

To: Members of the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees
Bill Epperly, Chair Carolyn Ehlert Fuller
Lyneir Cole Phil Hare
Bill Griffin Mike Houston
Cathy Early D'angelo Taylor

From: Joe Rives, Vice President, Quad Cities and Planning

Date: December 12, 2012

Re: December 2012 Strategic Plan Update

This month's *Strategic Plan Update* provides you with an update on the team analyzing trends in higher education and recommended actions for Western Illinois University in the near-, five-, and 20-year time frames.

Actions to Date

After hosting an October 22, 2012, planning session led by the Illinois Board of Higher Education staff members, the planning team had four meetings (November 6 and 7, December 4 and 5). The team also continues to read articles related to the current and future of higher education.

Team membership was expanded to include the Mayor of Macomb, Community Economic Development Director, President of the Macomb Area Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Corporation, and the Regional Superintendent of Macomb Schools. We are currently recruiting a sample of Macomb employers and are using the Vice President for Quad Cities and Planning's Advisory Board to gain additional perspective from community leaders, business, and industry.

To date, presentations, conversations, and discussions focused on four sets of issues. We used the fall semester to discuss implications for Illinois higher education in general and will use the spring semester to focus discussions on Western Illinois University in particular. These four issues are:

1. **Academic Identity:** Focus on active and engaged learning, identifying niche and quality programs, helping students learn how to learn (e.g., requiring a distance education course), improving retention rates, educating for degrees and workforce training, high quality viable and sustainable programs, interdisciplinary focus, alternative semester lengths, the role and support of technology, distinguishing Western Illinois University from the other Illinois public universities, becoming either a specialized or generalized institution, advantages of urban and rural locations, is institutional consolidation on the horizon, access, changing demographics, internationalization, the sustained need for residential universities, need for programs to be both responsive and agile, the importance of maintaining currency (e.g., engaging advisory boards)
2. **Collaborative Partnerships:** Community colleges, other colleges and universities, public-private, linking higher education and economic development, articulation agreements beyond 2+2's, regional stewardship (serving our host communities and regions), the need for agility, responsive to new windows of opportunity, government-partnerships, looking for other sources of funding given

state declines (e.g., federal grants), re-establishing contact with students who have stopped out to complete their degrees.

3. **Finance and Infrastructure:** Declining state appropriations, privatization of public higher education, becoming increasingly fiscally self-sufficient, increased regulation and reporting requirements, increased transparency, and the need to become increasingly entrepreneurial. Intentionality in budgeting, not being all things to all people. New facilities; deferred maintenance in facilities, technology, and infrastructure; need for competitive residence halls, academic and administrative technology, shifting costs (e.g., state pensions, deferred maintenance).
4. **Costs of Higher Education:** cash flow, changing rules of appropriation and expenditure, maintaining affordability, price sensitivity, price elasticity, student debt load, need and merit scholarships, scholarships beyond the freshman year, lack of increases to financial aid, new models of financial aid, importance of paid internships and other forms of experiential education, tuition discounting, the perceived value vs. cost of higher education, and educational access for students “priced out” of higher education.

Next Steps

The items above represent the first phase of this exercise—exploring trends facing higher education in the next 20 years. At this point, trends are not Western specific, prioritized, or refined. They are a topical list of team discussions to date. As the items above become more refined, we will develop recommendations in conjunction with *Higher Values in Higher Education* and additional sources on what the University should do, where the University should experiment/exercise innovation, and what the University should not do. These recommendations, as charged by you, will be presented to President Thomas and the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees.

Your January 2013 Strategic Plan Update will include an update to the Team’s membership list, provide a list of sources reviewed, and contain a summary on the next steps in the team’s work. The latter will include additional feedback received from the campus community on the process and issues as just requested. We also welcome additional members of the campus community who wish to volunteer for this team and its important work.

Should you have questions about the materials in this *Update*, and/or if you have feedback for the continued successful advancement of *Higher Values in Higher Education*, please contact me.

cc:	President Thomas	CSEC Pres. Rupert	Associate Provost Neumann
	Provost Hawkinson	COAP President Grimm	Associate Provost Parsons
	Vice President Bainter	Faculty Council Chair Pillutla	Assistant Vice President Williams
	Vice President Biller	Faculty Senate Chair Rock	Planning, Budget, and IR Staff
	Vice President DeWees	SGA Chair Markey	President’s Office Support Staff