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 & Marketing
DATE:       December 10, 2021
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
November brought unprecedented rainfall and historic flooding to Whatcom and Skagit counties which has kept our University Communications, Community Relations and Small Business Development Center teams busy with emergency communications and outreach to affected communities.

It has also been a busy time for University Marketing as we prepare to launch another campaign focused on Financial Aid resources and FAFSA/WASFA completion in the December-February timeframe. This will also mark the University’s first foray into targeted digital outreach to Spanish-speaking households.

URM has also been busy recruiting new employees as higher ed has proven not to be immune to the Great Resignation sweeping across virtually all sectors in the U.S. In particular, we have been rebuilding our visual media team, and we are excited to welcome a new Director of Visual Media Production whose work at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor earned him an Emmy Award for a long-form documentary shot high in the arctic ice sheet of Greenland. His prior experience also includes related work at the University of Texas, Austin and Stanford University, in addition to video production work with many established global brands including Audi, Bosch, BMW and General Motors.

We are also very pleased with five strong finalists for a new Visual Journalist position all of whom are equally skilled at photography and videography. Finally, we will begin a search in January for a new Director of University Communications to replace Paul Cocke who will be retiring this month after a 18-year career at WWU. This provides URM an opportunity to do a national search for a strategic communications leader who is well versed in proactive outreach strategies that go beyond traditional local and regional media, with a focus on more far-reaching modern media platforms and utilizing more visual storytelling and sophisticated issues management skills.

UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

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

Our office continued to provide broad, rapid and intensive communications support for Western’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These efforts included:

- Interim director and Western Today editor John Thompson continued to provide support for Western’s COVID Response Team and its associated structure of campus stakeholders, from the Student Health Center to Counseling, Health & Wellness, Enrollment & Student Services, Academic Affairs, the Western Libraries, and more. Thompson also worked with the COVID Response Team on a complete rebuild of the campus’ coronavirus dashboard, resulting in more data being displayed via a much more user-friendly design that is updated weekly.
- The office continues to be a focal point for response to inquiries from parents and students in advance of the start of winter quarter, as well as media response and other communications requests. As the campus approached Thanksgiving break, the office had worked with campus, local, regional, and national media on coordinated, planned responses to more than 40 reporters and their stories since the academic year began.
A full campus and stormy fall weather has resulted in a jump of crisis messaging as well, and Thompson has worked with stakeholders from the University Police Department, Environmental Health & Safety, Human Resources, Facilities Management and others on messaging regarding everything from how to prevent bike thefts on campus, to the new LiveSafe campus safety app and weather-related messaging from windstorms and last week’s devastating floods. This trend is likely to continue as we get into snow season.

Social Media Coordinator Zoe Fraley has been busy sharing all of the great events and resources available at Western now that more students and activities are on campus, and she has been playing with more interactive short video content for Instagram Stories that help provide a sense of place on campus. She has developed a weekly event listing for Instagram and Facebook Stories and feed posts that run each Monday morning that highlight events for the week, from AS and Athletics events to academic speakers and campus-wide events, with links to the Western Involvement Network and our campus calendar to explore more. Those Stories posts generally have our highest reach and engagement each week with 3,000 to 4,500 impressions during the 24 hours they are up. Our usual stories from shared posts and other campus accounts average 2,500 impressions in 24 hours.

After attending several of the sessions at the free online Adobe MAX conference, Zoe began working in Adobe Spark to create branded social media templates and a Western brand library that others could use for Instagram Stories and social posts, working with University Marketing to ensure that each template was branded appropriately and designed to their standards. During fall’s Social Media Committee meeting, she gathered a list of communicators who would want to use those templates and was able to invite more than a dozen communicators across campus to access those templates through Spark, giving folks who work on social media more tools to create branded posts without each person having to start from scratch. She hopes to build that collection of templates based on group feedback to ensure that it remains helpful and relevant.

In publications, the fall edition of Window magazine was delivered the first week of November to nearly 130,000 alumni and other friends of Western. We’re already at work on the winter edition, expected in February, with stories about how alumni supply-chain professionals are weathering a once-in-a-lifetime disruption of global supply chains; a veterinarian who works with the CDC on stopping the next pandemic; and a former WWU basketball star who returned to Western to finish his degree at the encouragement of his old coach and with financial help from the Western Foundation.

Western also continued to receive notable media coverage, including:

- The office worked with the Bellingham Herald during November’s flood to successfully pitch two stories that tied Western’s research expertise into the evolving breaking news of the worst flooding in more than 50 years in Whatcom County. The first story, about how climate change is impacting fall rain events and forcing more precipitation to fall as rain instead of being stored in the mountains as snow, featured the research of Geology’s Bob Mitchell. The second story examined the impact of the floods on the Nooksack’s tenuous salmon populations, and featured the research that Environmental Science’s Jim Helfield is doing in conjunction with local tribes.

- The office worked with Scripps Media to set up an on-campus television interview with Border Policy Research Institute Director Laurie Trautman about the impacts of the closed border on border communities; this segment aired in Denver, Tampa, Buffalo, Detroit, and San Diego. Trautman continued to be in the spotlight over the past month and was a source on numerous stories as the border reopened, from print media like the Bellingham Herald and the Spokane Spokesman-Review to online sources such as Yahoo! News.

- University Communications worked with more than 20 reporters who were following up on the tragic death of WWU student Axel Acosta Avila at the Astroworld Concert in Houston;
Media inquiries about Avila came in from such national outlets as NPR, the Los Angeles Times, New York Times, CNN, and more.

University Communications graphic designer Chris Baker also provided a range of design support, including:

- Window Magazine
- History Department Newsletter
- Transportation Office Infographics
- Career Services Annual Report
- Fairhaven World Issues Forum graphics
- Downtown office wall graphics
- WWU Financial Statements Report

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

METRICS DASHBOARD
SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2021

WESTERN TODAY

Total Sessions Top Stories
62,913

- A ‘bomb cyclone’ of rain, wind headed to Seattle area—[Link](#)
- New Mandated Payroll Tax to Pay for Long Term Care Benefits in Washington State—[Link](#)
- Requirements and Guidelines to Visit WWU’s Campus—[Link](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA

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.4% % gained
91 Engagements

.3% % gained
6,510 Engagements

3.3% % gained
62,060 Engagements

External Media

Total Stories
1,275

Top Stories

• One hundred years after Peace Arch was dedicated, U.S.-Canadian border remains closed, and experts worry about the implications – Spokesman-Review/Yahoo News

• Perseverance’s first major successes on Mars – an update from mission scientists – The Conversation

• Boston sheds more light on its relationship to slavery – Boston Globe

FAMILY CONNECTION NEWSLETTER

September
Audience: 14,220
Opened: 44.3%
Clicked: 17.8%

Top clicks for September: Housing Move-In, Orientation Event on Getting Involved at Western, Fall Family Weekend, Late night at the Rec Center, Let’s Get Things Started video, Paint B’ham Blue, Student Business Office, How to Pay Due Dates and Late Fees, Student Business Office.

October
Audience: 10,685
Opened: 27.6%
Clicked: 6.8%

Top clicks for October: Fall Family Weekend, AS Outdoor Center Excursions, Student Business Office, College of Fine & Performing Art’s “No Exit,” coronavirus cases by building.

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Total Projects 53

Featuring
• Window Magazine, fall issue
• President’s Report
• Alma Clark Opening Event cards/posters
• Guide to University Residences
UNIVERSITY MARKETING

SUMMARY

University Marketing is engaged in a range of work which includes paid digital marketing, collateral creation, video and photography production, brand management, and marketing planning & project management.

CAMPAIGN DIGITAL MARKETING

Beginning September 2021, URM launched the 2021-22 undergraduate digital campaign in partnership with Admissions as the primary enrollment and brand awareness campaign for WWU. This includes display, display retargeting, Snapchat, YouTube, Pay-per-click, Audience Select (list targeting), and Facebook/Instagram advertising which runs for a six to nine-month cycle, depending on the platform. This year we are also including a transfer campaign (launching November 2021), and a graduate school campaign (launching October 2021) focused on general awareness plus a targeted effort for Weekend MBA and Rehabilitation Counseling (OCE supported programs). After our initial success in improving FAFSA and WASFA completions last year, we will launch another Financial Aid focused campaign running December 2021-February 2022 targeting parents in addition to the University’s first Spanish-language targeting advertising.

At-a-Glance (September 1 – October 31, 2021) Undergraduate Campaign (General awareness and Early Application messaging)

- Total Impressions = 12,301,189
- Total Ad Clicks = 61,621
- Total Conversions (Application or RFI button clicks) = 1,043

At-a-Glance (October 2021): Regional/Everett Graduate Campaign

- Total Impressions = 849,597
- Total Ad Clicks = 376
- Total Conversions (Application or RFI button clicks) = 1

COLLATERAL CREATION (GRAPHIC DESIGN)

In September and October, the designers collectively worked on 104 projects and produced 474 individual assets.

Notable projects include:

- Ad Creative for Campaign (Undergrad, Grad, Transfer, Parents, and Spanish-Speaking Households)
VIDEO AND PHOTOGRAPHY

September and October Video & Photography
- Engaged in the ongoing transfer of working footage into Studio Network Solutions EVO, our new media management and collaboration system
- Alma Clark Glass Hall Dedication feature video
- Alma Clark Glass Hall video tour
- Indigenous People’s Day feature video
- Indigenous People’s Day livestream event
- Five campaign videos for digital marketing efforts

BRAND MANAGEMENT

The creative team works with partners across campus to manage Western Washington University’s brand. This includes the development of design elements and assuring adherence to Western’s brand standards.

In September and October, the Creative Team:

- Completed brand identity work for the Ray Wolpow Institute for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity
- Started on brand identity work for:
  - Entrepreneurship and Innovation
  - Sustainability Education and Engagement Institute
  - Tribal Relations Office
- Continued University’s SEO strategy and interdepartmental collaboration, utilizing a “One Western” approach.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

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

TASTE OF BELLINGHAM TOUR

On October 6 and 7, nearly 100 new WWU students learned about the Bellingham community by visiting nine popular and inclusive restaurants. In collaboration with the Downtown Bellingham Partnership, students were given a guided, walking tour by WWU Admissions Student Representatives. At each stop, students met the owner or manager, learned about the restaurant, and sampled signature dishes. The nine participating restaurants included: Black Drop Coffeeshop, The Bagelry, Bantam 46, Mallard Ice Cream, AB Crepes, Cosmos Bistro, Boundary Bay Brewery & Bistro, Naan & Brew, and Flatstick Pub. We hope to engage the Alumni Office in underwriting this event and turning it into an annual start-of-the-academic-year event to build a bond between new students and downtown businesses.
HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

On October 8th, WWU partnered with 21 Community and Technical Colleges to offer a virtual Hispanic Heritage Month presentation by renowned Latina journalist Maria de Lourdes Hinojosa Ojeda. Hinojosa has been named three times as one of the 100 Most Influential Hispanics by Hispanic Business magazine for her work as a reporter for CBS, NPR, and CNN. Her presentation can be viewed at https://www.wwu.edu/hispanic-heritage-month.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’ DAY

On October 11, WWU led a partnership with Whatcom Community College, Northwest Indian College, Bellingham Technical College, Peace Health, City of Bellingham, Bellingham Public Schools, Lhaq’temisch Foundation, and the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community Education Department to offer a virtual celebration of Indigenous Peoples’ Day. Nearly 1,000 people registered for the event and 671 attended the virtual event. Additionally, many teachers in the Bellingham School District also live streamed the event to their classrooms and continue to share the presentation as a part of continued curricular teaching. The keynote presenter was Matika Wilbur, a Swinomish and Tulalip member who has traveled to over 300 tribal communities across the country to take portraits of Indian Country. The event also included student speakers from Whatcom County’s educational institutions and a performance from the Lummi Blackhawk Singers. A recording of the event is available through the end of November, in conjunction with Native American Heritage Month. It can be seen at https://www.wwu.edu/indigenous-peoples-day.

TRAILS TO TAPS RACE

On October 16, WWU once again made its beautiful campus available to the annual Trails to Taps Race which is a local relay celebrating Bellingham’s trails, parks and breweries. Dozens of runners passed through campus as a part of this community event.

MLK DAY

WWU is partnering with Whatcom County Education Partners, the City of Bellingham, and Peace Health to host a hybrid MLK Day Celebration on January 17, 2022. This in-person event will take place at the Mt. Baker Theatre in Bellingham and will include a virtual interview with Dr. Ibram X. Kendi. Dr. Kendi is the founding director of the Boston University Center for Antiracist Research and is a contributing writer at The Atlantic. He is also the author of many highly acclaimed books. In 2020, Time Magazine named Dr. Kendi one of the 100 most influential people in the world and in 2021 he was awarded the MacArthur Fellowship. Student speakers and local performers will also be a part of the event which will be live-streamed. More details can be found at www.wwu.edu/mlk.

TRIBAL LIAISON PLANNING

The Tribal Relations Department received a $2,000 donation from the Washington Women's Foundation to support Native student programming. Despite not meeting the criteria for two-year grant support, individual members of the Intersect committee made monetary donations in a spirit of support for the work done by the Tribal Relations department and WWU. We also submitted a Longhouse funding request to the Whatcom County Council for federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that the county is currently distributing.

The Tribal Liaison has engaged a Coast Salish tribal elders advisory committee who will guide the longhouse review committee with their knowledge of protocol and cultural expertise.
EVENTS

This year the Indigenous People’s Day was held virtually with approximately 670 people in attendance representing communities throughout the western U.S. from the Dakotas to Oregon. The event hosted the Lummi Nation Blackhawk Singers, Lummi elder Juanita Jefferson who provided the blessing, and keynote speaker, Matika Wilbur. This partnership demonstrated true collaboration with our neighboring community organizations who support Indigenous People. We were proud to be a part in this alliance and we have great plans for next year’s event.

The Tribal Liaison was invited to be a guest speaker for the First Generation College Celebration and to welcome the audience to the virtual space held on November 8, 2021.

TRAINING

The Tribal Liaison is currently working with the Woodring College of Education on government-to-government training with the Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs to be held in December.

ADVISORY FUNCTIONS

The Tribal Liaison continues to meet with Western staff and other organizations regarding tribal and Indigenous issues. The Tribal Liaison was most recently interviewed by a staff member of University Residences for their newsletter. The interview was informative for both Native and non-Native students who wish to learn more about the Tribal Relations department.

RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING

The Tribal Liaison continues to serve as a Trustee for Northwest Indian College. This partnership has proven instrumental in collaborations with WWU, NWIC and the Lummi Nation.

The Tribal Liaison has begun a partnership to develop an MOU for the development of professional programs for Whatcom County school leaders and educators with the Lummi and Nooksack tribes. This collaborative effort will instruct the process and extend the reach of the “Since Time Immemorial Curriculum” initiative.

The Tribal Liaison been invited to serve as a member of the cross-Pacific Indigenous Aquaculture Collaborative Steering committee which brings communities together to enhance and grow sustainable coastal food systems. Details will follow as this process progresses.

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER (SBDC)

BELLINGHAM HIGHLIGHTS

Q3 2021
Contract Deliverables

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Top Areas of Counseling: Start-up Assistance, Buy/Sell a Business, Managing a Business

Rolling 12-month Demographics
- Top Industries: Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services, Service Establishment, Manufacturer or Producer
- Annualized Sales: $289.4M
- Jobs Supported: 2,865

Highlights
- In Q3, created 10 videos describing and promoting SBDC services and value proposition, distributed via newsletters and website
- Worked with the City and Port to co-promote Working Washington grant opportunities
- Working with the WWU Foundation to identify sources of support for EDIA+ work, essential to building a more resilient County economy
- Working with WWU Procurement to increase supplier diversity and grow opportunities for local firms
- In coordination with the WWU Contracts office, responded to an RFP from the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) to educate employers about compliance support and resources available from L&I

KITSAP COUNTY

Q3 2021
Contract Deliverables

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<td>Information or Resources Provided</td>
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Top Areas of Counseling: COVID-19 Financial/Capital, Start-up Assistance, Managing a Business, Marketing/Sales

Rolling 12-month Demographics

Top Industries: Service Establishment, Accommodation and Food Services, Arts and Entertainment, Retail Trade
Clients’ Annualized Sales: $23.8M
Jobs Supported: 534

HIGHLIGHTS
Local Funding Partners: With impressive data to document the SBDC’s impact in Kitsap County, we are on track to expand local government funding from only the City of Poulsbo in our first two years, to all of the local governments for 2022 and beyond. Kitsap Credit Union has committed to three more years and we expect to get ongoing commitments from other lenders in the near future. Some of these are still in process and we expect to be able to have a full report at the end of the year. After just two years in operation, the Kitsap SBDC has achieved a client list of almost 400 small business owners.

BOTH COMMUNITIES

Industry Observations
Multiple industries are still experiencing difficulties of hiring and retaining skilled workers. Industries across the board are still experiencing delayed product shipments, out of stock issues, general supply chain delays and expense increases.

- **Retail (brick & mortar):** Supply chain problems continue which may dampen Q4 holiday sales. Some merchants are looking for more local/domestically produced goods which represents some opportunity for smaller retailers to compete with national chains. Shipping container shortages and shipping cost increase are driving up costs. Consumers continue to show interest in Buy-Online-Pickup-In-Store which can represent opportunities for our local merchants if they invest in e-commerce selling platforms or technology solutions.

- **Restaurant & Hospitality:** We are seeing some closures or exits from our local community in the restaurant/brewery spaces; however, there also seems to be plenty of willing entrepreneurs to step up and fill those vacancies with new business opportunities. Worker shortages continue to be a problem.

- **Healthcare:** Qualified providers of health care, services, and support may receive Provider Relief Fund payments for healthcare-related expenses or lost revenues due to COVID-19. These distributions do not need to be repaid to the U.S. government, assuming providers comply with the terms and conditions. We are assisting clients in preparing to apply for these funds and will be promoting the funding opportunity to the health care community.

- **Industries that were closed or severely limited (bars, gyms, entertainment venues):** Some gym/fitness businesses are offering hybrid models where clients can attend classes in person or online. As Delta variant problems intensified in Q3 some of these locations saw large numbers of cancellations of memberships and in-person visits to facilities drop substantially.

- **Real Estate/Construction:** Consumer spending on home improvement and remodeling projects has many contractors booked out far in advance. However, some disadvantaged populations are struggling to secure work due to language barriers.

WASHINGTON CAMPUS COMPACT (WACC)

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

In 2019, Washington Campus Compact was successful at procuring legislative funding for the Student Civic Leaders Initiative. This funding has supported student civic leadership fellows from across the state develop projects that addressed critical issues on campuses and in communities for the last two years. We will request funding again during the 2022 legislative session to continue support for this work. Student fellows will develop projects that address issues such as housing/food insecurity, mental/medical health, K-16 student success, breaking the prison pipeline, and environmental stewardship.

VISIONING TEAM/RE-BRANDING
Washington Campus Compact has been convening a diverse visioning team, representing institutions from across the state, to participate in a process of rebranding the organization. The
intent is to identify a new name by the end of the calendar year, and then launch the new brand in early 2022. The board will meet on December 16, 2021 to select the new name of the organization.

WEB COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (WebTech)

SUMMARY

Fall saw WebTech complete two major projects in collaboration with Admissions, the Office of the Registrar, and University Marketing that aim to directly impact recruitment.

The primary institutional website holds the webpages that describe the majors offered at Western. This site is one of our most highly-trafficked areas and is one of the first touchpoints for prospective students looking at what degrees and opportunities exist at Western. Based on user research, market research, and corroboration of that research with our external digital marketing agency, the pages were revamped, simplifying the user experience, with search engine optimized section headings and improved imagery and text to support keyword searches.

Two weeks after releasing the new pages, analysis of traffic and search terms show that 15 majors that had never received traffic from Google now are doing so. The traffic to the majors landing page is up 28.3% from the month prior where the old format was in place. Engagement with the landing page has increased 58%, nearly an additional 30 seconds per page. This we believe can be attributed to more meaningful content written in an engaging manner. Biology, Engineering, Business Administration, Art Studio, Anthropology, Elementary Education, Business and Sustainability, Marketing, Mathematics, Art Education, Finance, and Interdisciplinary Studies all saw 100% or more increases in active visitors to the page. Secondary Education saw an increase of 630%. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) can be a powerful tool for increasing traffic as evidenced by these numbers, and we intend to apply our learnings to additional highly-trafficked Admissions and Financial Aid pages.

The second project was aimed at supporting those seeking to transfer to Western through the Transfer Course Equivalency Guide. The guide has been available for many years but was struggling to deliver results for those using small screen devices such as phones and more modern web browsers. The revised system is now providing timely results and a seamless experience.

WebTech also built or assisted in a significant way in the building of the Department of Modern and Classical Languages website, the Vice Provost Undergraduate Enrollment website, and a web application for helping stakeholders internal to Western understand Data Standards.

In a culmination of months of preparatory work, all Drupal 8 sites on campus – now numbering 90+ sites – were successfully upgraded to Drupal 9. This was necessary as several components of Drupal 8 were scheduled to no longer be supported at the start of November. Drupal 9 also aligns with our goals of providing faster websites to all users through a variety of new technologies we can now access.

WEB TRAFFIC ANALYSIS

Traffic across the institutional website increased significantly from the prior period before September 18th- November 12th. The engagement is being driven by traffic to the homepage, up 54%, most likely due to the preferred application deadline ending November 1st; the aforementioned majors pages, up 52%; and the current undergraduate marketing campaigns, up nearly 234%.
A highlight for the period is that Indigenous Peoples' Day ranked 9th in overall traffic for the period, with 8,055 views. The event was advertised on the homepage for two weeks and had broad community engagement outside of Western. The Academic Programs, Institutes, and Centers landing page was revised late in September and subsequently saw an 11,110% increase in traffic, with over 4,484 views. Unfortunately, that traffic did not continue onto the individual program, institute or center pages themselves. We will be continuing to refine this user journey with the goal of driving traffic to those program sites.
In response to project requests and ongoing support of the growing network of websites and applications across campus, WebTech created 198 work tickets between September 18th and November 12th. We were able to resolve 209 tickets overall which is the first time in several periods that we have been able to close more than open.

483 emails for support were received from September 20th through November 12th. A further 19.85% increase from the prior period. As can been seen in the chart, the rate of increased support requests does seem to be tapering as Western moves into the late Fall quarter.