WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
ITEM SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: President Bruce Shepard by Vice President Eileen V. Coughlin

DATE: October 9, 2009

SUBJECT: **Fall Opening**

PURPOSE: Information Item

Purpose of Submittal:

To provide an overview to the Board on the Fall Quarter 2009 opening.

Supporting Information:

Fall Enrollment Update: Although actual enrollment numbers will not be final until early October, Fall 2009 enrollment appears to be the largest in Western's history, with 13,793 students currently enrolled compared with a Fall 2008 record number of 13,777.

With economic uncertainty consuming this year's admissions and enrollment planning cycle and state funding dropping from 12,175 FTE in 2008-09 to 11,373 FTE in 2009 – 10, the primary enrollment driver has been to maximize course access while maintaining quarterly headcount and annual FTE at the same levels as last year. Enrollment in most categories has intentionally remained stable including approximately 2,700 new freshmen, the same as in Fall 2008. While overall transfer enrollment was reduced by approximately 80 students to compensate for a slight increase in the number of continuing undergraduates, the number of incoming transfer students entering with a transferable associate degree earned at a Washington community college actually increased by five students. And, as in Fall 2008, 37% of all undergraduates had earned credit at a Washington community college prior to enrollment at Western.

Actual fall enrollment numbers for the entering freshman and transfer class as well as overall enrollment will be provided at the Board meeting.

Early Registration: WWU implemented early registration, allowing continuing students to register for fall quarter 2009 beginning in May 2009 rather than in September as had been done previously. More than 94% of potential continuing students (9,870 students) took advantage of this opportunity. We also allowed new transfer students to register during Transitions; an advising and orientation program specifically for new transfer students. New freshmen registered for their classes during the Summerstart programs offered throughout August. This change provided availability of faculty and staff to advise students during the time of registration; provided an opportunity for the university to address enrollment trends and to adjust course offerings; allowed faculty to order course materials earlier to ensure availability for students; and student commitment to continuing at WWU prior to leaving for spring. We feel that this change has not only provided a better service to students but also provided critical advance planning information to departments.

Campus Housing: The opening weekend brought sunny days and warm welcomes. There were 350 volunteer "Helps" who answered questions, unloaded family mini-vans, and directed traffic around the residence halls. Bruce and Cyndie Shepard and Eileen Coughlin joined the Help crew on Sunday up at the Ridgeway complex, carrying boxes and chatting with parents and students. University Residences was able to meet all requests for housing the fall and has the flexibility to respond to last-minute needs. Actual housing figures for Fall 2008 will be available in mid-October.

Opening Week: A wide variety of events were once again offered to new incoming students, providing a great kick-off to the academic year.

- Approximately 310 new students and family members from out-of-state attended the Out-of-State Student Dinner at the Viking Union Multi Purpose Room on September 19.
- A series of academic success and major exploration workshops (totaling 17 sessions) were offered during Fall Orientation with participation ranging from 20-75 students at each session.
- Fall Orientation also features larger welcoming events such as bus and bike tours of Bellingham, Late Night at the Wade King Student Recreation Center, and VU Late Night as part of opening week.
- Student Outreach Services hosted 20 College Success Foundation Scholars for STEP (Student Transitional Education Program) an inaugural 3-day bridge program from September 16-19, connecting students to faculty, staff, and campus life while also creating a cohort community. This program, along with University Residences created a "learning community" in Edens Hall. This community will be utilized throughout the year to provide workshops and programming designed to sustain and build on the community relationship established during STEP.

  Student Outreach Services also hosted the two-day early move-in orientation, The First 48, September 19-20, hosting over 150 students and 100 parents/family members. The program is designed help students connect with each other and the institution through team building and campus resource orientation.

  Both programs are designed to increase the retention of low-income, first generation students by helping them and their families integrate more thoroughly into the WWU community.
- Hundreds of new and returning students gathered information and free samples from a wide variety of vendors and participants at the annual AS Information Fair, held on Red Square. Representatives from nearly 400 businesses, student clubs, and campus programs participated.
- Over 1500 new students attended Welcoming Convocation on September 22, a Western tradition that occurs the night before the first day of classes. Returning students, faculty and staff line the walkway from the Performing Arts Center to Old Main, welcoming new community members with great enthusiasm and energy.
- University Dining Services hosted a sustainable dinner in the dining halls on September 24. Western Reads, now in its fifth year, features the book *The Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan. A faculty panel will discuss the book on November 10. The author will be visiting campus on January 14, 2010.
- Now in its sixth year, ThisWeek@WWU posted the first week of information about upcoming events and deadlines on September 23. ThisWeek@WWU has evolved into a web-based communication with students receiving a weekly invitation to visit the website for featured stories and timely reminders. In 2008-09, the website averaged 2000 visits/month.

First-Year Programs: Western has created special first year academic programs designed to facilitate the transition of new students to college. There are two options available at WWU: FIGs (First-year Interest Groups) and FYE (First Year Experience) courses. Both options aim to help first-year students integrate into university life by encouraging a stronger sense of academic community. Students who participate in either a FIG or FYE during their first quarter at Western consistently receive higher GPAs than other first-year students at WWU.