About 25 people met to hear the Strategic Plan Work Groups present their ideas for the 2004 EWU Academic Strategic Plan.

Following is a summary of the Q&A that followed the group presentations:

- What is the difference between community engagement and faculty service? There were several responses to this question. One is that there is little difference; “Star” faculty are engaged in the community. On the other hand, community engagement also focuses on ways to enhance student engagement. It is important to see all the Work Groups as overlapping and integrated.

- We need to find ways to measure some of the strategies and goals we are proposing, as accrediting bodies increasingly ask for specific measurements for mission goals. One participant cautioned that often goals are determined by multiple factors and it can be difficult to produce measurable results unless there is a very direct correlation between the desired behavior and the intervention.

- The Diversity group proposed increasing the diversity component in courses. A questioner asked what a “diversity component” was. The response was that we would want to survey courses to see what diversity elements they have, have a discussion to define it and what should/could be incorporated into other courses.

- A questioner asked what the status of the proposed multicultural center was and how that related to the Work Group’s proposed center for diversity. The multicultural center is a physical place that is being proposed for campus—it is currently in the review process. There was agreement that EWU needs both an academic center that will evaluate and encourage diversity and also a physical place that fosters it.

- The Provost talked about work by Alan Guskin who advises that as higher education costs continue to escalate, universities will need to define what general student learning outcomes they desire (in addition to outcomes for the major) and then find new ways to deliver those learning outcomes—ways that may use technology or graduate students or community members to supplement faculty involvement so that faculty can be used more productively for student mentoring, and the other high-priority tasks identified by Work Groups for the strategic plan.

- There was discussion about the importance of creating an academic experience at Eastern that fosters a spirit of exploration. This may require reducing the size of the major so that students could minor in a second area of difference, or focus on a language. Course duplication also needs to be addressed.

- The Provost said that as the strategic plan is developed there will be several strategies which can be followed immediately. The PLUS program, for example, which was mentioned by several groups as a successful example of contributing to an integrated experience should be expanded. These “low-hanging fruit” will
be identified as the plan is launched, in addition to more long-term strategies, such as the diversity initiatives that will be ongoing.

- With the strategic plan, “organization will follow function.” As we identify functions we want and goals that are important we will and must adjust our systems, structures and ways of operating to make them possible.

- President Jordan thanked the groups for their hard work and contributions to the strategic plan. He noted there are obvious overlaps in the ideas expressed by the groups. These overlaps need to be identified in the plan so that the integrated nature of the Work Group themes is apparent. He also said that several of the strategies can be merged, others may complement each other and others that conflict should be noted so the campus conversation can continue.

- The final word was given to Noah, a graduate student who was encouraged by the ideas expressed by the forum. He noted, however, that when he asks the freshmen in his Math 103 class whether they like college their reply is “It’s okay but I thought it would be more of a community.” He encouraged the strategic plan to include ways in which EWU can become more of a community.