LETTER FROM KIM O’NEILL

As a first-generation college student, former high school teacher, and having built a career in public higher education, I genuinely appreciate the value of education. When the opportunity to apply to be the next VP of University Advancement and President and CEO of the Western Washington University Foundation presented itself, I considered how my career in philanthropy could add value to the excellent reputation Western has as a leading liberal arts institution. As a native of the Pacific Northwest, I have always been impressed by Western’s commitment to inclusive success for all students and a quote I read from President Randhawa galvanized my decision to pursue this opportunity:

“Western and higher education institutions across the country have a moral imperative to expand access to higher education, particularly for students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds. But we have an added responsibility that goes beyond access; we need to ensure success is attainable for all students as well. Advancing access and success for all students is one of the most courageous and concrete ways to ensure equity, inclusion, and opportunity.”

And as I spoke with the search committee, board members, and Western staff during the interview process, I knew Western was where I wanted to continue my career because of the philanthropic investment from alumni, community members, parents, corporations, businesses, private foundations, and friends of Western to help achieve the vision established by university leadership.

Following in the footsteps of Stephanie Bowers is a monumental task. Over two decades, she has overseen the significant growth of the Foundation’s assets and endowment, helping to create countless opportunities for students to discover, develop, and excel. She has earned this well-deserved retirement, and I am grateful she will be close by to offer advice and insight as I transition into this role.

In my research during the interview process, I watched the December 2020 Commencement video and paused at the statement, “The world can’t wait. Let’s change it.” These words have never rang more true than they do today in a global pandemic. Thank you for your leadership in promoting higher education. Together, we make obtaining a degree a reality for so many, which ultimately changes lives. The impact of Western Washington University is truly extraordinary.

I look forward to meeting you in person to share how philanthropy leads to student success for future Western Washington University Vikings.

Kim O’Neill
Vice President, University Advancement
President and CEO, Western Washington University Foundation
WWU’s sixth annual Give Day, held on May 27th, generated unprecedented levels of support for our students! You helped us meet their critical needs during a time when many are facing financial hardship, and you invested in transformational learning experiences that will shape their futures.

A record number of donors and dollars

2,500+ DONORS gave more than $1,000,000

Many thanks to the WWU Foundation Board for their leadership in securing $368,520 in challenge funds this year, a new record!

We welcomed nearly 700 FIRST-TIME DONORS, a 10% increase over last year.

We are celebrating an 18% INCREASE in the number of gifts from Alumni.