Eastern Washington University

*Inspiring the Future* Strategic Planning Process

Focus Group Executive Summary

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Table of Contents

Research Methodology

Executive Summary of Key Findings
Research Methodology

Focus Groups
From May 24, 2011 to May 31, 2011, Desautel Hege Communications (DHC) facilitated thirteen (13) focus groups with one hundred and eight (108) total participants. In these groups, DHC used a discussion guide developed in collaboration with EWU, designed to gather feedback that will inform the strategic planning process. Focus groups were comprised of audiences internal to EWU including:

- Faculty:
  - Two (2) focus groups with Cheney faculty with a total of nineteen (19) participants
  - One (1) focus group with the Faculty Senate with a total of three (3) participants
- Staff:
  - Two (2) focus groups with Cheney staff with a total of twenty-four (24) participants
  - One (1) focus group with Cheney Student and Academic Affairs Leadership staff with a total of ten (10) participants
  - One (1) focus group with Cheney Advancement and Business & Finance Leadership with a total of ten (10) participants
- Faculty and Staff combined:
  - One (1) focus group with Riverpoint faculty and staff combined with a total of six (6) participants
  - One (1) focus group with Bellevue faculty and staff combined with a total of four (4) participants
- Students:
  - Two (2) focus groups with Cheney students with a total of nineteen (19) participants
  - One (1) focus group with members of Cheney ASEWU (Associated Students of Eastern Washington University) with a total of nine (9) participants
  - One (1) focus group with Riverpoint students with a total of four (4) participants

*An EWU alumni focus group and a Bellevue student focus group were scheduled but cancelled due to low turnout.*
Executive Summary of Key Findings

Key themes emerged across all audiences that participated in focus groups. These include:

Strategic planning process should be transparent and actionable
Participants stressed the importance of consistent communication during the strategic planning process, and emphasized the fact that EWU should show how feedback was implemented into the plan. Additionally, participants want the final strategic plan to be visible and actionable for all campus constituents.

EWU’s focus on first generation students is both a strength and a weakness
Participants consistently discussed EWU as an institution of access and EWU’s strong focus on first generation students. This was pointed out as something that differentiated the school from others in the region. However, this focus on first generation students comes at a high price. Participants pointed out their concern with low graduation rates, retention rates, and additional needed resources to help prepare first generation students.

Many students need assistance preparing for EWU
While audiences commented on the fact that EWU is a highly accessible institution, especially for first generation students, students are not often fully prepared when they come to EWU. Participants discussed the need to bridge this gap by offering programs or services that can help students get ready for all aspects of college life. Some participants also brought up the fact that EWU should be encouraging under-prepared students to complete pre-requisites at a community college before entering EWU.

EWU offers many programs, but resources may be spread too thin
While the breadth of EWU’s programs and degree offerings is a strength, many participants pointed out that EWU attempts to be “everything to everyone.” EWU may want to consider focusing on fewer programs, particularly those that will position students for careers in high growth areas.

EWU’s mission statement is vague; EWU needs to improve how it is acting and “living” the mission
Overall, most participants agreed that EWU’s mission statement is well-written. However, EWU needs to be making efforts to improve how the campus is acting on the mission statement and achieving the outlined objectives. Additionally, many participants pointed out that the mission is very vague, and could be used to describe any university.

Clubs and activities are highly valued among students
Student participants consistently pointed out that EWU is a school that allows students to be very involved in campus life. Clubs, activities, athletics and the Greek system are highly valued among students and something students would hate to see EWU cut.

Integrate Riverpoint and Bellevue campuses
EWU’s Riverpoint and Bellevue campuses were consistently brought up as strengths. Participants value the fact that EWU is a regional school that offers students opportunities in Cheney, downtown Spokane and the west side of the state. EWU can continue to look for ways to integrate Riverpoint and Bellevue, through enhanced communication with faculty and staff, remote classes and more.