

**President's State of the University Address
Rice Auditorium
September 18, 2017**

Thank you Chair Baumgartner.

Good morning friends and colleagues and thank you for being here today – welcome to the start of a new academic year!

I am so appreciative of the support we receive from our trustees – it is clear to me that they hold Western in high esteem and have high expectations for our continued success. Please join me in thanking them again for their dedicated service.

At Western we know that shared governance is of paramount importance to our long-term health and future – I would like to recognize the president of the Faculty Senate, Dr. Adele Schepige, the president of the Staff Senate, Jesse Poole, and the ASWOU president, Jessica Freeman.

I would like to also recognize our elected officials and their representatives:

Scott McClure, City Manager – Monmouth
Steve Milligan, Mayor – Monmouth
Darin Silbernagel, City Councilor – Monmouth
Evan Source, on behalf of Representative Evans

Next I would like to recognize our new tenure track faculty, new non-tenure track faculty, and staff that have joined the WOU team this past year, and importantly, serve our students and faculty alike. A list of all new employees was distributed and I would like to have all our new colleagues stand and be recognized.

Thank you—we are so excited to have you join the Western community. I know your contributions will help the university continue its path of excellence.

Our academic programs are central to our purpose and mission. And faculty have primary responsibility for nurturing and developing academic programs that attract and graduate students. In addition, our faculty are engaged in original scholarship and creative activities that keep them engaged in their professional disciplines. I would like to invite all of the faculty and staff who have published an article, book, book chapter,

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exhibited your work at a juried conference or written a grant to stand and be recognized. Your intellectual and creative pursuits enable Western to excel—thank you.

Finally, I would also ask all of the recently tenured faculty to stand, as well as those faculty who earned a promotion. Thank you for your years of service to Western.

Today I want you to think back to your first day at Western. For some, that day is today, for others it was years ago. In my own case it is just over two years. Were you drawn to Western because of the long tradition of student success? Because of the legacy of Western as a community of learners?

Whatever your reason may have been, I am convinced that a primary driver for those of us in higher education and especially for those of us at Western, is the desire to make a difference in the lives of our students and colleagues. Western is a special community—a community that is safe, welcoming of difference and eager to discover truth and insight.

This past year, events have tested our resolve to maintain and nurture our sense of community—Western’s commitment to diversity and respect. In response to these events, Western has reaffirmed its commitment to the principles of diversity, inclusion and community. Moreover, our faculty, staff and students worked with the City of Monmouth to proclaim Monmouth as an inclusive city that:

... embraces, celebrates, and welcomes all people without regard to race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, age, sexual orientation, gender and gender identification, national origin or perceived national origin, immigrant and refugee status, veteran status or disability. RESOLUTION NO. 1833 Declaring the City of Monmouth an Inclusive City, April 4, 2017.

This resolution is a recognition by the city of the vitality of Western in the life of the larger community and the role we have in preparing leaders of tomorrow.

On September 5, the Trump administration announced the end of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. As you know, the DACA program has enabled scores of students to attend Western Oregon University. Many of these students have assumed leadership roles while on campus, and others have gone on to start their professional lives and/or attend graduate school after graduation. I believe this decision goes against our core values as a nation and as a university.

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Western will vigorously deploy any strategy or advocacy at its disposal to protect our DACA students. We will uphold our values and champion our students, particularly those who are vulnerable during these times. In this way, Western will continue to see all of our students succeed academically and to assume leadership roles in society.

Earlier this year, I wrote:

Our nation is largely a nation of immigrants, and we are part of the global community of nations. The influx of people from all parts of the world has made the nation better in every measure and we preserve our commitment to continue to revitalize our communities and country.

Last year, our campus mourned the loss of our student body president, Alma Pacheco. Alma was a bright light in an increasingly chaotic world. Our community and campus are diminished by her death; yet in that difficult time, we came together as a community to celebrate her life and to recommit ourselves to our core values and to the goal of providing a community that supports the success of all our students. Our sadness tested our resolve and commitment to a core value for Western: “supporting the inclusion of, respect for, and appreciation of all communities of students, faculty and staff.”

In August, the nation was shocked by the horrific and tragic confrontation between white supremacist groups and protesters in Virginia. This incident was an assault on ideals in a democratic and civil society and on the values that we have developed over decades as a university. In the face of this heartbreaking incident, I want to reaffirm that academic freedom, democracy, civility and inclusion are Western Oregon University’s guiding principles.

WOU’s slogan **Together We Succeed** is Western’s North Star that guides our every move, our interactions, and our every dialogue.

The role of the state colleges and universities has never been more important than it is today. The roots of public education and public higher education are intertwined with the rise of the common school and the normal school movement in the early 1800’s. Horace Mann is credited with a leading role in developing the case for public education in Massachusetts. He identified six principles for public education:

1. Citizens cannot maintain both ignorance and freedom,
2. Education should be paid for, controlled, and maintained by the public,

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3. Education should be provided in schools that embrace children from varying backgrounds,
4. Education must be nonsectarian,
5. Education must be taught using the tenets of a free society,
6. Education must be provided by well-trained, professional teachers

<https://www.biography.com/people/horace-mann-9397522>

These principles formed the basis for the nation to develop the large network of normal schools that prepared teachers for positions in public education. It was in this era that Western Oregon University was created in 1856, with a commitment to preparing teachers for the Oregon territory—yes Western predates Oregon’s statehood.

Today, Western Oregon University is much more than a normal school—it is a public regional comprehensive university. We have developed academic and co-curricular programs that respond to the needs of society and the state of Oregon. Throughout our history, Western has been known for developing innovative programs and fostering a cohesive, caring community of learners.

So, as we anticipate the start of classes next week, know that WOU remains steadfast in its mission to provide an inclusive, supportive and accessible learning environment that provides a transformative educational experience for all of our students.

To start the new academic year, let’s take a moment to reflect on 2016-17.

1. Year in review

- The graduating class of 2017 totaled 1,668 individuals with just over 1,000 attending commencement.
 - 86% received a bachelor’s degree and 14% received a master’s degree.
- 2017 graduates represented:
 - 33 of 36 counties in Oregon;
 - 24 states from Alaska to Florida, and the U.S. Territory of Puerto Rico;
 - 8 countries with our largest number of students from China and Saudi Arabia.
- Representative Betty Komp received the alumnae of the year award—Representative Komp is also a member Western’s Board of Trustees.

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- Completed strategic plan, *Forward Together: 2017-23* and revised university mission statement—would members of the Strategic Planning Committee please stand and be recognized. Thank you to Dr. Laurie Burton who served as co-chair.
- Submitted year one report to NWCCU in March and an ad hoc report earlier this month. Thank you to Dr. Sue Monahan for her efforts.

Looking back at 2016-17 we opened the Richard E. Woodcock Education Center. I know that this new space has been a welcome addition to campus for the College of Education faculty, staff and students. The Pastega room has been used by many groups, including our alumni association.

This year we will renovate the Natural Science Building—this project will begin in January 2018 with a completion date of December 2018. I want to acknowledge Dr. Steve Taylor for his leadership on this project and his colleagues who have participated in developing the project scope. With their participation and insight, I am convinced that the project will improve the building infrastructure, but more importantly, it will vastly improve the learning spaces for our current and future students. To accomplish these outcomes, we will need to secure an additional \$2.7 million.

With the strong support of our students, Western now has a new Student Health and Counseling Center. The new space is about 11,000 square feet which increases our capacity to provide the services our students need. The new center will be dedicated on Monday, October 2 at 3 pm and more details will follow.

The old student health center will be remodeled, at a cost of less than \$200,000 to accommodate the academic advising staff and staff that support the Student Enrichment Program. This change will address issues that we face in the current space in APSC related to student privacy. The building will be known as the Advising Center and we expect the remodeling to be completed this fall.

Western established access for Dreamers in partnership with TheDreamUS—this program provided access for dreamers from WICHE states that do not extend tuition equity to students who grew up and graduated from high schools in that state. As you know, the Trump administration has announced plans to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, DACA. This action will affect The Dream US project and threatens the immigration status for nearly 50 students at Western. Western, along with its sister institutions in Oregon, have written to Oregon's federal legislative delegation

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urging Congress to act to restore the DACA program. Last week, the state of Oregon joined a lawsuit with New York and several other states to overturn this decision by the Trump administration. Western Oregon University has provided support for the lawsuit citing the negative impact of the plan to end DACA. This fall, I ask each of you to reach out to our DACA students and encourage them to stay the course until a resolution can be found.

Western created a dual admission program with Clackamas Community College—this year we plan to expand the number of community colleges that have dual admission agreements with Western. I want to thank Dave McDonald for his work on this project. And, I am pleased that Dave has agreed to serve in a new role as Associate Vice President for Public Affairs and Strategic Initiatives. In this capacity, he will work closely with the Cabinet and interface with HECC, legislative leaders and other universities and colleges in Oregon to assist Western in its efforts to be a leading destination campus.

This year we created a “jump-start” program for recipients of the Oregon Promise to attend Western. The jump start program provided Oregon Promise recipients \$1500 or \$1000 in tuition discounts depending on family income level.

Western increased its focus on degree completion. LaRon Tolley accepted a newly-created position tasked specifically with targeting former students who have stopped-out for re-enrollment and degree completion. Of the approximately 60 students identified and contacted to date, 23 have completed and been awarded their degree, with an additional 16 that are actively making progress toward degree completion.

On the curricular front, Western, under the leadership of our Dr. Breeann Flesch and Dr. Steve Scheck, and with support from Faculty Senate, have initiated redesign of general education. A task force met throughout the summer and it will host campus town halls this fall to share its work. My expectation and hope is that the task force will complete its redesign by the end of fall term with formal presentation to Faculty Senate for adoption. Further logistical planning for roll-out will need to take place in winter and spring terms, but I know we will be up to the challenge to be creative in doing so.

Complementing this work, the Faculty Senate has approved Western’s participation in the WICHE passport program which guarantees transfer of credits from participating universities throughout the US. Efforts such as these will differentiate Western from other Oregon universities and will provide students with effective pathways to their degree and chosen major.

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As noted in the program, Western hired eight new tenure track faculty in LAS and five new tenure track faculty in COE. I want to welcome Dean Kathy Cassity, our new dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

2016-17 saw many other important efforts including:

- Improved our freshman to sophomore retention rate to 75%
- Continued growth in our Honors program, which recorded the largest number of graduates in 2017
- The Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling (RMHC) was fully reaccredited by the Council on Rehabilitation Counseling Education (CORE) through 2025.
- Athletics:
 - New Athletic Director – Curtis Campbell
 - Championships
 - GNAC champions in baseball
 - Men’s Distance Medley Relay Team secured the D-II national championship
 - 66 GNAC All-Academic honors
 - Team GPA above 3.00 for women and 2.85 for men
 - Head Coach Mike Johnson named GNAC Indoor Track & Field Male Coach of the Year
 - Our student athletes embody the D-II credo of ***Life in the balance***

Veterans—Western has been a military friendly campus since 2012. Under the leadership of Andrew Holbert and Dave McDonald, Western expanded its **Voyager Award scholarship program** to members of the National Guard or Reserves who are Oregon residents and meet the military service requirements are eligible to receive up to four years of tuition assistance. Western’s program will help these veterans achieve their educational goals. Finally, we waived the application fee for all honorably discharged veterans.

Finally, I want to ask all of our colleagues who planned and executed all of the events related to the eclipse on August 21st, to please stand—without a doubt Western was **the place to be for the eclipse**—we had thousands here to enjoy the campus and the community. There is no doubt that we hosted the events in a manner that was welcoming and most importantly we provided an educational venue for our guests.

I want to share one example. Shortly after the eclipse ended, a mother and daughter approached me—no surprise I was wearing a red Western polo—they asked if there was someone they could speak with regarding our science programs. They are from Beaverton and the daughter is entering her senior year of high school. Dr. Patty Flatt was about 30 feet away and had given a presentation to over 100 guests at the Gentle House and Patty immediately took the time to visit with this aspiring scientist. As I continued to visit with the mother, she raved about her time at Western and how she hoped that her daughter will enroll here—no doubt she will also share her experience with friends and neighbors in Beaverton.

2. Enrollment and class of 2021

I would like to pause and reflect on some the characteristics of our new class of freshmen—the class of 2021, courtesy of the *The Mindset* from Beloit College:

- They are the last class to be born in the 1900s, *the last of the Millennials* -- enter next year, on cue, *Generation Z!*
- They are the first generation for whom a “phone” has been primarily a video game, direction finder, electronic telegraph, and research library.
- Electronic signatures have always been as legally binding as the pen-on-paper kind.
- In college, they will often think of themselves as consumers, who’ve borrowed a lot of money to be there.
- The Panama Canal has always belonged to Panama and Macau has always been part of China.
- It is doubtful that they have ever used or heard the high-pitched whine of a dial-up modem.

<https://www.beloit.edu/mindset/2021/>

Enrollment projections for fall 2017 show that overall enrollment will be down about 3%. This is due to a smaller freshman class—with the greatest decrease among Oregon residents— a decrease of 100 compared to last year. However, Oregonians still comprise about 78% of our undergraduate enrollment.

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On a positive note, undergraduate enrollment from other states increased by 5% over last year. As we look to the demographics of Oregon over the next six years, high school graduates will remain near 36,000. And, within that number, the fastest growing segment will be Hispanics. By 2027, 10 years from now, Hispanics will represent 25% of Oregon high school graduates.

At Western, enrollment of Hispanic students will exceed 15% of total enrollment this fall and Hispanics represented nearly 20% of our incoming freshman class. Closing the educational attainment gap for Hispanics is vital to our nation's future. Growing Hispanic enrollment is essential and Western will continue to host events such as the César Chávez Leadership Conference, which gives Western a leading role in shaping the college plans for nearly 2,000 high school students each year.

Finally, transfers at Western have increased this year, and we continue to make progress on developing and promoting transfer pathways for students from Oregon's community colleges. The legislature passed House Bill 2998, which will lead to a task force that is expected to report to the legislature in spring of next year. Among the requirements are an expectation that 30 credits of general education credits transfer among all institutions. The task force organized by HECC includes five faculty from the public 4-year institutions.

Even with the increase in transfers, overall enrollment will be down between 3 and 5%. This means that we must continue our efforts to improve retention and graduation rates, we must explore ways to serve new academic markets for degree seeking students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and we must continue our effort to provide effective graduation pathways for all students, including transfers.

3. Legislative Session and Budget update

Capital budget

Last year I reported that Western was seeking funding to remodel the Oregon Military Academy. I am pleased to report that Western received \$7.7 million toward a total cost of \$8.3 million for this project. This fall, we will hire a consultant who will meet with campus representatives to discuss the best use of the space. The building affords the campus a unique opportunity to develop space that will assist our efforts to provide conferences focused on such things as first-generation enrollments and graduate certificate programs. The lower floor is likely to house admissions and financial aid, as well as

classroom space to enable families to apply for financial aid in a one-stop shop environment. The second floor is envisioned as a combination of living and learning space to host groups and/or individuals on campus.

Western also received \$5.5 million of a total project cost of \$6 million to remodel the lower 2 floors of the Instructional Technology Center (ITC). The ITC project will include safety and seismic upgrades as well as improved classrooms and facilities. The project will upgrade the HVAC as well as the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. ITC is home to our programs in computer science, visual communication design and the Academic Innovation Center. This project is slated to start in the latter part of the 2017-19 biennium.

Operating budget

As you know, the 2016-17 legislative session was filled with challenges. The Governor's recommended budget of \$667 million for higher education fell \$100 million short of the funds needed to meet current obligations. Through concerted efforts of the public universities and partners such as SEIU and WOUFT, the final operating budget for higher education was \$736.9 million, an increase of about \$70 million over the Governor's recommended budget. The Public University State Funding is allocated to each university via a funding formula. The formula includes a portion of funding based on activity—that is weighted student credits hours and outcomes—primary degrees granted to Oregon undergraduates. Starting in July 2018, 60% of the funding will be determined by outcomes. By contrast, 80% of 2016's budget was determined by student credit hours. This gradual move toward greater emphasis on degree production is intentional and stresses the importance of student success as measured by degree completion. The funding model plays to Western's historic advantage in promoting a campus where student success is a core value.

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities, AASCU, has identified affordability as one of the top ten issues in higher education. When setting tuition, Western places great emphasis on affordability. This year, the Western Board of Trustees approved the budget with an increase in tuition of 6.5%. With this increase, Western's resident undergraduate tuition remains among the lowest rates in Oregon. Moreover, the budget note will limit tuition in 2018-19 to no more than 5% for all Oregon public universities.

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Going forward, we must continue to be mindful of the overall cost of attendance to insure that Western remains affordable for Oregon families. One metric that we track is tuition and cost of attendance in relation to median household income for Oregon. Western continues to provide alternatives such as the Western Promise for those students and families that prefer to lock-in tuition for a four-year period. ***Access to higher education without affordability is not opportunity.***

In a few weeks, we will have final enrollment numbers and this will enable Western to determine the extent to which we will have a structural deficit. As we finished 2016-17, budget unit heads submitted budget reduction scenarios that were vetted by the Cabinet and forwarded to the University Budget Committee (UBC) for review and consideration. The alternatives totaled nearly \$3.5 million.

The UBC considered the proposals in light of the strategic plan with a goal of ensuring continued progress toward degree completion for our students and a focus on the other aspects of the plan. Following its deliberations and review, the UBC identified eighteen proposals (Tier 1) that totaled about \$3.2 million. These proposals remain under consideration as we enter 2017-18.

We will use a portion of our reserves in the current year to balance the budget, but Western will need to make decisions that lead to a balanced budget for 2018-19. This means that we will use the current year to engage in the planning and decision making process that ensures a balanced budget by July 1, 2018. At this point, we are projecting a current year deficit of about \$2 million, which will draw down university reserves below our target level of 15%. If unabated this level of spending will reduce our fund balance below the Board mandated minimum of 10% of total operating revenue which could lead to retrenchment activity to address the structural deficit.

With more than 85% of Western's expenditures devoted to personnel costs, it is important to have settled our collective bargaining agreements. I am pleased the university and faculty union reached a three-year agreement that provides:

- 2% salary increase for next year (with economic re-openers in the subsequent two years);
- creation of a labor/management committee to discuss contract issues and to help identify issues for subsequent bargaining sessions;
- improved job security for long-term NTTs;

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- automatic extension of the probationary period or “tenure clock” for tenure-track faculty who becomes a parent through birth or adoption during the probationary period;
- improved processes to handle overload and ensure faculty teaching loads are congruent with the contract.

I am optimistic that the new labor-management committee will provide a forum to identify key issues of mutual interest. Additionally, the committee will provide a way to clarify existing aspects of the contract during its implementation.

I am pleased that the seven public universities also reached an agreement with SEIU. The contract provides:

- Steps in both years of the Agreement;
- 1.00% COLA in the first year of the Agreement effective October 1, 2017;
- 1.00% COLA in the second year of the Agreement effective July 1, 2018.

4. Strategic Planning Implementation

Much of our work in 2017-18, will be defined by our strategic plan, *Forward Together*.

To begin that work, I convened a group of 30 colleagues from throughout campus on September 7th to develop next steps in implementation of the strategic plan. The participants worked in teams on the five initiatives: student success, academic excellence, community engagement, accountability, and sustainability & stewardship. The group used the strategic plan and the recently approved set of university goals to develop three goals for each area. This work continues as we start the year, and I will be calling the group together on October 6 to finalize the goals for each area. Implementation of the strategic plan will also lead us to create a **University Council**. The Council will consist of a broad cross-section of the university and its primary purpose will be to assess the extent to which Western is fulfilling its mission. The University Council will be responsible for determining the degree to which the university is meeting its mission and is engaged in comprehensive, ongoing, systematic assessment of its work that leads to mission fulfillment and continuous improvement. The council will also be crucial in our on-going effort to meet Northwest accreditation standards as we move through the next seven-year cycle.

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Western will also need to restructure its efforts related to information technology planning. This issue was cited as a concern in the last accreditation review and Adele Schepige and Bill Kernan have led discussions that have identified a new direction for planning and oversight of information technology. The charge for the **University Technology Committee** (UTC) will be finalized in the coming weeks and it will likely include such things as developing, and submitting recommendations related to the use of technology for teaching, learning, research and scholarship. The committee will provide recommendations and develop IT standards for new building spaces and renovation projects that are appropriate for our academic environment. The committee will also be expected to develop policies related to academic and information technology.

These two new committees, along with the **University Budget Committee** (UBC), will help the university engage in a more transparent integrated system of governance.

In late spring, we created the **University Budget Committee** and it was actively engaged in the budget discussions leading up to the July Board meeting. Moving into 2017-18, the UBC will fully participate in the budget process as we seek to balance Western's budget for 2018-19. A major determinant of the final status of our effort will be affected by enrollment and tuition revenue.

Western will initiate a refresh of the **campus master plan** in 2017-18. We will hire an external consultant to engage in the process by which we reevaluate the space and facility needs of the campus. Our last master plan used enrollment forecasts that have not been realized and we will need to calibrate our space and facility needs with our new realities related to enrollment. The plan will also need to be responsive to the changing needs of our learning environment for all students.

By way of example, the old College of Education building will remain vacant this year. With its location near the center of campus, we need to identify the best use for that space. One idea that is worthy of careful consideration relates to our commitment to student success. What if we imagine a student success center? The center would be a place where all students would gather to improve their academic performance. The center might house academic advising, the Student Enrichment Program, TRiO, the Math Center, the Writing Center, the Honors Program, and the Veterans Center. In such a space, students could receive support from faculty and staff as well as student peer tutors. By providing such an integrated set of services, I am confident that retention and graduation rates would improve because academic performance would improve. Finally, the center might include open space for collaboration and learning for all students.

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A final aspect of implementation relates to the development of an **enrollment management plan** that will lead to sustainable enrollments. The most important aspect of the enrollment management plan will be the identification of new markets, new degree programs and new (or enhanced) degree pathways. Oregon has over 500,000 persons with some college credit but no degree. Western could partner with Chemeketa Community College to offer a pathway to a bachelor's degree for these individuals at Chemeketa's downtown center in Salem. The program could be a cohort based program that provides a mix of face-to-face and distance education. The program might be designed to be offered year-round with additional teaching opportunities for faculty in summer.

A study by Stamats Market Research in 2016 identified the following graduate program areas for Western as opportunities: MS in exercise science, Doctor of Physical Therapy and a masters in organizational leadership. The exercise science program could be developed as a foundation for building capacity for the doctoral program. In its review of the organizational leadership program, Stamats identified our proximity to the state capitol as a major competitive advantage. There is no doubt that Western needs to explore additional graduate programs to diversify our graduate array. Additionally, the proximity to the state capitol might afford Western some unique undergraduate program opportunities too.

What's Possible?

Our mission is: Western Oregon University creates **lasting opportunities** for **student success** through **transformative education** and **personalized support**.

Western must strengthen our commitment to our long tradition of engaging our students in deep learning activities. Western's size and student-to-faculty ratio give us a comparative advantage in engaging all of our graduates in such high-impact practices. These core values are also aligned with our effort to better appreciate and understand what our students learn, inside and outside the classroom. It is through these channels of learning and discourse that our students are transformed by their experience at Western.

I have met alums from all periods of our proud history—from our normal school roots, to the days of OCE and WOSC, and to our modern era as Western Oregon University—in every case these alums cite the power of personalized support in the educational process.

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Next week we start another academic year and, for a significant number of freshmen, ***they will be the first in their families to attend college, and you will be their first professor. Other colleagues will be their first advisor, residence hall director, financial aid advisor, librarian, business office professional, college coach, or campus safety officer.*** Each of us is engaged in this ***transformational process*** which is designed to help each student graduate.

I ask each of you to re-commit yourselves to our core values and our mission. If we do this, Western will thrive in these turbulent times, we will build and cherish our community and we will be a sanctuary of learning that is dedicated to providing opportunity for all who enroll at Western.

After some time for questions and comments, I invite you to the Pacific Room for lunch. At your table in the Pacific room, you will find an ornament as a reminder of the **50th Tree lighting ceremony** on Friday, December 1. We are planning a number of new and exciting events around this year's celebration aimed at bringing more alumni to campus. I hope you and your families plan to attend and celebrate with our campus and surrounding communities.

Thank you and I wish all of you a great academic year. Go Wolves.

Respectfully,



Rex Fuller, President