Academic Affairs Update

As faculty and staff working in a twenty-first century institution of public higher education, we may feel challenged to keep pace with the constant changes. Those changes—affecting what, how, and who we teach and serve—require shared information and open lines of communication. Given the many change initiatives currently underway in Academic Affairs, those of us in Miller Admin 306 decided we should provide some updates. What follows are short articles on several projects; please feel free to contact any of us in the Provost’s Office with questions or feedback. If this Update proves useful, we will explore the possibility of future editions.

Successful Students

In 2015-16, 2,835 new freshmen students joined Weber State University as Wildcats. After their first year as WSU students, however, about 47% (1,335) of them left the university. For some, the decision to leave makes sense, but for others, leaving is the result of roadblocks: with scheduling courses, understanding financial aid, knowing what faculty expect from them, or finding their way in a large institution that may make assumptions without providing explanations. The 47% who leave before their second year rack up costs associated with lost credits, “stop-out” time, and diminishing financial aid options. The institution, which depends on enrollments for tuition funding and on increasing student numbers for state funding, takes on risk to our financial health as students leave. Retention has to be a priority for all of us.

As faculty and staff members, we generally have lots of knowledge about our own departments and colleges, but may not be fully aware of many resources throughout the institution that are available to assist students. To help faculty and staff help students, universities across the nation (as well as all other USHE schools) are employing software programs that take advantage of contemporary data collection to identify patterns of both positive and negative student behaviors. For example, the program may pick up indications that a student is pre-registering for courses wildly outside of the student’s degree plan and send a notification to the student’s advisor to ensure that this scheduling really is what the student wants to do.

At WSU, Academic Affairs has purchased a Strategic Retention software product—Hobson’s Starfish—to address this need. Starfish will allow faculty and advisors to provide much more fully-informed assistance to students about courses, university regulations and expectations, financial aid, and so on. As such, use of Starfish aligns with WSU’s core values of Learning and Access and is very much in keeping with retention and completion goals being articulated with WSU’s Academic Affairs Planning Task Force (see next page).

Over the next months, Hobson’s will work with teams comprised of faculty and staff to determine what components of the software we will implement, how we will engage in training faculty and staff to use the software, and how we can offer support to those who take on responsibilities in this process. The introduction to Starfish will be phased, with implementation of IT and analytics components happening in summer and a small pilot program for functional users in fall 2017 (comprised mostly of existing Early Alert participants: Athletics, ROTC, FYE, developmental math and developmental English).

Any interested faculty members are welcome to participate. Feedback from those involved in the pilot will help shape the second phase of the implementation process. Throughout all phases, faculty and staff can expect support, not only from Starfish but also from the WSU team committed to achieving goals associated with this product’s implementation. Other universities who have employed Starfish have seen marked increases in student retention; we can do the same for students at WSU.

Visual Schedule Builder (VSB)

Visual Schedule Builder is a new software tool that will help students plan the courses they wish to take at times that best fit their busy schedules. A student simply lists the courses they are interested in, along with their work schedule, gym time, or other commitments, and then presses a button. Visual Schedule Builder will return all possible schedules that fit the student’s preferences. This tool will be fully integrated with CatTracks and the Banner registration system. This means the student will be able to pull their degree plan from CatTracks, then register from the schedule builder. You can expect to see Visual Schedule Builder sometime during summer 2017. For more information on this new tool, view the YouTube demo https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtCTDwnnWTM or go and test it out for yourself on the test website https://weberdev.vsbuilder.com
WSU’s Academic Planning Task Force

During Fall semester 2017, Academic Affairs constituted a Task Force comprised of the provost and associate provosts, deans, at least one faculty member from each college, the chair of Faculty Senate, WSU’s Diversity Officer, and a few hardy volunteers. Over the course of four meetings in fall, this group heard from Chuck Wight (a president’s perspective on WSU’s academic future), Norm Tarbox (WSU’s funding model: past, present, future), Madonna Miner and Eric Amsel (WSU’s relationship to other USHE schools and to its accrediting agency), and Lynn Mahoney (Cal State—Long Beach’s Student-Success story).

During Spring, 2018, the Task Force broke into five teams, each charged with examining perspectives of a specific group of stakeholders with respect to WSU’s academic purpose and possibilities: Students (prospective, current, alums); Faculty; Staff; Community Members/Employers; and Stewards (Legislators, Board of Regents, Trustees, USHE officials, donors). At a meeting of the whole, we agreed on a couple questions common to all five teams, shared questions specific to individual teams, enumerated information and data to be generated, and discussed different strategies for engaging in this process (focus groups, surveys, individual contacts, etc.). Teams will share preliminary results in late spring and throughout the summer.

The goals of the Task Force? We hope to set a general course (always open to correction) to guide development, growth, and funding of academic areas based on identified opportunities, strengths, and needs, in keeping with WSU’s overarching values of Learning, Community, and Access. We intend to set that course informed by data and insights from as many constituents as possible.

Have a visitor walk around and ask, “Whose job is student success on this campus?”… If the replies are “Everyone’s,” the visitor has found a campus focused on student success (AASCU, 2005).

David A. Dowell, Ph.D. from a 2005 Education Trust study subtitled “A Matter of Culture and Leadership”

Ruffalo Noel-Levitz Consulting Group

With the goals of increasing student enrollment and diversifying the student body, an outside consultant group was hired last fall. Individuals from Ruffalo Noel-Levitz have begun meeting with key groups in identifying non-resident students who “match” with what the University has to offer. These non-resident markets focus not only on domestic students but will include attracting more international students—who add a rich diversity of opinions, culture, and experience. Ruffalo consultants will also be evaluating our tuition-discounting strategies to achieve the goal of attracting and retaining these students.

We hope to begin seeing the positive effects of this effort beginning fall 2018.

Interstate Passport: An Honor that Supports Transfer

Beginning Spring 2017, students who complete their General Education requirements with a grade of C or higher in each course will be recognized as earning the Interstate Passport LDGE (Lower Division General Education). The recognition will be in the form of an honor, with an comment placed on students’ transcripts (see below). The honor reflects students’ achieving Passport learning outcomes for nine knowledge and skill areas:

- Creative expression
- Critical thinking
- Human cultures
- Human society and the individual
- Natural sciences
- Oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Teamwork/value systems
- Written communication

The Interstate Passport is a program developed by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) to minimize challenges of transfer. Weber State University students who receive the Passport will be able to transfer their General Education coursework to 21 Passport-accepting schools. Also, students who earn a passport elsewhere will be given credit for all General Education requirements, except American Institutions (which can be waived depending on their completion of AI-related coursework). Information about the Interstate Passport is available at weber.edu/passport.

Sample transcript with Passport comment:

### INSTITUTION CREDIT

**Term:** Fall 2016

**Term Comments:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Academic Standing</th>
<th>Subject</th>
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<th>Title</th>
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<th>Credit Hours</th>
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<td>UG</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>UD</td>
<td>CJ</td>
<td>1010</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>SS Intro to Criminal Justice</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UD</td>
<td>MATH</td>
<td>1040</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>QL Introduction to Statistics</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UD</td>
<td>WEB</td>
<td>1504</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>TD Info Literacy Comp Exam</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>0.500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Term Totals (Undergraduate):**
Ogden Civic Action Network: OgdenCAN

House families. Educate community. Promote health.

In February 2016, President Chuck Wight signed the national Campus Compact’s Action Statement, which committed WSU to creating a civic action plan by May 2017 that demonstrates our commitment to the public purpose of higher education. WSU decided to take a collaborative approach and invite the community to participate in writing a civic action plan together. To facilitate this process the Ogden Civic Action Network (OgdenCAN) was created.

OgdenCAN is a coalition of local stakeholders committed to improving the welfare of our community. It currently includes what we are calling anchor institutions, allies and residents in the East Central Ogden neighborhood.

The seven anchor institutions include: McKay-Dee Hospital, Ogden Regional Medical Center, Ogden School District, Ogden-Weber Applied Technology College, Weber-Morgan Health Department, Ogden City and Weber State University. The allies are local businesses, faith-based organizations, non-profits, the Diversity Commission, Ogden United Promise Neighborhood and corporations, like Zions Bank, that are making investments in community improvements. Residents of the East Central Ogden neighborhood round out the Network.

The goal is to leverage the resources of all stakeholder groups to address three priorities: housing, education and health.

WSU’s Provost’s Office acts as the facilitator and convener of this collaborative work. Brenda Kowalewski, Associate Provost for High-Impact Programs and Faculty Development, is chairing the OgdenCAN Advisory Board and Bill Cook, former Executive Director of Ogden City Council, volunteers for the Provost’s Office as the OgdenCAN Executive Director.

Creating Coordinated Outreach in East Central Ogden Neighborhood

The mission of OgdenCAN is to create comprehensive neighborhood revitalization through a place-based strategy that focuses resources on the East Central Neighborhood of Ogden (20th to 30th streets, Harrison to Washington Blvd.). A key strategy of the Network is working together to leverage existing resources and initiatives.

During the past several years, Ogden’s East Central Neighborhood has been a major focus for revitalization, investment and improvement. This community and its 15,528 residents have incredible potential, and the diversity of the residents in the neighborhood is to be celebrated. However, challenges still exist for residents that impede their quality of life. For example, the East Central Neighborhood has the highest population density and the highest poverty rate in the city (19%).

Hundreds of Weber State University students already volunteer their time in local non-profits serving East Central Ogden residents and tutor in the elementary schools located in the neighborhood. Numerous WSU faculty members are conducting research with and for organizations serving residents in the neighborhood. McKay-Dee Hospital (Intermountain Healthcare) facilitates outreach programs in the neighborhood to improve access to quality healthcare and, for the last 25 years, has offered the LiVeWell program to help improve the quality of life for individuals by promoting healthy eating, exercise and better living conditions. Ogden Regional Medical Center’s Health-2-You (H2U) program facilitates health screenings at low or no cost in an effort to improve health outcomes for residents. And Weber-Morgan Health Department recently completed a Community Health Improvement Plan to address high rates of tobacco use among teens, obesity and suicide in the county.

OgdenCAN provides an opportunity to bring the work of all these organizations, and others, together in a more focused strategic way to improve the lives of residents living in one of the most economically disadvantaged areas of Ogden City.

If you have an interest in joining one of the priority-area implementation teams on housing, education or health or you would like an invitation to the public celebration in late May, please let Brenda Kowalewski bkowalewski@weber.edu or Bill Cook billcook@weber.edu know and we will be happy to include you.
General Education Revitalization

Over the past several years, GEIAC (General Education Improvement and Assessment Committee) has been working on its Faculty Senate Executive charge to improve the content and delivery of General Education. Among its accomplishments, it has...

- Developed a new GE mission statement
- Refined student learning outcomes
- Supported the development of the Computer Literacy Center and the removal of the computer literacy GE requirement starting in Summer, 2017
- Created the WSU Program of interdisciplinary, variable (3-5) credit, team-taught and limited enrollment GE courses that satisfy requirements in 2 areas

Over this past year, GEIAC also sought to revitalize GE by making it more coherent, so it becomes an even more meaningful and effective program for students. After extensive discussions with and feedback from all constituents, the committee has proposed program-level Gen Ed Learning Outcomes (called GELOs) which are closely aligned to national models of General Education program outcomes. These GELOs also have been widely shared and discussed by various constituents.

- GELO 1: CONTENT KNOWLEDGE: This outcome addresses students’ understanding of the worlds in which they live and disciplinary approaches for analyzing those worlds. The knowledge is well defined in USHE policy R470 and further refined by Core and Breadth Area Committees.
- GELO 2: INTELLECTUAL TOOLS: This outcome focuses on students’ use of and facility with skills necessary for them to construct knowledge, evaluate claims, solve problems, and communicate effectively.
- GELO 3: RESPONSIBILITY TO SELF AND OTHERS: This outcome highlights students’ relationship with, obligations to, and sustainable stewardship of themselves, others, and the world to promote diversity, social justice, and personal and community well-being.
- GELO 4: CONNECTED AND APPLIED LEARNING: This outcome emphasizes how students’ learning in general education classes can be connected and applied in meaningful ways to new settings and complex problems.

GELO 1 addresses the acquisition of new knowledge, reflecting the focus on distinct content knowledge that is presently the focus of course-level student learning outcomes and Gen Ed assessment. It is what we already do. In contrast to GELO 1, the other GELOs are habits of mind that students can acquire only through repeated practice in using intellectual tools, adopting personal and social responsibilities, and engaging in connected and applied learning.

To ensure that the GELO-related activities are exercised across all their Gen Ed classes, each class will have two features: Big Questions and Signature Assignments. The Big Question is a pedagogical device that allows students to connect the information in a class to broader issues and concerns of personal or social relevance. An instructor may formulate a Big Question for his or her class in many different ways, including addressing such topics as science and society, cultures and values, global interdependence, sustainability, health and well-being, the changing economy, or human dignity and freedom. The Big Question provides a brand that students will come to appreciate of all their General Education classes.

The Signature Assignment is also a brand that students will come to appreciate of their General Education classes. A Signature Assignment is one in which students apply their acquired learning to address the Big Question. Requiring a signature assignment in whatever form it takes (a written, oral, or digital presentation) helps students exercise intellectual tools (GELO 2) by integrating and applying (GELO 4) content knowledge (GELO 1) to personally and socially significant topics (GELO 3). Practicing these GELO-related activities over 12 or 13 General Education classes will strengthen students’ broad-based abilities.

The proposal for the GELOs, Big Questions, and Signature Assignments passed GEIAC, Curriculum Committee, and Faculty Senate Executive Committee. Faculty Senate voted on and passed the proposal at its last meeting on March 16th. GEIAC will be rolling out the new General Education practices slowly, seeking input and guidance to optimize the effectiveness of the Big Questions and Signature Assignments given characteristics of a particular General Education class. Also, the rollout will ensure that full-time and adjunct faculty members teaching General Education classes are well supported with training and best practices in using these features.

“Liberal education has always been this nation’s signature educational tradition, [whose] core values [are]: expanding horizons, building understanding of the wider world, honing analytical and communication skills, and fostering responsibilities beyond self” (AAC&U, College Learning for the New Global Century).
Searching for a University Librarian → Dean of the Library

After 25 years as University Librarian of the Stewart Library, Joan Hubbard will retire on June 30, 2017. When Joan announced her retirement, the Provost’s Office established a search committee comprised of: Social and Behavioral Sciences College Dean Francis Harrold (who serves as chair), Misty Allen, Jason Francis, Chris Hauser, Kathy Payne, Sarah Singh, Andy Lippert (faculty member elected by other members), and Marta Alvear Bravo (student representative approved by WSUSA president).

At its first meeting, the committee decided that current practice is to describe this post as “Dean of the Library” rather than “University Librarian,” and that is how WSU’s ad reads. The committee determined minimal and preferred qualifications, as well as text for the position advertisement, which is online at jobs.weber.edu. The incoming Dean will have an opportunity to review and reshape the Library’s mission and values in light of changes taking place in academic libraries world-wide. Please feel free to contact Dean Francis Harrold with suggestions, comments, or questions.

The advertisement will be posted nationally and run for thirty days, following which the Search Committee will read and rate applications. The Provost’s Office hopes that initial Skype interviews will occur in April, with on-campus candidate visits taking place soon after.

New York Times News

I love picking up a copy of The New York Times on campus and know that many faculty, staff, and students enjoy doing the same. Funding for the paper began in 2006 and was motivated by a desire to have faculty make use of the paper in classes as part of the Times’ Education Partner Program. Over the most recent couple of years, the pick-up rate for the paper has declined (from ~350 to ~200) and fewer faculty members (between 12 and 16 per semester) have elected to participate in Times’ classroom partnerships.

The cost to provide The New York Times on campus increases each year. Given the rate increase, Academic Affairs asked college deans to gather feedback from their college faculty about classroom use of the paper. One college reported extensive use (and favored continuing receiving the Times in paper format by about 2:1), two colleges supported continuation of our subscription in some form, and three colleges reported little interest and no classroom use of the paper.

At that point, Academic Affairs learned that if we were to switch our subscription to a digital site license, we would save over $10,000 per year and could make the paper available to all faculty, staff and students 7-days a week, all year long. In other words, 17,728 students, faculty and staff would be able to read the paper on weekends and throughout the summer as well as Monday through Friday during fall and spring semesters. Here are some specifics:

1. All-digital access to nytimes.com, from 1851 to right now*, including:
   ◊ All multimedia, including video, photography, VR features
   ◊ Spanish and Mandarin Chinese versions of nytimes.com
   ◊ World-class curation that fosters engagement and exploration
2. Personalized access to The Times:
   ◊ Email newsletters, including The Edit, Mobile Apps, Customized alerts,
   Cross-platform save, Article recommendations
3. The New York Times In Education: Faculty-generated course material to help professors easily integrate The Times into their curriculum.

*Note: For articles from 1923-1980, each individual user is limited to 5 articles per day, due to a copyright ruling.

*Note: The full crossword puzzle is not included, but the daily mini-crossword is.

Academic Affairs will finish out spring semester with the paper version of the NY Times. At that point, we are going to switch the university’s subscription to the now less expensive full-calendar year digital version. In addition: 1) TLF will serve as “coordinated site” for WSU’s work with the NY Times; 2) each dean will ask one faculty member per college to serve as a NY Times advocate. This person will encourage use of the paper in classes and help advertise NY Times’ speakers; 3) AA will monitor usage during this next year to determine how many faculty, staff, students, and classes make use of the paper; for some reason it makes sense to return to the Times in a paper format, we will revisit that question next spring.

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Promoting Student Success: Turning Talk into Action

As the academic year begins to wind down, the Promoting Student Success Series is winding up, turning talk into action. There are two more events left to round out the academic year – one on April 4th and one on May 3rd.

In these two sessions we will draw upon what we’ve learned from the experts who have presented in the series—Paul Hanstedt, Lynn Mahoney, and Susan Shadle—and apply it to what we do here at WSU.

The two afternoon-long events will be rich with information sharing, opportunities to provide feedback, engaging dialogue, and development of action items to move our student success work forward in the 2017-18 academic year.

Participants will not only learn about the different student success initiatives underway and how they align, but will also be given the opportunity to provide feedback on this approach to promoting student success. Additionally, participants will reflect on their own personal contributions to promoting student success and help create next steps for WSU to turn our vision into reality.

Please join us for:

Aligning WSU Student Success Strategies
April 4th, 12:30 - 3:30 pm
Dumke Hall in the Hurst Center
Light lunch provided

Promoting Student Success: From Vision to Reality
May 3rd, 12:30 - 4:00 pm
SU Ballrooms
Light lunch provided

Come share your perspective and continue to shape WSU’s approach to promoting student success.
Message from the Provost

In Fall 2016 I had the opportunity to teach ENGL 2010: Intermediate College Writing to a really gung-ho group of students. A couple weeks into spring semester, 2017, I received an e-mail from one of them:

"I have been so impressed with the professors I have had these last two semesters. They are knowledgeable, and professional, and friendly. In addition, all of them are trying to learn the names (and faces) of their students. How is that even possible?! A big thank you to them and to those of you in administration for making WSU a friendly place."

It's always a pleasure to hear about students' positive experiences on campus; this particular note really warmed my heart because its author is so appreciative of ways faculty relate to students personally and individually.

I too want to express my appreciation for the care and concern faculty and staff show for students on a daily basis. I am proud to work in an institution of higher education that truly puts students first, that consistently attempts to support students as they explore the world, themselves, and the knowledge offered in our disciplinary areas. Every single one of the initiatives mentioned in this Academic Affairs Update is motivated by the desire to allow more students to engage successfully in this exploration.

As we improve our data gathering and analysis of that data, as we learn more about what challenges students confront, we can do even more to help students stay the course. Thank you, sincerely, for what you currently are doing—and for being open to engaging in a changing array of strategies as we discover what works best for Weber State students.

Madonne