INSTITUTIONAL PLAN

University of Western States
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University of Western States

University of Western States (UWS) offers a world-class, integrative health care education and provides an evidence-informed approach to health and well-being. The university is at the forefront of an emerging, transformative whole-person approach to health care. As a leader in health sciences education since 1904, UWS provides integrated, evidence-informed curricula grounded in a dedication to current research, effective clinical practices, and patient-centered care.

To preserve the UWS legacy, the university initiated the development of an updated and revised institutional plan to advance its mission and mission goals, as well as ensure the reflection of institutional values in strategic university priorities. This document outlines the UWS institutional plan and the efforts that went into the plan's development.

UWS Vision and Core Values

The institutional plan conforms to the vision that "Quality of life and wellness are advanced through transformative education and health care." To ensure this vision is infused in every aspect of the university experience, six core values guide UWS:

1. Student-focused
2. Whole-person health
3. Curiosity
4. Best Practices
5. Inclusion
6. Professionalism

These core values are fundamental concepts that support university decisions, shape the learning and working culture, and exemplify the university's identity.

UWS Mission and Mission Goals

The mission of UWS is "To advance the art and science of integrated health care through excellence in education and patient care." The mission is supported and advanced through three mission goals. These mission goals reflect the university's core responsibilities and duties in fulfilling its mission and core purpose as an institution of higher education. The UWS mission goals are:

- Student Success
- Stewardship and Sustainability
- Academic Excellence and Integrated Health

Each mission goal has corresponding indicators and measures that help evaluate the university's ability to fulfill its mission (see Appendix A). Each indicator is a meaningful, assessable, and verifiable measure of mission performance that forms the basis for assessing each mission goal and associated strategic priorities. The meaningfulness of the indicators was determined through a process of campus engagement to identify measures that explain the significance, purpose and value of the mission goals in terms of the outcomes of the university's efforts to attain its mission.

UWS Institutional Plan Development Process

Gathering Data and Information

In previous years, University of Western States (UWS) has followed dual paths of managing a strategic plan and a set of institutional *mission goals* (previously named *core themes*). The current strategic plan (2017-2021) concludes at the end of this fiscal year (June 30, 2021). Going forward, the university mission goals serve as the foundation for planning and resource allocation, allowing the university to better align priorities to what is central to the institutional mission.

In preparation for the planning process, the administration conducted an environmental scan to evaluate external changes in higher education and to determine how these changes may impact UWS in the near or distant future. The environmental scan included examining trends related to demographic shifts, program and university enrollments, instructional delivery, and higher education structure, including business and financial models. In addition, throughout the process, the university administration continued to gather information on the external environment, including how the COVID-19 was and will continue to impact higher education. A final summary of the environmental scan is included on page 5.

In November 2020, the university administration convened 10 information gathering sessions (focus groups) with university employees, and administered open-ended surveys with students. The purpose of these sessions and surveys was to gather input to understand the university's current strengths, challenges, and priorities relative to the established mission goals.

The information gathering sessions were voluntary. Employees were invited to sign-up for a session that aligned with their schedule. The voluntary nature of the process resulted in each session having a unique mix of faculty and staff members from departments across the university. The sessions garnered participation from 70 part-time and full-time staff and faculty, (including adjunct faculty) with representation from every department and division of the university. In addition to these sessions, 85 students completed the surveys in which they described their experiences and needs in a detailed narrative.

The student survey and employee information-gathering sessions provided a great deal of information regarding the university's current needs and identified options to address these needs in the context of the current higher education and healthcare environment.

Below is a summary of the primary themes that emerged from the data:

Actions the university should build on and continue…
1. Facilitating **mentorship opportunities** for students in all university programs.
2. Expanding the DC's **Community-Based Internship (CBI)** program to ensure students gain experience in real-life, non-academic settings.
3. Building **robust student supports** such as academic coaching, tutoring, counseling, and other services.
4. Supporting the **Center for Teaching and Learning** and its efforts to provide training, technical assistance, and other supports to instructors, faculty members and students.

5. Using and expanding the **Standardized Patient Program** in both the college of chiropractic and the college of graduate studies.
6. Sustaining **enrollment** in light of the pandemic and shifting dynamics in higher education.
7. Providing consistent **university communications** such as the weekly vitals, HR round-up, facilities planning newsletter, and updates from the office of the president.
8. Promoting **UWS Core Values** across the institution and infusing these values into policies, processes, and practices.

Actions the university should continue to focus on…
1. Integrating **interprofessional education and practice opportunities** into curricula, courses, and clinical experiences.
2. Increasing the **volume and diversity of patients within UWS clinics** to ensure students have more robust clinical experiences.
3. Establishing a comprehensive **academic advising program** to support student persistence, retention, and success.
4. Offering more robust services to **students and graduates to support their professional and career development**.
5. Advancing **diversity, equity, and inclusion** (DEI) efforts within the university and reflecting these concepts in curricula, policies, and practices.
6. Exploring the transition to another **Learning Management System (LMS)** to improve the student/instructor experience and to streamline system support.
7. Continuing to explore **new academic programs and offerings** that align with the UWS mission.
8. **Integrating IT/IS systems** to streamline information-sharing and safeguard data integrity.

Identifying Strategic Priorities

The information gathering sessions and student surveys provided a wealth of information on the university's current needs in the context of the current higher education and healthcare environments. This information, coupled with data derived from the environmental scan, informed the development of eight strategic priorities. The university institutional planning and effectiveness committee reviewed and refined the priorities to ensure alignment with and advancement of the UWS mission goals – *Student Success*, *Stewardship and Sustainability,* and *Academic Excellence and Integrated Health*. The university executive leadership has endorsed these priorities.

The eight strategic priorities include:
1. Establish a holistic academic advising and registration model that improves student persistence, retention, and success.
2. Develop services and resources to support the professional and career development of students and alumni.
3. Cultivate a university culture that promotes inclusion and supports equity among all students and employees.
4. Improve IT/IS infrastructure to support institutional sustainability, flexibility, and growth.
5. Implement flexible work models that empower work-life balance and promote engagement of university employees.

6. Advance an integrated clinical model that supports interprofessional education and community practice opportunities.
7. Develop and implement additional campus-based and online academic programs that advance integrated health.
8. Explore innovative educational models, curricula, and offerings that facilitate teaching and learning in face-to-face, hybrid and online environments.

A copy of the strategic priorities in alignment with mission goals and core values is included in Appendix A.

Refining Strategic Priorities

The eight strategic priorities above represent the key strategies the university needs to focus on and execute in the next two years to advance the three mission goals. To support the further development of these strategic priorities, the administration invited feedback from the UWS community on actions or activities to support and advance each strategic priority. Feedback was collected via survey as well as directly from department and division heads. Such feedback was used to develop specific tactics to help fulfill each strategic priority. These tactics were used to identify financial and personnel needs relative to supporting the achievement of the priority. These needs were then aligned with the annual operating and capital budgets.

Integration of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within the eight Strategic Priorities

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are indispensable to academic excellence and the holistic development of UWS students. Diversity refers to the numerical representation of faculty, staff, and students who hold different social identities, backgrounds, and experiences. Equity requires attention to disparate impact, differential access and opportunities afforded to various communities, as well as structural and systemic barriers that limit potential and possibilities. Inclusion refers to the respectful treatment of all people with recognition for the multiplicity of identities and perspectives present in a diverse community.

To reflect our commitment to DEI, the eight strategic priorities will be implemented, operationalized, and socialized through a DEI framework. Furthermore, DEI will serve as an anchor point as university employees work collectively to incorporate DEI into UWS teaching, learning, outreach, assessment, operations, and decision-making at all levels of the organization. To accomplish these priorities in a manner that advances DEI, we:

- Foster and sustain an environment of respect and inclusion for faculty, staff, students, and members of the communities we serve;
- Create environments that embrace diversity and promote the acceptance and valuing of differences;
- Be steadfast in our efforts to ensure equitable access to UWS facilities, programs, resources, and services; and
- Advance our workforce by attracting and developing talented faculty, staff, and students from diverse backgrounds.

In support of these commitments, UWS is developing a DEI action plan to align with and support the strategic priorities. The DEI action plan includes specific initiatives focused on advancing university efforts to support diverse university stakeholders and promote a learning and working environment that is accessible, equitable, and inclusive.

Environmental Scan

Higher Education Landscape

For the last several years, colleges and universities across the country have experienced downward trends in enrollment (Education Dive, 2019). Failure to adapt to these enrollment trends, without modifying outdated business models, has contributed to significant financial uncertainty, requiring institutions to rely on financial reserves and endowment funds to support and sustain operations (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2020).

Independent, non-profit college closures have accelerated since 2016. Institutions with smaller enrollments and higher tuition dependency are the most vulnerable (Education Dive, 2019). Since 2016, more than 65 non-profit colleges in the US have closed, five of which have been in Oregon (Inside Higher Education, 2020).

Currently, UWS derives over 91% of its revenue from tuition, and consequently the institution's continued sustainability is dependent on stable enrollment. While UWS has added academic programs to diversify tuition revenue, the university's operations are dependent on student enrollment and retention. Larger shifts in the higher education environment marketplace, such as dramatic decreases in domestic undergraduate students and international undergraduate and graduate students, will continue to impact UWS in the future. In 2020, approximately 35% of UWS students were international, creating additional risk for declining future enrollments as the number of international students seeking graduate education in the United States declines.

High School Graduates and Students Interested in Higher Education

The total number of high school graduates in the United States is decreasing due to lower birth rates and decreased immigration (Bransberger et al., 2020). This decrease in high school graduates has and will continue to impact the pipeline of students to higher education, leading to overall fewer students attending colleges and universities across the country. Indeed, the college-going population of 18–25-year-olds is forecasted to drop by 15% between 2025 and 2029 (Bransberger et al., 2020).

Diversity of Students

Despite the national trends in high school graduates, Oregon's demographic trends project growth at the rate of eleventh highest in the nation, with the population expected to reach 4.74 million in 2030 (Office of Economic Analysis, 2019). Oregon is a major destination for migrants, with 77% of the population growth since 2010 due to in-migration, creating a more diverse population in terms of race and ethnicity. Currently, the highest Oregon racial and ethnic minority populations are Hispanic, Asian, and Pacific Islander (Office of Economic Analysis, 2019). By 2060, the racial demographics of Oregon are predicted to be nearly equal between white and minority populations, with minority students making up a third of Oregon's children (Mapes, 2019). As such, the number of minority high school graduates will continue to increase, and subsequently the pipeline of potential students to colleges and universities will be students of color.

In the fall of 2020, UWS students overall were majority white, with roughly 8.1% Asian, 3.9% Black or African American, 3.5% Hispanic, less than 1% each for American Indian and Pacific

Islander, and 9.4% two or more races. The College of Chiropractic has a majority of male students, (56%) while the College of Graduate Studies has a majority of female students (71%). Roughly 50% of all UWS students are enrolled in the Doctor of Chiropractic program, either solely or in conjunction with another degree program.

To date, the majority of degrees conferred in professional health science programs (e.g. MD, DO, DDS, DVM, DC, etc.) have been awarded to white male students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). While health science programs across the county have implemented efforts to attract and retain students with diverse backgrounds and experiences, graduates of these programs are predominately white and incoming students do not reflect the demographics of the country (Poole et al., 2020; Sklar, 2019; Taylor et al., 2020). Chiropractic programs, in particular, have not made strides in recruiting and enrolling diverse students. In 2019, the majority (75%) of Doctor of Chiropractic (DC) degrees were awarded to white students. In comparison with other health science programs, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) is the only degree that is "whiter" than Chiropractic (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Chiropractic Education
The DC program is the largest program at UWS. Overall enrollment in chiropractic degree programs in the United States has declined over the past 20 years. The conferral of DC degrees crested at 3,796 students in 2001 and has remained under 3,000 every year since (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). The precipitous decrease in DC enrollments has created greater competition among chiropractic institutions as they are each vying for a smaller pool of applicants (Institute for Alternative Futures, 2013). As a consequence, the total number of students inquiring and applying to the UWS Doctor of Chiropractic degree program continues to decline. This has resulted in flat enrollment in the UWS DC program for the last two academic years, demonstrating a potential plateau, or a decreasing trend, in UWS DC student enrollment now and in the future.

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic
The economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are expected to attribute to further fluctuations in U.S. higher education enrollment. In September 2020, as the country continued to manage the pandemic, undergraduate enrollment in American colleges and universities decreased by 4%, with a 16% decrease in freshman enrollments (West, 2020). The significant decrease in undergraduate enrollment in 2020 will have lasting impacts on total higher education enrollment for the next several years (Nietzel, 2020). Low-income students and students of color have been disproportionally impacted by the pandemic, with many students taking temporary or permanent leave from their institutions (Policoff, 2020; West, 2020). With diminishing admissions and reductions in underrepresented students, higher education institutions across the country, including UWS, are refocusing their efforts on the retention of currently enrolled students. With the barriers to access and continued enrollment erected by the pandemic, it is imperative institutions develop and implement strategies that meet the evolving needs of students.

In addition to the pandemic's impact on higher education enrollment trends, COVID-19 has accelerated the demand for online programs, courses, and content (Pokhrel & Roshan, 2021; ; SynEd, 2020; West, 2020). Higher education's shift to hybrid or fully online learning in spring

2020 has illuminated for many students that they can receive a high-quality education remotely, and therefore could complete their program from anywhere. As more students turn to fully online programs and courses, the two most important factors students are considering are *flexibility* and *convenience* (Maloney & Kim, 2021; SynEd, 2020). In addition, modern learners prefer personalized content that is timely and on-demand, which is why mobile learning is predicted to grow in a post-pandemic market to include more micro-learning options and personalized learning pathways aided by artificial intelligence (AI) (Ferrara, 2019). AI systems are also expected to work with intelligent technology to provide individualized student assessment in addition to traditional testing and learning capabilities (Ferrara, 2019).

These described changes to enrollment and increased demand for high-quality online education underscores the need for institutions, like UWS, to adopt innovative education models for new and existing programs and support flexible access to all students.

Need for Innovation

As the higher education marketplace becomes more competitive, institutions must ensure that students have access to career-building support, opportunities for peer-to-peer networking, connections with alumni and potential employers, regular communication and transparency from university leadership, and reassurances that institutions will adapt to market fluctuations without compromising student support services and quality education (Ramaswamy, 2020; Wilkerson, 2020). Moreover, institutions must ensure they can continue to attract and retain high-quality employees by maintaining competitive salaries and benefits, offering flexible work schedules, and supporting professional development opportunities.

Sustaining services and supports for students and employees will require institutions to "think outside the box" – and apply innovative strategies to sustain operations during uncertain times. These strategies must be both comprehensive and targeted, adaptable and flexible, and informed by data and instinct. To be successful, every member of the university community must be involved in the adoption and implementation of these innovative strategies, and all functions of the institution must be included (Wilkerson, 2020). Above all, the primary focus of innovation must remain on student access and success.

Conclusion

Significant forces are impacting colleges and universities across the country. These forces challenge the way colleges and universities have historically operated. To address these forces, UWS must cultivate a shared vision, execute innovative strategies, and refocus actions on student access and success. The areas of paramount focus for UWS are:

- Preparing for an increase in diverse students by cultivating a learning environment that is accessible, equitable, and inclusive.
- Promoting and engaging innovative strategies by evaluating internal and external environments, and then applying continuous improvement processes.
- Continuing to grow and add programs that are rigorous yet flexible, and that meet society's current and emerging educational needs.
- Refining business models to foster program viability and sustainability.
- Creating additional sources of revenue to reduce tuition dependence.

Appendix A: Mission Goals and Indicators

Core Theme	Indicator			Measure		
Student Success	1.1	Students pass licensure examinations	1.1.1	Standardized exam pass rates*	First-time pass rate (calendar year)	
					First-time pass rate (fiscal year)	
	1.2	Students graduate from their programs	1.2.1	Graduation rate	% of students graduating from their programs	
			1.2.2	Retention rates	% students retained at the end of Q2	
					% students retained at the end of year 1 (4 terms from start)	
					% students retained at the end of year 2 (8 terms from start)	
	1.3	Students complete their programs on time	1.3.1	% graduating students complete within 100% of program length	% of program graduates completing their program within 100% of published length	
	1.4	Students attain post-graduate success	1.4.1	Cohort default rate*		
			1.4.2	Alumni survey data	TBD	
Stewardship & Sustainability	2.1	Faculty, staff, and students have a positive experience.	2.1.1	Employee feedback survey* (Great College instrument)	Average of responses for all items	
			2.1.2	Employee feedback survey engagement items* (Great College instrument)	Average of responses for engagement items	
			2.1.3	Annual Student Feedback Survey	% of positive responses for all items	
					Average of responses for all items	
			2.1.4	Employee donations	% of current employees donating annually	
	2.2	The university enrolls sufficient students to meet enrollment goals	2.2.1	New student enrollment		
			2.2.2	Annual headcount		
	2.3	The university maintains financial stability	2.3.1	Composite Financial Index (CFI)*		
			2.3.2	Primary reserve ratio*		
			2.3.3	Viability ratio*		
			2.3.4	Net operating revenue ratio*		
			2.3.5	Return on net assets ratio		
			2.3.6	Net tuition by student FTE		
			2.3.7	Tuition discount rate		

Core Theme	Indicator		Measure		
Academic Excellence & Integrated Health	3.1	Programs prepare students to approach patients/clients from the integrated health perspective	3.1.1	Patient survey percent agreement with integrated health items	% of positive responses for all items
			3.1.2	Institutional learning outcome data	% targets met per annual assessment cycle
			3.1.3a	Student agreement in ability to utilize an integrated health approach (Student Feedback Survey)	% of positive responses for all items
			3.1.3b	Student agreement in ability to utilize an integrated health approach (Graduate Exit Survey)	% of positive responses for specified items
	3.2	Faculty and staff engage in practices to support academic excellence and student success	3.2.1	Student performance on program-level learning outcomes	% targets met per annual assessment cycle
			3.2.2	Scholarly work and innovation	# UWS seed funding grant applications
					# of UWS seed funding grants awarded
					# of scholarly publications

*Indicates indicator in which benchmark data will likely be available for either the entire university or at least one UWS program

Appendix B: UWS Strategic Priorities in Alignment with Mission Goals and Core Values

UWS Core Values						UWS Mission Goals		
Student-Focused	Whole-person health	Curiosity	Best Practices	Professionalism	Inclusion			
UWS Strategic Priorities FY2022 & FY2023						Student Success	Stewardship & Sustainability	Academic Excellence & Integrated Health
SP #1 Establish a holistic academic advising and registration model that improves student persistence, retention, and success.						X	X	
SP #2 Develop services and resources to support the professional and career development of students and alumni.						X		X
SP #3 Cultivate a university culture that promotes inclusion, accessibility, equitable educational and professional outcomes for students and employees.						X	X	X
SP #4 Improve IT/IS infrastructure to support institutional sustainability, flexibility, and growth.						X	X	X
SP #5 Implement flexible work models that empower work-life balance and promote engagement of university employees.							X	X
SP #6 Advance an integrated clinical model that supports interprofessional education and community practice opportunities.						X	X	X
SP #7 Develop and implement additional campus-based and online academic programs that advance integrated health.						X	X	X
SP #8 Explore innovative educational models, curricula, and offerings that facilitate teaching and learning in face-to-face, hybrid and online environments.						X	X	X

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