

To: Members of the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees
Bill Epperly, Chairperson Mike Houston
Carolyn Ehlert Jessie Kallman
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From: Joe Rives, Interim Executive Assistant to the President, Quad Cities, Planning and Technology

Date: May 28, 2008

Re: May 2008 Strategic Plan Update

This month's *Strategic Plan Update* focuses on the development of dashboard indicators to measure the continued successful implementation of *Higher Values in Higher Education*. Displayed below are the recommended indicators based upon your suggestions and measurable actions from *Higher Values in Higher Education 2008-2018*.

As noted below, the dashboard will be divided into three parts: Educational demand and quality, educational opportunity, and affordability/financial strength. Following past practice, goals will be set for the individual performance indicators by following objectives in the Strategic Plan, recommendations from the President's Cabinet, and considering the performance of the top quarter of Midwest public master's granting universities on each of the variables.

The reporting of the data will continue to be updated both on a semester and annual basis. Unless otherwise noted, the University's performance will be compared longitudinally and benchmarked to the Illinois public universities and peer institutions endorsed by all campus governance groups.

In addition to the quantifiable information described above, Monthly Strategic Plan Updates will continue to provide you and the campus community with additional information about the continued successful implementation of *Higher Values in Higher Education*, and changes to the dashboard indicators will be made based upon your recommendations.

Suggested Dashboard for Higher Values in Higher Education 2008-2018

Section 1: Educational Demand and Quality

The first series of data points are designed to measure the demand for a Western Illinois University education as we continue to work on enrollment goals of 12,500 students in Macomb and 3,000 students in the Quad Cities. Dashboard indicators to be reported on are:

- The number of fall new freshmen completing applications for Western Illinois University.
- The number of fall new freshmen accepted for enrollment.

- The number of fall new freshmen who enrolled at the University.
- The “show rate” or the ratio of new freshmen enrolled divided by the number of new freshmen who were accepted.
- The same data points mentioned above will be reported for new transfer students on the Macomb and Quad Cities campuses.

The next series focuses on the levels of academic preparation of new students entering Western Illinois University by reporting on:

- The average ACT scores of new freshmen.
- The ACT interquartile range or the middle half of the ACT distribution of the new freshmen population.
- The average transfer grade point average of new students on the Macomb and Quad Cities campuses.

For both the Macomb and Quad Cities campuses, total enrollment as well as the percentages of minority, international, and Pell grant students will demonstrate the University’s progress in promoting diversity, access, and opportunity.

The high-achieving and diverse students of Western Illinois University are served by a high-achieving, diverse faculty and staff. Both *Higher Values in Higher Education* and *Higher Values in Higher Education 2008-2018* identify faculty and staff salaries that meet and exceed the mean of peer institutions as the highest institutional priority. Therefore, the University will report on:

- Faculty salaries as a percent of Western Illinois University-University Professionals of Illinois agreed upon institutions by rank (professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and instructors).
- Administrative and professional salaries as a percent of the same peer group.
- Civil Service salaries as a percent of Illinois public universities south of Interstate 80 and including Northern Illinois University. All faculty and staff peer groups are based on where prospective employees are recruited from.

Section 2: Educational Opportunity

Because Western Illinois University values educational opportunity and welcomes those who show promise and a willingness to work toward achieving shared educational goals, we will report on:

- Annual fall-to-fall retention rates of all students, specially admitted students, minority students, and Pell grant recipients.
- For the Macomb campus, six-year graduation rates of all students, specially admitted students, minority students, and Pell grant recipients. Six years to degree is the national reporting standard (i.e., 150 percent of the normal time-to-degree) for institutions that admit new freshmen.
- For the Quad Cities campus, four-year graduation rates of all students, minority students, and Pell grant recipients. Since the Quad Cities admits undergraduate students as juniors, four years is the 150 percent measure of the normal time-to-degree.

To further understand trends in student retention and graduation, results from the National Survey of Student Engagement will be used, as student involvement and satisfaction with the educational process are correlates of academic achievement. For second-semester freshmen in Macomb and second-semester seniors on both the Macomb and Quad Cities campuses, the University will report on student perceptions regarding the levels of:

- Academic challenge or the degree to which students perceive the importance of academic effort and setting high performance standards.
- Academic and collaborative learning or measures of how intensely students were involved in their educational process and whether they applied what they have learned to different settings.
- Student-faculty interactions or the degree to which students interacted with faculty inside and outside the classroom.
- Opportunities for enriching educational experiences or the degree to which students engaged in curricular and co-curricular activities beyond classroom instruction. It also measures the extent to which students report exposure to different ideals and cultures other than their own.
- Supportive campus environment or the extent to which students perceive that the University's academic programs and co-curricular services are committed to student success inside and outside the classroom.

Individual attention, as expressed in the core value of academic excellence, is an additional correlate of student retention and graduation. For both the Macomb and Quad Cities campuses, the University will report on:

- The number of course sections.
- Percent of classes with enrollments under 30.
- The student-to-faculty ratio.

The University will also report on the percent of alumni donating to the University. This has been documented in the literature as a proxy to student satisfaction with the educational experience.

Section 3: Affordability and Financial Strength

Western Illinois University has a strong history and tradition of maintaining cost predictability and affordability. We were one of only 13 institutions nationally selected by the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education as a "best practice institution" for the recruitment and retention of first generation and low income students. The University will continue to monitor issues of affordability by reporting on:

- The percent of students graduating with loans.
- The average debt load of students graduating with loans.
- The average four-year all-costs increase.
- The average four-year all-costs increase compared to the Higher Education Price Index and the Consumer Price Index.
- The one-year change in state-appropriated operating support versus the average four-year all-costs increase.

Western Illinois University also has strong traditions of conservative fiscal management, financial strength, allocating resources to support the academic mission, and keeping administrative costs low. The University will continue to monitor these traditions by reporting on the following variables, noting that the first four below are required annually by the Higher Learning Commission-North Central Association of Colleges and Schools as part of institutional accreditation. Definitions for the variables below were excerpted from *Strategic Financial Analysis for Higher Education, Sixth Edition*.

- The Primary Reserve Ratio: Measures the financial strength of the University by comparing expendable net assets to total expenses. This ratio indicates how long the University could function using its expendable reserves without relying on additional net assets generated by operations. A negative or decreasing trend over time indicates a weakening financial condition.

- Return on Net Assets Ratio: Determines whether the University is financially better off than in previous years by measuring total economic return. A decline in this ratio may be appropriate and warranted if it reflects a strategy to better fulfill institutional mission. An improving trend in this ratio indicates that the institution is increasing its net assets and is likely to be able to set aside financial resources to strengthen its future financial flexibility.
- Viability Ratio: Measures the availability of expendable net assets to cover debt should the institution need to settle its obligations as of the balance sheet date.
- The Net Operating Revenue Ratio: explains how the surplus from operating activities affects the behavior of the other three core ratios. In general, the larger the surplus, the stronger the University's financial performance as a result of the year's activities. A negative ratio indicates a loss for the year. However, a small deficit in a particular year may be relatively unimportant if the university is financially strong, is aware of the causes of the deficit, and has a corrective action plan in place.

In addition, the University will continue to report on the following variables:

- Percent of appropriated funds allocated to instruction.
- Cost of instruction per credit hour.
- Administrative and support costs per credit hour.

Should you have questions or recommendations for the newly developing dashboard that will be user-friendly, interactive, tabular and graphically based, or if you have feedback for the continued successful implementation of *Higher Values in Higher Education*, please contact me.

cc: President Goldfarb CSEC President Lavin Alumni Council Chair Hoffman
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