

To: Members of the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees
Carolyn Ehlert Fuller, Chair Lyneir Cole
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Roger Clawson Yvonne Savala

From: Joe Rives, Senior Vice President, Strategic Planning and Initiatives

Date: November 30, 2018

Re: November 2018 Strategic Plan Update

This month's *Strategic Plan Update* provides an update on Western Illinois University's completed Quality Initiative for the Higher Learning Commission. Additional materials on this topic will be presented at the December 14, 2018, Board of Trustees meeting.

Background

The Higher Learning Commission requires all member institutions to complete one Quality Initiative (QI) between years five and nine of the ten-year accreditation cycle. Western is currently in year eight of its ten-year accreditation cycle.

The University's QI was approved by the Board of Trustees in December 2015. At the time that it was approved, the QI set four goals for the University to address during the next three years: (1) To update the University's *Strategic Plan*. (2) Increase enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. (3) Continue participation in the Commission's Persistence and Completion Academy; and (4) Engage in fiscal reduction and reinvestment, while continuing advancement in national ranking systems.

Summary

The University was successful in three of the four goal areas, and we continue to work to improve student enrollment, retention, and graduation rates.

Goal 1: Update the University's Strategic Plan

The University:

- Created a new process for producing annual Strategic Plan Supplements to address unforeseen challenges and opportunities at the time of writing a 10-year Strategic Plan.
- Implemented *Academic Years 2015-16* and *2016-2017 Strategic Plan Supplements*, and *Higher Values in Higher Education 2017-2027*.
- Initiated development of the Academic Year 2019-2020 Strategic Plan Supplement.

Goal 2: Increase Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation Rates

The data demonstrate:

- Enrollment declines. However, fall 2018 enrollment of 8,502 students was 502 students ahead of spring 2018 projections suggesting an enrollment 8,000 of students in fall 2018.
- Constant first-year (fall-to-fall) new freshmen retention rates for three of the last four cohorts, but declining to 65.3% with the fall 2017 cohort.
- Six-year graduation rates declines.

Goal 3: Participate in HLC's Persistence and Completion Academy (PCA)

The University:

- Established a Retention Office and expanded student Living-Learning Communities on the Macomb campus.
- Initiated a Retention Task Force and Peer Mentoring Program on the Quad Cities campus.
- Implemented Respondus Lock Down Browser to better serve distance education students.

Goal 4: Engage in fiscal reduction and reinvestment, while continuing advancement in national ranking systems.

The University:

- Reduced institutional expenditures by \$12.3 million (9.8%) through the *FY16 and 18 Priorities and Reinvestment Plan*.
- Reallocated over \$2.6 million to the student financial aid and scholarships and \$9.7 million to support institutional operations during the two-year, historic, and unprecedented statewide budget impasse.
- Maintained or advanced in national measures of quality, opportunity, and affordability (e.g., *GI Jobs Magazine*, *Princeton Review*, *US News and World Report*, and *Washington Monthly*)

Conclusion and Next Steps

The Commission's evaluation rubric for institutional QI's indicates, "Genuineness of effort, not success of the initiative, constitutes the focus of the Quality Initiative review and serves as its sole point of evaluation." It is believed that Western's *Report* demonstrates the University's genuine effort. This is evident in the seriousness of the QI, its scope and impact, advancement of *Strategic Plan* priorities, engagement by members of the university community, and institutional resource provision.

Western's genuineness of effort and commitment to student success is further displayed by our continued implementation of *Strategic Plan* priorities related to student enrollment, retention, and graduation rates at all levels of the University. Trend data and current institutional efforts in these areas will be included in the Higher Values in Higher Education Update presented at the December Board meeting.

I will share the Commission's Report on the University's QI with the Board and the University community when it is received. In the interim, please contact me if you have any questions about the materials presented in this *Update*, and/or feedback for the continued successful implementation of the University's *Strategic Plan*.

cc: President Thomas CSEC President O'Bear SGA President Ramos
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