

## **2021-2023 Biennium Internal Budget Proposal Narrative**

### **Division: University Relations & Marketing**

**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.

#### **Funding for Centralized Marketing and WebTech 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.*

**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.)*

In 2018-19, the university made a strategic decision to invest in institutional marketing to support increased enrollments both in Washington state and out-of-state and to present a more unified and distinctive picture of Western to potential students, alumni, donors and the communities we serve. Through institutional reserves and a commitment from the WWU Foundation, a three-year centralized marketing budget was created through AY 2021-22. This fund has allowed Western, for the first time, to create a modern, competitive digital advertising campaign based on a new differentiated brand strategy (“Make Waves”) that has helped to mitigate some of the effects of pandemic-induced enrollment declines.

The challenge, however, is that WWU is not properly structured to take true advantage of this investment. Western is not unusual in having highly decentralized marketing and communications functions across the institution. Prior to 2018, there was not a coordinated, centralized approach to brand marketing and institutional storytelling, and as a result Western has had inconsistent messaging and visual branding applied in a disorganized and unmeasured fashion across communication channels which has affected our visibility and identity in an increasingly competitive marketplace and reduced positive sentiment and trust especially among underrepresented populations.

On top of this, the pandemic-induced rapid pivot to “virtual everything” has created an outsized need for the resources and talents of the University Relations & Marketing (URM) division. From fast and accurate communications to multiple constituencies, to new websites built in a matter of hours and inspiring video storytelling, to critical support for virtual orientation sessions, commencements and other events, the URM division has repeatedly shown up in remarkable and reliably consistent ways.

We have made steady progress in developing a cohesive brand strategy and more integrated institutional marketing, but it took a global pandemic to accelerate that progress. As the coronavirus response forces us to cut costs and find efficiencies, collaboration is at an all-time high because it *has to be*. The real and imagined barriers that used to prevent

departments from working together are crumbling, and we have applied many new best practices on budget and process efficiency, establishing objective and measurable metrics, and ensuring message consistency that we hope endure in a post-COVID world.

To address this dual challenge of pandemic-related virtual communications and events, and the need to accelerate our enrollment marketing efforts, we merged the Outreach & Continuing Education (OCE) marketing team into URM in Fall 2020. This merger serves two purposes: creation of a centralized marketing services department and reducing the OCE deficit.

The problem, however, is that the OCE staff absorbed by URM is currently funded by finite divisional reserves that are projected to run out in about 6.5 months. This proposal puts forth a request for permanent funding for these positions.

Additionally, Web Communication Technologies (WebTech) has nearly doubled in size over the past four years from a combination of new hires, temporary workers, and cross-divisional realignments. The workload as well has increased 62% over the same time period with the team coordinating, on average, nine distinct projects at a time, on top of handling ongoing web content updates for campus partners who have not backfilled vacant department-level webmaster positions and leading web accessibility remediation, standards development, and training for the entire campus community.

WebTech's budget for non-labor expenses is heavily stressed by supplying university-wide tools and services that have never had permanent funding allocated to cover the cost. WebTech currently pays for SiteImprove, a web governance and accessibility tool, that is currently used by about 120 employees across the institution. WebTech also covers the cost of the search engine tool for the university website and all external domain names centrally purchased. This totals approximately \$35,989 or 76% of WebTech's non-labor expenses. In prior budget years, we have used travel and professional development budgets to augment the goods and services budget deficit. If we were able to have permanent funding for these university-wide software tools and services, we could provide more training for our web developers and designers which is critically important for retention and professional growth in the rapidly changing technology landscape. This proposal puts forth a request for a new assistant director position to help manage the existing staff of 9.525 FTE and up to four student employees, and funding for software.

#### **Anticipated Outcome(s):**

- Greater visibility and interest in WWU among both in-state and out-of-state undergraduate, graduate and transfer students.
- Increased in-state and out-of-state enrollments to support COVID economic recovery.
- Greater affinity for Western among BIPOC, LGBTQ+, first gen, people with disabilities and other traditionally underrepresented groups.
- Compliance with the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights voluntary resolution agreement on web accessibility.
- Ability to continue to support a desire for more virtual events even in a post-pandemic environment.

**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.)*

- Primary goal: Increase applications for undergraduate programs on the main campus, Western on the Peninsulas and Everett.
- Secondary goal: Increase inquiries for undergraduate programs.
- Marketing conversions are tracked across all platforms including online display advertising and retargeting; IP targeting; pay-per-click keyword search advertising; Facebook/Instagram; YouTube; and Snapchat.
- Conversions tracked include successful Request for Information form submissions; Apply Now and First-Year Application for Admission and Scholarship button clicks; and Register Now button clicks.
- Highlights from our Jan/Feb 2021 reporting period:
  - The campaign focused on financial aid resources resulted in a 49% year-over-year increase in FAFSA and WASFA filings between Jan 1-Jan 22 ahead of the priority application deadline on January 31. Last year in the first 22 days of January we had 1,737 aid applications, and this year in that same first 22 days we've had 2,595. Interestingly, prior to the start of the campaign, our aid applications we're running slightly behind last year's rate (about 2%), in keeping with national trends on lower aid applications due to the pandemic.
  - 170% increase in month-over-month conversions on display retargeting
  - FB/Instagram behavioral campaigns produced a 1,123% increase in conversions MoM
  - Undergrad PPC conversion rate increased 191% MoM, primarily from branded keywords such as +Western +Washington +admissions
  - YouTube campaigns captured 51% MoM increase in undergrad in-state conversions and 50% MoM increase in out-of-state conversions.
  - Snapchat campaigns drove over 3,380,000 impressions and 27,751 swipe ups, averaging to a 0.82% swipe up rate.

**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 aligns with the divisional priority to “undertake proactive, broad-based, consistent messaging and brand visibility targeted at key stakeholders using modern marketing techniques.”

- a. **Strategic Plan Goal 1.C**
- b. **Strategic Plan Goal 2.B**
- c. **Strategic Plan Goal 2.G**
- d. **Strategic Plan Goal 4.C**
- e. **Strategic Plan Goal 4.D**

**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.)*

- This proposal helps achieve our most important challenge: to advance inclusive success by presenting authentic stories of achievement from students of diverse and under-represented socio-economic backgrounds, and the community and faculty mentorship that supports those achievements, thereby encouraging more enrollments from students who see themselves and their lived experiences reflected at Western.
- It also supports the theme of increasing Washington impact by demonstrating how we contribute to the future workforce needs in Washington and the region. Our marketing and storytelling focus on how Western prepares our students to be successful in a continuously changing work and social environment.
- This proposal also brings to life our goal of advancing a deeper understanding of and engagement with place. Much of our marketing and storytelling features the rigor with which we study, protect and envision the future of the land and sea in Washington state and the Pacific Northwest, its sustainability, complexity and beauty.

**What are the consequences of not funding this proposal?**

- Compounded enrollment declines
- Loss of employment for valued marketing staff
- Loss of skilled and in-demand web developers and designers
- Lost momentum on substantial recent gains in both in-state and out-of-state awareness and application rates

**What alternatives were explored?**

The alternatives have been explored at WWU for years: Decentralized, poorly funded marketing programs that lack digital sophistication, consistency and coordination.

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

Because this proposal seeks funding for positions and software that support university-wide integrated marketing and web communications needs it essentially involves all colleges, and particularly supports the Enrollment & Student Services division, Admissions department and Graduate School.

**Equipment needed:**

N/A

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

**Item:**

N/A

**Purpose:**

N/A

**Cost:**

N/A

**Anticipated Useful Life:**

N/A

**Replacement Cost if any:**

N/A

**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>Director of University Marketing (formerly in OCE)</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>132,130</i>	<i>132,130</i>
<i>Asst. Director of Creative Services (formerly in OCE)</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>104,831</i>	<i>104,831</i>
<i>Manager of Digital Marketing (formerly in OCE)</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>97,817</i>	<i>97,817</i>
<i>WebTech Assistant Director</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>80,885</i>	<i>107,442</i>
<i>Communications Consultant 3 (formerly in OCE WebTech)</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>1.0</i>		<i>97,817</i>
	<i>5.0</i>	<i>5.0</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>540,035</i>

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.):**

\$36,000 for WebTech software in use across the university.

**Space Requirements:**

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

N/A

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

N/A

**What needs can be accommodated within your existing space?**

All needs can be accommodated within existing space.

**How much new space will be required?**

N/A