

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION SELF-STUDY 1999

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What kind of place is WSU? We see ourselves as a big, caring, successful, freewheeling kind of place. We are especially proud of our alumni's passionate loyalty, of our emerging status as a top-flight research institution, of our historical commitment to being a teaching institution, and of the very wide variety of students we serve successfully.

We are on the far side of Washington -- the other, other, other Washington, as some wag has noted. We are far from the centers of population, but we can fill up our 35,000-seat football stadium for a good game. We have a beautiful main campus with well-kept facilities, but our offices and labs are becoming crowded. We have a number of highly ranked academic and research programs, but we aspire to do a great deal more research and to be better recognized for it.

How else are we unique in this state? We emphasize research and academic excellence and we offer a number of programs that are nationally ranked, but at the same time our specialty is to reach out to meet the needs of a wide variety of Washington citizens. Whether it is the research that jump-started the now well-known Washington wine industry or a Learning Center for placebound students in Colville, a nationally recognized Honors College to support the highest achieving students or intensive support for struggling freshmen, WSU sees itself as reaching out to serve Washington state.

Washington State University, founded in 1890, is the state's land-grant institution and meets the criteria of a Research I institution. It is dedicated to the preparation of students throughout the state for productive lives and professional careers, to basic and applied research in various fields, and to the dissemination of knowledge. In 1989, this mission led WSU to become a multi-campus system with the establishment of campuses in Spokane, the Tri-Cities, and Vancouver and, in 1992, WSU initiated the state's first degree program offered through distance education techniques.

Location

Washington State University's main campus is located in Pullman, a small, rural college and farming community. This southeast region of Washington, called the Palouse, is where much of the nation's finest wheat and legumes are produced. The 2,000-acre campus is 78 miles south-east of Spokane, the closest city of size, and 8 miles west of the Washington-Idaho border, the city of Moscow, and the University of Idaho.

WSU's three branch campuses serve placebound students who are unable to attend the main campus. WSU Vancouver is located on 351 acres seven miles north of the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area in southwest Washington. Opened in June of 1996, the state-of-the-art campus is the first built in the State of Washington since the 1960s. WSU Tri-Cities is located on the banks of the Columbia River in Richland. It offers 11 undergraduate and 16 graduate majors to the residents of south central Washington. Finally, WSU Spokane is an urban campus with a focus on the health sciences, engineering, and design disciplines. WSU Spokane is the primary

provider of graduate and research programs for the Spokane metropolitan area. Planned for the lifestyles of professionals and full-time students, advanced courses are offered at convenient times in central, downtown locations.

Character of the University

The heart of WSU's multi-campus system is the Pullman campus where 17,000 students are enrolled. Approximately 15,000 are undergraduate students and nearly 2,000 are graduate students. Pullman is one of the largest residential campuses west of the Mississippi with about half of the student body living in residence halls, single and family student apartments, and fraternity and sorority houses. Here, students of diverse social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds from across the state, throughout the nation, and more than 90 foreign countries come together in a community in which education is the principal industry and human development the primary concern.

More than 2,900 juniors, seniors, and graduate students are enrolled at WSU Vancouver, Tri-Cities, and Spokane. WSU Vancouver enrolled 1,514 students in Fall 1998. This semester's enrollment represents an increase of nearly 14% over 1997. The 1,171 students who take classes at the Richland campus (WSU Tri-Cities) and at the Yakima and Wenatchee Learning Centers are served by more than 40 full-time and more than 350 adjunct faculty, drawn from the area's "brain trust" of highly qualified professionals. WSU Spokane is the smallest branch campus with 438 students enrolled for Spring semester 1999, but a new mandate from the state to expand WSU's research, graduate, and upper-division mission in Spokane is expected to fuel faster growth at that campus. Enrollment at the branch campuses is expected to double by early in the next century as facilities and degree offerings are expanded.

The university's colleges, including the College of Nursing headquartered in Spokane, and the Graduate School, offer nearly 100 major fields of study. Bachelor's degrees are available in all major areas, and master's and doctoral degrees are available in most. Degree programs and fields of study vary at each branch campus but represent, for the most part, extensions of programs offered at the Pullman campus.

As Washington's only statewide university, WSU has Cooperative Extension offices in all 39 counties, as well as 8 regional Learning Centers, seven research and extension facilities, and 24 Small Business Development Centers statewide. The university runs the Washington Higher Education Telecommunication System (WHETS), which transmits live, interactive instruction between the various campuses and other sites. Offering the state's first Bachelor of Arts degree via distance learning technology, Extended Degree Programs has flourished, with 965 students now enrolled in courses leading to bachelor's degrees in three different majors. By the year 2000, at least four more degree programs will be available.

Facilities. The Pullman campus features modern laboratories and classrooms, many fully technologically equipped, plus museums, student residences, recreational and athletic facilities, a student union, and a community hospital. A new library addition has doubled WSU's library capacity. Further, a one-of-a kind alumni center, a fine arts building with galleries, state-of-the-art chemistry and engineering buildings, and a 12,000 seat performing arts coliseum, home to Cougar men's and women's basketball, are also located on the Pullman campus.

WSU Vancouver's campus facilities include classrooms, science laboratories, offices, a 200-seat lecture hall, a gallery, and a cafeteria, as well as a system of biking and pedestrian paths. Its library carries more than 500 journals and a core collection of more than 11,000 volumes, and provides access to 50 bibliographic data bases. The library offers on-line search capabilities to other academic libraries through PORTALS, the Portland Area Library System. WHETS allows WSU Vancouver to originate and receive classes and meetings from other WSU campuses and sites throughout the state.

The WSU Tri-Cities' campus is sited next to the scenic Columbia River in Richland. Campus facilities include engineering and science laboratories, multi-media and lecture classrooms, auditorium, food service, museum, and the Student Learning Center. The Consolidated Library, operated and staffed by the university and the Hanford Technical Library, includes more than 50,000 monographs, 500 current journal titles in print, more than 600 journals in electronic form, more than two million government technical reports, and an extensive array of other electronic information resources. Five campus computing laboratories contain personal computers for student use and instruction. Abundant parking and links to the community bike trail system provide easy access to the campus.

WSU Spokane houses programs at its downtown and Riverpoint Higher Education Park facilities. Riverpoint facilities include a new three-story building with state-of-the-art studio space, computer labs, and Geographical Information Systems equipment, and a 200-seat lecture hall and gallery. Laboratory space for the health sciences is housed at area health care institutions that serve as important partners in collaborative applied and clinical research. The downtown campus facilities house administrative offices and a number of programs, including a full-scale clinic for speech and hearing sciences. The Cooperative Academic Library System, operated and staffed by WSU and EWU, provides access to selected titles and journals on-site, and to the full array of WSU library services via document delivery and online services. WHETS allows WSU Spokane to conduct interactive classes and meetings with other WSU sites throughout the state.

Employees. Washington State University employs more than 5,000 staff and faculty personnel across the entire system. The largest number of faculty is on the Pullman campus, making it the largest employer in the area.

[Table of Employee Numbers]

Accomplishments of the University

WSU continues to meet all of the essential eligibility requirements of the Commission on Colleges. Since the last accreditation visit ten years ago, WSU has grown in size, in complexity, and in its expectations of faculty, staff, and students. Research came to the fore to an extent it had not reached before, solidifying WSU's position as a robust research institution. For the last few years teaching and learning have, again, become the focus of an intense new emphasis and new initiatives-now undergirded by the stronger research base that has been attained and continues to expand.

Significantly higher admission standards, phased in between 1989 and 1993, resulted in better-qualified students, even as enrollment numbers and ethnic diversity both continued to increase. The six-year graduation rate rose steadily from 50.6% in 1990-91 to 63.1% in 1997-98. WSU's freshman retention rate of 83% is comparable to that of much more selective institutions nationwide.

WSU is proud to be nationally recognized in a number of areas. The University Honors College was named among the top eight across all United States public universities. We are the only major public research university in the country to require an approved writing portfolio for graduation. We were named among America's 100 Most Wired Colleges, and have the fourth-ranked broadcasting education program in WSU's Murrow School of Communication. WSU boasts the newest and best-equipped veterinary teaching hospital in the world and, in a completely different realm, is among the top five universities in the country for intercollegiate athletic opportunities for women. Finally, WSU was number one in alumni giving among all public universities in 1997, arguably a clear vote of customer satisfaction. These achievements, and more, are evidence of why Washington State University is known for its quality education, friendly learning environment, and success in graduating students.

The following brief list includes some of the university's further accomplishments since the last accreditation visit.

- WSU celebrated its centennial in 1989.
- General Education reform was implemented.
- The nationally recognized Writing Program and portfolio system were created and remain an integral part of General Education.
- Nationally recognized Freshman Seminars were developed to provide intensive learning community opportunities and increase retention among freshmen students.
- 1998's entering freshman class averaged a 3.41 grade point average, evidence of more top students choosing WSU.
- WSU met the criteria for Carnegie I Research status.
- A new addition has doubled the capacity of WSU's Holland Library.
- Branch campuses at Spokane, Tri-Cities, and Vancouver were officially designated.
- WSU introduced Extended Degree Programs, increasing access for students statewide as well as WSU's national visibility.
- Statewide enrollments passed 20,000 after six years of continual growth.
- Campaign WSU, the first comprehensive fund-raising effort, raised \$275 million.
- University shared governance was strengthened and remains solid.

Issues Facing the University

The issues that follow are common to many institutions of higher education. In that sense, these issues are not exceptional. WSU believes they are important, but not insurmountable, and views them as opportunities for growth.

Funding. What concerns us most about where we are and the future we face? Money -- that would have to be number one. Taking the long view, we are financially strong and fiscally

sound, and there have been much tougher times in the past. But statutory and policy changes at the state level and at other public institutions led to lower than expected freshmen enrollments at WSU in 1996-97 and 1997-98. We expect to repeat this year's substantial increase in freshman enrollments next year, but the effects of the past two years will take longer to overcome as those smaller classes move through the system.

Common to all of public higher education in this state is the legislature's refusal to fund faculty salary raises at a level that would prevent falling farther and farther behind our peers. When a 2% raise is authorized but not funded, taking the money out of institutional operations is experienced as a budget cut, largely negating the psychological effect of the raise. Finally, when the legislature raised out-of-state tuition several times, nonresident enrollment dropped dramatically, creating a noticeable drop in revenue. The consequent belt-tightening chips away at morale and raises money to the top of most lists of concerns.

Branch Campuses. The geographically dispersed system of branch campuses and Extended Degree Programs is on the minds of some members of the community. From their inception there have been questions of whether such programs would draw needed resources and students away from the Pullman campus, how branch campus faculty would be integrated into their home departments in Pullman, and whether the quality of distance education courses would measure up to traditional courses. Although final resolution has not been reached on any of these questions, they are continually discussed and assessed and efforts persistently made to find good answers. While these tensions are not new to WSU, the form they take is maturing along with the branch campuses and extended programs. For example, branch campus faculty members are now coming up for tenure, focusing needed attention on how they meet both their job expectations and the standards of the university as a whole.

Academic Preparation. The academic preparation of incoming students is under discussion by the faculty. While it is true that the high school grade point average of freshmen has increased over the past several years, SAT scores are just holding steady, and the performance of too many students in the classroom is a concern. Is it a problem of preparation? Of expectations? Attitudes? There is also an emerging recognition of -- or greater willingness to talk about -- the university's party school image as a hindrance to attracting the best students and developing high academic expectations and good study habits.

A new Council on Undergraduate Excellence is reviewing what we know about ourselves and our students, researching what works elsewhere, and bringing forward ideas and plans to better engage students in the academic community and in their own learning process. Campus-wide efforts are under way to combat excessive alcohol use. Greater emphasis is being placed on enrolling students in learning community experiences such as the Freshman Seminars; and new, residence hall-based freshman academic groups will be started next fall.

Technology. WSU promotes the use of technology, both on the campuses and for distance education programs. The faculty is encouraged to be innovative with instructional technology, and a wide variety of efforts are under way. However, use of technology here, as elsewhere, has reached the point where the lack of systematic funding for integrating technology into instruction, and the lack of clear rewards for doing so, are beginning to be felt. Led by the

Provost and the Vice President for Extended University Affairs, efforts are under way to clarify the institution's goals in regard to technology-based instruction and to realign resources and rewards, if necessary, to support those goals.

Diversity. Diversity is widely considered to be both a strength and a challenge. WSU's positive achievements in this area are noted elsewhere, but progress continues to be a challenge. Any campus and region with such a large proportion of the majority population will be hard-pressed to attract and retain a diverse student body and faculty. In addition, campus and community climate frequently arises as an issue, and new ways are being sought to deal with it. Ongoing assessment and reporting of progress continues to inform campus efforts, and the Provost's ad hoc Diversity Assessment Committee will be reporting its findings and recommendations this spring.

Summary. Washington State University clearly has much to be proud of and, just as clearly, faces an energizing and motivating array of challenges. Additional accomplishments and challenges are described throughout the sections of the self-study that follow, and we are optimistic that the additional attention drawn to them by the accreditation self-study process will contribute to meeting the challenges.

Self-Study Process

The formal self-study process that led to this report began in April 1997 with the formation of an Accreditation Steering Committee. The committee's function was to guide the self-study process and present the results in the form of a self-study document. The steering committee has broad representation from the faculty, staff, and administration, as follows.

Robert Altenkirch, Dean (through 1998-99), College of Engineering and Architecture
Anjan Bose, Interim Dean, College of Engineering and Architecture
James Cochran, Campus Executive Officer and Campus Dean (through 1998-99), WSU Tri-Cities
Karen DePauw, Interim Dean of the Graduate School and Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Mary Doyle, Director of Information Technology
Sandi Howard, Executive Director for Business Affairs
Alton Jamison, Director of Student Advising and Learning Center and Career Services
Susan McLeod, Chair, Department of English
Steve Nakata, Interim Director, Multicultural Student Services
Muriel Oaks, Associate Vice President, Extended University Services
Susan Poch, Research Associate, Academic Affairs
Jim Rimpau, Director of Institutional Research, Capital Budget and Space Management
Jane Sherman, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Accreditation Liaison Officer
David Stock, Chair of the Faculty Senate (1998-99)
Mary Wack, Senior Fellow, Center for Teaching and Learning
James Zuiches, Dean, College of Agriculture and Home Economics

Nine of these committee members served as chairs for subcommittees that researched and wrote about each of the standards. In all, more than 70 faculty members, staff, and

administrators participated in directing, collecting information for, and writing the self-study as members of the subcommittees. Many more individuals contributed ideas, questions, and comments, and reviewed the work as it progressed.

Because of the manner in which the standards were divided and what each encompasses, most committees needed information from units other than those represented by their members. The subcommittees compiled this information, the Steering Committee reviewed it, and the results -- both specific to the units and general to the university -- were given back to the individual committees for their feedback. Meetings were held with each college, and university-wide forums were convened to provide information about the process and to elicit input. Additionally, drafts of the self-study were made available to the university community through a Web site with notices placed in the student newspaper, the weekly faculty/staff newspaper, and on the WSU Announcements via e-mail. This method permitted a larger audience to view the self-study and to correct inaccuracies, update information, and question and/or validate information. The goal is to tell Washington State University's story clearly and accurately.