TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: President Sabah Randhawa on behalf of Brent Carbajal, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

DATE: December 11, 2020

SUBJECT: Accreditation Update and Undergraduate Student Success

PURPOSE: Discussion Item

Purpose of Submittal:

In this session, Jack Herring, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education will provide an update on accreditation with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) and new federal regulations that relate to accreditation requirements in higher education. He will also discuss student retention during the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing efforts to support first-year students.

Background:

The US Department of Education has changed a number of regulations related to accreditation, effective 7/1/2020 (e.g. https://www.chea.org/review-us-department-education-final-accreditation-regulations). This includes the elimination of the previous distinction of “regional accrediting agencies”. NWCCU has also adopted a new set of criteria for accreditation this year and revised its process and calendar for review of institutional accreditation.

The efforts of WWU over the last 10 years to support first-year student retention through first-year interest groups and other forms of programming are working, with modest benefits seen across a range of students. This work is a strong foundation for meeting key strategic priorities in student success and educational equity. In the short-term, however, the COVID-19 pandemic appears to have had a small but significant negative impact on retention of first-year students; some groups of students have been impacted more than others.

Strategic Questions:

1. How will the involvement of Trustees in the accreditation be changed with the revised NWCCU renewal process?

2. President Randhawa has challenged the campus to increase overall graduation rates by 10% while closing achievement gaps for students of color. What sorts of efforts will be necessary to achieve this large step in moving WWU towards its strategic goals?
Accreditation Update and Undergraduate Student Success

Jack Herring
Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) Accreditation

- Adopted new standards for accreditation in 2020
  - Removed the “core themes” that were reviewed in parallel to standards for accreditation
  - Split compliance issues into a separate review process to happen with a report and evaluation visit in year 6 of accreditation cycle
- Responding to new regulatory requirements approved by the US Department of Education (effective July 1, 2020)
  - End of “regional accreditation”
  - Revised definitions of the credit hour
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) Accreditation

- NWCCU is working to hold all member institutions accountable for advancing educational equity
  - Disaggregating student success data along the lines of race, gender, income levels, etc.
  - Identifying key structural barriers to equitable student success
  - Allocating effort and resources to remediate those shortcomings
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) Accreditation

• NWCCU is also actively supporting member institutions as they cope with the COVID-19 emergency.
  • US Department of Education granted a waiver allowing universities to offer courses online without approval for distance education from accreditors.
    • Expires December 31, 2020.
  • NWCCU created an expedited process making this very easy for institutions that previously had been approved, overall, for distance education.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Department SLO Activity</th>
<th>University Assessment Activity</th>
<th>Accreditation Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>On hiatus during accreditation year.</td>
<td>NSSE (SQ)</td>
<td>Year 7 self-study (WQ), site visit (SQ)</td>
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<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>Assess one learning outcome for each degree</td>
<td></td>
<td>Year 1 report (SQ)</td>
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<td>2018-2019</td>
<td>Reaffirm departmental assessment plans; assess two learning outcomes for each degree</td>
<td>CLA</td>
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<td>2019-2020*</td>
<td>Close-the-loop reports on curriculum improvement (delayed due to COVID)</td>
<td>NSSE (delayed due to COVID)</td>
<td>Year 3 report (WQ)</td>
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<td>2020-2021</td>
<td>Close-the-loop reports on curriculum improvement (WQ); assess two learning outcomes for each degree (SQ)</td>
<td>NSSE (SQ)</td>
<td>Requested approval for all degrees online past Dec 31; approved by NWCCU</td>
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<td>2021-2022</td>
<td>Close-the-loop reports on curriculum improvement</td>
<td>CLA</td>
<td>Ad-hoc report on NWCCU recommendations 5 and 6</td>
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<td>2022-2023</td>
<td>Assess two learning outcomes for each degree</td>
<td>NSSE (SQ)</td>
<td>Year 6 NWCCU visit for regulatory compliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>2023-2024</td>
<td>Close-the-loop reports on curriculum improvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>Year 7 self-study; accreditation site visit</td>
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Student Retention During COVID-19

Retention of first-year students who entered in fall 2019 into fall 2020 was 79%. This compares to 82% in the previous three years.

- A small decline in retention was observed from fall to winter quarters
- When disaggregated, we see that the retention decrease was more significant among:
  - Out-of-state students
  - Students eligible for Pell Grants
  - First generation students
  - Asian students
WWU FIG Student Retention and Grades, 2010-2020
FIG Student Characteristics

• From 2010-2020, 6798 students have enrolled in a First-year Interest Group (FIG) (12.6% of all FY students)
  • This gives them a small (<25 student) seminar-style course that is linked as a co-requisite to two courses meeting General University Requirements.

• Over the decade that they have been offered, compared to students who don’t take a FIG, students in a FIG
  • Have slightly lower HS GPA
  • Have less transfer/ running start credits
  • Are more likely to live on campus
  • Are more likely to be a Black or Hispanic student
  • Are more likely to be Pell Eligible
FY Students by Admission Index

• The Admissions Index ranges from 0 to 100
  • Based on HS GPA and SAT or ACT test scores
• Average AI from 2010 to 2020 was 57
  • 60% of FY students AI was between 40 and 70
WWU FY Students by Admissions Index, 2010-2020

Number of FY Students

Admissions Index

Non-FIG Students  FIG Students
Retention of FIG students into 2\textsuperscript{nd} year

- As a whole, 83.3\% of FIG students were retained to the 2\textsuperscript{nd} year, compared to 82.4\% of non-FIG students.
- Retention of FIG students was greater than non-FIG students for those with admissions indexes of 40 to 60 at a statistical significance of p=0.05.
  - The only AIs where FIG retention was lower was from 0 to 20, but the difference wasn’t statistically significant
Students Retained to Second Fall by Admissions Index
2010-2020

Non-FIG Students
FIG Students

*: Statistically Significant
First Quarter Academic Success

- Students in FIGs register for more credits and have higher grades during the first quarter than students not registered in FIGs

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<tr>
<td>Quarterly GPA of Non-Fig Students During First Quarter on Campus</td>
<td>2.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quarterly GPA of Fig Students During First Quarter on Campus</td>
<td>2.96</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quarterly Hours Registered of Non-Fig Students During First Quarter</td>
<td>14.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quarterly Hours Registered of FIG Students During First Quarter</td>
<td>14.90</td>
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Questions? Comments?