April 13 Campus Forum Summary

More than 40 faculty, staff and students attended Eastern Washington University’s April 13 Strategic Planning Campus Information Forum.

Provost Brian Levin-Stankevich welcomed the group and described Eastern’s planning process. For the past six months Work Groups have met to create strategies that will be presented to the ASEWU, Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees in May. Eastern’s Academic Plan, developed last year, reiterates the university’s commitment to remaining a university of opportunity for our region and also to preparing individuals for purposeful lives and professions. The higher education environment is increasingly challenging, however, as we face changing demographics, more competition and the need to look more closely at our priorities.

Each of the Work Groups then presented a brief summary of their proposals (see the Work Group reports at http://www.ewu.edu/x16798.xml). Following is a summary of the audience comments and questions, in the order in which the Work Groups presented. People are encouraged to contact the Work Group co-chairs by e-mail with additional questions or comments. Contact information is at http://www.ewu.edu/x17003.xml.

**Group 5—Physical Capacity & Technology**
There was support for the Group’s proposal to expand wireless throughout the campus. A faculty member noted that as the technology changes, wireless connections are increasingly important. It was also suggested that because the equipment varies across campus, it can take a lot of time to hook up laptops, projectors, etc. It may make sense to install standard ports to enable faculty to move more quickly between classes. The group was reminded that providing tech support is as critical as providing more technology.

**Group 1—Resource & Enrollment Growth**
Rick Romero reminded the group that 90% of EWU’s resources are enrollment-related (state support, tuition, etc.). The ability to increase our quality is tied to enrollment, therefore we are looking to grow—not to get bigger, but to get better. He also predicted that the enrollment projections may not be as aggressive as some groups predict. He said the group has based its recommendations on the assumption that there will be minimal enrollment growth and more competition. It was suggested that in addition to the strategies the group outlined, EWU must also continue to capitalize on what we are doing well now—reaching first-generation students and students in some minority groups (we are one of the most diverse campuses).
Group 2—Retention Until Graduation
Michelle Whittingham shared the good news that currently EWU’s freshman applications for fall 2005 are up by 14%. One faculty member noted that he has been tracking student performance in large-enrollment freshman classes and found that there is a cohort of students who are failing because they do not attend class or do the assignments. For this group, remediation is not the answer, but instead faculty and staff need to find ways to identify them early and find ways to engage them. Michelle observed that giving students high expectations should begin with orientation and we also need to look at a range of intervention strategies, including student mentors, collaborations between faculty & staff, early warning systems that can connect students early to student support, etc. A faculty member observed that engaging students is also a faculty responsibility and that faculty need to take advantage of a range of pedagogies.

Group 6—Developing Human Capacity
As Sally Winkle noted in her presentation, flexibility is the key to enabling faculty and staff to find ways in which they can support students, fulfill their own professional interests and contribute to the goals and priorities of each department and to EWU. It was suggested that the Group should consider recommending release time for individuals who provide service to the department. And it was suggested that Goal 4 could also apply to staff as well as to faculty.

Group 3—Program Profile
Presenter Linda Kieffer noted that we need to know more about each other so that we can explore integrated or interdisciplinary activities. The Group suggests featuring a department on the web or meeting annually or having an open house. There was no discussion for this group.

Group 4—Financial Resources for Sustainability & Flexibility
As Barbara Alvin noted, Work Group 4 has outlined a range of strategies for consideration—some more controversial than others—but none are written in stone. She encouraged discussion and comments. Faculty Organization President Patty Chantrill complimented the group on being creative and open to ideas and for encouraging the campus to consider a range of ideas. It was also suggested, under the Group’s Goal 2, idea (f) that having funding levels for staff at the 50-75th percentiles may be a large range when faculty funding has traditionally been kept to the 50th percentile. The co-chairs reiterated that those numbers are proposals only and may be too broad.