

To: Members of the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees
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From: Joe Rives, Vice President, Quad Cities and Planning

Date: February 29, 2016

Re: February 2016 Strategic Plan Update

This month's *Strategic Plan Update* provides data from statewide and national sources to show that Western Illinois University provides a quality, well-rounded educational experience. Moreover, the University does so in a manner that is cost efficient.

US News and World Report's 2016 Best Online Programs: Bachelor's Category

US News and World Report recognized Western Illinois University's distance learning program in the "2016 Best Online Programs: Bachelor's Category." These rankings were published in January, 2016. This is the fifth consecutive year that the University has earned this distinction. Western ranked 92nd from colleges and universities from across the United States, and is one of only three Illinois public universities in the top 100. The University of Illinois at Chicago ranked 4th and the University of Illinois at Springfield ranked 30th.

To form national rankings of undergraduate online programs, US News and World Report formed a composite score comprised based on four measures. Student engagement accounted for 40% of the total score, while faculty credentials and training, student services and technology, and peer reputation each accounted for 20% of the total score. Appendix A (attached) provides the operational definitions and weightings within each of these four measures.

Western Illinois University performed favorably when compared to the Illinois public universities and the Macomb and Quad Cities Campus Benchmark Institutions approved by the Board of Trustees for use in non-salary comparisons. US News and World Report only ranked seven of the 27 campuses in this comparison group.

Western Illinois University Peer Group Rankings in US News and World Report's 2016 Best Online Programs: Bachelor's category	
<u>Institution</u>	<u>Ranking</u>
Wisconsin-Whitewater	7 th
Illinois-Springfield	30 th
Western Illinois	92nd
Texas-Permian Basin	92 nd
Central Washington	195 th
Southern Illinois-Edwardsville	195 th
Appalachian State	212 th

Appendix A
Methodology Used in U.S. News and World Report's
2016 Best Online Programs: Bachelor's Category

Student engagement (40% of the total score)

<u>Variable</u>	Percent of the Category <u>Ranking</u>	<u>Description</u>
Best practices	27%	An index based on 16 equally weighted factors: exams require multifactor authentication for entry (a new factor in this year's rankings); identical exams are not administered twice at different times; exams have random order questioning; policies are in place for instructors to track, review and provide feedback on student participation; school tracks students after graduation; collaborative coursework is used; school has a formal copyright policy; school has an anti-plagiarism policy; school has an Americans with Disabilities Act policy; certified instructional designers are used; students sign ethics statements; course evaluation response rate; how quickly instructors are expected to respond to student questions; number of instructor office hours.
Graduation rates	27%	A two-year average of the percentage of students who finished the program within a three-, four-, five- or six-year time period. The use of two years of data is a change from the previous edition of the rankings. The time period is determined by the average number of credits among new entrants to the program relative to the number of credits needed to graduate, or a proxy calculation. A program must have at least 10 graduates in its reporting cohort to receive credit.
Assessments	14%	Half the score is based on whether schools administer at least two out of 13 assessments measuring student learning, engagement and satisfaction. The other half is based on whether they make the results of those assessments publicly available. Partial credit is awarded to schools that administer one assessment or make the results of one assessment publicly available.
Class size	14%	A school's mean class size and maximum class size each make up half the weight. Schools in the top 20 percent in terms of the smallest class sizes receive the maximum score.
Retention rates	9%	The mean re-enrollment rate over four years for the years in which the school reported data. Deductions are applied for programs that report fewer years of data.
Time to degree deadline	9%	This score is based on the amount of time in which a school requires students with 75 percent of credits applied to their degrees to earn the remaining 25 percent. The maximum score is given to the 20 percent of schools with the smallest values, while other schools are compared with the 20th percentile value.

Faculty credentials and training (20% of the total score)

<u>Variable</u>	Percent of the Category <u>Ranking</u>	<u>Description</u>
Terminal degree faculty	38%	Schools receive the full score as long as at least 50 percent of their instructional faculty have terminal degrees; schools below 50 percent receive a score based on how close they are to 50 percent. Part-time faculty are treated as one-third of full-time faculty for the calculation. Programs with five or fewer individual faculty members receive a deduction.
Preparedness to teach distance learners	28%	Two-thirds of this score is based on whether the school finances training on online teaching best practices and the number of training hours required, and one-third is based on whether continuing training is required and if a system of peer review is in place.

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Percent of the Category Ranking</u>	<u>Description</u>
Faculty who have more than a B.A.	13%	Percentage of instructional faculty with a master's degree or higher.
Technical staff available to faculty	13%	The ratio of staff members employed to offer technical assistance to program faculty relative to the number of faculty members at the institution to whom they are available. Part-time staff are treated as one-third of full-time staff. Schools in the top 20 percent in terms of the largest ratios receive the maximum score. At least 10 faculty members at the institution must have access to support for a school to receive credit.
Tenured faculty	8%	The percentage of instructional faculty who are tenured or tenure-track faculty.
Student services and technology (20% of the total ranking score)		
Student indebtedness	50%	Half of the score is a program's two-year average of mean student debt at graduation compared with the median such value among other schools; the other half is the two-year average percentage of a school's graduates with debt compared with the median such value among other schools. Only schools with debt levels that are below the two-year medians for either are awarded scores. Programs with fewer than 15 total graduates in the previous academic year receive a deduction. Both the use of two years of data and the deduction for programs with fewer graduates are changes from the previous edition of the ranking.
Technological infrastructure	25%	An index based on student access to 10 equally weighted technologies: application for smartphone; application for tablet; remote access to the following: chat rooms, recorded audio, recorded video, simulations, software-based readers, streaming audio, streaming video, visual software.
Support services	25%	An index based on student access to 10 equally weighted services: academic advising, bookstore, 24/7 tech support, financial aid services, live librarian, local area network, mentoring, live tutoring, writing workshops, career placement assistance
Peer reputation (20% of ranking)		
Score	100%	A school's weighted mean of scores on a 1-5 scale as rated by top college administrators and academics in online bachelor's degree programs.