

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

Date: January 31, 2017

Re: January 2017 Strategic Plan Update

This month's *Strategic Plan Update* highlights Western Illinois University's inclusion in the United States Department of Education's (DOE) *Promising Practices for Improving Student Degree Attainment* that was published in December 2016. Only 11 institutions nationally were featured in this publication. Western's inclusion in this publication demonstrates how faculty and staff continue advancement of the *Vision of Higher Values in Higher Education*, as we become the national leader in quality, opportunity, and affordability.

Background

The United States Department of Education published *Promising Practices for Improving Student Degree Attainment* in December 2016. Western Illinois University was one of 11 colleges and universities from across the nation honored with best practice status for serving students from low-income families, adults, and/or those from underrepresented racial and ethnic communities.

Western was one of only two Illinois public universities featured in this publication. No other Western Illinois University benchmark institution was included. The University was the only four-year public institution located in a medium size town as classified by the DOE.

Colleges and Universities Included in <i>Promising Practices for Improving Student Degree Attainment</i> Shown by the Descriptive Variables Identified by the United States Department of Education						
	Undergraduate <u>Enrollment</u>	Highest Undergraduate <u>Credential</u>	Institutional <u>Type</u>	<u>Location</u>	Location <u>Size</u>	
Georgia State University	6,841	Baccalaureate	Public	City	Medium	
Iñisaġvik College	109	Certificate	Public	Rural	Small	
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts	1,517	Baccalaureate	Public	Town	Small	
Rutgers University	6,841	Baccalaureate	Public	City	Medium	
Salem College	946	Baccalaureate	Private	City	Small	
Spellman College	2,135	Baccalaureate	Private	City	Medium	
University of Illinois-Chicago	16,635	Baccalaureate	Public	City	Large	
University of Massachusetts- Lowell	12,190	Baccalaureate	Public	Suburban	Medium	
University of North Carolina- Wilmington	12,686	Baccalaureate	Public	City	Medium	
University of Richmond	3,223	Baccalaureate	Private	City	Medium	
Valencia College	37,634	Associates	Public	City	Large	
Western Illinois University	9,645	Baccalaureate	Public	Town	Medium	

The intention of this publication was “to include a toolkit [that] features schools that are increasing college completion rates for students on their campuses through promising practices.” Specifically, the “toolkit gathers data-driven student supports from a sample of these institutions as a resource for institutional leaders ... With the goal of highlighting innovative ways that schools across the country can build the systems and supports necessary to ensure that those who enroll in college complete their degrees.”

Strategic Plan actions fostering student success at Western Illinois University featured in this publication included the First Year Experience, University 100, Building Connections mentoring program, and programs and services offered by the Gwendolyn Brooks Cultural Center and the Casa Latina Cultural Center.

Results

Results of Western Illinois University freshmen and seniors compared to the average of the University’s peer group on the National Survey of Student Engagement show that:

- First-year WIU students rate the University significantly higher ($p < .05$) than first year students at peer institutions with regards to interactions with diverse individuals, the quality of student-faculty interactions, and the University in promoting a supportive learning environment.
- Seniors rate the University significantly higher ($p < .05$) than seniors at peer institutions with regards to learning strategies, quality student-faculty interactions, effective teaching practices, and the University providing a supportive learning environment.

In addition:

- Western’s freshman-to-sophomore retention rate increased from to 69.2%, from 67.7% the previous year.
- Western’s six-year graduation rate increased to 53.1% in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 compared to 52.8% in FY 2015.

Summary and Next Steps

As this *Update* shows, Western Illinois University continues to receive recognitions for national leadership in quality, opportunity, and affordability. The material highlighted in this month’s *Update* complements other institutional recognitions received since December 2016. This includes:

- Western Illinois University’s designation as a “Military Friendly School” by *G.I. Jobs Magazine* for the eighth consecutive year. This year the University earned Gold School Status in the Large Public School category (more than 10,000 students).
- Western Illinois University’s recognition as a “Top School” in the *Military Advanced Education & Transition 2017 Guide to Colleges and Universities*.
- BestMastersDegrees.com ranked Western Illinois University’s online master’s curriculum and instruction degree program in the top 30 nationally.

Future Strategic Plan Updates will provide more information about these rankings and the University’s participation in the RecycleMania 2017, the national collegiate recycling competition. Last year the University’s recycling rate increased 51.0%, from 13.9 in 2015 to 21.0 in 2016. As a result, Western earned 4th place out of 84 institutions nationally in RecycleMania’s “Most Improved” category.

Please contact me if you have any questions about the materials presented in this month's *Update* and/or feedback for the continued successful advancement of the University's *Strategic Plan*.

cc: President Thomas CSEC President Dorethy SGA President Frank
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