**President’s Performance Survey Report ~ 2011-2012 Academic Year**

**April 5, 2013**

Faculty Senate Committee on Provost and Presidential Performance (CPPP)  
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**Executive Summary**

A survey was conducted of the WIU Macomb and Quad Cities faculty asking them to evaluate President Thomas’ performance in 2011-2012. A total of 253 faculty members opened the survey instrument and 217 agreed to participate in the survey, out of a population of 640. They evaluated the President’s overall performance on a five-point Likert scale at a mean value of 3.35, with a standard deviation of 1.26. The respondents also provided evaluations of the President’s performance in the areas of Total Campus Enterprise, Academic Goals, and Personnel, Faculty Relations and Campus Issues. A summary of those responses follows. Finally, the respondents were given opportunities to comment on the President’s performance, and the comments provided are summarized at the end of this report. Both the qualitative and quantitative responses to the survey indicate a cautious approval of the President’s performance in the light of the significant budgetary and demographic constraints facing the University at present.

**Overview and Methodology**

At the request of the Board of Trustees’ standing Presidential Evaluation and Assessment Committee, the Faculty Senate conducts an annual survey of the faculty regarding their views of the President’s performance over the past year. No surveys were administered for the 2010-2011 year, as it was the first year in office for both President Thomas and Provost Hawkinson. The instrument used for this year’s survey (Academic year 2011-2012) was only slightly altered from the surveys administered under President Goldfarb. The changes were mostly superficial changes in wording of the questions. In the question related to the President’s fostering of effective relations with certain groups on campus, we added two new groups, the Board of Trustees and the UPI. Instead of a question asking respondents to assess the President’s responsiveness to the concerns of faculty, staff, students and the community, we asked respondents if the President was responsive to their concerns. The most significant change to the survey was the inclusion of a self-reflective statement from the President regarding his performance in the past year, and a listing of the President’s goals and sub-goals for that year. The respondents were invited to rank the goals by their importance to them (1. University Growth and Student Recruitment and Retention, 2. Programming, 3. Institutional Facilities, 4. Professional Development for Faculty and Staff, 5. Campus – Wide Committees), from 1 to 5.

The survey was conducted on-line by e-mailing each eligible faculty member (640 faculty were invited to participate) a web link to complete the survey. Eligible faculty members had three weeks to respond (opened Feb 13th, 2013 and closed Mar 6th, 2013, 5:00 p.m.) and were given three separate reminders in addition to the initial invitation to complete the survey. 253 faculty or 38.3 % of the total faculty opened the survey, and 217 or 32.9% of the total faculty agreed to participate in the survey.

For the survey questions, a 5-point Likert scale was used (1 = Not Effective to 5 = Highly Effective), with additional options of No Opinion and No Answer. The survey instrument asked questions divided into three focus areas: Total Campus Enterprise, Academic Goals, and Personnel, Faculty Relations and Campus Issues. The responses of no opinion and no answer were not included in the statistical analysis provided below. Open comment sections were provided at the end of each focus area. Items requesting demographic information were also included in the survey. The quantitative results of the survey can be seen in Table A: President’s Survey Quantitative Data. Table A provides a quantitative review of the President’s job performance for the 2011-2012 academic year.

**Demographic Overview**

54% of the survey participants who identified their gender were male. This 54%/46% disparity compares with the difference in numbers between men (52%) and women (48%) on the faculty reported by Institutional Research and Planning. Faculty respondents were evenly spread out over the first three experience levels (30% at 1-5 years, 27% at 6-10 years, and 30% at 11-20 years). Only 13% of the respondents had more than 20 years of experience. Of those who indicated their college affiliation, 47% belonged to the College of Arts and Science or the Library, corresponding to 31.3% of all faculty in those two academic units. The next largest affiliation was with the College of Education and Human Services at 22%. Finally, 38% of the respondents indicated that they had interactions with the President at least 1 to 3 times in a semester, while 45% indicated they interacted with the President no more than 1-3 times in a year, and 17% said they had no interactions with the President this past year.

### Overall Effectiveness

The faculty reported an overall mean rating of effectiveness for the President of 3.35 with a 1.26 standard deviation. This overall mean rating was correlated with the respondent’s ranking of the President’s goals, as well as with the demographic data. When asked at the end of the section on Total Campus Enterprise if “overall, the President fosters the mission of the university,” the mean rating increased to a 3.51, with a standard deviation of 1.19.

There were only two noticeable trends observed when the rating of overall effectiveness was correlated with the goals and demographic data. The one statistically significant trend was that respondents who ranked the President’s goal of “University Growth and Student Recruitment and Retention” as being most important to them ranked the President’s performance as higher (M = 3.58), while the rating was M = 3.27 for respondents who marked any of the other goals as most important. In addition, respondents in the experience categories of 1 to 5 years and 20 or more years both gave higher overall effectiveness ratings than the other groups, though not sufficiently that it was statistically significant.

Figure 1. Overall rating according to which goal was placed as top priority by the respondent. Goal 1: University Growth, Goal 2: Programming, Goal 3: Institutional Facilities, Goal 4: Professional Development for Faculty, and Goal 5: Campus-wide Committees. The data table below the chart indicates the number of respondents who ranked the President’s overall performance from 1 to 5 according to the goal they indicated should be placed as the highest priority on the President’s agenda.

**Total Campus Enterprise**

*Support for Scholarship, Teaching and Students*

When asked if the President “effectively promotes an environment for excellence in scholarship,” the mean response from the faculty was a response of 3.24. Faculty comments indicated as well that they felt the President was somewhat less supportive of faculty scholarship than of the teaching enterprise in the past year. When asked if the President effectively promotes an environment for excellence in teaching, the respondents rated his performance at 3.36. The President’s performance was rated at 3.39 for “effectively promoting an environment for excellence in student learning.”

*Campus Mission*

There were a number of questions in the survey related to the President’s effectiveness in carrying out the University’s mission, or in his support of others in accomplishing their mission. With regards to short range planning, the President’s policies were rated at 3.62, while his policies related to long range planning were rated at 3.44. The higher rating for short range planning is reflected in the comments of the respondents, where many people acknowledged the President’s ability to maintain budgets and initiatives in the face of the increasingly difficult financial position of the State.

With regards to the President’s effectiveness in promoting the University's mission to the local community, the western Illinois region, and beyond the region, his actions were rated at 3.51, 3.51 and 3.29, respectively. It should be noted that the number of people who ranked the President’s effectiveness beyond the western Illinois region dropped from 160 to 136. Nevertheless, the ratings indicate that the faculty respondents consider President Thomas to be doing a somewhat better job in promoting the University and its mission regionally than he has outside our region.

With regards to the President’s effectiveness in fostering relationships among the relevant constituencies on campus, the ratings for his effectiveness with government agencies was 3.36, with potential donors was 3.58, with alumni was 3.72, with the local community was 3.45, with the Board of Trustees was 3.92 and with the UPI was 3.15. The number of respondents on these questions varied, with a maximum of 146 providing a rating on his relationship with the local community, while only 105 rated his relationship with the Board of Trustees and 102 rated his work with government agencies. His lowest ratings were for relationships with the UPI and government agencies. A number of faculty comments indicated displeasure with how the President’s administration has handled faculty grievances and the issue of publishing in Open Access journals. Others mentioned that the President seemed distant from the faculty. A number of faculty comments questioned how forceful a voice the President has had in promoting WIU in Springfield. The highest ratings were for his relationship with the Board of Trustees and with alumni.

The next questions concerned how effectively the President has managed and provided resources to the departments, colleges and overall university. The faculty respondents rated his performance in supporting their department and or academic unit at 3.06. They rated his performance in managing University resources at 3.56, and his effectiveness in securing funding at 3.18. A number of faculty comments pointed out that they had not seen the President be concerned with their department or unit. Most recognized his ability to keep the University functioning despite budgetary hard times. Several of the respondents questioned whether the President was doing all he can to secure the necessary funding to maintain the Macomb campus and its mission.

*Overall Rating*

Respondents indicated that overall, the President’s effectiveness in managing the total campus enterprise was rated at 3.51, with a standard deviation of 1.19.

**Academic Goals**

*Working with the Provost and Vice President for Student Services*

The faculty were asked to rate the President’s effectiveness in working with the Provost and the Deans to allocate resources to the departments. The respondents rated his work with the Provost at 3.47, but somewhat lower with the Deans at 3.29. Several comments commended the President’s having all purchasing decisions go through the Provost’s office as a way to keep control of the resources. A number of comments indicated that the resources needed at the department level, both for teaching and for scholarship, were just not forthcoming.

The faculty were asked to rate the President’s effectiveness in working with the Provost to meet the future needs of the faculty, students and staff. The respondents rated his effectiveness in doing so at 3.01 for the faculty needs (159 respondents), 3.27 for meeting the student needs (131 respondents), and 3.07 for meeting staff needs (109 respondents). Again, the comments indicated the lack of resources and the sense of distance from Sherman Hall as being primary factors for the lower ratings on these questions.

The faculty rated the President’s effectiveness in working with Student Services to foster policies for student leadership and co-curricular participation. The respondents rated the President’s effectiveness in fostering student leadership at 3.67, and for co-curricular participation at 3.52. Several faculty comments indicated approval of the emphasis on the Honors College. It should be noted that the number of responses to these questions was significantly lower, with just 89 responses.

*Academic programs in the Quad Cities*

Those taking the survey were asked about the President’s support of the academic programs at the Quad Cities campus. The number of respondents to these question were even less, from 63 to 77. The respondents rated his leadership in planning for the QC academic programs to be 3.65, in developing the QC academic programs to be 3.65, in implementing the QC academic programs to be 3.51, and in assessing the QC academic programs to be 3.32.

*Overall Academic Standards*

The faculty were asked to rate the President’s effectiveness in fostering high academic standards for students at WIU. Most respondents who filled out the survey answered this question, giving the President’s performance a rating of 3.20. A number of comments in the survey indicated faculty feel that, while the centennial honors scholarships are a good start, the preparation level of the incoming students is still too low, and that faculty are not supported in setting high academic standards, because of the need to maintain enrollments and the tuition dollars they provide.

*Support for research*

When asked to respond to the statement, “The President allocates resources so that your department or academic unit’s faculty can accomplish their research mission,” the respondents rated the President’s performance at 2.86, with a standard deviation of 1.27. The comments indicate wide spread dissatisfaction with the support they receive for carrying out their research agenda.

**Personnel, Faculty Relations, and Campus Issues**

A series of two questions were asked regarding faculty, staff and student activities. The first question was do the President’s management practices promote excellence. The respondents rated the President with regard to faculty at 3.11, with regard to staff at 3.18, and with regard to students at 3.27. The second question was do the President’s management practices promote diversity. The respondents rate the Present with regard to faculty at 3.95, with regard to staff at 3.83, and with regard to students at 3.90. The President’s highest ratings of effectiveness are for his work in promoting diversity. There is a feeling that he has not been as successful in promoting excellence.

The faculty members being surveyed were then asked to evaluate whether the President is “responsive to your concerns”. The President’s responsiveness was rated at 3.25, with the largest standard deviation for any response in the survey, at 1.42. Obviously, there is a considerable spread in the respondents’ perceptions of the President’s responsiveness to their concerns.

*Macomb Campus*

The survey asked the respondents to evaluate whether the President promotes the Macomb campus work environment to be healthy, safe, and pleasant. The respondents rated his effectiveness in promoting these characteristics at the Macomb campus to be 3.47, 3.39 and 3.41, respectively. The number of respondents averaged 167.

*Quad Cities Campus*

The same questions were asked regarding the Quad Cities campus, for which only 49 people responded. The respondents rated his effectiveness in promoting a healthy, safe, and pleasant environment to be 3.80, 3.80 and 3.88. Clearly, the perception is that the Quad Cities campus is a healthier and more pleasant place to work than the Macomb campus.

*Faculty governance*

The respondents were asked to evaluate whether the President supports faculty governance at all levels. The respondents’ rating was 3.38. There were a significant number of comments indicating the President’s style of leadership was not conducive to faculty participation in decision-making and goal-setting. Those comments seem to overstate the dissatisfaction of the faculty regarding the President’s effectiveness in supporting faculty governance, although the large standard deviation of 1.32 does indicate a significant spread in faculty opinion.

*Administrative appointments*

The respondents were asked to evaluate whether the President makes effective administrative appointments. They rated his effectiveness of making appointments at 2.93. This is the second lowest rating received by the President, and reflects the sense of the comments from the faculty that there have been too many administrative hires, too many of them have been from within WIU, and a few of them have been considered ineffective or underprepared. It should be noted that there was again a wide spread in the responses, with a standard deviation of 1.36.

*Physical facilities*

In response to the statement, “The President directs the university’s physical facilities so that they meet the needs of your department or academic unit,” the respondents rated the President’s performance at 3.03. This rating reflects the numerous comments made about the sad state of a number of academic buildings on the Macomb campus, and a number of comments that the Performing Arts Center is an unnecessary distraction from the more pressing needs of the academic facilities at Macomb.

**Table A: President Quantitative Data**:

Directions: For each of the following series of questions you will be asked to rate how effective President Thomas is in performing various aspects of his responsibilities. The scale ranges from 1 (not effective) to 5 (highly effective). If you feel that you do not have enough information to form an opinion please select “No Opinion” or “No Answer.”

***NB: “No opinion” and “no answer” numbers were not used in calculating the mean or standard deviation. The labeling of the years in the columns refers to the academic year being evaluated, not the academic year during which the survey was constructed.***

| Q # | Question Text | Mean (Average)  Score | Standard  Deviation\* | N  (# of respondents per question/  (no opinion/no answer\*\*) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2011-12 | 2011-12 | 2011-12 |
| A1-3. | The President effectively promotes an environment for excellence in:  i. Scholarship  ii. Teaching  iii. Student learning | 3.24  3.37  3.39 | 1.22  1.24  1.17 | 176(17/4)  182(10/3)  176(14/3) |
| A4-5. | The President effectively promotes policies that support the mission of the university relative to:  i. Short term strategic planning  ii. Long term strategic planning | 3.62  3.44 | 1.10  1.19 | 164(25/7)  160(28/7) |
| A6-8. | The President effectively promotes the University’s academic mission to:  i. The local community  ii. The western Illinois region  iii. Beyond the region | 3.51  3.51  3.29 | 1.22  1.26  1.28 | 166(29/2)  160(32/4)  136(50/10) |
| A9-14. | The President fosters effective relationships with:  i. Government agencies  ii. Potential donors  iii. Alumni  iv. Local Community  v. Board of Trustees  vi. UPI (University Professionals of Illinois) | 3.36  3.58  3.72  3.45  3.92  3.15 | 1.18  1.14  1.12  1.17  1.04  1.27 | 102(75/15)  110(65/17)  123(55/14)  146(34/10)  105(67/18)  131(49/12) |
| A15. | The President effectively promotes policies that foster the activities of your department or academic unit. | 3.06 | 1.28 | 181(11/3) |
| A16. | The President manages the University’s resources well. | 3.56 | 1.20 | 177(13/4) |
| A17. | The President effectively secures funding to support university initiatives. | 3.18 | 1.17 | 149(33/11) |
| A18. | Overall, the President fosters the mission of Western Illinois University. | 3.51 | 1.19 | 189(4/1) |
| B1-2. | The President works effectively with \_\_\_\_ to allocate resources for your department or academic unit to achieve WIU’s mission  i. Provost  ii. Deans | 3.47  3.29 | 1.28  1.26 | 137(43/11)  135(42/11) |
| B3-5. | The President works effectively with the Provost anticipating future needs (i.e., technology, infrastructure, or student services) of:  i. faculty  ii. students  iii. staff | 3.01  3.27  3.07 | 1.30  1.21  1.27 | 159(26/5)  131(49/9)  109(64/16) |
| B6-7. | The President works effectively with Student Services to foster policies for:  i. student leadership  ii. co-curricular participation | 3.67  3.52 | 1.13  1.10 | 89(84/16)  89(86/13) |
| B8-11. | Regarding the Quad Cities academic programs, the President provides leadership in:  i. planning  ii. developing  iii. implementing  iv. assessing | 3.65  3.65  3.51  3.32 | 1.24  1.25  1.21  1.19 | 77(77/35)  75(79/35)  73(81/35)  63(89/36) |
| B12. | The President fosters high academic standards for students at Western Illinois University | 3.20 | 1.32 | 182(6/3) |
| B13. | The President allocates resources so that your department or academic unit’s faculty can accomplish their research mission. | 2.86 | 1.27 | 174(12/5) |
| C1-2. | Regarding faculty, the President’s management practices promote  i. Excellence  ii. Diversity | 3.11  3.95 | 1.37  1.07 | 178(8/2)  174(10/3) |
| C3-4. | Regarding staff, the President’s management practices promote:  i. Excellence  ii. Diversity | 3.18  3.83 | 1.33  1.11 | 130(47/10)  122(51/12) |
| C5-6. | Regarding student activities, the President’s management practices promote:  i. Excellence  ii. Diversity | 3.27  3.90 | 1.35  1.06 | 128(49/12)  122(48/15) |
| C7. | The President is responsive to your concerns. | 3.25 | 1.42 | 138(40/11) |
| C8-10. | The President effectively promotes the Macomb campus work environment to be  i. healthy  ii. safe  iii. pleasant | 3.47  3.39  3.41 | 1.27  1.29  1.29 | 168(16/5)  166(16/5)  167(15/4) |
| C11-13. | The President effectively promotes the Quad Cities campus work environment to be  i. healthy  ii. safe  iii. pleasant | 3.80  3.80  3.88 | 1.12  1.19  1.12 | 49(97/43)  49(95/42)  48(97/41) |
| C14. | The President supports faculty governance at all levels. | 3.38 | 1.33 | 159(24/7) |
| C15. | The President makes effective administrative appointments. | 2.93 | 1.36 | 162(22/6) |
| C16. | The President directs the university’s physical facilities so that they meet the needs of your department or academic unit | 3.03 | 1.27 | 171(13/5) |
|  | **Overall, I rate the President as** | **3.35** | **1.26** | **187(1/2)** |

\* Standard deviation is a measure of dispersion. In other words, it measures the degree to which responses are spread out around the mean. The larger the standard deviation, the more the scores differ from the mean. Alternatively, if the standard deviation is small, this indicates that the scores were very close to one another.

\*\* 253 faculty members began the survey. 217 responded that they were willing to take the survey. Not everyone who said they were willing actually did evaluate the President. In addition, not everyone filled out a response to every question. Finally, “No answer” was offered as a response choice, rather than forcing respondents to always select from the 1-5 Likert scale of perceived effectiveness. Thus, the total number of respondents does not add up to 217. The statistical means were calculated using the number of respondents who responded 1 through 5 on the Likert scale provided. This number is indicated in the third column of numbers in Table A.

**Qualitative Analysis of Open Ended Comments:**

At the end of each of the three sections in the survey, the respondents were asked to add any additional comments they might have regarding the President’s performance in those areas. In addition, the respondents were asked to provide any additional comments about the President’s overall performance.

Total Campus Enterprise

A number of comments addressed the need for facilities upgrades at the Macomb campus. “In addition to new facilities, upgrades need to be made to existing buildings and grounds. Some of these would be expensive and others would not. If WIU is going to attract students, the facilities need to be recruitment tools. The buildings (especially the interiors) are showing their age. A plan needs to be put in place to slowly start renovating. Faculty, staff, administration and students need to be able to take pride in the buildings, classrooms, and grounds. Restrooms with missing tile, hallways with asbestos tile and poor lighting, and parking lots with potholes need to be addressed. With limited budgetary funds this will be a challenge.”

Several commenters raised concerns about the hiring policies of the current administration. “I have to wonder about some of the personnel decisions in administration. Firstly, many people feel there are too many admins being added, with little input from the university community. Secondly, the choices are sometimes questionable, with a perception (not necessarily founded) that too many come from the personal social network. Incompetence is very apparent in one hire… In general, my advice would be to hold the line on hiring any more administrators or faculty (we are over-staffed with faculty, in my view, given our enrollment) except for replacements and new programs, and focus on other staffing needs, such as advisors and support staff.”

A number of commenters expressed frustration at the relative lack of communication from the President to the campus community and with the individual departments. “Since, as a faculty member, I have no contact with the president -- he does not email us about university needs or plans, and he has no open house times to talk with him -- I have no clue what he is doing or when or why. Maybe the deans and chairs are in on the loop from Sherman, but the faculty is not. I think this is the greatest weakness of his presidency. The avarage (sic) faculty member has no contact with or information from the president about anything. We are asked to volunteer to participate in programs we had no part in designing and know nothing about before we are presented with the final product.”

There were several comments provided about the initiatives to develop graduate programs. Some expressed the need for more programs at the graduate level, while others expressed the need to cut them. “In order to be competitive with other universities, we need to be offering more options for graduate level degrees - PhD level. We have had many students who are interested in a DNP in nursing thru WIU, but this seems to not be a priority. Many students have gone elsewhere because they do not want to wait to get a terminal degree. There have been many students inquire as to when this opportunity will be available through WIU. I really believe that WIU has missed financial gains opportunities due to not moving forward with this opportunity.”…“This school is an undergraduate university. Every graduate program creates a faculty member who teaches fewer students, which means those faculty members cost more….There is nothing wrong with being a fantastic undergraduate institution, and that's what I would like to see us get back to.” Several commenters questioned the wisdom of creating a Ph.D. program in LEJA.

Many comments praised the President for his leadership in managing the University in spite of difficult economic conditions. “I believe President Thomas provides overall solid leadership for a campus community that is facing tremendous external pressures. I think his work with the Board of Trustees, fundraising, recruitment, and improving our national reputation is exemplary.” Nevertheless, there were some concerns raised regarding his leadership in issues beyond the campus, at the state level. “We do not hear anything (enough?) about his effectiveness or efforts in dealing (fighting) with the state legislature, other university presidents, the Governor, or any other agencies that are in a position to turn this slow-death spriral (sic) of public and state-supported institutions around. He appears to be a good manager of the institution, but he could be more visibly active/aggressive in his role as our leader.”

Academic Goals

A number of comments addressed the difficult challenge of helping the Quad Cities campus grow and improving the environment at the Macomb campus. “A lot of our academic goals could be met more easily if faculty and students could travel easily between the two campuses.”…“The President/Provost/Joe Rives need to market the Iowa side of the QC better to draw in more students from the Eastern Iowa Community College district by forming stronger partnerships.”…“I hvae (sic) a concern about who really plans, develops, and assesses at the QC campus. My concern focuses on how much input and control the President has over the process in the QC, whether he puts too much trust in advice from the QC campus leaders, whether the President has control of how earmarked money is allocated and spent for the support of QC programs, and what is the true vision for the growth of the QC campus?”…“The Quad Cities seems to be more important than the Macomb campus. Priorities need to be straightened.”…“As for the QC, student enrollments suggest that--despite MUCH talk for years about how it will explode and, thereby, also benefit the Macomb campus, clearly that hasn't happened yet.”

There are significant concerns about the impact our recruiting efforts are having on academic standards. Some see a negative trend, others, a positive one. “We certainly do not foster high academic standards at WIU. We may claim these standards, but we don't foster them. We enroll students who are not prepared for college and then we prepare them for the college they are supposedly already in (remedial courses). Even so, more than half subsequently leave. The proposed solution to this problem? A one hour credit course on how to be a student. I should say I don't believe this course will do much good. Nor will it do much harm. I would have hired more advisors, significantly more. We know that helps with retention--see the OAS program.”…“WIU students are coming in with weaker backgrounds than in the past… Many students do not have the skills to be successful in college coursework. I feel the president needs to work with the provost and faculty to find ways to assist the large percentage of students, who are coming to WIU with weak academic backgrounds, to be successful.”…“The steady state of our enrollments is evidence the recruitment/retention programs are working, even as the high school populations are dropping. The rise in ACT scores was a wonderful benefit of the recruitment/retention program.”…“It is a long process to increase quality and quantity at the same time, and I hear staffers express fear that the quality is going down as enrollment strategies change. I don't know if that is true, and I don't perceive that myself, but it is a relevant issue to the climate and support for our initiatives to increase retention and enrollment. Communications about those strategies and changes should emphasize that the focus is not primarily or solely numbers. Also, trying to be all things to all people is not going to work for us. We need to focus in on the things that work. Adding PhD programs or other doctorates, for instance, diverts us from the primary mission of undergraduate education.”

Others identified particular challenges the University faces if it is to improve the academic standards at WIU, and of which the President needs to be aware. “As a community we are not working well with the change in the population of students we are receiving. Our upcoming students have had a very different public school experience due to the State's implementation of No Child Left Behind. Now we are seeing these kids and they are far behind. We need to seriously examine their needs and begin the process, campus wide, of working toward solutions to give these students the tools they need to succeed in academia.”…“In general, I'm happy with how we have stayed the course financially, and yet have changed the flavor of our goals from affordability to academic challenge. Still, we need to do a better job making this University a positive force for change and good in the region and state. We need to take leadership and set the example, in particular as it relates to providing the supports and rewards for academic rigor, and emphasizing the value of teacher education and its importance.”

There was nearly unanimous approval of the new scholarship program. “Dr. Thomas is 100% behind the most effective strategic programming initiative going at Western - increasing the quality and intellectual interest of the study body through the Centennial Honors College. Let's keep going with this!”

Budgetary concerns predominate in the comments related to support for scholarship and research. Comments reflect conflicting perspectives on how the budget is managed overall, and department by department. “In this era of declining state revenues, Dr. Thomas has demonstrated significant leadership in managing our University's fiscal resources. By slowly releasing funding, he has ensured that the departments and colleges have not squandered funds. By requiring us to seek prior approval for purchases, he has ensured that we have not spend money recklessly.”…“There has been no chance in my department's budget in over eight years. No one knows why or how the budget is created. No change in a budget is eight years means that a budget was made for some purpose and we don't even know if that purpose is still relevant or if that department or program has changed. The last two deans of CAS have been either unable or unwilling to explain how the (sic) determine how much money a department should get. It's just what you got last year.”…“I appreciate the facutly (sic) travel monies and URC grants. They help alot! (sic)”…“We really do not have the facilities required to pursue research opportunities. We barely have the needed facilities to teach our students.”

Personnel, Faculty relations and Campus Issues

A major concern is the physical state of the Macomb campus. “Most of the buildings are dilapidated. Let's forget about the fine arts center. No one wants it except for a few select people in COFAC. Most of the COFAC faculty do not believe that it will be a benefit. We desperately need to do something about the infrastructure. It is unfortunate that we will have to raise tuition and fees again in order to make ends meet but that is the way it has to be.”

A number of comments expressed dissatisfaction with the way the President is engaging faculty in the governance of the University, and in how he is handling faculty personnel issues. “I would like to see more clear communication of the direction of the University and policies and future plans. Frequent, transparent communications are necessary that the faculty and staff can work with the President to make Western a better place for our students. We do not work as a unit, administration is not communicating effectively with staff and faculty.”…“Faculty participation in University plans and policies seems to have disappeared in the past two years. It is hard to participate when we have no idea what the administration is doing or planning to do. As for physical facilities, our current buildings are crumbling around us. Roofs leak, elevators break, air conditioning and heat is sporadic at best, and many of our buildings lack sufficient electronic classroom for teaching needs.”

Several commenters felt that campus safety and security need to receive a higher priority on the President’s agenda. “In regard to the question of fostering a safe campus, I think the awful attention the university got for being an "unsafe campus" in some publication needs to be addressed head on. For one, with the grant received for the Interpersonal Violence Prevention Coordinator position, there was an expectation that students would receive some mandatory online training, in the same vein as that which is done for alcohol awareness. It seems a little weak-willed to not implement that for fear that students wouldn't come here for having to do the training, as the VP for Student Services has expressed. I think mandatory training on violence prevention among our students would help offset some of the negative press we've received about safety on campus.”… “Safety is and will be the single greatest issue for the university to address. It will impact retention, initial enrollments, and donor support. Maybe the committee reviewing these evaluations can do a little research and look at schools with seriously declining enrollments. Check to see if enrollments and decreasing campus safety are correlated. Campus safety at the Quad-Cities seems to be better. With two buildings and a security officer on duty at both buildings, security is highly visible. Visible security is the first step to reducing violent crimes. It is time to develop a comprehensive safety plan.”

Several commenters emphasized the need to continue working toward a diverse and unified community at WIU. “This campus needs a campus climate survey and to begin making intentional efforts toward helping students, faculty and staff become a more multiculturally competent campus community. On the surface, the structural diversity initiatives are in place. Below the surface, a lot more could be done that would result in better retention, deeper learning, and stronger community.”…“I do not feel that enough is being done to recruit a diverse faculty and staff. Research continually demonstrates that to retain diverse students a diversity faculty is necessary.”

Overall Performance

“President Thomas is a pleasant, well-meaning individual who is sincere in his efforts. He is not, however, an effective leader able to articulate a vision for the University's future that will rally the faculty and academic staff behind him. He faces immense challenges running this university, with its recalcitrant and under-producing faculty (I say this as a faculty member myself) and the State's looming financial chaos. For this he has at once my sympathy and best wishes. But he relies too much on authority rather than persuasion, is often too rigid and unattuned to other voices. People need to believe in what they are doing, to feel valued and respected, at no time more than in the face of adversity. They need to be led by visible example -- inspired but not preached to, directed but not commanded. As it is, people sense a leadership vacuum at senior levels of the University and this is sapping their confidence about the University's future and their readiness to work for it.”

“I think he's doing a good job overall. Perhaps is too top heavy in the administrative hirings & positions that currently exist. Non-essential programs that are minimally attended/supported need to be eliminated in lieu of cost-effective ones that bring stronger numbers and more financial support and credibility to the university.”

“I hope Jack gets us money and can save this place. I really think he wants to do that. I just hope he gets others who share his vision and have the ability to do it, and the willingness to tell him when ideas are bad. Those people are hard to come by.”

**Conclusions**

In general, the commenters were positive toward President Thomas’ management and initiatives, in light of the economic troubles the University and the State face. However, they provided constructive criticism in a number of areas related to facilities management, alignment of the two campuses, the need for clearer communication and stronger involvement from the faculty in running and developing University initiatives, a greater willingness to hire in administration from outside the University, continued efforts to improve academic standards, and increased support for academic research.

The President and the University are facing a significant crisis brought on by decreasing state support and declining numbers of incoming freshmen from across the state. The University has a huge problem to address in the multiplying needs of building maintenance and of upgrading current facilities, both for the teaching and research mission of the faculty. The faculty respondents recognized that difficult choices need to be made in times of shrinking budgets and growing needs. They hope the President will engage the faculty more actively in addressing these problems together. They wish to see the President address actively the challenges of improving academic quality and rigor, increasing levels of support for faculty scholarship, increasing faculty as well as student diversity, and of raising the profile of WIU at the highest levels of the state and the nation.