

2019-2021 Biennium Internal Budget Proposal Narrative

Division: Enrollment and Student Services

Evaluation Criteria: Proposals will be evaluated on every aspect of this template. It is highly recommended that the narrative portion touch on each area. Proposals forwarded to UPRC by unit leaders will be discussed at UPRC and authors are encouraged to attend so that they may answer questions and provide clarification.

Addressing Critical Staffing Needs in Academic Advising/Student Support

- This is a revised version of a previously submitted budget proposal.
If box is checked please briefly outline any significant changes and/or indicate why it is being resubmitted.

There has been an ongoing need for continued financial support in this area along with other student success initiatives, which have included both internal operating requests and decision package requests to the legislature. In the past, these needs have included multiple departments (e.g. advising, mental health, tutoring, and disability services). This request is specific to central advising and student support services provided by the Academic Advising Center and Student Outreach Services staff.

Statement of Purpose: *(What is the challenge or opportunity being addressed? How does the proposal address this challenge or opportunity? Limit response to 1 page – please link to any existing reports, data, supplemental materials, etc.)*

The retention and graduation of students, and particularly those from traditionally under-represented groups (e.g. Pell grant, first generation, or students of color) is at the center of the university's new strategic plan and metrics to measure "advancing inclusive success". At the core of that work is our ability at Western to reach students early in their academic experience to have conversations about their academic and long-term career interests, to ensure that they are on the right path for their intended major(s), and to help them to degree attainment in a manner that is timely and sensitive to the affordability of degree completion. Historically, research at Western has shown that students who utilize central advising services are retained at levels higher than non-users and that difference is often greater for those from under-represented groups. As the demographics of our institution continue to change, more students will be arriving less well prepared for college level work and will require our support to engage with the campus community and to take full advantage of the resources that enable them to be successful.

Western currently enrolls more than 3000 new freshmen and 1100 new transfer students each year. To be on pace to graduate in a timely manner, transfer students should declare a major by their second quarter at Western and students who entered as freshmen should declare by the end of their sophomore year or when they've earned 90 credits. Delayed major declaration and excessive changes in major are among the most significant factors contributing to graduation delays. In general, approximately 1/4 of our new transfers are undeclared at the end of their second quarter and 70% of native freshmen are still undeclared at 90 credits.

Professional staff in the Academic Advising Center (AAC) and Student Outreach Services (SOS) are charged with providing advising support for first year and undeclared students at Western. Based on current staffing levels, Western utilizes a voluntary advising model with mandated advising enforced only for undeclared students reaching 105 credit completion. This model places the responsibility on the student to take the initiative to seek out advising when they need it. The reality, however, is that this approach leaves students free to self-advise which is problematic because left on their own students frequently make poorly informed choices in regard to course selection and majors, resulting in delays in degree completion. Moreover, students often don't realize or recognize too late that they are off track and need assistance.

We currently face two major challenges in areas supporting central advising (Academic Advising Center and Student Outreach Services) – services critical to the retention and graduation of students. The first is that our staffing levels are simply inadequate to support student demand of providing advising support and facilitating timely major declaration and are well outside of industry standards of 1:350. Ideally, we would add more advisors but we don't have the space capacity to add more advisors in private advisor space, which is essential to the nature of the conversations these students are having. This isn't just about their academics...it is about their fears, financial demands to support their families, work commitments, basic needs for a family to survive. These are not conversations that need to be in the space of others. Yet, I am still asking for more staff. We will need to figure out how to be flexible. Simply denying our students access to these services is unacceptable.

Second, as we continue to invest and work towards improving those standards, the rate of enrollment growth at Western continues to impact our progress as there is no institutional formula that factors for additional staff in student support service areas that would help us “keep up” with that growth and address the service demands that also come with growth. As a result, even while we make inroads towards improving that ratio, there is an ongoing unreasonable workload expected of current staff that is impacting their retention as well.

In addition, opportunities have been identified to streamline and re-organize our services in these two departments (Academic Advising Center and Student Outreach Services) to reduce duplicative services, to buffer staff retention gaps, and to provide a more comprehensive service to our students. This will require some additional funding which is still unknown to support this restructure but which is estimated in the budget request as a “Good and Services” request until that restructure is fully identified.

Anticipated Outcome(s):

- Improvements in *retention* rates (aggregated by various stated sub-populations)
- Improvements in *graduation* rates (aggregated by various stated sub-populations)
- Earlier outreach to students with academic advising and student support needs
- Positive impacts on time to declaration of major and time to degree
- Reduction in student wait times to access academic advising and support services
- Improvements in retention rates of professional staff

Metrics: *(How will outcomes be measured? Please include current data points and goals. If this proposal will have any impact on the [Overall Metrics](#) included in the university's strategic plan, please indicate which specific ones here.)*

Providing greater access to advising and student success initiatives will have a direct impact on the metrics outlined in the university's strategy plan regarding first-to-second year retention, six-year graduation rates, and transfer four-year graduation rates.

- Enrollment data: #/% of students enrolled (yield) - overall and by cohort
- Utilization and effectiveness of Services: service contacts, student surveys (WELS, NSSE); departmental assessments of retention
- Excess credits: % of students graduating with excess credits
- Major declaration: average completed credits at declaration of major, # of major changes, # of 105 registration holds, timing of major changes
- Retention and graduation Rates: overall and by sub-populations
- Student to staff ratios
- Timely access: amount of time to access services
- Utilization rates: service contacts, # of students accessing services
- Retention and Graduation Rates for students who access the services
- Retention rates and satisfaction of employees

How does this proposal align with your departmental/divisional strategic priorities? *(Please reference specific items from the recently completed departmental/divisional strategic plan and attach a copy.)*

This proposal directly aligns with our division's goal to "increase access and persistence to graduation for today's diverse scholars and innovative leaders" and to our value to be "student-centered".

How does this proposal support the University Mission and Strategic Objectives? *(Please refer to the [2018-2025 Strategic Plan](#) and indicate which core theme(s) this proposal will help achieve.)*

Western's strategic plan speaks directly to advancing inclusive success, increasing Washington's impact and enhancing academic excellence. Academic advising and support is a core service in ensuring that a student is successfully retained and able to graduate in a timely manner, thus reducing unnecessary loan debt due to delays in degree completion. These services have a direct impact on our ability to attain the retention and graduation rates outlined in the strategic plan and to eliminating the achievement gap.

What are the consequences of not funding this proposal?

- We will continue to struggle to maintain and improve on retention rates for the institution
- High workload and service demands will continue to impact staff retention and morale

What alternatives were explored?

Requests have been submitted previously both in the form of state decision packages and internal budget requests. While some funds have been received they have not been enough to fully staff the need or to keep up with enrollment growth. The only other alternative would be to establish a

mandatory student fee but that would be passing the cost off to students and therefore was not deemed a suitable alternative.

Which units (departments, colleges, etc.) will be involved?

Academic Advising Center and Student Outreach Services

Equipment needed:

Items associated with hiring new staff (e.g. office equipment, phone, computer equipment)
\$3000 one-time cost.

For major (>\$25k) purchases, please provide the following information.

Item:

Not applicable

Purpose:

Not applicable

Cost:

Not applicable

Anticipated Useful Life:

Not applicable

Replacement Cost if any:

Not applicable

Human Resources *(Complete the table below adding additional rows if necessary):*

<i>Position Title</i>	<i>Total Headcount</i>	<i>Total FTE</i>	<i>Salary and Benefits per FTE</i>	<i>Total Cost</i>
<i>Academic/Career Advisor</i>	2	2	\$68,979	\$137,958
<i>See other Goods and Services for blanket reorg costs</i>			\$50,000	\$50,000

Table above should match data on budget spreadsheets submitted with this proposal. Complete the spreadsheet to get salary, benefit, and total cost amounts. Contact your division budget officer with questions.

Operating & Maintenance Costs (include service contracts, installation costs, etc.):

See excel spreadsheet (annual ongoing operating costs noted below PER POSITION)

\$1000 one time cost for recruitment per position

\$1000 Supplies & Materials

\$ 375 Computer replacement (every 4 years)

\$2500 Travel

Space Requirements:

What type of space is needed for this proposal? (e.g., private office, lab space, group work/study space, etc.)

Private office space for confidential conversations with students

What features must this space have? (e.g., fume hoods, plumbing, 3-phase power, etc.)

Not applicable

What needs can be accommodated within your existing space?

Needs can be accommodated within existing space though not all offices are private. Some are cubicle spaces.

How much new space will be required?

No new space would be required at this time.