

# **The Report of the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Synthesizing Committee Presented To President Jerilyn S. McIntyre**

**March 6, 2001**

The Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Synthesizing Committee was established in November, 2000 by President McIntyre as a means to facilitate campus and community-wide involvement in conversations about the future direction of the university and to synthesize the input that resulted. In a letter to the university community, the president clarified that the committee's charge was only to facilitate the process and distill comments. Members were asked to avoid directing the content of the input.

Specifically, the committee was to develop a process whereby faculty, students, staff, alumni, and citizens in the state could describe their vision of the university in the next half-decade and could recommend goals and objectives related to six areas of emphasis:

- I. Provide an outstanding academic and student life experience on the Ellensburg campus.
- II. Provide an outstanding academic and student life experience at the university centers.
- III. Develop a diversified funding base to support our academic and student programs.
- IV. Build mutually beneficial partnerships with industry, professional groups, and institutions, and with the communities surrounding our campus locations.
- V. Maintain our tradition in the preparation of teachers by being a leader in the field of education.
- VI. Create and sustain a productive, civil, and pleasant campus and workplace.

The 22-member committee was appointed by the president and met for the first time on November 8, 2000. The committee met as the committee of the whole on 7 additional occasions: November 15, December 11, January 26, February 2, February 21, February 23, and March 2. Members also met in sub-committees and served as facilitators and recorders for public forums.

Forty-three forums were held during a five-week period from December 2000 to January 2001 on the Ellensburg campus, in the community, and at the university centers. Some forums were telecast electronically to the university centers as well. The forums were advertised electronically and in hard copy to faculty and staff, and the schedule was posted on the CWU home page. A press release and a

guest editorial resulted in some media coverage, though not as much as the committee had hoped. Letters were sent to community college presidents and public school superintendents. The CWU Alumni Association Board was invited to participate, and the forum schedule was posted to the alumni association's home page.

In addition, interested parties were invited to comment electronically or in hard copy to the committee co-chairs or via a threaded discussion that was established especially for the purpose

Attendance at forums varied widely from as few as two participants to as many as 44. More than 50 individuals commented through electronic and surface mail and the threaded discussions. Several units of the university met to discuss the vision and six emphases and submitted comments to the committee from their units.

Following the last forum on January 19, 2001, all correspondence and summaries of all meetings were collected and distributed to all members of the ad hoc committee for synthesis. At the January 26 meeting, committee members agreed on definitions that would guide the next phase of work:

Emphases<sup>1</sup>: These were viewed as very general goal statements with vocabulary open to interpretation.

Sub-goals: Major thematic units within each area of emphasis. These statements should be less open to definitional interpretations and should have reasonable social validity.

Objectives: Statements that call for action and include measurable outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

Actions: Specific operational activities that a unit or the university as a whole might take to achieve a particular goal or objective.

All members were assigned to return the following week having identified two to three elements each for inclusion in the vision statement and in each emphasis. In addition, committee members were assigned to one of seven sub-committees that corresponded to the vision and six emphases. Sub-committees were to develop more thorough knowledge of their assigned areas and be prepared to shape group input into sub-goals and objectives.

There was considerable discussion about the definition and purpose of a vision statement and about the distinction between a mission statement and a vision statement. The committee operated under the assumption that a revision of the February 2000 mission

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<sup>1</sup> Later renamed goals.

<sup>2</sup> In the end, the committee attempted to make objectives measurable, but did not specify the level of change or the instruments that would be used to measure the outcome.

statement was not part of its charge. In the end, members agreed that while a mission statement should describe expectations that characterize an institution's performance and are achievable at present, the vision statement should describe aspirations that are not being achieved currently and that may require more resources or reallocation of resources to achieve. Members generated lists of important elements to include in the vision statement, debated if the statement should be primarily a marketing tool or a guide for the institution, and considered if it should list specific elements. In the end, the group decided in favor of a very brief statement that articulated with the goals and sub-goals:

*Central Washington University dedicates its second century of service to its students and its communities by providing excellent academic programs and transforming learning experiences for citizens of a global society.*

The group generated a list of elements for each emphasis and submitted these lists for refinement to the subcommittees. In subsequent meetings, the work of subcommittees came back for review by the committee of the whole, and the final version was shaped. At the beginning of the process, the group had agreed to have no more than two or three sub-goals and no more than two or three objectives for each. A review of the committee's final recommendation reveals that this rule was violated. However, there was a fairly strong sentiment that the final document should be driven more by the quality, quantity, and type of content that was received than by an arbitrary limit.

The ordering of goals, sub-goals, and objectives is not meant to suggest an order of importance, although the committee was aware that the order of appearance on the page might suggest relative importance. The only goal where order became an issue for the committee was Goal (Emphasis) I. The final ordering of sub-goals was not universally popular, but, in the end, the group decided to leave the items as they appear.

The committee submits this report with an assumption that it has discharged all of its duties except one. Committee members will return to the textbook (written comments and meeting summaries) to identify actions that were recommended for each sub-goal and objective. This list will be compiled and submitted to the president by March 16, 2001.