

Washington State University Tri-Cities Four-Year Degree Plan Implementation Executive Summary

Background In 1989, the State Legislature created Washington State University Tri-Cities from the existing consortium of five universities offering programs in the Tri-Cities . WSU Tri-Cities, as part of a world-class research university system, offers degrees in disciplines associated with the needs of the region and the state. Baccalaureate programs have historically been coordinated with the region's community colleges. Graduate programs are aligned with the region's premier research-related organizations to address topics of local, national, and international significance. Today, there are nearly 1,200 students participating in 16 undergraduate and 14 graduate degree programs. Over 75 percent of the students are majoring in the areas of education, business, liberal arts, and nursing.

This report is in response to Substitute House Bill 2867 which directed WSU Tri-Cities to examine resources available at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and in the region, to develop a plan regarding areas of need in higher education, and to determine how to best develop into a four-year institution. It further noted that, beginning in the fall of 2007, WSU Tri-Cities may admit lower-division students, subject to approval by the Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Public hearings, meetings, media briefings and a survey were used to gather feedback from a wide range of constituents. The input of community leaders, students, faculty, staff, alumni and others was incorporated into the development of this Four-Year Implementation Plan.

Growth Plan This Four-Year Implementation Plan is developed in the context of WSU Tri-Cities' role and mission in the WSU system and the community's value for education as an economic necessity. As part of its strategic plan to provide world class undergraduate education opportunities, WSU Tri-Cities will: 1) admit lower division students, beginning in fall 2007, into existing degree programs; 2) expand the Coordinated Bachelor Degree Program, currently implemented in partnership with Columbia Basin College (CBC), to other community colleges in the region; 3) initiate co-enrollment of qualified community college students; and 4) add new academic programs, as appropriate, to address regional and state needs. Although the focus of this report is on the expansion of four-year undergraduate programs at WSU Tri-Cities, the campus will also continue to serve the region and state by providing undergraduate transfer programs, graduate education and research opportunities.

Undergraduate Degree Options Students entering higher education after high school can consider several options as they determine their best pathway leading to a baccalaureate degree at WSU Tri-Cities . A detailed description of the Traditional 2 + 2 Transfer Model, Coordinated Bachelor Degree Program, Co-Enrollment Model, and Liberal Arts Cohort Model is provided in this report. The new Liberal Arts Cohort Model, described herein, provides the first options for freshmen at WSU Tri-Cities.

Phase I – Start Up of Lower Division Program WSU Tri-Cities faculty evaluated student demand and cost effective delivery to ascertain the initial degrees to be extended into the lower-division. Based on this assessment, an innovative Liberal Arts Cohort Model was developed for the initial group of freshmen (35 FTE), who will begin in fall 2007. WSU Tri-Cities will offer all lower division courses necessary to complete the six most popular Liberal Arts majors:

- Digital Technology and Culture
- English
- History
- Humanities
- Psychology
- Social Sciences with concentrations in Anthropology, Criminal Justice, Human Resources/Personnel, Psychology, or Sociology.

In addition, faculty have developed programs of study to enable students to obtain undergraduate degrees in Business Administration (Majors: Accounting, Accounting Information Systems, Business Administration, or Management and Operations) and Education (Elementary Education) where one or more prerequisites for the major may still be offered in partnership with a community college.

The Liberal Arts Cohort Model is a fully integrated curriculum that resembles Freshmen Interest Groups and Honors Colleges at prestigious universities. During each of the first two years, courses are designed around a central theme linking class discussions, lectures, and reading and writing assignments together to enrich the learning experience. These are enhanced by special events such as exhibits, art shows, guest lectures, and concerts. Each student will be matched with a career mentor and will have the opportunity to apply their learning to real world challenges through service learning projects and internships.

In fall 2008, 50 FTE freshmen will be admitted, with additional funding to meet the demands of both sophomore-level courses and a new cohort of freshmen.

Student Recruitment The primary source of freshmen for undergraduate programs at WSU Tri-Cities will be the region's high school graduates. There are 48 school districts in WSU Tri-Cities' service area (ESD 105 and ESD 123) with a combined enrollment surpassing 115,000. In Benton and Franklin Counties, there are currently 12,415 students in high school. WSU Tri-Cities recruitment staff is working closely with high school advisors, students, and parents to provide information about this new local option for obtaining an undergraduate degree from WSU. In addition to recruitment at the high school level, WSU Tri-Cities and its partners have specific outreach strategies designed to reach underrepresented populations to increase the enrollment of multicultural students.

The community has launched on an aggressive fundraising campaign to provide each of the members of this historic freshmen class with a \$3,000 scholarship during their first year. A second \$3,000 scholarship during their senior year will encourage retention and timely degree completion at WSU Tri-Cities. Alumni, faculty, staff, students, business owners, and community leaders have also rallied to provide mentorships and service learning opportunities in the region. These features, and the widespread community support, provide a significant enhancement to our recruitment efforts.

Phase II – Expansion of Undergraduate Programs In fall 2009, WSU Tri-Cities plans to admit 100 FTE freshmen and extend more of the existing undergraduate programs into the lower division. Program development will be guided by a comprehensive assessment of regional higher education needs, to be conducted in 2007. This assessment will evaluate educational trends and will identify the interests of prospective students and the needs of employers in the region. The resulting data will provide a baseline for strategic expansion of existing degree programs to full four-year status and the introduction of select, new degree programs to best meet regional needs.

Regional Assets WSU Tri-Cities' growth is supported by a range of regional assets. Partnering with PNNL provides access to unique expertise, equipment and facilities to enrich WSU Tri-Cities research and teaching mission. Other business and organizations in the region provide adjunct faculty and opportunities for collaborative research and internships. The assets of the WSU System, such as the Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center in Prosser, also support the growth of WSU Tri-Cities. WSU Tri-Cities will build upon its long standing, successful collaborations with area community colleges. The five community colleges in WSU Tri-Cities' service area will continue to be a primary source of transfer students. Partnerships developed with CBC over the past several years will be used as models to extend the coordinated and co-enrollment baccalaureate programs to other community colleges. These institutions are also a potential source of shared faculty and facilities.

Resource Requirements The Legislature provided \$250,000 in FY07 in start-up funds associated with implementation of SHB 2867. Based on the experience of WSU Vancouver, UW Tacoma, and UW Bothell, this level of support will not be sufficient to meet basic start-up requirements. Significant additional funds will be required for recruitment, marketing, retention programs, and program development. For example, Student Affairs will require additional recruiters, advisors and credentials staff to evaluate, admit and enroll the incoming freshmen and sophomore students. WSU Tri-Cities will need to hire faculty and staff for lower-division programs based on prioritized needs. The noted FTE will be part of the WSU biennial budget requests. Revised capital and facilities needs based on these growth assumptions have been submitted by WSU as part of the WSU 10-year capital plan. Additional facilities will be needed as WSU Tri-Cities expands to include lower division students including a classroom, teaching laboratory and faculty office building; student services and activities center; library expansion; and a science and engineering classroom facility. WSU Tri-Cities will work with community leaders and regional Legislators to pursue necessary State support for this expansion.

In addition to State funding support, WSU Tri-Cities will continue to leverage the resources of its partners in business and industry (e.g., collaborations with the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and the Tri-Cities Development Council—TRIDEC), and private sector fundraising. The Tri-City Education Advisory Council, who coordinates K-20 activities, and WSU's Advisory Council Tri-Cities, appointed by WSU President Rawlins, will each play a critical role in garnering local, state, and federal support for the growing campus.

SHB2867 states, “By gradually and deliberately admitting freshmen and sophomores in accordance with its plan, increasing transfer enrollment, and co-admitting transfer students, the campus shall develop into a four-year institution serving the Southeastern Washington region.” This report delineates the plans of Washington State University Tri-Cities to strategically grow its undergraduate programs while expanding its high quality graduate degree programs and research in focused areas. The University remains committed toward addressing the needs of students and their families and being a key partner in the continuous enhancement of economic vitality in the region.