

**WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY  
ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING AND FACILITIES  
AT THE BELLINGHAM WATERFRONT**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Western Washington University plans to create a programmatic and physical presence at the Bellingham waterfront that enables it to carry out its mission and strategic plan by extending and enhancing University educational and programming outreach, connections and activities to and with the community and beyond. It is Western's goal to serve its communities through internal partnerships, while also working with other local higher education institutions, non-profit organizations, and with the private sector in vital areas of environmental, economic, technological, international, and societal innovation and sustainability.

Planning for the Bellingham Waterfront project has been ongoing since March 2004, when then President Karen Morse first presented the concept of Western expanding to the waterfront to the WWU Board of Trustees. She chaired the Waterfront Academic Planning Committee until her retirement in 2008. Western confirmed the waterfront as a location for possible expansion in its 2006 Strategic Action Plan. Early in 2009, Western created a smaller planning group (Western Crossing Planning Committee) that has approached the project in three phases. This white paper has been written by the WCPC, but is the culmination of the work done by both groups.

**Phase I – The WWU Technology Development Center**

Western Washington University is an anchor on the Bellingham waterfront in the form of the Technology Development Center which is part of the Technology Development Zone, a State and Federally funded initiative in Washington State. The facility, which is shared with partner Bellingham Technical College, was dedicated in the fall of 2009 and is now home to a research arm of the College of Sciences and Technology.

**Phase II – The WWU Community Learning Center**

Western envisions a **Community Learning Center** facility, one that offers high tech educational delivery and an environment that fosters constant learning for people from all walks of life from the city, region, state, nation and the world. It is envisioned that this facility could be built in partnership with other higher education (e.g. BTC, Northwest Indian College, Whatcom C.C.), non-profit and private sector entities, and would result in a destination point that creates new economic stimulation for the city and region and provide a connection to the global community. This economic production would be created by virtue of the foot traffic generated through the programming and outreach activities conducted in the facility.

**Phase III – WWU and the Green Economy**

The WCPC identified a focus of planning around "The Green Economy." The vision calls for the possible relocation of either Huxley College of the Environment, the College of Business and

Economics, or possibly both, to the waterfront. Another possible option is that neither college would be relocated, but rather, the synergies created between CBE, Huxley and CST would lead to the development of an institute or center focused on The Green Economy. Woodring College of Education could also play a role through its work with schools and adult educators and focuses on knowledge and learning in a Green Economy. WWU believes focus on Green Economy development will create a destination point for people from around the country and the world and further serve as a tool to drive help drive the economic engine of the region.

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**The Goal:** For Western Washington University to create and further develop academic programming that supports its core instructional mission, to extend and enhance University outreach, connections and activities to and with the community and beyond, and to construct facilities at the Bellingham waterfront that facilitates this goal. WWU will partner with other higher education, non-profit and private sector entities to create a destination point that helps to meet the civic needs and also drive the economic engine of Bellingham and the region.

**Planning Guidelines**

The Western Crossing Planning Committee (WCPC), the committee created in 2009 to continue the work of the original WWU Waterfront Academic Planning Committee, developed mission and vision statements and guiding principles to provide a framework for discussions defining program opportunities and the related need for facilities. It used the guiding work of the initial WWU Waterfront Academic Planning Committee to frame guidelines. The WCPC emphasizes that undergraduate student programs are the core of the Western learning experience and must be the catalyst that drives planning discussions. With that in mind, the WCPC has created the following:

**Mission Statement**

Combine the strengths of WWU and its partners to create and foster dynamic change for society.

**Vision Statement**

Enhance Western's ability to serve its communities through internal partnerships and by working with other local higher education institutions and non-profit and private sector entities in vital areas of environmental, economic, technological, international, and societal innovation and sustainability. By doing so, enhance Western as a premier destination university.

**Core Values in Planning**

Collaboration, Convergence, Community, Sustainability, Innovation

**Brand Principle**

Partnerships to Benefit Society

A key question the WCPC grappled with is how do we take several programs that are unique to Western and create an environment that encourages and rewards participants to work together? The WCPC also felt strongly that WWU needs to provide incentives to university groups to pursue exploration of new cross disciplinary programming and partnership opportunities.

### **Programming Objectives**

- Promote and enhance Western's reputation through the creation of a facility that serves as a "destination point" for people from the community, region, state, nation and world.
- Enhance the quality of a Western education through high-tech cutting edge collaboration and in doing so to create an environment that fosters constant learning.
- Strengthen community relations and community capacity by shared use of resources
  - Provide a venue for easier access to WWU resources.
  - Providing an enhanced stakeholder experience with easy access and parking.

### **Phase I – The WWU Technology Development Center**

Western Washington University is an anchor on the Bellingham waterfront in the form of the Technology Development Center which is part of the Innovation Partnership Zone, a State and Federally funded initiative in Washington State. The facility was dedicated in the fall of 2009 and is now a research arm of the College of Sciences and Technology and for BTC Workforce Training Program.

At the TDC, College of Sciences and Technology faculty and students engage in a wide scope of work, which has already included composite materials research for light weight ferries and buses, and clean energy. It also serves as a collaborative workspace for local entrepreneurs to meet for brainstorming sessions and to engage Western faculty and students. In addition, the TDC provides opportunities for manufacturing and technology companies to partner with WWU to pursue government grants and contracts, and support collaborative research and development projects.

Phase II will harness the history, experience, and expertise of the four higher education partners to prepare students from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds for high quality, living wage jobs in composite technology and clean energy development.

### **Phase II – The WWU Community Learning Center**

The WCPC envisions a **Community Learning Center** facility that could meet needs of Western, other local higher education institutions (e.g. Bellingham Technical College, Northwest Indian College and Whatcom Community College), non-profit and private sector entities and the Bellingham community as a whole. This would enable Western to have a centrally located facility in the community with the latest in high tech educational delivery tools that offers an environment that fosters learning for people from all walks of life. Programming offered in this facility would create a destination point for people from the city, region, state and beyond at the waterfront.

The WCPC envisions a facility that could be a laboratory in itself in achieving the highest LEED certification possible through appropriate commitments in land use, construction standards, material usage, transportation infrastructure and use of alternative renewable energy.

The **WWU Community Learning Center** could enhance the role and mission of the university by:

- Providing an extension for practical and applied education for students of all ages through Western's Extended Education Program.
- Creating a "destination point" that increases visibility, access and service to a diverse community that includes the city, region, state, nation and world.
- Meeting the educational and professional needs of the state by supporting additional enrollment through daytime, evening/weekend classes and expanded delivery modes.
- Offering the possibility of generating new revenue streams to support Western as a publicly purposed university
- Facilitating the delivery of core academic instruction through:
  - General daytime instruction
  - General evening instruction
  - Specialized instruction
  - Presentation space
  - Guest lectures
  - Colloquia/conferences
  - Video conferencing
  - Group breakouts
- Providing interdisciplinary and expanded opportunities for:  
**Specialized Studies** to (1) provide space for additional students, (2) enhance community connection and community service, (3) offer and extend opportunities to non-traditional students, including youth and seniors, (4) extend non-traditional offerings to a wider reach of people with diverse interests, (5) offer interdisciplinary packages for students.

**Delivery of Focused Programs** that reflect the emphases that WWU has determined in its waterfront programmatic planning, including environmental science/studies, business/economics, community health, education, sciences and international. Within these emphases, certain departments/programs might be designated (i.e. – AMSEC under sciences, BPRI under international).

**Continuing Professional Credentialing** to support professional growth and advancement of community and regional members and alumni.

**International Studies** to provide a global focus to expand and strengthen educational, economic, and cultural awareness and education for the larger community, including the public, private and non-profit sectors. Such studies will extend real life experiences to students.

The **Community Learning Center** could provide an interdisciplinary approach to offerings promoting a unique opportunity for academic departments and professionals to share strengths in a collaborative manner. Examples include:

- Specialized Studies such as:
  - Institute on Health and Aging
  - Emergency Management
  - Center for a Sustainable Environment
  - Center for Global Studies
  - Institute for Pacific Rim Studies
  - Management/Leadership Institute
  - Professional Science Master's Programs
  
- Continuing Professional Credentialing such as:
  - Psychology
  - School Counseling
  - Accounting
    - Economic Education
  - K-12 Educators
  - Communication Sciences and Disorders
  
- International Studies such as:
  - East Asian Studies
  - TESOL/IEP
  - Ethnic Studies
  - International Institutes
  - Trade Leaders Conference

***The WWU Community Learning Center*** could create a Western venue that promotes partnerships and collaboration with local, regional, state, national and global colleges, organizations and government. It would provide a central physical location with easy access from downtown Bellingham and via mass transit from the WWU campus, and potentially from other local higher education campuses. It would be a gathering place that serves as a new venue that increases contact with Western's talented faculty and exposure to numerous programs and entities. It would also be a venue in which local organizations and businesses can offer a selection of field experts and practitioners who can further enhance the learning environment. Examples of current or new University programs that provide Community connections include:

- Academy for Lifelong Learning
- Health/Wellness
- Distinguished Lecture Series
- Colloquial Conferences
- Learning
- Center for Economic and Business Institute Research
- WWU library and local libraries
- Student/Faculty Art Gallery
- Forums/Events
- Center for Service
- The Border Policy Research

The WCPC pointed out that specialized programs and institutes can be catalytic in attracting regional and national attention from “new economy” entrepreneurs, researchers and foundations. This helps to fulfill the vision of leveraging the waterfront to assist the community in creating new economic opportunities and accentuating WWU and Bellingham’s attraction as a premier destination university.

Through the **WWU Community Learning Center**, Western’s Extended Education Program would continue to support, facilitate and grow a variety of programs and offerings in partnership with WWU colleges and departments. EE has a proven record of accomplishment in the educational outreach as it has or is:

- Experienced in supporting and servicing nontraditional populations
- Flexible and responsive, which results in the ability to adapt quickly to change
- Marketing experience to assist colleges, departments and others in promotion efforts
- Program development experience to assist implementing ideas into fruition
- Experience managing self-sustaining programs
- Experience providing program delivery through a variety of delivery modalities
- Administrative structure that supports diverse offerings and services

Through the **WWU Community Learning Center**, offerings can be expanded to enhance student programs with application-based learning and by connecting with professionals who are working in their fields of interest. It will open doors to the community which has largely been unable to have continuing and meaningful access to University offerings. Initial space needs might include:

- 10-15 flexible and attractive mediated classrooms/training rooms (seminar to large lecture space) with state-of-the-art technology to promote and encourage connections with field and subject experts nationally and internationally.
- A facility for community access to state-of-the-art facilities for key meetings and conferences.
- Office space for faculty and support staff
- Computer and training lab with Assistive Technology Center
- Convertible auditorium/event space for conferences, banquets, institutes, exhibitions, galleries, etc.
- Food service
- Welcome/Reception Center and area
- A site that welcomes and encourages alternative forms of transportation
- Parking

### **Why should Western have a *Community Learning Center* facility on the waterfront?**

- Higher Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is very much about the concept of bringing people together, people from different walks of life to discuss and problem-solve issues from multiple perspectives and to offer unique solutions in a time that is unlike

- any other in our nation's history. A **Community Learning Center** at the Bellingham waterfront would offer a facility that is highly accessible, offers facilities that provide potential enhancement for learning with the latest in technology, with ample parking for students, faculty, staff and community members.
- A **Community Learning Center** would provide Western and the community with a facility that it presently does not have. It could be a facility that is designed to be expanded in size over time to meet changing needs of both entities.
  - The WCPC feels that a facility on the waterfront designed to embrace economic and educational change would allow Western to do several things: have an attractive facility for undergraduate and graduate programs, a facility that facilitates an interdisciplinary approach to educational delivery and learning, offer an excellent location for various meetings, conferences and workshops Western organizes and stages, connect with the community in a more convenient location, and to possibly focus outreach, and economic and workforce development activities in one location.
  - In addition, we feel a **Community Learning Center** could be a facility that potentially helps to serve the diverse needs of Bellingham Technical College, Northwest Indian College, and Whatcom Community College along with not-for-profit entities.

### **The Need for Campus and Community Gathering Space**

- One of the most significant challenges Western has faced for decades is the ability to attract and host conferences and meetings which bring together scholars, students and community persons. Campus facilities, ranging from the Viking Union to academic buildings, are small in nature and in high demand just to meet day-to-day operational needs. In addition, Western's parking facilities are limited in size, not readily accessible to existing meeting space, and in high use throughout the day and evening.
- We feel that other Washington public higher education institutions would embrace the opportunity to utilize new space for their own outreach efforts, programs such as Bellingham Technical College, Northwest Indian College and Whatcom Community College, which have varying space challenges in hosting workshops in the area.
- The WCPC feels that the key to making this facility an asset to Western and the community is flexibility, capacity, and the latest in technology communication. Technology would be intentionally designed to incorporate the latest science to promote learning. It will also be imperative that a small staff will need to be hired to manage and operate the facility

### **Phase III – WWU and the Green Economy**

The very initial work of the WCPC focused on the strengths of WWU and the region and what could ultimately serve as a "destination point" to further the mission of Western, while at the same time serving to stoke the economic engine of Bellingham and the region. A consensus was reached which identified a focus of planning around "The Green Economy" as an initiative

that would meet all of the planning principles developed by the WCPC.

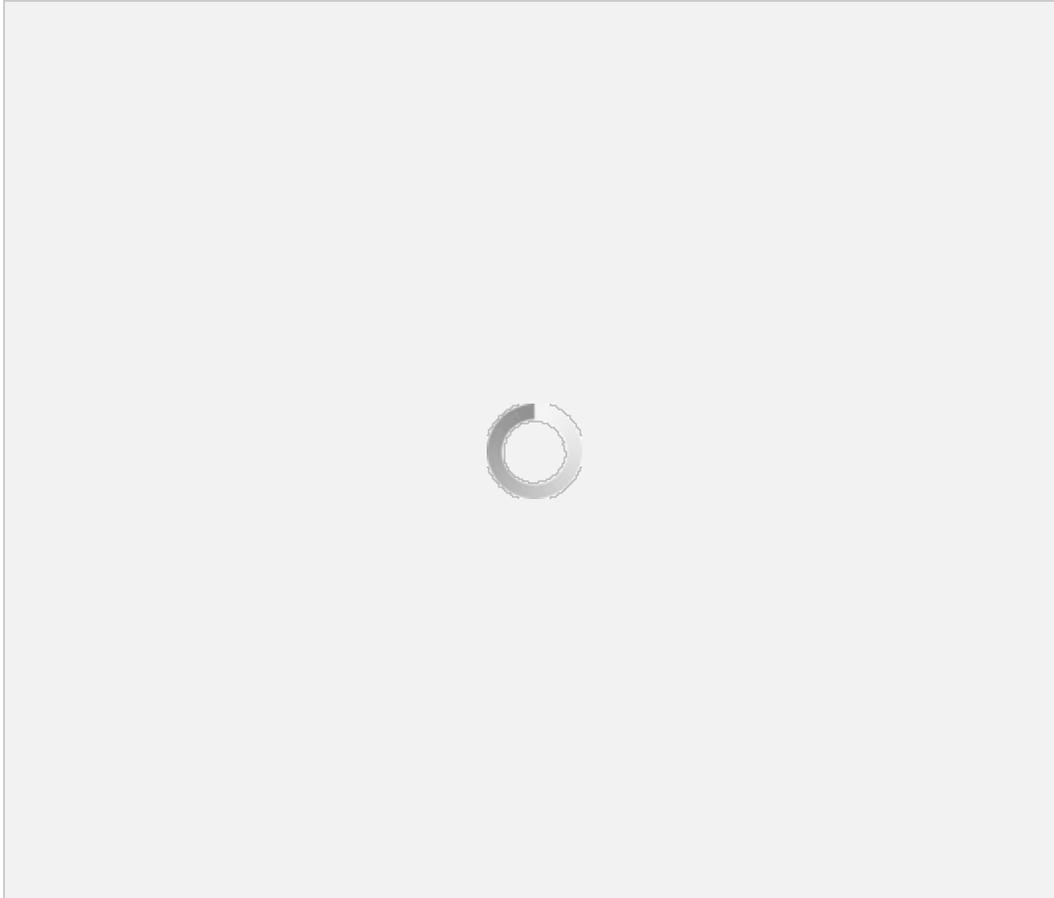
This focus could possibly lead to the relocation of either Huxley College of the Environment, the College of Business and Economics, or possibly both, to the waterfront. It would also be possible that neither college would be relocated, but rather, the synergistic programming created between the two entities, along with the College of Sciences and Technology, could lead to the development of an institute or center. No matter which option would be pursued, it would require the construction of a major facility to house the college(s) or institute/center.

However, in 2010 with continuing discouraging news coming from Olympia regarding current and near future state budgets, the question was raised if it would be possible for Western to have state capital funds secured for the construction of academic facilities focus on Green Economy on the waterfront by 2015. The WCPC, with input from key Western administrators, unanimously agreed it did not appear to be likely. It was then decided to take a new approach to the programming discussions and timeline, but to also keep the original focus on The Green Economy as the ultimate vision for the waterfront. It is also realized that a private/public partnership with a developer could be the most likely scenario to building a new facility.

### **Why Western and the Green Economy Makes Sense**

The WCPC reviewed the strengths of Huxley, CBE and CST and on programmatic synergies that could create a successful 21<sup>st</sup> Century Business model by bringing the colleges together. The group decided that potential synergies must also include an analysis of the unique strengths that Western possesses by virtue of its location. That discussion highlighted the fact that WWU has a one of a kind location which makes it unique in American higher education. No other university in the United States can claim the following:

- Location at the base of a mountain range (Cascade Mountains), and
- Location on a major body of water (Bellingham Bay and the Puget Sound)
- Location on the Pacific rim, and
- Location between two major metropolitan cities (Seattle and Vancouver, BC), and
- Location near an international border (with Canada), and
- Location on a major highway corridor (Interstate 5), and
- Location on a major railroad corridor (Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railroad), and
- Location in a significant agriculture production area.



The WCPC concluded that the combination of the location of Bellingham and Western Washington University and the strengths of Huxley, CBE and CST, offers a number of unique programmatic opportunities for those colleges and for related WWU programs. Based on an analysis of all of the internal and external strengths of the colleges and the region it was determined that a focus on “The Green Economy” will significantly contribute to the goal of enhancing the economic engine of Bellingham and making WWU destination point for students, faculty and businesses in the region, state, country and world.

The WCPC engaged in highly energized discussions about the wide-array of potential programming possibilities that exist under the umbrella of The Green Economy. The WCPC developed a list of different programming initiatives already underway at Western that have some various degrees of connection to the Green Economy. The list is not limited to Huxley, CBE and CST, but rather includes program examples from all of the WWU colleges. The list includes:

- Border Policy Research Institute
- Vehicle Research Institute
- Center for Economic Education Center
- Resilience Institute
- Sustainability Institute
- Critical Junctures Institute
- Small Business Development
- Watershed Studies

- Center for Teachers and Sustainability                      - Sustainability Across Disciplines
- Advanced Materials Science and Engineering Center

Discussion expanded to identify current and future programs that could help fulfill the mission and vision of The Green Economy related programming at the waterfront. Programs identified included:

- Technology Development Center    - AMSEC
- BRAIN    - Canadian Border Policy Institute
- Center for Cross Cultural Research - Center for Healthy Living
- Renewable Energy Program    - Ctr. For Economic Business & Research
- Center for International Business    - Center for International Studies
- Center for International Business Research - Continuing Professional Education
- WWU and Food Growth and Production - International Visitors Center
- Resilience Institute    - Watershed Studies
- Western Center for Education and Sustainability