

May 12, 2020

Colleagues:

The COVID-19 health crisis has affected much of what we do at Western and how we do it. This year's budget process is no exception. While normally at this time of year we would be sharing our recommendation from the Provost, Vice Presidents and Deans on decision package proposals that should be sent to Olympia for consideration by the Governor and the Legislature for funding, we find ourselves unable to do that this year, for the 2021-23 biennium. Instead, we describe below our approach to the decision package issue, preliminary and prospective at this juncture and until we have more information.

We'd first like to thank the faculty, staff and students who have participated in decision package development and vetting. Through the engagement of the campus community and the [Decision Package Proposal Criteria](#), we started with pre-decision package proposals made to the University Planning and Resources Council (UPRC) in the spring of last year. The UPRC and Budget Forum website helped elicit feedback from the campus to narrow down the pre-proposals to a more manageable number for further development and consideration during this academic year's planning cycle.

In the fall of 2019, the Provost, Vice Presidents and Deans utilized the feedback from last year to evaluate those pre-proposals, and refined eight proposals for deliberation again at the UPRC in February and March of 2020. We are of course in a different environment now than we were when the process began. The UPRC has conducted much of its deliberation and discussion through socially distanced methods, and its members' flexibility and dedication are much appreciated. The state economy is in flux, with the impacts of the coronavirus still being modeled and measured. Despite these challenges, we believe it is important to remain focused on advancing Western's mission and communicating our university's strategic priorities.

With the excellent advisement of the UPRC through its rankings and comments on the eight proposals, the Provost, Vice Presidents and Deans met on April 21, 2020, and then the Council of Deans met again on April 28, 2020, to discuss decision packages. These deliberations are always guided by several considerations: advancing our mission and values, reasonable possibility of garnering the requisite legislative support, and in this year's case how to contribute to the State's eventual recovery from the current health crisis. With that background, the Provost, Vice Presidents and Deans plan to discuss with the Board of Trustees an approach to the programmatic decision packages that would involve combining and refining the proposals listed below. It is also quite possible that Western - and the other five public institutions of higher education in the state, for that matter - will ultimately not submit programmatic decision packages, this due to the reality of the state's budget picture. We should continue to learn about that reality during the summer.

### **Programmatic Decision Packages:**

The following decision package proposals have been prioritized through the process described above. What we intend to accomplish in the coming interim is a certain combination of elements of these proposals that would situate Western very positively not only to increase its impact in the State of Washington, but also to continue to work toward accomplishing the Washington Student Achievement

Council's "70% achievement goal" in new and important ways during COVID-19 recovery and beyond. To articulate and enumerate new graduate programming responsive to professional needs in the public health, leadership, and management spaces, and to do this while enhancing our ability to foster inclusive student success, will be elements of this approach. We see the Ethnic Studies proposal as one that stands by itself, and we think it might be possible to link it to the combined proposal as well by possibly adding graduate programming in Ethnic Studies to the latter.

In addition, there is broad consensus for incorporating elements of the Center for Global Health proposal into the request as it is refined over the coming period. We also recommend continuing to pursue funding for the Western on the Peninsulas and STEM enrollments requests from the 2020 Supplemental budget session. Our work will continue as we further develop and in some cases combine these proposals.

### **Western's Graduate Programs ([full proposal](#))**

Although Western delivers high-quality Graduate education with strong student outcomes, years of declining enrollment and stagnant TA compensation levels have brought Western's Graduate programs to an inflection point. This Decision Package puts Western on a path to achieving the University's strategic goals for Graduate education while better serving the people of Washington State.

### **Advancing Inclusive Success ([full proposal](#))**

The work of Enrollment and Student Services (ESS) is critical to realizing the outcomes of Western's strategic plan, especially those goals associated with the core themes of Advancing Inclusive Success and Increasing Washington Impact. ESS is well-positioned to meet Western's ambitious enrollment, retention, and graduation goals, but requires increased resourcing to do so. This initiative – named *Advancing Inclusive Success* for the university core theme at the heart of the division's work – will add 28 staff FTE to support three key strategies: increasing enrollment through equitable access, increasing retention through inclusive engagement, and increasing student outcomes through holistic support.

### **Ethnic Studies Academic Initiative ([full proposal](#))**

This proposal will fund a major initiative in Ethnic Studies curriculum and student support services to create a home, academic and otherwise, for students of color and others interested in the study of race, ethnicity, and Indigeneity in the context of the United States, as well as related transglobal phenomena. If funded, this initiative will emplace at Western programs that will equip students with both the practical and conceptual tools to deal with our increasingly diverse and stratified society. This timely proposal also will fulfill multiple goals in Western's strategic plan and will help Western meet the Governor's goal of increasing the number OF degrees awarded in the State.

The current full versions of the decision package proposals above can be found in the [Budget Forum](#) on the Budget and Financial Planning website, where members of the campus community can share their input. All campus feedback will be considered as recommendations continue to be developed prior to a

discussion with the Board of Trustees at its June meeting. Please engage in the campus conversation using one of the following avenues:

- Provide feedback to your representative on [President's Cabinet](#).
- Provide feedback through your [UPRC representative](#).
- The [Budget Forum](#) is open through May 28<sup>th</sup> and will be monitored to receive feedback and answer any questions. It requires you to select the Log in button at the bottom of the page, and utilizes your universal WWU account for security validation.