

Strategic Plan | 2018-2023



WESTERN
COLORADO UNIVERSITY



Western Mission

Western Colorado University promotes intellectual maturity and personal growth in its students and prepares them to assume constructive roles in local, national and global communities. Western's distinctive character emerges from its unity among academic and professional disciplines, high standards of scholarship and a unique environment in the mountains of western Colorado.

Trustee Values*

The Board of Trustees of Western Colorado University hereby adopts and embraces the following statement of values that shall, taken together, guide the operational decisions and aspirations at all levels of this great institution.

Quality: Western offers a transformational educational experience by providing an engaging and highly personalized learning environment within a unique and inspiring setting. We embrace the highest standards of scholarship and integrity and provide our students with a solid foundation of knowledge and skills that will enable them to assume constructive roles in local, national and global communities.

Achievement: The University has a long and rich tradition of serving students from the state of Colorado as well as from across the nation and beyond. Western supports the intellectual and personal development of our students, as demonstrated by strong student learning outcomes. As part of the Western community, individually and collectively, we expect that achievement will occur within the context of impeccable integrity and ethics.

Innovation: Western embraces innovation as a key strategy that creates new value. We will develop and deliver programs with creativity and engage the University community in a collaborative process to ensure the sustainability of the institution.

Fiscal Responsibility: Western is committed to providing the people of the state with extraordinary value by offering high quality programs at an affordable cost. We utilize our financial resources responsibly and in ways that maximize benefit to the University's students, faculty, staff and the state of Colorado.

Growth: The University recognizes the importance of fulfilling the potential of the institution and ensuring the sustainability of the institution to provide quality educational experiences for future generations. Western embraces growth as measured in a variety of ways including growth in enrollment, in our program offerings, in student services, in the institution's benefit to the community and the state of Colorado, and in the people who engage with us to support the institution.

Diversity, Inclusion and Equity: Western holds diversity, inclusion and equity as core values central to education. We know people of different backgrounds bring various experiences and perspectives to the classroom and community. We strive to foster a respectful, welcoming, learning and social environment.

* The Western Board of Trustees updated their Vision Statement and Values in December 2021.



Goal 1: Strategic Marketing and Enrollment Plan

Western's Marketing and Enrollment group will lead the continued development and build out of integrated strategic marketing, recruitment and enrollment capabilities in order to promote greater enrollment growth and improve student marketability and success. This Strategic Marketing and Enrollment Plan (SMEP) builds upon the strategies and initiatives within Western's 2015-18 strategic plan.

Outcomes for this goal will utilize metrics that measure increased outreach to prospective students and constituents, with targeted and timely outreach, across multiple channels and methodologies, resulting in increased engagement, responses and actions, subject to market conditions and competitive factors.

Initiative 1.1 Commitment to Increasing Enrollment: Continued development of integrated institutional capacity and capabilities in admissions, recruitment, financial aid, marketing communications, career services and alumni relations.

Initiative 1.2 Emphasis on Building Integrated Enrollment Strategies: Partner with graduate studies, athletics and concurrent enrollment programs to broaden marketing and enrollment capabilities, create synergies and leverage opportunities further to grow enrollment.

Initiative 1.3 Cultivating a Culture of Community: Improve engagement for campus and the Gunnison Valley community to help build a stronger brand that can attract a wider range of prospective students and engage a broader set of career success and development partners.



Goal 2: Student Academic Success

Building upon institutional strengths, Western will further develop an outstanding and personalized education, fostering an inclusive learning community, mentorship and maximizing experiential learning in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, leading to successful careers for graduates.

Outcomes for this goal include Western achieving retention rates and graduation rates at or above peer averages. Furthermore, to achieve inclusive excellence, Western will reduce achievement gaps during the period of this strategic plan. Finally, Western will increase its annual credential production, including Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) credentials.

Initiative 2.1 A Distinctive and Innovative Curriculum for Western Students: Western will pursue innovation in its liberal arts and professional curriculum, adding technical skills and civic education to be responsive to changing market demands, to grow the campus, to take advantage of location and community resources to provide personalized learning, and further to develop experiential learning opportunities for students.

Initiative 2.2 Maximizing Student Academic Success, Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Quality Initiative: Western will implement new, or enhance existing, high impact educational practices to assist students in meeting their potential and to ensure timely graduation from Western.

Initiative 2.3 Graduate Education: Western will continue to develop graduate programs, while integrating graduate programming into the institution's culture of teaching and learning and will develop a robust assessment system to measure outcomes.

Initiative 2.4 An Outstanding Faculty and Staff: An excellent education is only possible with an outstanding faculty and staff. To enhance the quality of the faculty and staff, Western will increase resources to make progress on faculty and staff compensation goals, for professional development, and to adopt best practices toward achieving a diverse and inclusive faculty and staff. Each academic discipline will work with the Vice President for Academic Affairs to define and co-create a roadmap demonstrating how it pursues excellence in a Western education and articulates its goals and vision for distinction, growth and participation in the campus capital campaign.

Initiative 2.5 Become a Campus of Inclusive Excellence by 2020: The American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) posits that Inclusive Excellence consists of: student intellectual and social development; purposeful development and utilization of resources to enhance student learning; attention to cultural differences of learners; and a welcoming community that engages all of its diversity in the service of student and learning.



Goal 3: Student Experience

Enhancing the student experience is critical to student success at Western. Capitalizing on the strengths of the University, Western will continue to develop and provide challenging engagement-oriented programming and supportive services for students that will assist in successful academic, leadership and career achievements.

In coordination with Goal 2, outcomes for this goal include Western achieving retention rates and graduation rates at or above peer averages. Metrics for student engagement and satisfaction with student support services will be developed in the first year of this strategic plan.

Initiative 3.1 Student Health and Wellness: Western will implement national best practices in student health and wellness by providing resources and programming supporting this initiative. Sub-initiatives within this area will be developed with clearly defined goals and learning outcomes that will be assessed and evaluated in support of the student experience.

Initiative 3.2 Campus Safety and Emergency Management: Western will implement and enhance high impact safety and Emergency Management (EM) practices that will reflect its ongoing commitment to providing a safe, secure and responsive campus environment utilizing national and state recognized systems and protocols, which will be developed with clearly defined goals and learning outcomes that will be assessed and evaluated in support of the student experience.

Initiative 3.3 Student Engagement: Student engagement improves the quality of the academic, personal and social experience for students, helps increase student retention, and contributes to strengthening the relationship between Western and our students. Western will pursue innovative experiential learning opportunities in our local, regional, national and international communities.

Initiative 3.4 Diversity, Equity, Inclusiveness and Internationalization (DEII): Develop a data-based comprehensive baseline understanding of current DEII-relevant aspects of university operations. Western will gather data to assess the most critical areas of DEII opportunity at Western. This evidence-based approach aims to streamline Western's DEII efforts as a university across operations.



Goal 4: Fiscal Sustainability

Western embraces growth as measured in a variety of ways, including growth in enrollment, in our program offerings, in student services, in the institution's benefit to the community and the state of Colorado, and in the people who engage with us to support the institution. Western will improve fiscal sustainability by growing revenue and capturing operational efficiencies.

Outcomes for this goal include Western maintaining operational efficiencies below our peer average as measured by the percentage of administrative costs to total costs. Western will also measure growth in total number of gifts received and total funds raised.

Initiative 4.1 Fundraising: Western will develop and implement a capital campaign that supports its Mission and Board Values and incorporates campus-wide priorities, including seeking funding to reduce the debt burden and thereby reduce student fees.

Initiative 4.2 Fiscal Responsibility/Quality/Operational Contraction: Western will implement an education campaign for the campus and community about the value of services being provided, and implement a framework for budget reductions if necessary.

Initiative 4.3 Growth and Program Development: Western will empower campus and valley residents by providing the tools needed to recruit and retain students to Western through developing key relationships, including the Gunnison Promise Program, incentives for recruitment and a Facilities Master Plan.

Initiative 4.4 Embrace of Sustainability To Ensure an Effective ROI for Western's Resources: Through the triple bottom line lens, Western will engage in on-site renewable energy generation, continued energy efficiency projects, and increased aversion and diversion of waste through environmentally preferable purchasing and zero waste principles.



Goal 5: Community Relations

For more than a century, Western and the Gunnison community have supported one another's success. In today's competitive environment, these ties must be strengthened. A stronger symbiotic relationship aimed at improving the campus-community relationship will support student recruitment and retention, enrich the lives of community members, utilize collective resources on appropriate projects and support our mutual economic goals. In short, when people hear Gunnison, they should think Western and vice-versa.

A primary outcome for this pillar would be improving city support for Western's enrollment goals, both in the recruitment and retention of students, and specifically to increase the student retention rate at or above peer averages. An additional outcome is to help achieve the City of Gunnison's strategic goal of diversifying and improving the resiliency of the local economy.

Initiative 5.1 Becoming a University Town: Develop a positive perception of Gunnison for potential students and meaningfully connect the campus and community to help recruit and retain students, faculty and staff.

Initiative 5.2 Commitment to Mutually Beneficial Economic Development: Develop the relationship between the University and the Gunnison community to work together for the mutual economic goal of attracting, enhancing and creating five (5) \$10 million (+) a year companies in the Gunnison Valley through the ICELab, increased through internship and other experiential learning opportunities, and supporting partnerships between academic programs and local businesses and institutions.

Initiative 5.3 Investment in Community: Coordinate, collaborate and share resources, as appropriate, on mutually beneficial capital and special projects between the campus and community including emergency services, sustainability initiatives and affordable housing.

Initiative 5.4 Partnering for Community-wide Sustainability: The Sustainability Action Committee, in collaboration with the City, County and other key stakeholders, will create a 15-year Sustainability Strategic Plan, which will serve to guide the Gunnison Valley's and the University's sustainability efforts and can be referenced in the next strategic planning process.