Our Strategic Initiative Statement
Investigate, support and enhance opportunities for Student Engagement through Interaction, Immersion, and Integration strategies.

Narrative
Our goal is to develop strategies for achieving authentic student engagement beginning before students make their first visit to Eastern Washington University and extending well beyond graduation. We seek to achieve a variety of coherent, challenging, and complementary educational activities, inside and outside the classroom, that will flourish on our campus with broad support. Below are the “broad brush” standards for each category described in more detail on pages 2 and 3.

CATEGORY ONE
Our first category focuses on the necessity for developing an engagement baseline through research. While EWU currently participates in the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ), the resources needed to analyze and evaluate this instrument are not currently supported. We also require data gleaned from other, non-student campus constituents to determine engagement potential and practices; our workgroup members conducted meetings with department chairs to get their perspective on engagement activities and ideas. For the sustainability of existing efforts, and for the development of new opportunities for engagement, more research needs to be done.

CATEGORY TWO
For Category Two, we sought to investigate strategies to “enhance” existing engagement programs and practices.

CATEGORY THREE
This final category contains strategies for engagement not previously attempted on our campus. Some are internally designed (invented), and some are borrowed wholesale from other institutions we researched.

Primary Objective: Research, Analyze, Assess, Develop and Support Opportunities for Student Engagement

Definition of Terms
Student engagement is “…the time and energy students devote to educationally sound activities inside and outside of the classroom, and the policies and practices that institutions use to induce students to take part in these activities.”
What we’re learning about student engagement from NSSE [National Survey of Student Engagement]: benchmarks for effective educational practices. Change, Mar-April, 2003

If integration is a “horizontal connection between disciplines and ways of knowing,” immersion is its vertical counterpart. Immersion implies depth of understanding and expertise, while integration connotes the broadly-trained generalist. Interaction implies engagement opportunities that span traditional boundaries, placing students in proximity with other students, with faculty working toward interdisciplinary goals, with student and academic affairs personnel, and other, diverse constituents of the university community.
Devote resources to combine our student engagement survey results with evidence from other surveys and academic records to develop rich, campus-specific profiles of the undergraduate (and graduate) experience.

Portfolios and major field-specific outcomes assessments could also be instructive sources of evidence when linked with student engagement findings and other information.

Determine the optimal and minimal levels of engagement in the various practices that yield satisfactory amounts of learning for various groups of students in various programs and levels of study.

Further document the relationships between student engagement data and valid measures of student learning.

Identify students who are essentially disengaged and the (personal and institutional) circumstances that limit their involvement in educationally purposeful activities.

Support research to verify locally the national claim that about one-fifth of both first-year students and seniors “frequently” come to class unprepared and say their institutions give little emphasis to studying and spending time on academic work.

Recognize and support the large number of EWU students whose life exigencies severely limit the amount of time they can devote to their studies—those who work full-time, support and care for dependents, and so forth. Even the majority of traditional-aged, full-time students are working by the time they are seniors.

For commuter and part-time students, assess and adapt strategies used by full-time students and students who live on campus (the vast majority of whom are enrolled full-time) and who tend to be more engaged. [They take more classes, read and write more, and spend more time preparing for class than their part-time counterparts. Because they live on campus, they have better access than their commuting peers to institutional resources for learning, including faculty members and other students. With typically fewer obligations off-campus, full-time students are engaged in more educational activities, such as study abroad or extracurricular events.]

Align I.T. resources with the Academic Strategic Plan to more effectively get, gather and evaluate needed data.

Provide resources to sustain a larger version of the PLUS program, including opportunities to develop GTAs to serve as collaborative learning facilitators.

Develop integrative Student Life Initiatives that partner with academic units for engagement projects.

Reward participation in the Research & Creative Works Symposium.

Enable Recruitment efforts to include engagement opportunities on a larger scale, integrating recruitment strategies with retention strategies.

Give significant emphasis to encouraging contact between students from different economic, social, and racial backgrounds so as to reaffirm our expressed appreciation for diversity and expand the existing BOT Diversity Initiative.

Support existing projects and programs that foster student engagement, including (but not limited to) student participation at conferences, student-faculty research partnerships, mock trial participation, interdisciplinary competitions, and service-learning.

Increase opportunities for first-year student-faculty interaction.

Further integrate the academic advising function to support students and address “critical moments” at every point in their educational development.

Expand the event calendar to reflect all campus constituents.

Routinely offer transfer students the range and types of socializing experiences designed to ease the transition of new first-year college students.

Help transfer students manage the challenges that come with learning how to negotiate—and take advantage of—EWU’s cultural and academic pathways.

“Our goal is to bring Eastern alive—to help students appreciate our medium sized campus in a great location...with faculty who care about their success...with high quality programs that offer undergraduate research and experiential learning to better prepare them for post-graduate employment or study...with an entire campus focused on student service, with constantly improving facilities, within a caring community focused on student safety and academic achievement, with a Residential and Student Life program that will help students apply concepts learned in class on a campus focused on access, quality and affordability.”

—Michelle Whittingham
EWU Director of Admissions
Category 3 Strategies: Adopt New Models through (internal) Invention and (external) Discovery


Adopt a “Fellows Model” that will immerse and engage all campus constituents in a 3-year integrative and interactive endeavor designed to help the university think more strategically about how we change.

Institutionalize mechanisms for recognizing and rewarding student, faculty and staff engagement (i.e., add faculty and student components to the QSI reward system, establish an award for “Distinguish Engagement,” and substantially align tenure and promotion to service accomplishments.)

Establish a “clearinghouse” for engagement that will support active and collaborative learning activities and intentionally change the way we work with our students to promote higher levels of engagement that translate into achievement.

Achieve a variety of coherent, challenging, and complementary educational activities, inside and outside the classroom, that will flourish on our campus through support of our president, Board of Trustees, academic and student life administrators, faculty members, and students.

Allocate time across multiple faculty priorities: support faculty so that they can require engagement of their students and themselves. Provide faculty with the time and resources to read student writing and offer feedback during office hours (outside of class). Frequent opportunities for students to get faculty feedback on their work, discuss grades and assignments, and exchange ideas outside of class are all proven methods to enhance student engagement.

Develop Student Learning communities that support academic, career and citizenship goals.

Establish service-learning as an academic priority.

Establish regional economic development as an institutional priority.

Establish EWU as a valuable resource to the region through university-wide community service programs.

Support academic programs so that they might include at least one required course with a service-learning component.

Empower student organizations to realize engagement activities based on their own assessment of what works.

Administer the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) on our campus.

Administer the National Survey of Faculty Engagement (NSFE) on our campus.

Because student-faculty interaction matters most to learning when it encourages students to devote greater effort to other educationally purposeful activities during college, adopt a culture that encourages substantive contact.

Reward graduate students who develop their own perspective relative to the canon/practices of the discipline.

Develop a student mentoring program that traverses disciplinary boundaries and encourages academic engagement at all levels from the first year student to the graduate student.

“Promote and support a shared responsibility for learning--on the part of faculty members who expect students to achieve through maximal effort, and on the part of students who are trained and encouraged to take full advantage of the resources EWU provides.”

From What we’re learning about student engagement from NSSE [National Survey of Student Engagement]: benchmarks for effective educational practices. Change, Mar-April, 2003
We will continue to explore and investigate different strategies for enhancing and supporting student engagement at EWU. We are specifically interested in those options that provide the level of immersion, interaction and integration first outlined in the EWU Student Learning Environment Task Force Report.

We also support the “Community Partnership, Scholarship and Service-Learning” (COMPASS) proposal as one method of achieving higher levels of student engagement and fulfilling the academic promise of Eastern Washington University.

Scheduling our workgroup meetings is harder than it looks. Any help? :)

Let’s Get Engaged.

Indicators of Success

We will know we have succeeded when...

- We have determined the optimal and minimal levels of engagement in the various practices that yield satisfactory amounts of learning for various groups of students in various programs and levels of study.
- We have a clear data-driven map of where student engagement succeeds and fails on our campus.
- We can articulate, with relative certainty, the causes and remedies for student disengagement at EWU.
- Faculty engagement becomes a viable and rewarded component of the tenure and promotion process.
- All students, from all academic, economic and cultural backgrounds, are aware of and able to partake in a wide variety of engagement activities toward a richer educational experience.
- Retention rates increase by 20%.
- Transfer students lose little time adapting to EWU’s “culture of opportunity.”
- Students are able to articulate a variety of learning methodologies and evaluate them according to their efficacy and relevance in “the real world.”
- Civic engagement rates increase, both during college and after students graduate.
- 10% of our student body graduates with service-learning distinction.
- Student expectations for engagement are met—and exceeded—at Eastern Washington University.

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