FULFILLING THE PROMISE

Access to Baccalaureate and Graduate Education in North Puget Sound

Washington State University Everett will fulfill its promise to the western Washington region with one of the state's leading public undergraduate baccalaureate programs—preeminent in STEM education, innovation, research, and application.

INTRODUCTION

This executive summary is an overview of Washington State University Everett's Strategic Academic Plan 2017–2027, "Fulfilling the Promise: Access to Baccalaureate and Graduate Education in North Puget Sound." It serves as lead-in to an extensive discussion of our vision: "To be recognized as among the state's leading public undergraduate baccalaureate programs—preeminent in STEM education, innovation, research, and application." The summary describes the scope and structure of the planning process; introduces Washington State University at Everett's (WSU Everett) proposed strategy for addressing pertinent educational, economic, and workforce concerns of the North Puget Sound (NPS) region; and begins the conversation regarding value-added education and research opportunities presented by this partnership between WSU, the State, and the NPS community.

The State of Washington's initial call to action engaged WSU as a partner in creating a comprehensive strategic approach to enhance educational access for indigenous citizens of the NPS region. Consistent with WSU's philosophy of education, as exemplified in its mission, vision, and values, WSU Everett's strategy focuses on a commitment to excellence in scholarship, research, innovation, entrepreneurship, and global education. In this summary, highlights from the strategic plan speak to the University's internal organizational capacities, external macro-environmental influences, organizational priorities, and contingencies for success. The summary concludes with a review of the strategic planning process and possible value-added opportunities that are expected to result from WSU's partnership with the State of Washington, business and industry, and the community at large.

A CALL TO ACTION

Political, business and education leaders in Snohomish, Island, and Skagit Counties have long recognized that the development of a robust regional economy would require local access to higher education in the form of a four-year research university. To this end, local and state advocates for a connection between education and economic development prevailed in their efforts to elevate the education levels and professional expertise of underserved citizens of the NPS region. The primary emphasis was, and continues to be, reversing a talent shortfall by improving access to baccalaureate and graduate degree programs, especially in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education and careers.

A series of regional and statewide discussions culminated in Senate Bill 5636 during the 2011–2012 legislative session. This bill redirected the management and operation of the University Center of North Puget Sound (UCNPS) from Everett Community College to WSU. The goal of the transfer was to allow the incremental growth of STEM education

at a research university and branch campus of WSU. With this in mind, WSU Everett was created. Changes would be required in location, program focus, academic and organizational strategies, and education and research capacities. A state-appointed Coordinating and Planning Council would provide guidance on inter-institutional collaboration and long-range strategy.

A STRATEGIC RESPONSE

In leading this endeavor, WSU Everett combines forces with individuals and organizations who seek to increase educational access and support economic improvement: local and State government, educators, business and industry leaders, and third-sector/civic organizations. This complex undertaking will require sound guidance and ample resources to ensure that the vision is realized and that its accompanying strategy reflects both the intent of Senate Bill 5636 and the ideals upon which WSU was founded.

STATEMENT OF MISSION AND PURPOSE

Our primary charge is to greatly expand access to high quality baccalaureate and graduate degree programs in the region and the state. With a focus on STEM undergraduate education, research, scientific inquiry, innovation, entrepreneurship, global interconnectivity, and sustainable growth, WSU Everett will address key region and state economic development needs - while readying graduates and associates, for successful practice and leadership in a rapidly changing, less vertically integrated, and globally-connected world.

A VISION FOR THE NEXT DECADE

WSU Everett will be recognized as among the state's leading public undergraduate baccalaureate programs – preeminent in STEM education, innovation, research and application. As a preferred university partner of choice, we will gain distinction and prominence as a forward-thinking education, business and research partner.

OUR PARTNERS – OUR STAKEHOLDERS

We anticipate entering into value-added, mutually beneficial transactional relationships with the University community, state and local government, regional businesses, third sector parties, other stakeholders, and leaders in education for the benefit of our students. We share, with each of our partners, a commitment to elevate the quality of educational offerings and advance economic and workforce development in NPS region.

WSU CORE VALUES

Washington State University's core values permeate all aspects of academic practices at WSU, and inherently, WSU Everett. These values are imperatives, embedded within the structure of this, WSU Everett's strategic plan: *Quality and Excellence; Integrity, Trust, and Respect; Research, Innovation, and Creativity; Land-Grant Ideals; Global Citizenship and Diversity; Freedom of Expression; and Stewardship and Accountability.*

WSU EVERETT'S STRATEGIC INTENT

We will provide our students with the knowledge and practical exposure to enable them to function as informed, responsible professionals in a complex globally-connected society. In addition to developing students who excel in discipline-specific competencies of practice and technical proficiency, we seek to inspire the creation and dissemination of knowledge for an evolving global economy and landscape. To do so, it is necessary to promote openness to innovative solutions. Critical thinking, adaptability, problem solving, and leadership are hallmarks of this shift towards preparing student who have the skills necessary to resolve complex project-specific, technical, economic, and social problems. At the core of this approach is the adoption of an entrepreneurial spirit and value.

THE WSU EVERETT ORGANIZATION AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

To reach the program's goals of sustainable growth and prominence in STEM education, research, and practice, WSU Everett will take full advantage of the opportunities presented by this initiative. With sustained concentration on innovation, scholarship, and the creation and advancement of knowledge, we will elevate WSU EVERETT's academic profile in ways that are affirming, accountable, and ultimately self-sustaining.

INTERNAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

Numerous value-creating opportunities, with potentially high returns on our investments, are presented by this University, state, and community partnership. Undergraduate STEM education is critical to the future prosperity of the nation, state, and region. WSU Everett is positioned to play a leading role in this area, and specifically, to:

- Pioneer superior undergraduate STEM education;
- Foster groundbreaking STEM research;
- Contribute significantly to the local, national, and global STEM workforce;
- Craft an effective education access strategy, buttressed by a solid local and global pipeline;
- Establish partnership alliances of mutual benefit to all constituents; and

- Champion innovative paradigms for lifelong learning and continuous professional development.

Key differentiating strengths in support of our aspirations include a reservoir of access to local business talent, the WSU system's broad educational and research capabilities, a community of scholars and professionals committed to WSU's success, and a confidence-inspiring mandate for STEM education from the State of Washington. Additional strengths and opportunities are provided by the initial capital funding of a 95,000 square foot state-of-the-art academic and research facility and approved cross-disciplinary research initiatives, such as those presented by JCDREAM, the Metropolitan Center for Applied Research, and the proposed Institute for Advanced Manufacturing and Aerospace. We have also fostered beneficial partnerships with government, business, and civic leaders and advisory groups to help guide strategic direction and serve as ambassadors. Other positive influences include those related to our geographic proximity to a fertile, resource-rich external industrial environment that puts us in an ideal position to grow in stature and will influence and enrich curricular and research endeavors. All serve as resources that will attract and nurture students, faculty, and researchers.

At the same time, a number of *challenges* will mark the next decade and significantly influence decisions regarding program strategy and growth. In particular, we must successfully navigate the financial constraints and fiscal realities of WSU and the current higher-education environment. Sturdy, reliable infrastructure supports will be necessary to ensure delivery of an unprecedented undergraduate education and research experience, along with the sustainable programmatic and organizational growth required to expand access to education and enhance its quality. Continual upgrades and renewals are necessary in all key result areas (e.g., teaching/learning infrastructures, including technology applications and enrollment mix and "yield"; staffing (faculty and administrative, marketing and communications, physical plant and technology-related systems); and revenue generation and fund development.

MACRO-ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES AND IMPACTS

National, state, and regional trends, conditions, and challenges that we expect will affect WSU Everett's ability to enroll, educate, and graduate STEM professionals over the next decade include shifts in area demographics and enrollee profiles, emerging employment trends, a changing workforce environment, the status of the local and national economy, less than favorable access to higher education, and business-sector growth that increases business and workforce demands. Other challenges arise from college affordability, heavy student-debt burdens, and gaps between college attendance, achievement, and completion rates, especially in high-demand and STEM-related disciplines. Still others are related to lack of access to postsecondary education

and workforce training for time-, place-, or financially constrained residents of the three NPS counties. These factors have converged to precipitate a supply/demand talent shortfall, especially in STEM and other high-demand professions. Areas of strategic significance for academic planning are described below; more extensive discussions can be found in the main strategic planning document.

STEM EDUCATION:

The federal government and its advisory councils on science, technology, and the developing economy continue to express serious concerns about the lack of STEM professionals and the country's ability to retain its preeminent role in science and technology. Groups such as the National Science and Technology Council's Committee on STEM Education and the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology point to the need for a well-qualified and increasingly diverse STEM workforce that is able to lead innovation in STEM-related industries. Economic projections for the U.S. suggest that as many as one million additional STEM professionals will be required over the next decade, over and above current graduation rates.

The preparation of students for postsecondary education is far from adequate to maintain sufficient interest and capability in STEM education and careers. Limited access to educational opportunities and gaps between college attendance and completion rates remain critical issues, especially in STEM-related disciplines. Financial barriers to educational attainment persist, and the dearth of evidence-based research on the characteristics of students who are most likely to succeed and enter the STEM workplace seriously limits our capacity to educate. The radical underrepresentation of women and minorities in STEM education and related careers impedes global education efforts and stifles innovation. Finally, public/private investment directed at rectifying labor-force deficiencies consistently fall short of the resources required.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY PRIORITIES:

Recent discussions with business leaders representing more than 6,000 employees in the NPS region focused on business priorities and human capital needs. A key theme among business and industry representatives is the need for new paradigms for lifelong learning to increase business and career success. Expertise in STEM disciplines and STEM literacy topped the list of required competencies for success across a wide variety of industries and practice areas. The need to decrease supply/demand shortfalls and attain a critical mass of talented STEM employees in the NPS region is considered urgent.

WORKFORCE TRENDS:

Current workforce trends are influenced by several major factors. Data management and analysis are seen as increasingly crucial for commercializing business products and services. Emerging technologies, automation, big data, and new media ecology are driving competitive business processes and outcomes. Global interconnectivity and communication across geographic and international borders are triggering an upsurge in innovation and competition. New scientific and evidence-based knowledge in global education and business is redirecting and challenging higher education and the global business world. The Cloud and mobile technologies are shifting workers away from the office and toward an "in-my-own-time-and-place" work culture, and the trend toward "contingent" and flexible employment is escalating.

Workplace demographics—e.g., age, diversity, and gender—are causing a shift in the dynamics of traditional employment models, particularly given our aging population. Longevity in the workplace is becoming more common, with many opting out of retirement to continue in their current jobs or embark on new careers. More flexible career paths, coupled with continuous learning, will ensure that job responsibilities and skill sets are properly aligned for the mutual benefit of business and workers.

STATE AND REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT:

Through 2023, we anticipate increases in regional, state, and national employment growth rates for STEM-related and high-demand professions in three Department of Labor SOC-classified job groupings: Computer and Mathematical Occupations, Architecture and Engineering Occupations, and Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations. Washington State employment categories flagged as "in high demand" and "short workforce supply" include computer science degree holders and health professionals. The Washington State Employment Security Department projects significant and increased demand in Civil and Industrial Engineering. Healthcare continues to occupy the position of greatest employment-sector growth among all groupings and, consequently, the largest increase in jobs and employment.

MOBILIZING FOR SUCCESS

Considering the complex nature of the WSU Everett initiative, our priorities reflect a three-pronged approach: (1) delivery of a quality undergraduate STEM education that evolves in response to economic and societal changes, (2) extension of the University's reach and impact through strategic leadership and excellence, and (3) development of a solid grounds-up infrastructure that will support and sustain organizational growth and impact. Six organizational priorities for the next decade align with those of the WSU Strategic Plan and are interlocking pieces of a broader University strategy for fostering scholarship, innovation and research excellence. Accompanying strategies capitalize on

opportunities for growth while increasing intellectual engagement within and outside the University community. Priorities provide context for ongoing strategic planning and implementation.

ORGANIZATIONAL THEMES AND PRIORITY INVESTMENT AREAS

THEME I: IMPROVED EDUCATION ACCESS

Priority I: Optimize Access to Baccalaureate STEM Education and STEM Career Opportunities

Representative areas of emphasis: diversifying education pathways and entry points to STEM degrees and other high-demand disciplines; enrolling and educating a talented, diverse student population of traditional and non-traditional college-going cohorts - including groups currently underrepresented in STEM education and careers; piloting an education system that counters barriers to education access, degree attainment, and transition to STEM careers; and breaking new ground in life-long professional development opportunities.

THEME II: ACTIVE LEARNING - STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Priority II: Engage Students to Excel in a Competitive Global Society and Pressing Labor Market

Representative areas of emphasis: integration of evidence-based STEM education practices into learning experiences; strategies for developing discipline-specific competence in standards of practice and “common employability” skill sets essential for career success and advancement; engagement in high-impact experiential learning opportunities; exposure to tested and proven interventions that advance knowledge, hone critical thinking skills, and positively influence learning outcomes; and learning reinforcements and student life supports that expedites successful academic and career outcomes and promote life-long learning.

THEME III: PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS - OUTREACH

Priority III: Forge Strategic Partnerships to Advance Education, Research, and Economic Development

Representative areas of emphasis: strengthened connections between WSU Everett, regional businesses, and third sector partners; value-added alliances that encourage innovation, scholarship research, and sponsorship of faculty-student initiatives; University-community collaborations of mutual interest and benefit to prosper the

regional economy; and education and resource networks that serve as forums for documenting and exploring innovative STEM-related practices.

THEME IV: INSTITUTIONAL, LOCAL, AND GLOBAL IMPACT

Priority IV: Become a Leader in Undergraduate STEM Education, Research & Economic Development

Representative areas of emphasis: recognition of WSU Everett as among the state's leading public undergraduate baccalaureate programs – preeminent in STEM education, research, and innovation; strategic efforts to attain distinction and prominence as a scholarly, innovative and entrepreneurial educational program; enhanced visibility as a forward-thinking, preferred "University Partner of Choice" for discerning stakeholders; building and fortifying a position of leadership in STEM education that advances the University's reach and impact – locally and globally.

THEME V: EDUCATION AND RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

Priority V: Achieve Excellence in Scholarship, Research, Global Education and Entrepreneurship

Representative areas of emphasis: competitive, culturally and digitally-skilled global citizens capable of succeeding in a professional environment; targeted, innovative high-demand undergraduate programs that respond to trending economic and workforce needs; state-of-the-art undergraduate STEM education; attraction and retention of a diverse core faculty with demonstrated ability to achieve excellence in teaching and research; innovative initiatives within and across disciplines; scientific inquiry and evidence- and discovery-based learning; and development of an entrepreneurial spirit and capacity.

THEME VI: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Priority VI: Align the Infrastructure with Programmatic and Organizational Priorities

Representative areas of emphasis: establishment of a stem-focused, innovative campus; core education and infrastructure requirements needed to expedite student-faculty accomplishments; management of long-term organizational sustainability and growth; conditions and strategies for maximizing and leveraging resources - e.g., financial, people, information technology, physical plant and property; effective organization development and benchmarks of accountability; and resource allocations, revenue generation and fund development.

MEASURING PROGRESS AND DEFINING SUCCESS

To evaluate our progress, stakeholders—including potential investors—will require documentation of progress based on meaningful criteria. Our progress and success will be tracked and gauged using objective qualitative and quantitative measures. A provisional suite of goal-linked key performance indicators, criteria, and metrics will assess programmatic and organizational performance by measuring progress in key areas, such as quality of the undergraduate experience, financial and operational effectiveness, faculty and student engagement and satisfaction, and critical programmatic occurrences—enrollment, inclusion, and retention—against predetermined targets.

PATH TO IMPLEMENTATION

Successful execution of this strategic academic plan will proceed in five phases. In Phase I, the state's call to action was corroborated, the vision was refined in accordance with University and state mandates, and strategic priorities were delineated. In Phase II, which is currently underway, start-up activities for the WSU Everett campus have begun, and a compelling case statement and marketing/communication strategy is being developed. In this phase of implementation, special attention is being paid to the high-priority areas and conditions essential to success: sustainable financial and resource-allocation models, a breadth and variety of academic degree programs, faculty recruitment, administrative leadership, enrollment management, and augmentation of teaching and organizational infrastructures to support start-up activities and evolving program development. In Phase III, an inventory of accomplishments will help establish a trajectory for program development and expansion. At this juncture, academic outcomes, progress metrics, and targets will be adjusted to satisfy University priorities. In Phase IV, in collaboration with University leaders and other strategic partners, a University-wide call for innovative STEM program initiatives will be outlined. Approved initiatives will set the tone and create conditions for future growth and prominence. Phase V will usher in the "Years of Accelerated Innovation and Program Refinement." Before embarking on the next planning cycle, the strategic direction for the final five years of the 2017–2027 planning cycle will be reaffirmed, subject to a comprehensive evaluation of WSU Everett's progress and successes.

Activities planned for each phase are subject to change based on such factors as urgency, competing institutional priorities, and availability of supporting resources. Some strategies may assume greater priority, while others may need to be deferred or realigned.

CONCLUSION

"Fulfilling the Promise: Access to Baccalaureate and Graduate Education in North Puget Sound" puts forth a plan for attaining and sustaining excellence in STEM education and research at WSU Everett well into the future. It brings life to a long-held vision of NPS leaders seeking to improve economic opportunities in the region. At the same time, this new academic initiative and partnership between WSU, the State of Washington, and the NPS community offers numerous value-creating opportunities to further advance WSU's mission and vision—most importantly, by showcasing WSU's expertise, research, services, and products through the engagement and expertise of highly qualified graduates and faculty who are poised to make significant contributions to the economic development and prosperity of the NPS region and the State of Washington. WSU Everett's agenda for the next decade is bold—and, if properly executed, the return on investment will be significant.

We invite you, our partners, to join as we work to sculpt a future of promise—one that extends the depth and impact of WSU's scholarship, outreach, and research, both in the NPS region and around the globe.

"Our case is compelling. Our agenda is clear. The timing is auspicious for our stakeholders, graduates, and strategic partners. In this, Washington State University North Puget Sound at Everett's 2016-2025 Strategic Academic Plan, we advance forward-thinking strategies to achieve our vision and to fulfill our mission…

… While satisfying the mandate and intent of Senate Bill 5636, enacted by the Legislature of the State of Washington--the provisions of which aim to expand access to baccalaureate and graduate degree programs, specifically for residents of the Everett Metropolitan area and North Snohomish, Island, and Skagit Counties."

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We invite participation and encourage collaboration among all constituencies. For details related to this Strategic Academic Plan, periodic updates, alternate media presentation, and continuing opportunities to provide feedback, please see the entire plan at www.everett.wsu.edu/wsu-everett-strategic-plan/

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