

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
Board of Trustees
July 26, 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY-INFORMATION – Baccalaureate Task Force

In April 2016, President Gaudino called for the creation of a Baccalaureate Task Force to define undergraduate student success at Central Washington University by answering the following questions:

- Why should students choose to pursue their education at Central rather than at other universities?
- What does it mean to earn a baccalaureate degree at Central Washington University?
- To what extent does Central’s General Education curriculum serve the needs of today’s undergraduates and prepare them for post-baccalaureate success?
- In what ways are students fundamentally different after their experiences with the Central Washington community – faculty, staff, administrators, and fellow students?
- How do the answers to the above questions impact the University Strategic Plan, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities accreditation, and future academic planning at our institution for the variety of demographic groups served through the University Centers, online programming, and on the Ellensburg residential campus?

Together, the Office of the Provost and the Faculty Senate created the Baccalaureate Task Force which, in turn, created and charged eight primary work groups:

- Academic Advising (jointly appointed)
- Developmental Programs
- Faculty Professional Development
- Honors (jointly appointed)
- Interdisciplinary Programs
- Online and Multi-Modal Learning
- Transfer Students
- University Centers

The reports submitted in Spring 2017 and Spring/Summer 2018 offer answers to the questions above and key aspects of the communication CWU should emphasize to students and key stakeholder groups.

Why should students choose to pursue their education at Central rather than at other universities?

In a time of increased competition for students among public, private, and for-profit institutions, asking why students should choose CWU is key to developing a successful strategic enrollment plan that includes consideration of recruitment, retention, and persistence. It is important to realize that students do not choose CWU once; rather, once enrolled, they choose to return to CWU term after term, year after year. Therefore, it is important to ask and answer: why do students initially choose CWU over other options – and why do students continue to choose CWU over other options? Based on the work groups’ reports, answers to these two questions center around the following:

CWU recognizes that an increasing percentage of our students are traditionally under-represented in postsecondary education. They are often the first in their family to attend college; from lower socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds, including many who are eligible for federal Pell grants; and are more and more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity. Both national and local research has shown correlations between these factors and student attrition and the failure to complete baccalaureate degrees. *Students should choose CWU because faculty, staff, and administrators are committed to providing students every opportunity to succeed and earn a bachelor's degree – no matter their background.* The challenge CWU faces is determining which students will derive the most benefit from which particular resources, and how we can optimize the cost-efficient use of limited resources.

CWU also recognizes that an increasing percentage of our students lack the necessary academic preparation to be “college-ready.” A growing number of our incoming first-time, full-time freshmen are testing into developmental math and writing. We also know that many of our incoming students lack the necessary reading comprehension skills to be successful in college courses. *Again, students should choose CWU because faculty, staff, and administrators are committed to providing students every opportunity to succeed and earn a bachelor's degree – no matter their level of prior academic preparation or success.* And again, a key challenge CWU faces is determining which students will derive the most benefit from which particular resources – and how we can optimize the cost-efficient use of limited resources.

What does it mean to earn a baccalaureate degree at Central Washington University?

Earning a baccalaureate degree at CWU involves becoming a member of a welcoming community that realizes the importance of both academic and social integration – and how a sense of belonging and connectedness, both academically and socially, can support students' persistence to degree completion.

CWU enables academic integration through developmental programming in math and writing; the new General Education Program (discussed further below); support for major and degree exploration and selection – using CAPS+ to help students develop clear expectations about what it will take to earn a particular degree; and perhaps most importantly, through experiential learning including undergraduate research, education abroad, academic service learning, community engagement, and leadership opportunities. CWU needs to continue to provide – and enhance where possible – these academic integration opportunities. In particular, CWU needs to create a more robust, less confusing system of university-wide advising based on the combined efforts of staff advising and faculty mentoring.

CWU enables social integration through orientation and onboarding of first-time, full-time freshmen and transfer students; through community-building in the residence halls and living/learning communities, and through numerous student organizations and groups. Because so many of our students do not have parents or other family members who are college-educated, CWU needs increasingly to emphasize programming that helps students navigate the higher education “space and place” – especially on what has been a “TWI” – a traditionally white institution. CWU also needs to increase its emphasis on programming that provides students opportunities to develop self-efficacy and resilience – and to have more and better interactions with students about career, graduate, and professional school preparation. It is insufficient to help students to earn a bachelor's degree if they do not have a clear pathway forward after degree completion. Our responsibility to our students does not end once they earn their diploma.

It is also important to note that academic and social integration are necessary for all CWU's students – first-time, full-time freshmen; transfer students; non-traditional students; students living on the Ellensburg residential campus or in the immediate area; students taking courses at our University

Centers and instructional sites around the state; international students; and our online/multi-modal students as well. CWU will need to address the resource challenges – human, technological, structural, and financial – in meeting the needs of these many, different types of students.

To what extent does Central’s General Education curriculum serve the needs of today’s undergraduates and prepare them for post-baccalaureate success?

The CWU community realized the current General Education curriculum does not best serve the needs of today’s students and, in AY2015-16 attempted to redesign the GE program. Unfortunately, like multiple attempts over the previous two decades, that attempt was not successful. Rather than giving up on GE redesign, CWU took on this challenge again in AY2016-17 and successfully created a new GE program in spring 2018. Implementation planning has been underway since then – with an anticipated rollout of the new GE program in Fall 2019.

The new program provides an enhanced first-year experience grounded in quantitative reasoning, academic writing, and opportunities for major and degree exploration through small, topical seminar across nearly all disciplines and departments. Students then take courses in Knowledge Areas (KAs) and Pathways – designed for both breadth (KAs) and depth (Pathways). Students complete the GE program through a capstone experience – often linked to a capstone project in their major. CWU will need to ask and answer a key question: to what degree is the new GE an improvement over the current program? Beyond that, CWU will need to determine what future enhancements to the GE program will keep it “current” and “meaningful” for today’s and tomorrow’s students.

In what ways are students fundamentally different after their experiences with the Central Washington community – faculty, staff, administrators, and fellow students?

CWU emphasizes the “Learn. Do. Live.” model of higher education. While other institutions focus on graduate research, CWU places great emphasis on undergraduate research as well. Evidence of this can be seen every May at the Symposium on University Research and Creative Expression (SOURCE). CWU also emphasizes academic service learning and community engagement – especially through the Center for Leadership and Community Engagement (CLCE). The challenge CWU faces is involving increasing numbers of Ellensburg residential campus students in these and other “Do” endeavors (e.g., education abroad) – while also providing these opportunities to students at the University Centers, instructional sites, and in the online/multi-modal educational environment.

How do the answers to the above questions impact the University Strategic Plan, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) accreditation, and future academic planning at our institution for the variety of demographic groups served through the University Centers, online programming, and on the Ellensburg residential campus?

In AY2018-19, CWU will need to re-examine its mission, vision, strategic plan, and core themes in the light of the challenges discussed above and create a new strategic plan – first and foremost to guide the institution forward, and second, to share with the NWCCU by March 2020. While CWU’s current Core Themes: Teaching and Learning, Inclusiveness and Diversity, Scholarship and Creative Expression, Public Service and Community Engagement, and Resource Development and Stewardship are all hallmarks of a sound, well-functioning public regional comprehensive university, they are neither bold nor particularly forward-looking. Thus, the primary challenges facing CWU are to determine how best to: 1) capitalize on the distinctiveness of our university community; 2) support the students who choose to come to CWU; 3) make the most of our new General Education program; 4) and optimize both academic and social integration programming to help our students meet the many challenges they face during their time with us – and afterward.

Action Items:

Academic Advising: Extensive data collection, feedback gathering, and program assessment occurred during 2017-2018. Effective advising is critical to improved retention efforts. It is evident that changes need to be made to the model in 2018-2019 that include clear delineation between professional and faculty advising.

Transfer Students: Relaunch of this work group (2017-2018). Associate Provost for Extended Learning and Outreach hired. Need for improved services at the University Centers and a dedicated transfer center in Ellensburg.

University Centers: Relaunch of this work group (2017-2018). Associate Provost for Extended Learning and Outreach hired. Several new hires have occurred for critical roles at the centers. Need for a clear and dedicated marketing plan, careful assessment of competition, strategic program offerings, and more consistent and robust services for the transfer student population. Academic and Student Life is supporting the creation of a marketing position specifically dedicated to the university centers.

Online/Multimodal Learning: Associate Provost for Extended Learning and Outreach hired. Launch of a national search for a permanent Executive Director of Multimodal Learning will occur in the fall. Need for a strategic vision, broader appeal to faculty, and more consistent accountability.

Developmental Programs: Launch of the Summer Bridge program for students to encourage completion of the developmental math requirement prior to the start of fall quarter (70+ registrants with a goal of 100 by the end of the summer, first-year orientations). Implementation of placement testing at orientation. Continued work on policy changes to ensure completion of developmental requirements within the first thirty credit hours.

Interdisciplinary Programs: Relaunch of this workgroup (2017-2018). Recommendation for a new organizational model. Need for a structured discussion with stakeholders and required program reviews next year.

Teaching and Learning Center/Faculty Professional Development: Identified a physical space in Samuelson STEM for a Faculty Development Center in close proximity to Online/Multimodal Learning. Need for a strategic vision for the future of the operation and likely a dedicated director role.

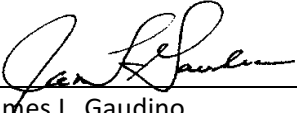
Honors: Relaunch of this workgroup (2017-2018). Recommendation to fully develop an Honors College (currently the Douglas Honors College functions as an honors program) and to adopt a phased approach to the build-out. Recommendation to coordinate disparate departmental honors through the Douglas Honors College in order to improve consistency, accountability, and student access and experience.

Submitted:



Katherine P. Frank
Provost/Vice President for Academic and Student Life

APPROVED FOR SUBMISSION TO THE BOARD:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Gaudino", written over a horizontal line.

James L. Gaudino
President