To: Members of the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees  
  Polly Radosh, Chair   Kisha Lang  
  Greg Aguilar        Doug Shaw  
  Justin Brown       Carin Stutz  
  Erik Dolieslager  Mark Twomey

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

Date: November 20, 2019

Re: November 2019 Strategic Plan Update

On behalf of the Social Responsibility Task Force, this month’s Strategic Plan Update available at www.wiu.edu/university_planning/planningupdates.php seeks your feedback on a revised draft of Criterion 4 for the University’s Self-Study for Reaffirmation of Accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission. Criterion 4 focuses on organizational outputs and outcomes.

As you read this draft, please note the following:

1. You will see two types of parenthetical references in the draft. Using examples, (4B1) indicates the specific Core Component for which additional information on that topic can be found in the Self-Study; and (4.1) indicates the specific table number where data will be displayed in the next draft of this Criterion.

2. The Social Responsibility Task Force seeks your substantive feedback on items to add, modify, and/or delete. Final grammatical editing will occur at a later point in the process.

3. Any item highlighted in blue is where information has been requested and will be added to the next draft.

Thank you for participating in this important process. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns on the materials presented in this Update, and/or if you have feedback for the continued successful implementation of Higher Values in Higher Education.

cc: Interim President Abraham  CSEC President Whan  SGA President Cox  
Interim Provost Clow  COAP President Roselieb  Associate Provost Mossman  
Vice President Polley  Faculty Council Ch. Porter  Associate Provost Morgan  
Interim Vice President Smith  Faculty Senate Chair Pynes  Planning, Budget, and IR Staff  
SGA President Markey  President’s Office
Criterion 4
Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The Mission of Western Illinois University (WIU) is to prepare students to lead in diverse and dynamic communities. To that end, the University served 107,543 students between falls 2010-2019 (duplicate headcount) and conferred 19,481 baccalaureate degrees, 488 post baccalaureate certificates, and 5,647 graduate degrees between FYs11-19.

WIU has four Core Values: Academic Excellence, Educational Opportunity, Personal Growth and Social Responsibility. Our Vision is to be a leader in quality, opportunity and affordability.

Data in Criterion 3 demonstrated that WIU’s strong commitment to mission-driven inputs produces educational offerings that are academically rigorous, promote intellectual inquiry, and delivery by high quality faculty and staff who are supported by effective structures for teaching and learning.

The outputs and outcomes of this educational process demonstrate that WIU is successfully achieving its Vision. Western delivers quality educational programs leading students to be highly successful in the workforce and future graduate and professional studies (4A). WIU engages in the assessment of student learning and continuous improvement inside and outside the classroom (4B). Commitments to educational improvement resulted in new innovative programs to address issues of cost sensitivity and price elasticity and nationally recognized graduation rates at levels higher than predicted for first-generation, low-income, and minority students (4C).

Core Components

4A. Western demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

(4A1) WIU maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.

Overview: New course, program, center, and unit proposals are developed by faculty and follow state and academic shared governance approval processes (3A1). Once established, all academic programs, units, and centers engage in cyclic review processes (described below) that follow Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and 23 Illinois Administrative Code 1050.50 protocol for new and existing programs, temporarily suspended programs, and temporary centers.

Institutionally, program faculty and designated subject matter experts (e.g., library liaisons) complete all program review reports. Department chairs/school directors plan, schedule, oversee, and submit final reports to their respective dean. The deans implement action plans based on program review results. The Provost’s Office determines outcomes from reviews (e.g., in good standing, temporarily suspended, etc.). Summary reports and action plans are submitted to the IBHE by the Associate Provost for Undergraduate and Graduate Studies.

New Program Reviews: All new programs, institutes, and centers complete a progress report three years after establishment to determine program continuation. WIU completed 22 new program reviews between AYs 2011-12 and 2018-19, with an additional eight reviews scheduled for the next eight academic years. Every progress report follows a standardized template created by the Provost’s Office (e.g., New Program Progress Report 2019-20).

As shown in examples from the B.S. in Engineering (AY2012-13), B.S. in Fire Protection Services (AY2016-17), Ph.D. in Environmental Science: Large River Ecosystems (AY17-18), and M.A. in Community and Economic Development (AY2018-19), new program progress reports describe the
original degree/certificate proposal, actions taken since program establishment, strengths and weaknesses, and resultant action plans. If the program passes its initial review, it is placed on an eight-year review cycle, unless findings necessitate more frequent review(s).

**Existing Program Reviews:** All existing programs, institutes, and centers are reviewed on an eight-year cycle following its initial three year progress report, unless findings necessitate more frequent review(s). **WIU completed 99 eight-year reviews between AYs 2011-12 and 2018-19. An additional 123 reviews are scheduled for the next eight academic years.**

Every existing review responds to a standardized template prepared by the Provost’s Office (e.g., *Academic Program Reviews: 2019-20*). However, programs can use current findings from specialized program accreditations and/or other reviews as the basis for existing reviews, if materials are less than two years removed to avoid duplication of efforts. WIU maintains initial/continuing accreditation with 17 discipline-specific accrediting agencies.

WIU’s existing review process utilizes the expertise of program faculty, an external reviewer, and include quantitative and qualitative data analyses. Institutional Research and Planning’s **Program Review website** provides data on enrollment, degrees conferred, entering student characteristics, credit hours, and costs per credit hour. Comparative enrollment and degrees conferred data for the other 11 Illinois public universities with the same six-digit CIP code is provided.

As shown in the sample copies of existing review summaries provided to the IBHE with the year of the review indicated in parenthesis for the B.S. in Mathematics (AY2011-12), B.S. in Law Enforcement and Justice Administration (AY2014-15), M.S. Ed. in Counseling (AY2017-2018), and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Music Performance (AY2018-19), WIU’s existing review questions facilitate the thorough and candid evaluation of the:

- Mission and goals of the program and its relation to those of the University;
- Educational objectives, curriculum, and student-learning outcomes of undergraduate and graduate programs;
- Quality and diversity of faculty and their contributions to the program;
- Resources (e.g., library, physical facilities); and
- Reputation of the program among peers in the discipline.

If a program passes its existing review, it is reviewed again in eight years, unless the Provost’s Office determines more frequent reviews are necessary or the program is temporarily suspended.

**Progress Reports on Temporarily Suspended Programs:** Temporary suspension of an academic program provides a limited period of time, not to exceed five years, to address the reason(s) for a program’s temporary suspension (e.g., curricular restructuring, resource and/or enrollment issues, accreditation requirements, etc.). The IBHE requires annual progress reports on temporarily suspended programs and the outcomes of these reviews.

**WIU completed six progress reports between AYs 2011-12 and 2018-19, with an additional two scheduled for AY 2019-20.** As shown in examples from M.A.T in Secondary Education (AY2013-14), Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Event Planning and Management (AY2017-18), and B.S. in Apparel and Textile Merchandising (AY2018-19), all temporarily suspended programs complete annual progress reports following a standardized template to document corrective actions and results in order to determine suspension status (continue or remove) and program status (reinstate or eliminate).
Temporary Center Reviews: WIU completed four reviews between AYs 2011-12 and 2018-19, with an additional two reviews scheduled in AY 2026-27. As shown in examples from the Western Survey Research Center (AY2011-12) and the Center for the Study of Masculinities and Men’s Development (AY2014-15), all units/centers complete reviews following a standardized template (e.g., Academic Center/Reviews 2019-20) to determine center status (continue on temporary status, in good status, seek permanent status, or disestablish). Each review describes the center, actions taken since the last review, strengths and weaknesses, and resultant action plans.

Application of Program Review Findings: Program review results have produced many empirically-driven institutional and programmatic decisions between AYs 2011-12 and 2018-19:

- Of the 22 new program progress reports, 17 (77%) were “found in good standing” by the Provost’s Office and placed on an eight-year existing program rotation. Five programs (23%) did not meet this threshold and were either placed on a yearly review cycle for low enrollment, entered phase out, or identified as a “low enrolled program” subject to elimination upon recommendation of the Provost and action by the Board of Trustees (4.1).

- All of the 99 existing reviews document:
  1. Changes resulting from the last program review. For example, the University’s Teacher Education Programs earned NCATE re-accreditation (AY2011-12) and the M.S. in Chemistry added a comprehensive examination exit requirement for students (AY2016-17). The M.S. Ed. in Counseling moved School Counseling to a 60-hour program, per CACREP standards. Three new School Counseling specialty courses that were developed and aligned to the American School Counseling Association’s National Model (AY2017-18).
  2. Changes planned before the next existing review. For example, Chemistry planned (and did) submit external grant applications to major instrument programs at the National Science Foundation to support instruction and research (AY2016-17). Additionally, the B.S. in Biology and the B.S. in Clinical Laboratory Science planned (add did) increase laboratory components with. courses, field trips, and research experiences (AY2018-19).

- Six progress reports were completed by three programs on temporarily suspension. The MAT program was disestablished after five years of temporary probation status (AY2013-14). The Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Event Planning and Management and the B.S. in Apparel and Textile Merchandising are in their third and second year of temporary suspension, respectively (AY2018-19).

- The four Temporary Center Reviews resulted in WIU disestablishing the Western Survey Research Center (AY2011-12) and exploring permanent status for Center for the Study of Masculinities and Men's Development (AY2014-15). The decision was made to disestablish the latter based on decreasing funding and staffing (AY2015-16).

It is important to distinguish between that Academic Program Review processes and the Academic Program Elimination Review Committee (2C4, 3C2) to clearly describe WIU’s structures and processes. Program Reviews are conducted by academic departments, schools, and units for the express purpose of continuous improvement. The Program Review process occurs annually.
The Academic Program Elimination Review Committee (APREC), a contractually required and elected faculty committee, provides the Provost with recommendations concerning academic programs being considered for elimination, when such layoffs would result in the layoffs of employee(s).

APERC was convened twice during the period of this self-study: AYs 2015-16 and 2018-19. Upon recommendation of the Provost, the Board of Trustees disestablished majors in African American Studies, Philosophy, Women’s Studies, Religious Studies, and Women’s Studies in FY2016. Annual Teach Out Plans have been filed with the Commission. The first three programs remain minors at the University and all four offer courses to support General Education, other programs, and elective hours. No programs were eliminated after submission of the AY2018-19 APERC Report. The Board tabled a Resolution to disestablish seven programs in June 2019.

(4A2) WIU evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties

WIU admitted an average of 5,593 new freshmen, 1,391 new transfers, and 1,128 new graduate students between falls 2015-2019. The University enrolled an average of 1,219 new freshmen, 865 new transfer, and 569 new graduate students during this time (4.1).

WIU admits new undergraduate students through the Admissions Office for all undergraduate degree programs except the Bachelors of General Studies (BGS) degree program. There are Admissions Offices in Macomb and the Quad Cities. Admission to the BGS program is overseen by the School of Global Education and Outreach. The School of Graduate Studies admits new graduate and international students (undergraduate and graduate). Western has credit evaluation policies that apply to each category of students.

Undergraduate Students: Following the Credit by External Examination Policy and Policy on Articulating Credit for Advanced Placement and External Examinations, Western grants academic credit to students successfully completing any of five programs (i.e., College Level Examination Program, Defense Activity for Nontraditional Education Support, International Baccalaureate, Proficiency Examination Program, and/or Seal of Biliteracy) prior to enrollment at the University. Students can receive up to 30 semester hours of credit for graduation from military, external testing, or a combination of both.

WIU publishes its Advanced Placement and Course Equivalencies for high school students. There are 37 courses and examinations across 22 subject areas that students may participate in. Western accepts transfer credits from regionally accredited institutions across the nation. Credit transfer is determined by existing course articulation agreements and school/departmental review.

WIU participates in the statewide Illinois Articulation Agreement (IAI) for General Education course/program transfer (3B1). IAI supports transfer students from the 48 Illinois public community colleges and 12 public universities. IAI participation also gives students opportunities to complete lower division (freshman/sophomore) course(s) in the major. The Admissions website provides a listing of the 24 majors participating in IAI.

WIU has Compact Agreements (CA) with one Illinois private and eight Iowa institutions to support General Education course/program transfer (3B1). Sample CA agreements for Lincoln College (Illinois) and the Eastern Iowa Community College District (Clinton, Scott, and Muscatine Community Colleges) are provided to illustrate program parameters.
Western has 96 articulation agreements with 18 partner community colleges and eight Linkages (community college dual enrollment) agreements. Students in the Linkages program take courses at both institutions at the same time during the freshman and sophomore years. Sample Linkage Agreements for Highland and Heartland Community College are provided to illustrate program parameters.

Western also has Honors Articulation Agreements with seven community colleges. Sample Honors Articulation Agreements with Carl Sandburg and Southeastern Community College are provided to illustrate the specifics of these agreements.

The Undergraduate Catalog includes policies on Illinois Statewide Articulated Baccalaureate-Oriented Associate Degrees, Out-of-State and Private Institutions Baccalaureate-Oriented Associate Degrees Articulation [Compact] Agreements, Illinois Articulation Initiative, Evaluation of Transferable General Education Credit, Evaluation of Baccalaureate Major Transfer Credit, and the Dual Admission Transfer Program.

WIU provides transfer tools to support seamless planning. There are Transfer Guides for students from 33 community colleges, WIU Engineering Curriculum Equivalent Course Offerings for students from 30 community colleges, and Transferology allows all potential transfer students to see how their courses will transfer to WIU or back to their home institution. The Transferology website also provides information about placement credit options through standardized examinations, military credit, and international course transfer. Students who participate in Western’s Transfer Admission Guarantee receive course credit evaluations and a WIU degree audit of their courses every semester.

Bachelors of General Studies (BGS) Candidates: An average of 417 majors have enrolled in the BGS program between falls 2014-2018 (4.2). The BGS degree is a 120-semester hour program, requiring 30 hours to be earned at WIU in order to satisfy residency requirements. All other credit hour requirements can be fulfilled through Western courses and/or a combination of the options that are displayed in the Policy on BGS Degree Completion Options for Earning University Credit (i.e., transfer courses, military courses/training, non-collegiate training, proficiency exams, internship(s), and/or prior learning portfolio).

Graduate Students: WIU enrolled an average of 569 new graduate students between falls 2015-2019 (4.1). Applicants for admission to the School of Graduate Studies must hold a bachelor's degree from a regionally-accredited postsecondary institution. WIU maintains curricular coherence and quality in graduate degree programs. The Graduate Transfer Policy states, a student may transfer a maximum of six semester hours of approved graduate credit from an accredited institution in a 30-hour degree program or nine semester hours in a degree program requiring 32 or more semester hours.

All Students: The Undergraduate Transfer Credit for International Classes Policy stipulates that courses taken at schools outside the U.S. are evaluated on a course by course basis. Students requesting credit for specific courses are required to submit detailed course descriptions or a syllabus for each course. If submitted materials are not in English, word for word translations are required.

All attempted academic credit is placed on the student’s transcript and expressed in semester hours. Honor points are assigned to the letter grades and are used to determine the academic standing of the student according to a plus/minus grading scale for undergraduate students. There is no plus/minus distinction at the graduate level.

WIU implemented a plus/minus grading system for undergraduate courses in fall 2010 to enhance the precision of assessment of student mastery in course content. The University also implemented a Grade Replacement Policy in fall 2011. Undergraduate students can repeat Western courses in an attempt to
improve subject mastery, satisfy other course prerequisites, and improve their grade point average.
Graduate students with successful petition(s) from the Graduate Council can also exercise this option.

WIU courses numbered through 499 are undergraduate courses. Courses numbered 500 and above are
graduate courses. Only those advanced undergraduate courses at the 400-level listed in Graduate Catalog
may be taken for graduate credit. In order for graduate credit to be earned in these 400-level courses,
additional work beyond undergraduate credit requirements must be successfully completed. No more than
one-half of the semester hours counted for the graduate degree may be earned in courses below the 500-
level.

All forms of undergraduate and graduate experiential learning (e.g., internships, student teaching, clinical
placements) have an assigned WIU faculty member who is the instructor of record for the course. Grades
are assigned by the instructor of record and include feedback from the site supervisor.

(4A3) WIU has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer

WIU follows five policies to ensure that the quality of credit accepted through transfer and proficiency
examinations meets institutional standards.

- Policy on Articulating Credit for Advanced Placement and External Examinations
- BGS Degree Completion Options for Earning University Credit
- Policies Regarding WIU Academic Departmental Proficiency Examinations
- Policy on Undergraduate Transfer Credit for International Classes
- Graduate Admission

These five policies are supplemented by 10 Regulations and Guidelines on Course Credits, Evaluation of
Transferable General Education Credit, Illinois Articulation Initiative General Education Core
Curriculum, Evaluation of Baccalaureate Major Transfer Credit, International Transfer Evaluation
Process and Guidelines, Proficiency Examinations, Repeatable Courses, Repeating a Course for Grade
Replacement, University General Education Requirements, and Variable Credit Courses.

(4A4) WIU maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses,
extpectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its
programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high
school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education
curriculum

Academic Courses, Rigor, and Expectations for Student Learning: Faculty own the curriculum, set
course requirements, and maintain academic rigor in all offerings. Faculty are also responsible for
establishing and assessing student learning outcomes in General Education (3B1) and all
degree/certificate programs (2C4).

All courses taught in the WIU high school dual enrollment program are WIU courses taught by WIU
faculty members, and follow WIU assessment of student learning processes. Western does not hire high
school teachers (or others) to teach its dual enrollment courses located at partner high schools.

Nor does the University have different academic standards for high-school dual enrollment students. All
students, whether on- or off-campus, take WIU courses that maintain academic rigor and high standards
articulated in the Course Syllabus Policy. All undergraduate students have semester and cumulative grade
point averages calculated in accordance with the University’s Grading Policies.
Access to Learning Resources: In addition to 10 Student Service departments (4B2), academic advising (3D3), University Libraries (2E1, 3D4), and Writing Centers on both campuses (3D1):

- **The Center for International Studies** coordinates with government agencies on student visas, provides a week-long orientation program for new international students, and serves in resource and referral capacities to these students.
- **The Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning** provides proctored testing services to distance education students, and Respondus Monitor software for deployment in online testing.
- The Learning Assistants Program provides peer tutoring in mathematics and physics on both campuses. Biology and Chemistry also have peer tutoring programs.
- **Math Help Centers** offers tutoring at different locations across the Macomb campus.
- **Study Abroad and Outreach** hosts conferences, workshops international programs, sponsored credit, and residential programs in short-term, semester-long, and year-round formats.
- **The School of Global Education and Outreach** advising students enrolled in the BGS, Interdisciplinary Studies, and National Fire Academy degree and certificate programs.
- **University Advising and Academic Service Center (UAASC)** oversees registration at new student Summer Orientation and Registration programs, helps students resolve academic problems, advises students in the Reach and University Advising programs, provides information about classes, programs, tutoring resources by major, and university policies and procedures, and conducts academic success presentations and workshops.
- **University Technology** supports instructional technology. Wireless access is available in all academic buildings and residence halls. Computer laboratories in Stipes, Horrabin, Memorial, and Morgan Halls and WIU-QC are staffed by trained student personnel. Residence hall students in Macomb may use student-staffed labs in each hall complex, including two 24-hour labs. Late-night access is available for off-campus students in the University Union and Malpass Library. Every student is provided with a WIU e-mail account, space to create a personal home page, and file storage. Google Apps for Education and Office 365 accounts are free to all students.

WIU provides synchronous and asynchronous access to learning resources. Sample electronic learning resources available to all students include online search engines and reference tools from University Libraries, career exploration tools, survey of student readiness to take online courses, online tutorials from the Writing Center, mathematical tutoring, and Western’s Knowledgebase (computing self-help).

(4A5) **WIU maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes**

WIU maintains discipline-specific accreditation with 17 agencies where academic programs have determined that accreditation is appropriate to the discipline. This is in addition to accreditations for Beu Health Center and the University Counseling Center, and National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I certification. No regional, specialized, or national accrediting agency or the NCAA has ever placed WIU under negative status or action.

(4A6) **The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and AmeriCorps).**
WIU conferred 19,481 baccalaureate degrees between FYs 11-19 (4.3). The University evaluates the success of its graduates by conducting surveys of graduating students on a rolling one, five, and nine-year cycle.

Western’s alumni are highly successful in graduate/professional school and workforce placement. Data from the Last One-Year Alumni Survey (2015 Baccalaureate Degree Recipients) displayed in the 2016 Factbook show that 23% of respondents are continuing postsecondary education and/or 83% are employed one year after graduation, with 71% of those respondents indicating employment is closely tied to their major. Additionally:

- **Engineering** graduates have a 100% pass rate on the Fundamentals of Engineering (certification) examination between FY10-19.
- **Nursing** job placement rates were 96% in 2012, 97% in 2014, and 100% in all other years between 2010-2018.
- **Speech Pathology and Audiology’s** academic year 2016-17 through 2018-19 graduates have a 100% pass rate on the graduate licensure examination (PRAXIS II) and all of these graduates have obtained employment within three months of graduation.
- **The Illinois Board of Examiners** 2017 CPA Exam pass-rate for students from Illinois colleges and universities was 50%. The pass-rate at Western was 71%, which was the highest rate of the 12 Illinois public universities.

WIU also conferred 488 post baccalaureate certificates and 5,647 graduate degrees between FYs 11-19. Alumni have been highly successful in the workforce.

- **College Student Personnel** has graduated approximately 1,000 alumni with a 100% post-graduation placement rating over the past 25 years.
- **Counselor Education**: For Academic Year 2018-19, School Counselors had a 100% job placement rate and a 100% pass rate on the Illinois School Counselor Content Examination. Clinical Mental Health Counselors has a 98% job placement rate. Both of these occupational areas also had a 100% pass rate on the National Counselor Exam (NCE) for students who took the Exam.
- **Educational Leadership** has certified more than 2,000 principals and 600 superintendents. These programs have received national recognition by the Educational Leadership Constituent Council and the Specialized Professional Association for school leadership preparation programs.

WIU uses formative evaluative processes to prepare students for workforce and future educational studies. The School of Graduate Studies and individual departments provides workshops on graduate studies. Career Development Offices in Macomb and the Quad Cities provide resume reviews and in-person mock interviews for students to practice engagement with prospective employers and/or graduate schools.

Students can also access the Big Interview that allows students to video, practice, and receive feedback on mock interviews. Faculty provide students with feedback on their participation in student teaching, clinical placements, internships, research and creative activities with faculty.

WIU hosts annual fall and spring career fairs on both campuses. Career fairs are also hosted by schools, departments, and colleges, including events held by Accounting and Finance, Agriculture, Law
Enforcement and Justice Administration, Supply Chain Management, and the College of Education and Human Services. Students can also learn about internship and career opportunities through Handshake, used by over 400,000 companies. The University’s 250 Registered Student Organizations in Macomb and 25 in the Quad Cities also provide many networking opportunities.

Professional attire is available to students who do not have these means when they engage in professional settings. Articles of clothing are available through the Captain’s Closet in Macomb, and through community partnerships in the Quad Cities (e.g., Dress for Success).

WIU uses summative evaluation measures to measure the success of its graduates and to make curricular changes, where appropriate. Student outcome and output data is evaluated as part of discipline-specific accreditations and in program reviews. The latter includes results and benchmark comparisons from Alumni Surveys, student/employer satisfaction surveys, certification and licensure examinations, and placement results. Sample excerpts from program reviews from program 1, program 2, program 3, and program 4 are available for review.

This summative data is complemented by formative feedback given by the 20 external advisory boards utilized by colleges and departments (3.1). Secondary sources also provide evidence to WIU on the success of its graduates.

For example, WIU offers 30 programs for students interested in an undergraduate or graduate degree in an education field. Twenty-two of these programs, serving 398 students in fall 2018, are Illinois State Board of Education fully approved licensure programs (4.4). Student completion of these programs may lead to a license/endorsement in teaching, educational administration, school counseling, school psychology, school speech pathology, or instructional technology. The Illinois State Board of Education produces an annual report on licensure/certification pass rates of students to the respective institutions (4.5).

4B. Western demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning

(4B1) WIU has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals

WIU has intended student learning outcomes for General Education and all degree and certificate programs. The Undergraduate Catalog contains the Philosophy and Six Goals of the University’s General Education Program, which includes the overall goals of the program, qualities that generally well-educated students will demonstrate, and learning outcomes for each of the six goals of the program. The Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs also contain links to student learning outcomes for all certificate and degree programs

During the last period of accreditation (2000-01 through 2010-11), WIU completed the four-year, HLC assessment academy. Since that time, Western’s General Education program and all undergraduate and graduate degree and certificate programs follow a four-step model to: (1) operationally define intended student learning outcomes, (2) collect and analyze data, (3) report findings, and (4) engage in empirically-driven, continuous improvement.

WIU has effective assessment processes. The University has clearly defined learning outcomes, deploys its model in curricular and co-curricular programs (4B2), and engages in continuous improvement (4B3) in a model that is based on best practices (4B4).
(4B2) WIU assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.

WIU’s four-step assessment model is applied to General Education and all certificate and degree programs. Student Services also has established assessment processes, and is expanding these efforts to include the University’s four-step model in co-curricular programs and services to support consistent assessment practices and continuous improvement inside and outside the classroom.

**General Education Assessment:** The General Education Program Goals provide the basic outline for student learning at the University. Each department and school teaching in the General Education Program develops and implements plans to assess student learning of General Education Goals in their course(s) that are included in the General Education Curriculum.

Departments and schools develop operationally define intended student learning outcomes that are specific to their discipline(s). Faculty teaching general education courses carry out the measurement in these courses. Departments compile results, analyze findings, and submit an Annual Impact Report outlining how data was used to improve student learning to the Provost’s Office. The Associate Provost for Undergraduate and Graduate Studies shares these Reports with the Council on General Education (CGE) for their ongoing review of General Education.

Seven examples of Annual Impact Reports are provided to demonstrate how faculty conduct General Education assessment and that processes used by faculty are consistent over academic years. The examples (below) are displayed by General Education courses and the program goals that they support.

- English 180 for Communication Skills.
- Mathematics 101, 102, 123, 133, 134, 137 and Statistics 171 for Natural Science and Mathematics.
- Psychology 100, 221, 250 and 251 for Social Sciences.
- Philosophy 100, 120, 140 and 205 for Humanities and Music 190 and 195 for Fine Arts.
- Broadcasting and Journalism 352 for Multicultural Studies.
- Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration 110 and 112 for Human Well-Being.

**Program-Specific Assessment:** Annual assessment of undergraduate and graduate student learning occurs in all degree programs and follows WIU’s four-step model, with final submission to the Provost’s Office. Six completed examples from the University’s accreditation cycle are provided (below) to illustrate process consistency across degree levels, types, and academic years. There examples are for the B.A. in Anthropology, B.S. in Computer Science, B.F.A. in Art-Art Studio/Graphic Design Option, M.A. in Economics, Specialist in Clinical/Community Mental Health, and Ed.D. in Educational Leadership.

**Co-Curricular Assessment:** Assessment of student learning in Student Services is evident in accreditation self-studies for the Beu Health Center from the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care and the University Counseling Center from the International Association of Counseling Services. It is also evident in the Alcohol and Other Drugs Center assessing student learning in prevention programs and Financial Aid offering programs and services to increase student financial literacy and planning.

Course based assessment also occurs within Student Services. The Career Development Office offers two, one-hour courses for academic credit. Career Development 200 focuses on career exploration and Career Exploration 390 helps students transition into the workforce. Student Services staff also teach the majority of University 100 sections.
Student Services expanded assessment efforts to mirror assessment processes used in Academic Affairs. As of fall 2019, all 15 departments have each articulated two intended learning outcomes and are collecting data. The University is deploying a consistent model of the assessment of student learning inside and outside the classroom.

**University Support for Assessment:** The Student Learning Assessment Committee provides oversight and coordination of assessment activities by identifying issues/concerns that require Faculty Senate, Graduate Council, college, and/or departmental attention; supporting assessment initiatives; and sharing information about assessment activities across the University.

The Associate Provost for Undergraduate and Graduate Studies, Assessment Facilitator, and the Director of the Office of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Retention Initiatives are facilitating development and implementation of new Student Service Assessment processes (described above). Their work started in Spring 2019.

*(4B3) WIU uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.*

Examples of assessment data improving student learning is evident at all levels of the educational experience. Changes have occurred inside and outside the classroom. For example:

- Within General Education, English introduced a new writing curricula for English 100, 180, and 280; online tutoring was introduced in Mathematics 137; Psychology standardized terminology across General Education sections; Music supported faculty conference attendance to refine technology use and enhance student learning; Broadcasting and Journalism added more practical examples to the curriculum; and Philosophy and Recreation, Park and Tourism evaluated the use of assessment tools and methods.

- A new assessment subcommittee and codified General Education writing requirements resulted from the 2016-2018 Review of General Education. The Council for General Education established a General Education Assessment of Student Learning Subcommittee (GEASC) on October 4, 2018. GEASC was given authority to work schools and departments to improve assessment planning.

  General Education writing expectations now include that all courses have at least one written assignment with written or oral feedback from the instructor with an opportunity for revision. It is also expected that there are multiple in class writing assignments. The number, length, and style vary with class size and between disciplines. The Council for General Education website provides resources for faculty when using “Writing to Learn” pedagogy in their courses.

- Within the disciplines, the B.A. in Anthropology refined assessment processes. The B.F.A. in Art – Art Studio/Graphic Design option implemented a new assessment plan with new student learning objectives; and the B.S. in Computer Science increased class participation, programming feedback, writing assignments, and homework collaboration.

At the graduate level, the M.A. in Economics updated the curriculum and evaluated the validity of its primary assessment tool. The Specialist in Clinical/Community Mental Health adjusted the curriculum to increase student exposure and practice in formal treatment planning, practice conceptualization, and diagnosis; and the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership identified where
students had deficiencies in completing assignments and implemented follow-up strategies to correct these deficiencies.

- Within Student Services, the Disability Resource Center implemented the use of a note taking software (Sonocent) to provide timely accommodations. Additionally, the Office of Student Activities revised the Rocky Unleashed Leadership Program. The curriculum for the 8-week program was revised based on the Social Change Model and utilizes experiential learning opportunities to educate students about leadership, service, and change. An eight-hour retreat was added to focus on identity, intersectionality, and prejudice.
- The Veterans Resource Center (VRC) and the Military Task Force established the VRC Liaisons Program. WIU faculty and staff complete a certification program and assist military service students. Likewise, Student Services established the Leatherneck Success Team as a peer-based resource and mentoring program for students to increase academic achievement and skill development.

Evaluation of student and academic support services and making modification where necessary ensures the delivery of effective programs and services in promoting student success. For example:

- Intercollegiate Athletics provides workshops on academic success, career development, resume writing, time management, and the job search processes. Student-athletes earned a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.17 in academic year 2017-18. This was the second highest cumulative GPA in the program’s history, with three student-athletes being named Academic All-Americans. The six-year graduation of student-athletes from the fall 2013 cohort was 60%, 14% higher than the rate for all freshmen from this cohort.

- The Office of Student Life supports Greek Life at WIU. The Mission of the University’s 12 Interfraternity Council fraternities, six Panhellenic Council sororities, and 12 United Greek Council fraternities and sororities emphasize academic excellence, leadership development, and community service. Student engagement in Greek Life promotes student success. New freshmen in Greek Life have higher first-year persistence and six-year graduation rates than independent students. For the fall 2018 cohort, values were 92.5% vs. 65.3% and 75.5% vs. 46.2%, respectively.

- University Housing and Dining Services evaluates the GPAs of new students in Living Learning Communities (LLC) compared to all other new students to measure program effectiveness in promoting successful student transitions and acclimation to academic expectations. Data for each of the fall 2015-2017 new freshmen cohorts living in the residence halls shows that the average first-semester and first-year grade point averages of students participating in LLCs are significantly higher than students not participating in LLCs. For example, the fall 2017 comparisons were 2.93 vs 2.64 and 2.88 and 2.62 for the first semester and first year GPAs of the fall 2017 cohort.

- The Report on the Learning Assistant Pilot Project in support of the Engineering Program at WIU-QC shows that students receiving peer-based tutoring earned one letter grade higher in LA courses compared to students who did not participate. LA participants also satisfied subsequent course prerequisites in the Engineering sequence at a rate of 84% compared to 73% for non-LA participants.
Additionally, the DFW rate for new engineering students decreased from 29% for students from the fall 2014-2016 cohorts to 15% for the fall 2017 cohort. First-year persistence of engineering majors increased from 60% to 65% during the period of comparisons.

(4B4) WIU’s processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members

WIU’s four-step model (4B1) is faculty-driven for academic assessment and staff-driven for cocurricular assessment. It is based on best practices learned in the Commission’s Assessment Academy, communications, and annual conferences. Western’s assessment protocol extends equally across instructional modalities. WIU does not differentiate learning goals or assessment processes between on campus and distance education students.

To further affirm that the University upholds to best practices in assessment with online students, WIU completed a Self-Study to ensure full compliance with State Authorization Reciprocity Act and Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education Programs. Results were presented to the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees in December 2015.

The University is a member of the Midwest Higher Education Compact (MHEC) and joined the National Council for State Authorization and Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) after completing the Distance Education Self Study and receiving Illinois Board of Higher Education approval in 2016. WIU’s NC-SARA Membership has been continuous since 2016.

WIU exceeds State of Iowa’s College Student Aid’s standards for distance learning that requires NC-SARA membership and demonstrated compliance with Iowa Code. The University provides online instruction to Iowa residents and hosts the Museum Studies program at the Figge Art Museum in Davenport, Iowa. WIU produced three applications that received State of Iowa registrations in 2012, 2015, and 2017. The 2019 Self Study is currently under review by Iowa Postsecondary Aid.

The Associate Provost for Undergraduate and Graduate Studies is responsible for ensuring that WIU’s assessment processes continue to reflect best practices. The Senior Vice President for Strategic Planning serves as the Accreditation Liaison Officer and keeps the Associate Provost and Vice President for Student Services informed on Commission, MHEC, and NC-SARA publications, announcements, and professional development opportunities related to the assessment of student learning. Faculty and the Provost’s office monitor and implement discipline-specific accreditation agencies expectations for the assessment of student learning.

4C. Western demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

(4C1) WIU has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.

Short Term Goals: WIU’s short-term objective has been to stabilize the institutional retention rate. The data show that the average institutional first-year (fall-to-fall) retention rate of first-time, full time freshmen is 68.4% for the fall 2013-2017 cohorts (4.6). However, these rates had decreased for five consecutive years, going from a high of 72.1% for the fall 2013 cohort to 65.3% for the fall 2017 cohort, before improving to 67.5% for the fall 2018 cohort.
WIU is aware of persistence challenges for different populations of students. Using the fall 2018 cohort as example, the first-year persistence rates of 54.4% for Black students and 64.7% for Hispanic students, which are below the 67.5% rate for the total cohort.

Recent evidence demonstrates that WIU is starting to experience progress in student persistence through concerted efforts occurring at the school/department, college, campus, and university level(s). Comparing the fall 2018 to the fall 2017 cohort, first year persistence rates are up 3.9% for Black students and 3.3% for Hispanic students.

Building on this momentum, Interim President Abraham set a goal that student persistence for all students will be higher in fall 2020 than it was in fall 2019. To that end, the University created new and enhanced existing scholarship programs to build upon that $10M in scholarships that the University awards annually to address student cost sensitivity and price elasticity.

WIU now offers Alumni Legacy Scholarships, Leatherneck Visitor Scholarships, Chicago and St. Louis Leatherneck Scholarships, Local Leatherneck Housing Scholarships, and Leatherneck Book Awards. Each of these scholarships and awards are effective with fall 2020 new students.

WIU also enhanced the Western Commitment Scholarship program. The scholarship automatically awards $3,000-8,000 annually to incoming freshmen based on merit and need. The Western Commitment Transfer Scholarship program was also revised, with the automatic award increasing to $2,500 and making the scholarship available to part-time students. The WIU Phi Theta Kappa Scholarship will provide a one-time $1,000 award to Fall 2020 new transfer students who are members of this honor society.

WIU also established new and enhanced existing programs and services to support student success in fall 2019. For example, the new Leatherneck Cares Referral offers a user-friendly tool for and member of the Western community to share non-emergency-related concerns about student behaviors and potential barriers to success. There were over 130 submissions from students, faculty, staff, and families of students between August-October, 2019.

The Student Development and Success Center and the Office of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Retention Initiatives implemented strategic follow-up with students who have class absences. The source of information is the Online Absence Reporting System (OARS) implemented in 2013. Students are required to submit an entry for each class missed. The information is forwarded to faculty for their recording keeping and use.

When faculty forward OARS information to the Student Development and Success Center, staff reach out to students who submit absence notifications for resource and referral. Additionally, the Office of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Retention Initiatives provides phone or in-person outreach to students who miss an above-average amount of classes or whom faculty have noted as having a high number of absences. Both interventions are designed to support students and ensure that class attendance is a priority.

The Leatherneck Success Team was established in 2012 as a peer-based resource and mentoring program for students. The Team typically consists of 10 members serving 40 students and focusing on time management, study skills, and campus engagement. Working with the Office of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Retention Initiatives, the Team engaged in active outreach campaigns that focus more on teaching students a particular skill. Currently, the Team is planning a “raise the bar” campaign to help students understand and create their finals week schedule, which is an issue that first-year students struggle with academically.
A streamlined tool for attendance tracking, advising management, and student communication will be implemented this fall. Future initiatives include enhancing academic advising, restructuring select introductory courses, increasing student involvement, and providing greater incentives to students in the Reach program.

WIU had a short-term goal to restore six-year graduation rates above 50%. The fall 2012 six-year graduation rate of first-time, full-time freshmen was 46.2%. This is the first time that WIU’s six-year graduation rate fell under the 50% threshold during the period of accreditation self-study. Six-year graduation rates were 53.1% and 50.4% for the fall 2010 and 2011 cohorts of first-time, freshmen. The 2013 rate improved to 50.5%.

**Longer-Term Goals:** WIU’s mid- and long-term goals are to achieve retention and graduation rates that place the University at the median and then top 25% of peer institutions. Data from the FY19 Performance Report shows that this will entail improving retention rates from 69% to 80% to reach the median and to 85% reach the top 25% for Macomb peers. WIU-QC’s 70% retention rate is the median for its peers with a goal of 82%. The University’s graduation rate will need to improve from 53% percent to 61% to reach the median and to 70% to reach the top 25% of peer institutions (4.7).

WIU has long-standing goals and priorities to improve student persistence and completion rates, as documented in the University’s Strategic Plans (*Higher Values in Higher Education 2008-2018, Higher Values in Higher Education 2012-2022, and Higher Values in Higher Education 2017-2027*), and Annual Strategic Plan Supplements that started in Academic Year 2016-17. The University Planning Website provides access to accomplishments from these Plans. WIU also participated in the Commission’s Persistence and Completion Academy to increase retention and graduation rates (4C2).

(4C2) WIU collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs

Degrees conferred, retention, persistence and completion data are collected/analyzed as part of program review and discipline-specific accreditation processes (4A1). Annual Fact Books provide retention and graduation data to assist in program evaluation. This includes displays of new freshmen retention and graduation rates by gender, ethnicity, admission type, major, and time-to-degree. It also includes the same information for new transfer students by gender, ethnicity, class, and associate’s degree status.

The Board of Trustees receive annual Performance Reports that compare university performance to stated goals, the Illinois public universities, and benchmark institutions to determine if WIU is successfully achieving its goals. The University’s benchmark institutions are currently being reviewed and updated by an Ad Hoc Committee of the Faculty Senate chaired by the Director of Institutional Research and Planning and an Associate Professor from Mathematics and Philosophy.

Data from the FY19 Performance Report shows that WIU’s overall university retention rate decreased 2.5% in the last year. The WIU-QC retention rate was constant. The Macomb campus graduation rate decreased 4.2% in the last year (4.8). Six-year graduation rates are not available for WIU-QC. Western did not begin admitting first-time, full-time freshmen to the Quad Cities until fall 2013.

WIU performs lower on national comparisons of retention and graduation rates (4.7). However, benchmarking does not illustrate successful implementation of the University’s Mission. Western values educational opportunity and access and admits up to 25% of its freshmen class who do not meet published admissions standards but show a desire and willingness to work towards shared goals.
By valuing academic excellence and attending to individual learners in a supportive environment inside and outside the classroom, WIU achieves nationally recognized graduation rates that exceed projections based on entering student characteristics. This is shown in comparisons of the Illinois public universities (4.9), WIU benchmark institutions (4.10), and documented in US News and World Report (2011-2018).

WIU received national recognitions for promoting student completion at rates higher than predicted for first-generation, low-income, and/or minority students by the United States Department of Education (2016), Illinois Education Research Council (2017), Washington Monthly, and the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Postsecondary Education.

The University’s student success rates were also recognized as WIU was one of 11 colleges and universities from across the United States selected to appear in the U.S. Department of Education’s (DOE) College Completion Toolkit, “Promising Practices for Improving Student Degree Attainment” (2017). The toolkit features schools that are increasing college completion rates for students on their campuses through promising practices.

WIU’s inclusion in this publication built upon previous recognitions. Minority Access, Inc. recognized the University in its annual Diversity Awards (2016). Western was one 38 colleges and universities from across the U.S., and the only Illinois public institution, recognized for embracing diversity, creating an inclusive environment, and demonstrating results.

WIU was the only Illinois institution and one of three in the Midwest cited in a report published by HCM Strategists, a Washington, D.C. public policy advocacy firm. Western and 31 other colleges and universities were recognized for efforts to improve college completion rates and prepare students for successful careers (2011). WIU was recognized by the Center for Student Opportunity for having the smallest achievement gaps between white and Hispanic students (2010).

WIU compares four-year transfer graduation rates in annual Performance Reports since six-year graduation rates cannot be compared for WIU-QC. The 67.4% rate for the Macomb campus is equal to last year’s rate and up 3.0% percent from two years ago, with the campus experiencing continuing increases in graduation rates of minority students. The 69.7% rate for the Quad Cities campus is down 3.8% from last year. Rates for minority students are down but percentages are based on small sample sizes less than 20. With a larger base, the graduation rate of Pell grant recipients is on a three-year improvement trend (4.11).

(4C3) WIU uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data

University use of information to enhance student persistence and completion rates focused on customized strategies focusing on the individual needs of students through institutional participation in Building Connections, HLC’s Persistence and Completion Academy, and Connections Mapping.

Building Connections: WIU established the Building Connections Mentoring Program in AY 2012-13 after a pilot year. Nearly 220 faculty and staff members volunteered to serve as mentors to all new freshmen. Students met with their mentors several points during the year to discuss issues and learn about resource and referral opportunities. As part of orientation, students completed the College Student Inventory, which measures academic motivation, social motivation, general coping skills and receptivity to support services. Results are shared with mentors so they are aware of their assigned students' strengths and areas in which the students may need assistance.
CSI results were shared between 2012-2015 and then discontinued after a fiscal decision by a former Vice President of Student Services. However, the mentoring component of building connections remains active.

**Persistence and Completion Academy (PCA):** WIU participated in HLC’s PCA between Academic Years 2014-15 and 2017-2018. It was part of the University’s Quality Initiative and focused on addressing student needs by location and modality of instruction. Additional details on the accomplishments discussed below are available from the University’s PCA Website.

As part of the PCA, Administrative Information Management Systems, Institutional Research and Planning, and Office of the University Registrar developed a distributed database that uses data to support programs and interventions designed to increase student persistence and completion. The database includes 16 freshman and transfer fall cohorts, 80 filters enabling customized analysis by financial aid status, demographics, academic information such as major and course placement, and 29 measures including course deficiencies, retention and graduation.

The database support use of the Predictive Analytic Framework by Institutional Research and Planning to identify students at risk of attrition. Analyses are completed each term and forwarded to offices and committees (including the Student Success Coaches in Macomb and the Director of Student Services in the Quad Cities) to inform planning, implementation, and evaluation. The information is available as early as 10th day, making intervention much more effective because it occurs early in the semester.

In Macomb, an inventory of student support services was created, the predictive analytic framework was deployed for new freshmen, two new student success coaches were appointed to work with at-risk students, and student Living-Living Communities were expanded.

In the Quad Cities, an inventory of current retention efforts and courses with high percentages of DFW rates were completed, the predictive analytic framework was initiated, a campus retention committee was established, and a three-year pilot of the Learning Assistants peer tutoring program in mathematics and physics was started.

For distance learning, an inventory of electronic student services and faculty and student surveys were conducted. New software (Respondus Monitor) was deployed that enables students to complete graded assignments on their computer rather than having to travel to a Western campus or approved testing location to complete these requirements.

HLC’s February 2019 Open Pathway Quality Initiative Report indicated, “The University put forth much effort during this time period to invest in these four initiatives, some of which resulted in permanent, structural changes to the University and its programs.” Benefits were seen in increases in fall 2018 first-time, full-time freshmen retention rates and improved six-year graduation rates (4C1). Retention, persistence, and completion work will continue. For example, WIU-QC will prepare a Trio Grant application to expand student services, and work with Institutional Research and Planning and Student Services in extending use of the Predictive Analytic Framework and corresponding interventions to new transfer students.

**Connections Mapping:** The Office of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Retention Initiatives launched an empirically-based and customized intervention process in 2018. The Connections Mapping initiative utilizes multiple data sets to document where new freshmen are engaged on campus. Results provide valuable insight into identifying students at risk of not persisting and making intervention plans based on individual student trend/use data.
University efforts to improve student persistence and completion also include focusing on issues of student cost sensitivity and price elasticity through scholarships, fiscal policy, and expanded distance learning. Approximately 75% of WIU students receive financial assistance, with 53% of the Macomb and 41% of the Quad Cities undergraduates receiving federal Pell grants (4.12). WIU students receive the highest percentage of need-based aid of other Illinois public regional institutions (4.13).

**Scholarships:** WIU established Western Commitment Scholarships for new freshmen in 2012, and adjusted award amounts for fall 2015, 2017, and 2020 recruitment (1A2, 4B1). The University also established Western Commitment Transfer Scholarships for new transfer students in 2013. Award amounts were adjusted for fall 2018 and 2020 recruitment (1A2, 4B1). The 2018 adjustment also made the scholarships annually renewable; the 2020 adjustment made increased the annual award by $500 and made the award available to part-time students.

**Fiscal Policy:** The Western Illinois University Board of Trustees enacted a 3.0% tuition reduction for all new FY16 students. WIU is the only Illinois public university (of 12) that locks new student tuition, fees, room and board rates with no cost increases for four years, provided the student maintains continuous fall/spring enrollment. The Board did not increase tuition in FYs 17-18. In years when there were tuition increases, the increases were lower than the average four-year increase in the Higher Education Price Index (4.14).

**Expanded Distance Learning:** Based on the cost-sensitivity of WIU students and the need for them to work in order to support their educational pursuits, Western continued to expand its distance learning portfolio to prevent attrition by adding additional course access.

WIU had five online degrees during the last accreditation site visit. The University now supports National Fire Academy Curricular (certification) for Fire Fighters, General Education, 11 bachelor’s degrees, five post baccalaureate certificates, and seven master’s degrees online. New master’s degree hybrid programs were launched in Business Administration, College Student Personnel, and Community and Economic Development. Fourteen live streaming course sections were offered in academic year 2018-2019.

(4C4) **WIU’s processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice**

WIU uses census day and other institutional data sets to analyze retention, persistence, and completion rates. These analyses led to new methods proven to increase student persistence and completion rates (4C3).

WIU continues to learn new and innovative ways to promote persistence, completion, and retention. The Office of the Senior Vice President for Strategic Planning and Initiatives formed a Data Sharing Consortium in 2018 that consists of representatives from Antioch University, Azusa Pacific University, Capella University, College for Financial Planning, Colorado Technical University, DeVry University, Los Angeles Pacific University, National American University, Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute, and Western Illinois University.

The Consortium has shared uses of the predictive analytic framework and ways to monitor and report persistence and completion rates for populations of students where traditional measures such as IPEDS that use consecutive enrollment underestimate actual graduation rates. Member institutions were specifically chosen as they serve high percentages of online and/or non-traditional students, with high institutional stop out rates.
WIU has learned two enrollment lessons from the Consortium. First, analysis of persistence rates applies to the admissions funnel. Therefore, the Admissions Office began in 2018 contacting accepted students who did not enroll at a college or university to encourage WIU enrollment. Second, students may not be aware of all of the educational opportunities available at the institution. In response, the School of Graduate Studies began contacting currently enrolled, academically qualified students to encourage enrollment in integrated degree programs and all other post-baccalaureate certificate and master’s degrees at WIU.

Summary
WIU demonstrates Mission achievement in preparing students to lead in diverse and dynamic communities. The University is achieving its Vision of leadership in quality, opportunity and affordability.

WIU provides a quality educational experience with an active program review process producing changes in a total of 131 reviews of existing, new, and temporarily suspended programs and temporary centers between Academic Years 2011-12 and 2018-19. The University follows processes for transcripting credit and provides students with access to learning resources. Highly qualified faculty own the curriculum, engage in hiring, and determine the applicability of discipline-specific accreditations in their programs. Alumni Surveys and programmatic data demonstrate that WIU prepares students to be successful in the workforce and future graduate and professional studies.

WIU has an active, annual assessment process that is based on best practices and includes intended student learning outcomes, as well as processes to collect and analyze data, report findings, and engage in empirically-driven continuous improvement. These assessment practices extend across General Education, all degree and certificate programs, and are being extended to Student Services to apply assessment across the University inside and outside the classroom. The extension of this model builds upon Student Services traditions of excellence in assessment.

WIU engages in continuous educational improvement by setting attainable short-term student persistence and completion goals enroute to achieving ambitious but realistic long-term goals in these areas. The University has nationally recognized graduation rates that exceed projections based on entering student characteristics. Western has received national recognitions for promoting student completion at rates higher than predicted for first-generation, low-income, and minority students by the United States Department of Education, Illinois Education Research Council, Washington Monthly, and the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Postsecondary Education.

WIU further demonstrates commitments to continuous educational improvement as demonstrated in Building Connections, Persistence and Completion Academy, Connections Mapping, new and enhanced scholarship programs, and expanded distance learning.

The University methods for persistence and completion reporting are based on best practices, and Western will continue to carefully monitor institutional retention and graduation rates. Furthermore, the University will document results from the new Student Services assessment process, increased engagement with the Online Absence Reporting System, and actions designed to increase student persistence and completion in Annual Strategic Plan Updates.