

2021-2023 Biennium Internal Budget Proposal Narrative

Division: Enrollment & 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.

Advancing Inclusive Success – Student Support Services

- 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.

The institution submitted the “Advancing Inclusive Success” decision package to the State for the 2021-23 biennium. It was reduced in scope after submission to align with similar requests from other institutions. A portion of the request was for direct Student Support. If these are not fully funded by the legislature, Enrollment & Student Services respectfully requests funding for any remaining elements of the request as these are high priority needs as recognized by the institution’s budget processes leading up to the 2021-23 request. See below for a re-statement of the needs in the reduced package.

Note: Any items that were deleted from the original package but are still high priority, are being submitted separately for consideration. This document only covers the reduced Advancing Inclusive Success package.

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.)*

This initiative fills current gaps in inclusive engagement and culturally responsive services for an increasingly diverse student population.

The Disability Access Center (DAC) serves over 1,800 students each year, and requires additional staffing to provide federally-mandated accommodations services. The number of students served in the DAC has more than tripled over the last ten years, without concomitant increases in staffing. As a result, caseloads are now double the level recommended by our external program review. In order to comply with federal law and best practice, we need funding to hire two more full-time Accommodation Counselors; this request is for one of those Counselors.

As state and national demographics change and economic drivers shift, enrollment management is a critical undertaking for all parts of the university community. As we expand into other locations, centralized support will ensure consistent, compliant processes to support Western students everywhere they are. Two FTE in Admissions and Recruitment will help Western serve the needs of students and their families while facilitating increased access to higher education, particularly for underrepresented students. Additional **resources will be important to engage in FAFSA and WASFA completion campaigns** serving the growing number of students who need financial aid, and conduct targeted outreach for recruitment in our region and across the state. Additional resources will enhance

outreach to diverse populations of future students across the state and to reach them in non-English languages and through a variety of other modes.

With the rate of students of color gradually increasing at Western, this fall quarter saw the most diverse class of students ever admitted to the university (currently 26.9% students of color). Western must also expand Multicultural Student Services by hiring a highly qualified Director of Multicultural Services, complementary to our LGBTQ+ Director position, with a similar remit to plan, develop, and extend co-curricular services available to campus.

The Veteran Services Office (VSO) at Western currently serves about 460 benefits-eligible students per quarter, 530 unique students per year, and sees an increase of about 13% in this population each year – and does so with only one School Certifying Official (SCO). However, the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) recommends that institutions of higher education maintain a maximum ratio of one full-time SCO to every 200 benefits-eligible students. Therefore, additional funding is being requested to hire an additional School Certifying Official, bringing the VSO service ratio within range of the national standard, and to ensure benefits-eligible students can access VA benefits, Washington state tuition waivers, and other specialized services.

The Counseling Center has experienced a 30% increase in the number of students seeking services in the past five years (2018-2019 compared to 2013-2014). There is increased risk when students must wait for appointments, and little opportunity to intervene early in the course of student mental illness. Recognizing gaps in our current services, we also need to hire a doctoral-level licensed psychologist with expertise in multicultural counseling to lead outreach and support efforts and provide clinical expertise and leadership in this area, as well as add an additional Mental Health Counselor to be housed in the Student Health Center, as recommended by our most recent American College Health Association audit, to improve collaborative and holistic behavioral health care for our growing population of students with complex medical-psychiatric needs.

Prevention and Wellness is responsible for providing both primary and ongoing prevention and awareness programs related to sexual violence. A 2017 audit found that Western's health promotion programs, specifically for sexual violence prevention and response, were operating beyond capacity, even with strong collaborations with other departments and organizations. Accordingly, this strategy includes hiring a Sexual Violence Survivor Services Specialist with expertise in program development and services for underrepresented students, and includes funding to cover increased operational expenses.

With the exception of the academic programs in Ethnic Studies, this proposal represents expansions of current programs. While state dollars have been allocated to these areas over the past two biennia, the funds have only been enough to keep overall departmental staff to student ratios at a level that was below standard benchmarks to begin with due to previous budget cuts. We must invest more resources in these areas at a time when the needs of students are growing (e.g. acute mental health issues), and when different approaches are needed to recruit, support and retain more first generation, low-income and underrepresented students.

The current conditions in higher education as represented through the campus climate (curricular and student support) for undocumented students, LGBTQ+ students, transfer students, Black, Indigenous, and students of color, first-generation students, women, and other under-represented student populations, demonstrate a profound urgency to channel resources towards equitable access and attainment. With an ever-diversifying Washington state population and a proclaimed commitment from WWU to recruit and retain students, faculty, and staff from historically underserved communities, this proposal further supports the ongoing and long-term work of addressing systematic issues of equity and justice throughout our state. Fundamentally, the enrollment, retention, and graduation of our students impact and support all parts of the Washington community.

The consequence of not supporting the proposal is a staffing shortage threatening access, equity, and retention. If this proposal is not funded and adequate staffing is not provided for inclusive engagement, our departments cannot engage in the challenging and deep collaborative work necessary to transform institutional culture, practices, and policies to be just and equitable for diverse students. This will mean continuing to accept disparities in success and satisfaction between diverse students and their peers.

Anticipated Outcome(s):

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.)*

Performance Outcomes:

We expect this proposal, if funded, to increase the number of students at Western and the number of degrees awarded, particularly but not exclusively among students of color and underrepresented groups. Western will improve its working and studying climate for underrepresented groups, allowing students from such groups to feel more comfortable and safe at Western. Coupled with robust support services, this will improve enrollment, retention, and graduation rates among those students and their allies.

Anticipated performance outcomes expected to be achieved within two years include:

- An enhanced ability to recruit and retain high quality, diverse graduate students;
- Reduced average student debt levels at graduation;
- Increased diversity among new students (first year students and transfers);
- Increased enrollment at the other Western locations;
- Increased overall retention rates, aggregated by at-risk sub-population;
- Increased overall graduation rates;
- Decreased wait time for appointments with accommodations counselors;
- Increased engagement and retention of students with disabilities;
- Increased programming for students of color;
- Increased engagement and retention of underrepresented students of color;
- Timely VA notification of enrollment status of veterans and other eligible persons;
- Timely SAA notification of new changes in programs and institutional changes;
- Increased engagement and retention of military-connected students;
- Increased access and availability of counseling services;

- Increased follow-up with students;
- Increased same-day appointments;
- Increased group support;
- Increase programming to address prevention of dating violence.

Western will measure success of this proposal by monitoring the percentage of students, faculty, and staff of color at Western, and retention and graduation rates of students of color. In the first years following funding we will monitor enrollment percentages and retention rates most closely, since graduation rates take time to move significantly. Also, we will monitor satisfaction rates in the various surveys we administer to graduating students, staff, and faculty.

Each performance outcome in a) is measured against the respective numerical metric (e.g. degree production, demographic data, number of degree programs, student debt survey data, etc.) Additional important indicators include the volume and diversity of the applicants, retention and graduation rates, and time to degree relative to previous years.

Outcome	Current	Anticipated
Increased diversity among new students	30.8% students of color	35% students of color
Increased enrollment at the other Western locations	690	1291-1614
Increased FAFSA/WAFSA completion rates	» 50%	» 65%
Increased retention of students with disabilities	74%	87-90%
Increased retention of underrepresented students of color	78%	87-90%
Increased retention of military-connected students	TBD	87-90%
Increased overall retention rates	81%	87-90%
Increased overall 6-year graduation rates	69%	75-80%
Increased average number counseling visits per student	2.9	5.0
Increased availability of sexual violence survivor services	1/200 (provider/ student ratio)	1/50 (provider/ student ratio)

Without additional state allocations, Western cannot support the strategies described in this proposal, and the alternative is to continue our status quo of understaffed departments, unmet demand for academic programs and services, and decreasing direct support for students. Unless new state allocations support additional resources, the only other alternative is to establish a mandatory student fee, which is not an acceptable option if we are to maintain affordability for our students.

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.)*

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.

Specifically, ESS is understaffed in nearly every department, by both national and institutional standards – in fact, the 2018-2019 Strategic Resource Modeling report identified a gap of approximately 30 staff FTE (for the Bellingham campus alone) to maintain adequate staffing across the division, given planned enrollment increases. Additionally, many key departments lack funding to adequately meet operational needs even at current enrollment levels, and resources are limited for supporting students from diverse and under-represented populations. The proposed initiative seeks to bridge these gaps by strategically increasing resources for core service areas to meet critical demands associated with enrollment, and by proactively growing inclusive engagement services to meet the anticipated demands of a changing student population.

This initiative – named *Advancing Inclusive Success* for the university core theme at the heart of the division's work – has three key strategies: increasing enrollment through **equitable access**, increasing retention through **inclusive engagement**, and increasing student outcomes through **holistic support**. This initiative supports the work of twelve key departments across the division, and its strategies enhance critical services throughout the student lifecycle, from admissions and enrollment; to access and engagement; to progression, graduation, and post-graduate outcomes. The request - as reduced to the highest priorities for submission to the State - includes critical resources for a number of the departments diagrammed below: Admissions, Disability Access, Multicultural Services, Veterans Services, Counseling Services and Prevention & Wellness. Several of the remaining departments diagrammed below have been added back into the division's 2021-23 Internal WWU request (separate documents.) These include: Financial Aid, New Student Services/Family Outreach, Registrar's Office, LGBTQ+, and Advising/Outreach for At-Risk populations.



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.)*

Strategic Framework:

As WWU's current strategic plan makes clear, the university is committed "to advance[ing] inclusive success, that is, increase[ing] retention and persistence rates and the number of graduates, while eliminating achievement gaps for students from diverse and underrepresented socio- economic backgrounds." We strongly believe that strengthening supports and reducing barriers to achievement is a vital — indeed, necessary — approach in this task.

Our request affirms WWU's goal to bolster the intellectual life by "assembling, supporting, and retaining a diverse and engaged community of faculty, staff, and students" through active efforts to increase resources and supports for students from historically underrepresented communities and increase resources and support for faculty and staff who mentor students, particularly those who represent historically underserved communities. In addition, our request also affirms the university's goals to support "the development of multi-disciplinary curricular and co-curricular opportunities." In alignment with WWU's strategic plan and mission, our request seeks to provide students with consistent access to high-quality, rigorous, and transformative education that affirms inclusive success and academic excellence. We need to better support undocumented students, LGBTQ+ students, transfer students, Black, Indigenous, and students of color, first-generation students, women, and other under-represented student populations.

Our request addresses Goal #3, "Western will foster a caring and supportive environment where all members are respected and treated fairly." As noted in the narrative above, this decision package is absolutely critical to achieving the enrollment, retention, and graduation goals of Western's strategic plan. Every strategy included in this initiative supports the themes of Inclusive Excellence and Washington Impact, and the anticipated outcomes of each strategy reflect and support Western's key metrics.

Likewise, the initiative presented in this package will contribute significantly to the World Class Education and Prosperous Economy goal areas identified by our Governor. Specifically, the equitable access strategy will increase overall enrollments, supporting "Increasing Young Adult Engagement," and will also increase financial aid access for students, supporting "college affordability" and reducing the "financial burden of higher education." The inclusive

engagement and holistic support strategies will increase retention, decrease time to degree, increase graduation rates, and increase graduate employment rates; outcomes which also support affordability and reducing financial burdens, while increasing student return on investment and institutional contributions to the state workforce. The proposal as structured will lead to a higher graduation rate, especially among students of color—whose graduation rate has been lower than average historically at Western and other institutions. This in turn will lead to more degrees awarded at Western, allowing us to contribute to the increases number of degrees awarded in the state called for by the Governor.

What are the consequences of not funding this proposal?

- **The consequence of not supporting the Equitable Access strategy is a competitive disadvantage threatening our enrollment.** Without increased funding of these critical student service and enrollment areas, we will not be able to take important steps to stay viable in the hyper-competitive higher education market, and we will be less equipped to adapt to changing demographics and student needs. We will be constrained in our ability to address shortcomings in our current administrative practices and services.
- **The consequence of not supporting the Inclusive Engagement strategy is a staffing shortage threatening access, equity, and retention.** If this proposal is not funded and adequate staffing is not provided for inclusive engagement, our departments cannot engage in the challenging and deep collaborative work necessary to transform institutional culture, practices, and policies to be just and equitable for diverse students. This will mean continuing to accept disparities in success and satisfaction between diverse students and their peers.
- **The consequence of not supporting the Holistic Support strategy is a staffing shortage threatening retention, graduation, and graduate outcomes.** If this proposal is not funded and adequate staffing is not provided for critical support services, our departments will continue to struggle to maintain and improve on retention and graduation rates for the institution, high workload and service demands will continue to impact staff retention and morale, and students will be increasingly disserved by their Western experience and disadvantaged in entering the workforce.

What alternatives were explored?

Without additional state allocations, Enrollment and Student Services cannot support the strategies described in this proposal, and the alternative is to continue our status quo of understaffed departments, unmet demand for services, and decreasing direct support for students. Unless new state allocations support additional resources, the only other alternative is to establish a mandatory student fee, which is not an acceptable option if we are to maintain affordability for our students.

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

See above divisional goals section for a list of Enrollment & Student Services departments key to this “Inclusive Student Success” work. In addition, the enrollment, retention, and graduation of our students impact and support all parts of the university community. For instance, if we are successful in our enrollment goals, all of Western’s locations will see significant growth and resultant demand for continually increasing offerings and services. Likewise, successful attainment of our retention goals will result in consistent, ongoing, and predictable student engagement in academic programs and auxiliary services. If we are successful in our graduation and employment goals, these outcomes will reflect positively on our majors, departments, colleges, and university, and will support increased engagement with University Advancement. Equally, if we fail to allocate necessary resources to support enrollment, retention, and graduation, it can be expected that all parts of the university will be adversely impacted.

Equipment needed:

None

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

Item:

Click here to enter text

Purpose:

Click here to enter text

Cost:

Click here to enter text

Anticipated Useful Life:

Click here to enter text

Replacement Cost if any:

Click here to enter text

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

Initiative	FTE	Time Cost (start-up and Equipment)	Travel	Annual Salary + Benefits
Support Services				
Admissions Counselors	2.0	\$ 8,032	\$ 4,000	\$ 163,057
Counseling Center - Psychologist	0.9	\$ 3,683	\$ 1,000	\$ 110,918
Counseling Center - Mental Health 1 Counselor	1.0	\$ 4,016	\$ 1,000	\$ 95,856
Disability Access Center - Accomodations Counselor	1.0	\$ 4,016	\$ 1,000	\$ 85,555
Multicultural Student Services - Director	1.0	\$ 4,016	\$ 1,000	\$ 119,656
Prevention - Sexual Violence Survivor Services Specialist	1.0	\$ 4,016	\$ 1,000	\$ 66,964
Veterans Services - School Certifying Official (Prog Spec 2)	1.0	\$ 4,016	\$ 1,000	\$ 71,453

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

Initiative	FTE	Time Cost (start-up and Equipment)	Travel	Annual S Benef
Goods & Services				
Admissions Programmatic & Outreach				
Admissions Resources in Non-English Languages				
Admissions Electronic Outreach to Prospective Students				
Veterans Services Programming				
Multucultural Student Services Operations				

Space Requirements:

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

Primarily Private Office space for direct service to students.

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

Privacy and visibility/accessibility to students.

What needs can be accommodated within your existing space?

The Viking Union Multicultural Center will house the Director of Multicultural Student Services. Space assessments for other areas will include study of remote work opportunities/hybrid arrangements/modified hours of service, etc. to maximize use of current space. The new Student Development Success Center for which it appears Pre-

Design funding will be awarded, will house some of the new positions within this request (detail TBD.)

How much new space will be required?

TBD