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Western Board of Trustees Meeting

Outreach Listening Session Report

May 14, 2020

During the fall and spring semesters of academic year 19/20, Western's President, Dr. Kim Dale, Director of Outreach, Kasey Damori, and High School Transition Coordinator, John Freeman went on a listening tour throughout Western's service area. Several other stakeholders joined the tour when possible, including current Board President, Regina Clark, past Board President, George Eckman, Trustee Ken Lorimer and Outreach Assistant, Brooke Quintrall.

The goal of the Listening Session Tour was to hear from key-stakeholders in our service area, get a look at Western's footprint in each community, demonstrate Western presence and ultimately learn what needs to happen in order to best serve our constituents and expand access to quality education.

There were 12 stops on the tour, including:

1. Bridger Valley
2. Cokeville
3. Star Valley
4. Big Piney
5. Pinedale
6. Green River
7. Rock Springs
8. Evanston
9. Rawlins
10. Baggs
11. Saratoga
12. Kemmerer

In each location, individual meetings were conducted with the Outreach and/or BOCES employees, school district administration and concurrent enrollment teachers, key-opinion and business leaders within the community and a public open-forum in the evening. The format of these busy days gave us the opportunity to have very candid conversations and develop relationships with these important Western partners. We learned of both strengths and opportunities in how Western can be a better partner to meet the different needs of each of these communities. This feedback will be instrumental in development of Western's new strategic plan.

The people with which we spoke were *very pleased* at the opportunity to connect with Western. We learned that some wanted and needed an opportunity to express prior frustrations and launch a renewed relationship with the college. Many shared how important Western is to supporting and improving the lives of its students and community members.

Overarching Themes

- Western's Outreach Center employees have very positive relationships within their communities.

- There is a need to increase Western's presence in our service area. This pertains to classes, programs and brand recognition.
- When HLC faculty credentialing requirements were updated and communicated several years ago, and high school faculty were no longer qualified to teach classes, the communication from Western was impersonal and lacking a collaborative approach to problem solving. This caused a lot of contention in some areas, but during the visits we were able to better explain Western's obligation to requirements. We committed to being collaborative and solution oriented, which was well received.
- There is a desire to expand concurrent enrollment opportunities
 - *Inequities across the state exist for funding dual enrollment students because of how BOCES funding is distributed*
- There is an expanding need for more vocational and workforce training
- More healthcare training is needed in almost every community
- Communities would like to find more opportunities to train high school students and keep them there—embracing a “grow your own” strategy
- There would be great value in more faculty and division chairs visiting our outreach locations, to improve relationships, communication and collaboration
- It is difficult to get certified teachers for CTE classes in the high schools
- Some communities are looking for help with retraining, if and when plant closures occur

Opportunities

- Getting more faculty approved to teach concurrently
 - Find ways for high school faculty to get credentialed, according to HLC, to teach concurrent classes. This is the most efficient way to deliver instruction to high school students.
 - Western's Foundation used to help pay for HS faculty to get their degree. The return on investment was high.
 - Look for incentives for high school faculty to teach college courses
 - They are currently not compensated by Western, but it is often a lot more work to follow both the high school and college standards. They also have competing priorities in small communities when they have other school responsibilities, like coaching and other roles.
- Expansion of career and technical education in Star Valley
 - The community of Star Valley funded a \$1.5 million CTE building attached to their high school. This will expand the concurrent automotive program there with the possibility of having adult-learning classes as well. It may also have opportunity for other trades classes down the road.
- Vocational training in Kemmerer and Pinedale
 - A team traveled back to Pinedale to hear the discussions between their industry partners, healthcare officials, school district, county commissioners and BOCES. We were anxious to hear how we can partner.
 - Healthcare- Training should they get a hospital
 - Tourism/Recreation
 - Safe-Serve Certification for HS students
 - Manufacturing opportunities for adult learners
- Early Childhood Education program in Evanston

- We met with the Director of the Evanston Childhood Development Center (ECDC) about the desire/need in the community for an Early Childhood Development Certificate. They plan to send over 70 of their employees through the program.
- Heidi Currutt and the Education Department have been working very hard find and hire qualified faculty and will now be working with ECDC to plan a schedule
- Certified Nursing Assistant course offerings in all high schools; Big Piney has an instructor who only need a few hours of work experience to be qualified; they have space as well.
- The idea of stackable certificates was very received by local business and high school leaders.
- Easier way for high schools to see the HLC faculty credentialing requirements so that they an attempt to hire already qualified teachers.
 - HLC faculty credentialing requirements will be shared on our new high school partner webpage
- Resurrect web-conferencing classes
- Align our advising practices with theirs. Possibility for a specific Western D/C advisor
- Stipend for concurrent teachers
- Plans for high schools that will be more aligned with actual degree attainment.
- Expanding healthcare training
 - Saratoga and Pinedale are both working on getting hospitals in their communities
- More evening classes
- More hybrid course options

Program “Requests”

- Tourism & Hospitality
 - Outdoor Leadership
 - Safe-Serve
- Agriculture
- Powerline
- Renewable Energy
 - Wind
 - Solar
- Stackable Certificates (several existing disciplines)
- Expansion of healthcare training
- Expansion of Electrical & Instrumentation into the Outreach
- Face-to-face Criminal Justice program in Rawlins
- Rangeland Management

Next Steps

Western’s President has committed to visit these communities again in academic year 20/21, to once again meet with business, legislator and high school leaders. These visits will demonstrate the commitment Western has to its entire service area. Feedback will continue to be garnered from our service area to inform our strategic and academic master plans and solidify positive relationships and partnerships. Dr. Dale has also directed Bill Formanek, Western’s Workforce Development Director, to start actively visiting these communities and

their businesses to have more conversations and plan for how we can expand workforce training opportunities throughout the service area.

Kasey Damori is actively engaged with Outreach employees and our partners in a variety of ways. Along with continuous communication via telephone and email, at least once a month, virtual meetings are hosted with all Outreach employees. This gives our entire service area an opportunity to hear updates about Western and collaborate with one another related to challenges and solutions in their respective communities. We often have guests from other areas of the college, based on requests and conversations, to help build the relationships across campus.

A High School Partnership newsletter is sent to our high school constituents monthly to keep them abreast of all of Western's updates. Twice a year, Outreach employees are invited to campus for a special in-service designed around challenges they encounter throughout the year and recommendations for professional development opportunities. The structure of these in-service sessions has created a sense of teamwork across the entire service area.

This year, we hosted our first dual-concurrent counselor workshop. Counselors from across the state joined us to learn more about dual and concurrent enrollment from an HLC perspective, a state-level perspective, an institutional perspective and all were able to brainstorm and share challenges and opportunities they encounter in their own high schools.

We continue to work on ways to engage the Outreach and make them feel a greater sense of inclusion in the Western family and we have received only positive feedback.

Showing a presence in their communities during this listening session tour was an invaluable experience and demonstrated the high level of commitment Western has to our entire service-area. We will continue to build on our findings our partnerships and look forward to our future endeavors.