TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: President Sabah Randhawa on behalf of Melynda Huskey

DATE: December 13, 2018

SUBJECT: Admissions and Enrollment Summary

PURPOSE: Information Item

Current Year 2018-2019 Enrollment

This fall we were pleased to have welcomed the largest entering class (3,147 first-year students and 1,165 new transfer students) and the highest enrollment (16,121) and percentage of diverse students (26%) in the history of our institution. Based on applications and confirmations received so far, we expect freshman and transfer enrollment for winter and spring of 2019 to be similar to last year.

Fall 2019

Recruitment challenges are on the horizon for Fall 2019, however.

As of the most recent report, we have received 337 fewer applications for admission for Fall 2019 from first-year students, a 6.7% decrease compared to the same time last year. We have deployed a number of measures to mitigate this trend as we near the January 31 application deadline: admission application workshops at high schools in Whatcom, Skagit, and King counties; a four-night Admissions telethon; the purchase of 9,000 additional names with the College Board (SAT test-takers); enhanced digital marketing messages near the time of the deadline and expedited application processing for qualified students. We will expedite the awarding of financial aid as well.

In fact, recruitment for next fall has been in full swing since late August, when high schools began their academic years. Admission Counselors have represented Western at hundreds of college fairs, high school visits, and community college events in 10 states: Washington, California, Oregon, Alaska, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, Utah, Idaho and Montana. Additionally, in late October, Admissions hosted a successful Western Fall Welcome: 1309 students, parents, and other family members attended a wide range of offerings, including information sessions, student panels, and campus tours to acquaint themselves with Western. The 1,309 attendees represents an increase of 11.1% compared to last year.

Early indicators suggest that Western is being impacted by the decline in the number of high school seniors in the state (from 92,559 to 83,826, a decrease of nearly 10%) as reported by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Another development that could reduce enrollment of first-year students is the voter-approved Seattle Promise scholarship program, which will provide free community college to Seattle public high school graduates. Using Fall 2018 enrollment data as a guide, we estimate that full implementation of the Seattle Promise program will prompt approximately 200 resident students who would otherwise enroll at Western to consider attending a community college instead.
Washington community colleges are suffering declines in enrollment as well, which in turn have reduced the number of transfer applications we receive. For Fall 2018, we received 2,210 transfer applications compared to 2,484 for Fall 2017, a decrease of 274 applications. Although it is early in the admissions cycle for Fall 2019 transfer students, we have received 94 transfer applications so far compared to 109 at the same time last year. The most recent data available shows that our top 10 feeder colleges (Whatcom, Bellevue, Skagit Valley, Everett, Cascadia, Shoreline, Green River, Edmonds, Olympic and Clark) have collectively experienced a decline of 7.3% in student headcount between Fall 2013 (69,081) and Fall 2017 (64,037).