ranked 48th.) Source: FAFSA Tracker, sponsored by the National College Attainment Network at https://formyourfuture.org/fafsa-tracker/.

II. Registrar

Fall 2021 Registration
Phase I registration opened three weeks later than usual on June 2nd, due to the rescheduling of the majority of classes to be face-to-face, following the announcement by President Randhawa that Western will require COVID vaccinations for students, faculty, and staff before returning to campus for fall quarter. Phase I registration closed on July 18th. The Registrar’s Office is currently working closely with New Student Services, Admissions, and the Academic Advising Center to ensure a smooth registration process for incoming students, which includes overseeing the reservation and release of course seats to provide new students sufficient access to courses. To give students who had already registered for fall a chance to make adjustments to their schedules and to allow new transfer and continuing and returning students who had not yet registered an opportunity to register, a Special Registration Session was offered from August 6-9, in between new student registration sessions. Approximately 250 students, who were not registered for Fall 2021, were able to secure fall classes during that special registration opportunity.

COVID Vaccination Policy Compliance
For the health and safety of our campus community and in compliance with the policy requiring proof of COVID vaccination status prior to returning to campus for Fall 2021, the Registrar’s Office is currently partnering with the Student Health Center to develop a method for indicating when students are in compliance with the policy. Various processes and reports are being developed to indicate COVID vaccination policy compliance, allowing students to move into University housing, attend in-person courses, work on campus, and participate in on-campus activities.

Fall 2021 Grading Policy
In May 2021 the Faculty Senate deliberated about Fall 2021 grading and made a decision to return to standard grading policy. All pandemic-related temporary grading policies will expire at the end of Summer 2021. The Registrar’s Office will work to remove transcript annotations and all processes and procedures previously required to comply with the temporary grading policies due to the pandemic.

Residency
In the last legislative session, the legislature made changes to state law regarding how students may qualify for residency. These changes have significant ramifications to our work, residency processes, and how many students will qualify for residency. We are getting guidance from the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) and the Attorney General’s office as to how those changes are to be interpreted, and we are working with residency colleagues at the other Washington public universities to determine appropriate action. We are still in the early stages of assessing impact to residency decisions and to tuition revenue.

III. Student Aid

Financial Aid Preparations for Fall Quarter 2021
After 2021-22 tuition, fees, and housing rates for University Residences were set in June, Financial Aid began awarding for actual costs and awarded $70.2 million to 5,639 returning students. The team is working to revise new first-year and transfer student aid offers (that used estimated cost figures) with the finalized figures.
Demands for aid recalculations using income for an alternate time period are at an all-time high because the 2021-22 FAFSA requires reportage of prior-prior calendar year income from 2019 (pre-pandemic). In many cases, income from 2019 no longer represents the abilities of students and families to pay college costs. Financial Aid Counselors are recalculating aid eligibilities in much larger quantities than usual, in addition to their regular file review, advising, and programmatic duties as we approach fall.

To streamline aid processing next year, the U.S. Department of Education waived verification requirements in July. This is equivalent to waiving audit requirements associated with FAFSA reportage. However, they did not waive the requirement that aid offices resolve conflicting data. Since Financial Aid had already requested documents such as tax transcripts from students who were selected for verification by the U.S. Department of Education beginning in January of 2021, most verification documents are already on file. Financial Aid is required by federal law to review them to determine whether conflicting data exists and if so, resolve any conflicts. Financial Aid does not have the authority to return the documentation to students or otherwise disregard the records received. While we appreciate the regulatory flexibility that has been provided and acknowledge that it will help a bit, it was too late in coming to serve as a source of much workload relief.

Vaccine Incentive Scholarships

Western Washington University was pleased to have the opportunity to award vaccine incentive funds granted by the governor, and we wanted to use them in a way that met the intent of the Governor’s Office. To that end, we needed to establish a structure that didn’t just give funds to students who had already been vaccinated but to encourage students to get vaccinated. We coordinated with colleagues from the other Washington public universities, established parameters, and were able to meet the goal of having $10,000 awarded by the end of July. We have awarded 10 students each a $1,000 scholarship that will be disbursed with Fall 2021 financial aid.

WWU Enrollment Management took the lead on designing the program (with guidance from legal counsel), advertising the scholarship opportunity, notifying students of the eligibility requirements, and selecting the recipients by random drawing. The Financial Aid Department’s Scholarship Center has worked directly with the student recipients to ensure notification and awarding of the funds.

On July 2nd, we sent out an email about the scholarship opportunity to all students who 1) successfully completed at least 6 credits in Spring 2021, 2) did not graduate in spring or summer, and 3) were registered as Washington residents. We also created a webpage about the scholarship, advertised the scholarship opportunity through WWU social media, and posted a story about the scholarship opportunity in Western Today. Of note, in our materials we did make reference to the Governor’s Office as the source of the scholarship funds and linked to the State’s “Shot of a Lifetime” program website. There were two additional criteria that students had to meet to be eligible to be included in the drawing for the scholarships. By Sunday, July 18th, students had to both register for classes for Fall 2021 and submit proof of COVID vaccination to Western’s Student Health Center through their student health portal. This gave us additional opportunity to provide vaccination information to students and instruct them about the process for meeting our COVID vaccination requirement.

On July 20th, we conducted the drawing from the pool of eligible students. By random drawing, 10 students were selected. Those names were passed to the Financial Aid Department’s Scholarship Center, and the Scholarship Center followed up with students to notify them and to
arrange for the posting of the scholarships to students’ accounts for Fall 2021. With student releases, we have posted the names of the scholarship recipients on the scholarship website at https://www.wwu.edu/coronavirus/vax-scholarship-drawings.

HEERF III (Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund III)
Western was awarded a total of $16,100,922 in HEERF III allocation to award to Western students with exceptional financial need. The first HEERF III awards were made in July to fund students experiencing financial crisis. Financial Aid will continue to award HEERF III to students on a case-by-case basis and is scheduled to award our neediest summer students in batch mode within the next few weeks. Discussions are taking place among University stakeholders to award HEERF III to students with exceptional need in a collaborative and timely manner for the upcoming academic year.

As a condition of accepting HEERF III funding, schools are required to conduct direct outreach to financial aid applicants about the opportunity to receive a financial aid adjustment due to the recent unemployment of a family member or independent student, or other circumstances, described in section 479A of the HEA.

Western’s Student Employee of the Year Wins State and Regional Recognition
Western student Ruby LeClair was named the Washington State Student Employee of the Year and Student Employee of the Year for the Western Association of Student Employment Administrators.

Ruby worked in the Accounting Department for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, a free service that prepares tax returns for qualifying students and low-income community members. Free tax preparation has been essential to help low-income students and community members receive their COVID-19 stimulus checks. Ruby recruited over 50 student volunteers and collaborated with the Internal Revenue Service, Opportunity Council, Whatcom Community College, and Western’s Accounting Department to leverage use of digital technology to serve students and community members in need.

Postponement of New Veterans Disclosure Requirements
In the interest of continuing to provide clear and accurate consumer disclosure information to Western students who are veterans, Financial Aid and Veterans Services collaborated to file a waiver with the Veterans Administration to postpone implementation of specific requirements associated with Section 1018 of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020.

Language discrepancies concerning veterans disclosure requirements are being examined nationally, and colleagues across the state and the country are reporting that they are not prepared to meet the requirements. Veterans offices in Washington universities are reporting that they will pursue a waiver of the requirement, and the Veterans Administration is expected to provide additional guidance in the near future concerning implementation of the Act.

Barring approval of a one-year waiver, the Act requires schools to estimate college costs and financial aid eligibilities for the entire duration of each veteran's program of study that would span multiple years. This new requirement has caused quite a stir among financial aid offices across the country, as it is a significant paradigm shift in award notifications. Unfortunately, such information is unavailable and would create confusion among students, with the issuance of two financial aid notifications instead of one. The first aid notification would include a partial financial aid offer with educational loans excluded, and the second would
include all aid eligibilities including loans. Financial aid notifications from most schools convey aid eligibilities for all programs for which students are eligible using mainframe software, so providing a partial notification of aid eligibilities would require systems software modifications. It should be noted that the bulk of the financial aid notifications have already gone out to Western students.

IV. New Student Services/Family Outreach

Orientation, Advising, and Registration (OAR) Programs for New Students & Families

Sessions for Fall Advising & Registration kicked off on July 21 for new Transfer and Post-baccalaureate students, with six sessions held in late July. A total of 867 students attended those sessions, compared to 839 last year and 887 in 2019. The sessions featured a small group advising appointment in the morning, optional academic department drop-in advising mid-day, and an individual registration appointment in the afternoon, all led by faculty, staff, and student academic advisors.

Advising & Registration sessions for new First Year/Running Start students kicked off August 2 and will run Monday through Thursday until August 26. One final session will be held on September 20 just prior to the start of classes to ensure that any late admits or students who could not make the August sessions receive academic advising and support for course registration. Many of the sessions are full, but students continue to make reservations for remaining available sessions in mid- and late-August.

Orientation is online in 2021 with virtual events running in July, August, and September. Visit the New Student and Family Orientation website (https://orientation.wwu.edu/) to view Orientation. With more time to plan this year, departments were able to create a more robust set of events. This year we have over 30 Live Events, and have curated over 70 pre-recorded informational resource videos from a wide variety of academic departments and campus services offices. Additional resources can be found at Welcome New Students! and Welcome Families!

Some examples from NSSFO include a series of events led by our Orientation Student Advisors. These events help new students connect to other new and current students about a wide variety of academic, personal, and social resources and opportunities. Events include How to Get Involved (options for student engagement, time management), Hidden Gems of Western (navigation routes, unique study spots, fun facts), Outdoor Activities in Bellingham (campus equipment rental services, student transportation options), How to Be a Bellingham Foodie (learning about local cuisine, on and off campus dining options, navigating dietary or cultural needs around food), and more.

Additionally, we are hosting a series for parents and families called “New Viking Families On Board" that provides resource overviews, insights from current students, tips on how families can stay connected to Western, as well as offering appointments with our Family Outreach Manager for small group dialogue with other family members or individual appointments for support. NSSFO is also producing some podcast-like interviews between current students and their families about the transition to university life, using real conversations and storytelling to encourage dialogue, answer questions, and present different takes on the student-family partnership.

Western Welcome Week
Planning for Western Welcome Week continues in its new highly collaborative process. A team of over two dozen campus partners are part of the Welcome Week Collaboration Team. Team meetings are scheduled weekly, and attendees share updates and plans for events, strategize on resource sharing and event transitions, and problem-solve together. Additionally, COVID Support Team representatives are also attending to provide guidance on policies and protocols as they evolve.

The WWW Team established a date range to anchor campus activities, which will be the week surrounding the first day of classes in Fall Quarter (2021: Sunday, 9/19 – Saturday, 9/25). Additional conversation is expected to frame welcome activities and time frames for Winter, Spring, and Summer Quarter. The Marketing team in University Communications has developed a visual identity for the week to tie advertising and communications together across campus, and the Web Tech team will build out a new WWW website for an event schedule and resources.

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

The week kicks off with Move-in activities organized by University Residences. Core events currently anchoring the week include New Student Convocation, Fall Info Fair, Associated Students Outdoor Movie on the Lawn, Viking Union Late Night, a weeklong Bike Fest, LGBTQ+ Queerientation, and campus tours, along with International Student Orientation and a final session of Advising & Registration for new first-year students. The schedule will also highlight activities for several weeks beyond the opening week of the quarter to generate interest and engagement early in the quarter, including all-campus events such as the West Fest music festival, Black Earth Day, and Fall Family Weekend.

Fall Family Weekend 2021
Fall Family Weekend will be held October 15 - 17, and it will feature a continued combination of virtual and in-person events. Planning is underway for the weekend, and we anticipate featuring guided bike trips, highlights of Student Research in Action, as well as virtual tours and events for those unable to travel to campus.