



# Western in Motion...

March 2009

Western:  
Committed to  
*Continuous Quality  
Improvement!!*

## Strategic Planning and AQIP

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Dear Western Family,

Thank you for all your effort and participation as we move through the Strategic Planning process. We had 220 people participate in the nine strategic planning sessions with representation from faculty, staff, and community. We ended up with *nine* topic areas that we need to focus on as we move to the next step in the Strategic Planning process.

These areas include:

- Internal Communication
- Technology
- External Communication and Marketing
- Student Centeredness
- Program Development
- Community Interaction

- Facilities
- Quality Faculty and Staff
- Changing Technological Needs
- Fiscal Stability

Only by combining the voices of every member of the college community can we make Western all that it is capable of being. Shortly, you will receive an invitation to participate in the next refining and clarification stage of the process. These teams will meet no more than two times to complete this process. The 'almost' final document will be available for your review and comment in August.

I was very pleased to see the common themes and the consistent perceptions shared by most of our college family.



**AQIP Action Projects are due to HLC on APRIL 1, 2009!**

We are using your feedback in the Strategic Planning process to move forward on our AQIP Action Projects. As a matter of fact, our three action projects focus on *Internal Communications*, *Student Centeredness*, and *Student Learning*.

Thank you for giving your time and effort in keeping **Western in Motion**.

Karla

## Vital Few for Student Learning—Reading Across the Curriculum

### A FOCUS ON CRITICAL READING

As content experts in our respective fields, it's tempting to think that writing instruction is the job of the English program. However, writing is essential to every discipline, provides our students with organizational and communication skills that will help them to succeed both inside and out of the classroom, and is a task that can be incorporated into any field of study. We are finding that the same evaluation is true

of reading. In fact, reading and understanding a short story in an English class involves different techniques than reading and understanding a textbook or scholarly article. Even very engaged students can improve their reading skills with a few tips. Those of us who have made it through countless years of schooling have already developed helpful reading skills. Successful students sometimes develop these skills without even realizing it.

However, the students who sit in our classrooms have often spent several years outside of school, and they all have other demands and obligations, just as we do. Direct instruction of reading techniques means that students can see how to quickly find information in a text when necessary; critical reading techniques also give students the skills to think deeply about new and complex information—both of these skills are essential in every discipline.

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For more information...

Instructional Support  
Room 1310

Sandy Caldwell x1720

Dianna Renz x1871

Kay Cooley x1810

Alumni & Retention  
Room 3012

Laurie Watkins x1899

Tammy Walker x1827

## Vital Few for Student Learning—Reading Across the Curriculum

“...the speed-reading and annotating strategies you taught us last term have really helped me in this new course. Thanks!”

### A REAL CLASSROOM EXAMPLE

Many instructors are deliberately incorporating reading strategies into their lesson plans. After taking such a course, one student reflected, “I’m taking Psychology this term and it’s more challenging than I expected, but the speed-reading and annotating strategies you taught us last term have really helped me in this new course. Thanks!” Direct reading instruction helps our students to learn better and stay engaged in their courses.

### A NEW TECHNIQUE TO TRY

Looking for a fun new way to improve comprehension? Instead of presenting the material to class via instructor lecture, try **Divided Reading**. Assign each segment of the chapter to a student group. Groups must meet outside of class to discuss and understand the material. Each group presents the material to the class. Groups may use presentation software, posters, whiteboard, quizzes, or other techniques to ensure comprehension.

## Annual Assessment Record—Just More Paperwork??

In their article “Is Outcomes Assessment Hurting Higher Education,” authors Pontuso and Thornton share their concerns about how “on-going assessment diverts teachers from teaching” (61). Undeniably (and rightly so), the truth is that Western needs its teachers to focus on teaching—this is their passion, and it’s what they do best. It is also true that Western needs instructor participation in documenting assessment measures in order to maintain our accreditation status as an AQIP institution. However, the real **DRIVER** for assessment must first, and foremost, be about student success and student learning.

No doubt about it, WWCC is full of dedicated, passionate, and inspirational faculty and staff who are concerned about student learning. Pontuso and Thornton rightly claim that “The measured ‘outcomes’ of a student who completes minimal amounts of school work and who graduates...learning little—or a student who doesn’t do any work and flunks out before graduation—are not reflective of the quality of education that their college offered” (62). One student’s scores—or even a whole cohort group of scores—can make a program seem ineffective or even incompetent. In reality, even aggregated scores for any single year provide only limited information.

It’s for this very reason that Western uses “multiple measures” of assessment in an integrated and on-going basis. Moving away from the past of disconnected measures, integrating course-level assessment into the program-level assessment plan helps identify areas within the curriculum that need to be targeted for improvement at various stages of a program. This **interconnectedness allows instructors to focus on teaching** while still providing assessment data from their current classroom activities. Programs should consider *the patterns that appear* from using a range of course- and program-level assessments such as common test items, standardized or common test scores, rubric evaluations, outside evaluators, or UW transfer data *over the course of five or more years*.

Rather than seeing assessment as an out-of-touch administrative function that is just more paperwork for some mysterious report, assessment should be an opportunity for each program area to focus on the students or functions it serves. The documentation should serve the goals of the program by functioning as the storage device, tracking the assessment process, results, and use of results. This program-level assessment documentation should adequately provide information for accreditation and reporting purposes.

### Dovetailing course- and program-level assessment:

*English Assessment: ENGL 1010 and working on ENGL 1020, ENGL 2010, and ENGL 1111*

*Business Assessment: ECON 1010 & 1020, ACCT 2010 & 2020, and BADM 2800 Capstone Portfolio with computer simulation*

*Psychology Assessment: Current Student and Recent Graduate surveys*

In the past, Western did not give programs the structure or support to gather and analyze assessment data, particularly in any on-going basis. The College also did not encourage integrating course- and program-level assessment for targeted improvement. Through the evolution of Program Review from a retrospective report to a future-focused portfolio, the groundwork has been done to change this dynamic. The **Annual Assessment Record** provides a place to store this valuable information over time, ensuring that no one has to create an “assessment tool” just to fulfill last-minute documentation requirements.



With spring break over!!  
Looking forward to SPRING...

## Early Spring 2009 Retention Activities

- **January Registration Program:** Attended by 70 new students and 28 guests – thanks to all who helped!
- **Pre-Requisite Checks:** Becky Asplund worked with Tammy Walker to ensure students enrolled in math, statistics, English, and government met pre-requisites: 166 letters were sent, and some students were removed from courses.
- **Registration & Records:** Issued “not attending” and “poor attendance” letters to students and their advisors based on faculty reporting.
- **Alumni & Retention:** Emailed a spring newsletter to 203 families of current WWCC students.
- **Advisor Lists:** Updated advisee lists emailed to 81 academic advisors to facilitate communication with advisees.

## Summer 2009 New Student Registration Programs

WWCC is committed to advising and its importance to student satisfaction and success.

Beginning in January 2008, Orientation programs for new students and their parents were reformatted to smaller, more personalized Registration Programs. In summer 2008, 4 Registration Program teams conducted 12 Registration Programs. In summer 2009, 16 Registration Programs will be offered. Parents attend a separate workshop with opportunities to ask financial aid and student adjustment questions. New students can meet their permanent advisors at Kick Off Day on Tuesday, August 25.



### Paints - Team Leader - Kay Leum

Tuesday, May 19 - 6:00 PM

Wednesday, May 27 - 1:00 PM & 6:00 PM

### Mustangs - Team Leader - Jackie Freeze

Thursday, June 4 - 1:00 PM & 6:00 PM

Monday, June 22 - 1:00 PM & 6:00 PM

### Clydesdales - Team Leader - Becky Asplund

Thursday, July 9 - 6:00 PM

Monday, July 20 - 1:00 PM & 6:00 PM

### Palominos - Team Leader - Laurie Watkins

Tuesday, July 28 - 1:00 PM

Wednesday, August 12 - 1:00 PM & 6:00 PM

### Honors Team

Thursday, April 30 - 6:00 PM

### International Team

Friday, August 21 - 1:00 PM

### All Teams

Monday, August 24 - 1:00 PM

## Building Student Connections Team Members

Bruce Anderson  
Jami Anderson  
Becky Asplund  
Sandy Caldwell  
Steve Davis  
Kim Drane-Nash  
Nish Ferrero  
Ken Fitschen  
Jackie Freeze  
Dudley Gardner

Kay Leum  
Christine Lustik  
Stacie Lynch-Newberg  
Deirdre MacDonald  
Kay Marschalk  
Patty Pedersen  
Ann Rudoff  
Sarah Stanley  
Tammy Walker (Recorder)  
Laurie Watkins (Chair)

Contact any team member if you have questions or suggestions regarding WWCC's retention efforts.



## Electronic Portfolios for New/Entering Students Are Finally HERE

Over the last several years, we have been looking at ways to make the Assessment Portfolio more about the student experience where the institution can capture assessment artifacts rather than a repository of prescribed assessment data that may or may not adequately reflect the student experience.

This is a struggle that many institutions have been grappling with for years. An inherent tension exists between the *positivist approach* (what we actually do right now) that puts a premium on the items that reflect the institutions interest VS. the *constructivist approach* (what we ALSO want) that puts a premium on the items that reflect learning from the student's perspective.

During last few years, Western has been test driving a portfolio product called TaskStream that seems to have the ability to combine the concepts of student experience with data gathering. Using TaskStream, we have moved all the Assessment Portfolio classes to a fully on-line format. This change to Taskstream in an online format has resulted in an increased enrollment for the portfolio class. This is good news and what we had hoped to see.



Western needs student portfolios that function to support deep learning AND work as an aggregate of assessment data.



Now our task is to transition the portfolio from a last semester repository activity to an entering student portfolio that evolves during a student's experience at Western. At this point, the last semester will likely be a seminar where the students will publish their portfolios. This structure has the flexibility to be an activity that can be integrated into Capstone courses or last semester courses for majors. Undeclared majors will likely enroll in a group seminar that should be fairly straightforward. Thanks to Nursing, Computer Science, and OIS for volunteering to be first to try it with new students for Fall 2009. Once we get this underway, we'll add additional programs each year. For the next several years, we'll be working on this transition process that will slowly phase out the need for Assessment Day!

At the Fall 2009 in-service, we'll showcase the new student driven assessment portfolio and ask for your help in promoting this activity with the students. To view a sample portfolio, visit <http://www.taskstream.com/ts/caldwell48/GoalsforStudentSuccessPortfolio.html>. This is Sandy Caldwell's sample portfolio that she built for the Assessment Team.

## Building Student Connections

WWCC's Building Student Connections Team was formed in August 2006 by bringing together existing WWCC action teams for Orientation, Advising and Part-Time and Non-Traditional Students. The team focuses on increasing student engagement and retention. WWCC FA08 to SP09 persistence rates:

Full-time	79.009% returned
	18.173% non-returning (attrition)
	2.818% are WWCC graduates
Part-Time	
Degree-Seeking	51.136% returned
	38.510% non-returning (attrition)
	10.354% are WWCC graduates



*"Active involvement of students in learning activities in and around the classroom, especially with other students, is critical to student retention and graduation."*

Vincent Tinto, Professor of Education, Syracuse University



## Extended Advising Hours

Becky Asplund's advising hours are 9 AM to 6 PM on Thursdays. She is available for office appointments and by phone for local and outreach students.

