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Academic Affairs Plan Overview – 03.13.18

Note: this document presents an overview of the intended Academic Affairs Plan initiatives, organized by their alignment to University Strategic Plan priorities. Though not presented here, final prioritizations, sequencing, and timelines will be included in the final version of the plan.

Introduction

In January 2017, the WOU Board of Trustees approved *Forward Together*, a strategic planning document that:

- established a new mission statement for WOU.
- will serve as a “roadmap” to guide the development of action items and initiatives to further that mission.
- is dynamic and responsive to changing conditions in the higher education environment.
- forms the basis for a renewed commitment to student success.

This document introduces and outlines an **Academic Affairs Plan** that will serve to operationalize the aspirations (**87** initiatives across five core pillars) of *Forward Together* through the lens of the current contextual and fiscal realities faced by the institution. This “plan for the plan” aligns its action items and initiatives to four *Refined Strategic Plan Priorities*:

- I. Academic Affairs will establish streamlined degree pathways and remove unintended barriers to **Student Success**.
- II. Academic Affairs will create purposeful and efficient structures and partnerships to ensure **Academic Excellence**.
- IV. Academic Affairs will maintain **Accountability** to stakeholders (students foremost).
- V. Concurrently, Academic Affairs will prioritize **Sustainability** through new (and continued) enrollments, retention, and foremost, graduation.

Guiding Principles/ Core Tenets for AA Strategic Planning

Given the current context and fiscal realities faced by the institution, this plan assumes *no new state funding* for the next 3-5 years and will instead focus on the *prioritization of resource allocation and simplification of internal systems and processes* necessary for effective stewardship of our students’ tuition dollars and strategic investment for future success. These actions will be primarily realized in several core areas:

1. A complete review of the entire Academic Affairs organization, including both colleges, for potential reorganization and redeployment of resources to best support (and align with) the strategic plan, operational needs, and NWCCU requirements.
2. Leveraging a streamlined curriculum and student support processes.
3. Prioritization of faculty workload structures and practices to improve efficiencies and enhance Academic Excellence (getting our faculty in front of our students and supporting faculty teaching).
4. Developing systems for transparency regarding current fiscal situation and costing metrics to inform “total cost of operation” and move beyond “local definitions of success.”

Thoughtful and earnest pursuit of the tasks and initiatives of the Academic Affairs Plan will properly position Western’s “academic side of the house” to provide the quality and value our students deserve, to reap the benefits of potential enrollment growth, and to fully realize the aspirations of *Forward Together*.

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Academic Affairs Strategic Plan Highlights (grouped by Refined Strategic Plan Priorities)

I. Academic Affairs will establish streamlined degree pathways and remove unintended barriers to Student Success.

- 1) *Finalize the restructuring of the undergraduate curriculum to align with the 180-credit framework.*
 - General education, BA/BS definition
 - Program major design with/without required minor
- 2) *Strengthen relationships with feeder community colleges, high schools, and other regional educational partners.*
 - Leverage the new streamlined curriculum to establish partnership agreements that address both curricular and fiscal issues (e.g., financial aid, tuition) with local CC partners.
 - Continue to support the Willamette Promise program and direct new efforts to enrollment of WP students into degree seeking programs.
- 3) *Institute coordinated and student-centered processes for cataloging, billing, scheduling, etc.*
 - Implement an online catalog.
 - Continue to explore potential for a simplified tuition and fee schedule.
 - Create and publish year-long course schedules.
 - Strengthen coordination of course scheduling and student course scheduling analysis functionality.
- 4) *Improve, expand, and centralize academic support services / Improve effectiveness of faculty academic advising in all areas.*
 - Cross-train Student Success and Advising personnel to increase student access to services.
 - Develop a university-wide standard for effective faculty advising guide (updated to reflect / take advantage of the simplified curriculum).
 - Increase coordination of tutoring efforts, explore potential benefits of centralization / unification, develop appropriate proposal.
 - Complete an analysis of current (and potential) transfer student onboarding systems and structures for the purposes of formally defining processes, personnel, and accountabilities.
 - Explore potential of centralized / embedded student “lifecycle” (first year + completion) advising structure, develop appropriate proposal.
- 5) *Increase accessibility and programmatic coherence of online (and other flexible format) offerings.*

II. Academic Affairs will employ purposeful and efficient structures and partnerships to ensure Academic Excellence.

- 1) *Improve faculty engagement with students.*
 - Re-examine university service load and course reassignments to maximize teaching and student engagement.

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- 2) *Strengthen partnerships with other university units.*
 - Strengthen partnerships with Strategic Communications, Student Affairs, UCS, Alumni / External Relations to strategically market high-impact programs and augment potential donor relations.
 - Improve operations in The Research Institute and Sponsored Grants Office to create synergies with academic units in providing pre and post award support and better coordinate extramurally-funded activities.
- 3) *Improve quality assurance for course offerings.*
 - Establish recommended quality assurance structures, metrics and processes to support faculty in development of classroom-based, hybrid and fully online (and other flexible format) offerings.
- 4) *Re-invigorate support structures and services.*
 - Re-examine and re-deploy resources, roles, and structures within Academic Affairs to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
 - Provost's Office
 - Faculty support units (e.g., international student instructional support, grant support, academic technology)

IV. Academic Affairs will maintain Accountability to stakeholders (students foremost).

- 1) *Establish mechanisms for prioritized resource allocation.*
 - Develop structures, processes, and practices to ensure that resources and efforts follow mission fulfillment priorities and are influenced by evidence.
- 2) *Remain in good standing with our regional accrediting agency.*
 - Address all outstanding and ongoing NWCCU reports and concerns satisfactorily.
 - Ensure that ongoing practices are mainstreamed and keep the university aligned with accreditation accountability.

V. Academic Affairs will prioritize Sustainability through new (and continued) enrollments, retention, and foremost, graduation.

- 1) *Develop new programs (both grad and undergrad) to attract new students; diversify graduate offerings.*
- 2) *Establish operations / deliver courses in a Salem facility.*
- 3) *In collaboration with Student Affairs, support adopted elements of the Strategic Enrollment Plan.*
 - Curriculum Accessibility
 - Freshman and Transfer Recruitment
 - Graduate Education
 - International Students
 - Retention