EWU Strategic Planning Conference
Breakout Session Report

On Thursday, September 26th, Eastern Washington University held the 2nd Annual Strategic Plan Conference, “A Big Start – An IncREDible Future,” to celebrate the outstanding progress that has been made in the first year of the Strategic Plan and look ahead at year two actions.

Dr. Vincent Tinto, author of *Completing College: Rethinking Institutional Action*, was this year’s keynote speaker. The breakout sessions that followed Dr. Tinto’s speech focused on four important topics discussed in his book, the conditions for student success. The four breakout session topics included:

- Engagement/Involvement
- Assessment and Feedback
- Expectations
- Support

The sessions were led by facilitators and were designed to openly discuss with staff and faculty ways that EWU can enhance overall student success and help craft new university wide actions, as well as inform existing actions.

The information gathered has been compiled and outlined below. Clear themes emerged that EWU will use to make future decisions and help develop new goals for the university. It is input like this from staff and faculty that will help EWU continue to *inspire the future*.

**Emerging Themes**

**EWU’s Current Strengths:**

- TRIO / Eastern Advantage Program.

- Learning Commons:
  - Tutoring.
  - Provides collaborative learning.
  - Centralization of support teams.
  - Used survey results to adjust physical space to meet student needs.
- McNair Scholars.

Key Challenges Facing EWU:

- Silos exist regarding process for helping students access services:
  - Students need to know how to easily access and find the services they need.
  - Faculty and staff need to know the correct channel to send students through based on their specific needs. Some of these channels include housing, Learning Commons, medical, disabilities, etc.

- EWU does not have an Early Warning System:
  - EWU needs a universitywide holistic system in order to help students succeed early on.
  - An Early Warning System requires faculty involvement, but there are opportunities for staff to be involved as well.

- There is an absence of the following things at EWU:
  - Teaching and learning center.
  - Early Warning System.
  - Faculty “PUB” or space for faculty to meet each other and forge collaboration and community.
  - Process for knowing when to get the following groups or individuals involved in student situations:
    - Advising
    - Mentors
    - Student
    - Housing
  - Process for knowing how to design student interventions and who to send them to.
  - Method of accountability for faculty and staff that show intervention with the student was attempted.
  - EWU assessment plan or program.
    - A methodology for a constant monitoring of and adjustment to how students were (or weren’t) learning, from day to day and quarter to quarter.
Limited resources or methods for:
- Identifying students that are struggling.
- Distribution of NSF Grant information and reports.
- Training on assessment at higher levels.
- Support services for students enrolled in Disability Services who need extra assistance and don’t always request those accommodations.

Ideas for new models, strategies or programs:

- Mentoring:
  - Each department needs mentoring.
  - Faculty and staff can mentor incoming freshman for an entire year.
  - ELI students often feel more comfortable with someone they can relate to.
  - Mentoring students often drives students to become mentors to other students.

- First Year Experience:
  - Assess if students are ready for college.
  - Extend orientation.
    - Discuss how to email professors.
    - Involve Career Services around choosing majors.
    - Have faculty reiterate orientation in the first year courses.
    - Involve the Writer’s Center in orientation.

- Online practices:
  - Determine best practices for an online community where students can receive personal guidance.
  - Have students complete more homework online to ensure papers aren’t lost.

- Group assistance and support:
  - Have PLUS group members assist other members.
  - Build group work into course curriculum.
Next Steps:

- Create better partnerships between staff and faculty. This helps provide additional support for each other and for students.

- Consider incorporating staff and faculty led learning communities or partnering staff and faculty with learning communities.

- Develop more common spaces. The library is popular, but students need other spaces.

- Provide tailored assistance based on the type of student (i.e. commuters).
  - One size doesn’t fit all. Assign students to faculty members based on specific needs.

Compilation of Notes

The comprehensive notes from each breakout session are below.

Engagement/Involvement

- What are we already doing in the area of involvement/engagement that we’re feeling pretty good about? What have we learned from this work?
  - Trio/Eastern Advantage
    - Work with 250 students due to money
    - Self-assessment to move forward
  - Project Base Learning
    - Opportunity to grow
    - Most effective related to capstones
  - Research and Creative Works Symposium
    - Older students mentoring younger students
    - Faculty mentoring is a plus and McNair Scholars
  - Home Program
    - Activist in residence kicking off Fall 2013
  - All Health Sciences: Interprofessional Education/Organizations at Riverpoint
    - Health care team challenge in the spring
    - EWU needs to step up with money to participate
o Volunteer (faculty and staff) where students “hang out” to engage with students to provide support and assistance
o Class topic connections between courses
o Connection to service learning and the classroom
o The better the student experience, the better the chance they will give back (i.e. donations)
o Get Lit: academic bridging

• **What are the key challenges we face in the area of engagement/involvement?**
  o Difficult to document
    ▪ Putting energy into doing vs. documenting
  o Programs with smaller focus – scalability
    ▪ Fewer students vs. serving/supporting entire student enrollment
  o Absence of teaching learning center
    ▪ If faculty cannot write the learning outcome, how can they assess it?
o Need a faculty “Pub” or space for faculty to meet each other and forge collaboration/community
  o Silos
    ▪ How do our students know how to access/find services?
o System issues/barriers
  ▪ Need more classes to allow our students to graduate on time
  ▪ Effective and efficient
  ▪ LLC registration
  o Get Lit
    ▪ How do we assess the meaning of this type of event to our students?

• **Are there new models/ideas/strategies/programs surrounding the area of engagement/involvement that are of interest to us?**
  o Learning communities are currently in practice at community college
    ▪ Is this an opportunity for EWU?
o QSI Conference
  ▪ Create community with faculty and staff. Break down silos to create more connectivity for students
  o Online community
    ▪ Look at best practices
      • i.e. students being guided personally
- Riverpoint
  - Learning community
- Infrastructure around service learning to support growth
- “Our Shirt” program
  - Let students design a shirt annually. Have people vote and then select the winner to be sold for $5 (USF program)
- This conference/breakout session allows all to re-engage and come together around common discussion

- Should we be doing more in the area of engagement/involvement
  - Continue conversations
    - Could be cost efficient
  - New way to do business by engaging

- What are the most important and clear first steps to get going?
  - Partnering faculty and staff with learning communities
  - Better use of My EWU Portal
  - Make EWU logo merchandise more broadly available
  - Use national championships as marketing/admissions opportunities
  - Upcoming “Listening Tour” for revised Gen Ed
  - Space for faculty, staff, admin to engage away from students
  - Career discussion early on in the classroom
    - Enhance discussion from what’s your major to what are you going to do with your education

Assessment and Feedback

- What are we already doing in the area of assessment and feedback that we’re feeling pretty good about? What have we learned from this work?
  - Pre/post test
  - TRIO Program
  - Writer’s Center
    - Increasing ESL students visiting Writing Center
  - McNair
  - Student Financial Services
    - Looking at “finances”
• Related to drop-out
  o Using/testing a model this year
  o Banner data
• Related to GPA and test scores
  o Large Enrollment Class
    ▪ Faculty interest in study by R2R
      • For example: looking at freshman behaviors in class to predict their college years
  o Area Coordinator Living in Dorm
    ▪ Student/A.C. Communication/feedback there as an alert system with this direct communication
      • “Socio-gram”
  o Disability Services
    ▪ Immediate feedback
  o Revisiting Student Learning Outcome (SLO) at department level
  o Early, constant quizzes by some faculty (in-class)
  o Learning Commons
    ▪ Surveys
      • Surveyed students and adjusted physical areas (‘quiet/loud’)
      • ASEWU response = positive assessment
    ▪ Tutoring
    ▪ Early Warning
  o Canvas
    ▪ Learning
    ▪ Feedback from students and faculty
    ▪ Clarification
    ▪ Quick access
  o NSF Grant
    ▪ Look at transfer student population
    ▪ Increasing retention/graduation rates
    ▪ STEM transfers
    ▪ Look at satisfaction/perceptions
  o EWU employees communicate across campus and status
  o Online-Pearson Dist have data they can share with us for tracking a students scores, use “help” button, etc.
    ▪ This is pro-active
• **What key challenges in the area of assessment and feedback?**

  *Adapting to this; change/new programs*
  
  o Rethinking outcomes/goals for students
    - Willingness on faculty to change
  
  o Process takes time – change
  
  o Change within department (faculty <-> faculty) and across departments
  
  o Systematic Student Learning Outcomes – theory for outcome
    - A **BIG** program
  
  o Give immediate feedback to faculty and students
  
  o Knowing where we’re going or where you want students to end up is a “must”
  
  o NSF Grant
    - Distribution of information and reports
      - Needs to go to deans and faculty and not stop wherever it stops
  
  o How do we take the next step?
    - When do we get the following involved?
      - Advising
      - Coaches
      - Student
      - Housing
    - How/what to do after assessment?
      - If student doesn’t expect to be approached with outcome of unofficial assessment, there is the potential for a problem with a “private” student
  
  o We need to know the channel to send the student through
    - For example. Housing, Learning Commons, medical, disabilities
  
  o What is TRIO & DSS and Dean of Students for?
  
  o Is “Retention Specialist” on our EWU search engine?
  
  o Others dismiss assessment as evaluation or monitoring
  
  o How do the 2 sides (positive assessment and negative assessment) come together?
  
  o How to design interventions and who to go to
  
  o Does EWU have a statement of what “assessment” is?
    - And what its purpose is?
  
  o Needs to be acknowledged from up above. **More coordination and training** on assessment at higher levels
    - It takes many levels
    - Incorporated in EWU culture
o Nomenclature
  ▪ “Early Warning System”
  ▪ “We Care” system

o Need EWU assessment plan / program

o Major decisions done, senior standing, - still have not taken math or math assessment

o 13,000 students have one person
  ▪ Who should Dean of Students send all students who need some type of support to?

o Is it up to faculty to notice and act?
  ▪ Or think “this IS college?”

o We know initiative of assessment is not widely known
  ▪ Cohesive set of expectations around finals
  ▪ Ideals of assessment are not cohesive

• Are there new models/ideas/strategies/programs surrounding the area of assessment and feedback that are of interest to us?
  o Move new programs to Learning Commons
    ▪ Examples:
      • Contact faculty with results
      • What do we want students to be able to do at graduation?
      • What kind of learning?

  o A central Hub to facilitate post assessment
    ▪ One contact – not 3 or 4

  o Invite student on quiz/assignments to “come see me”

  o Bring flowchart to every faculty and staff member that tells where to go/send student

  o Post-major declaration students need a separate type of assessment
    ▪ Compared to early warning and first year students

  o After 45 credits, make it mandatory that students meet with their advisor

  o Each department needs mentoring, community plan, activities, etc.

  o No major declaration until GECR’s are complete
    ▪ Math/reading assessments get missed

  o Do homework online
    ▪ No lost paper

  o Informal mentoring
    ▪ Faculty and staff can mentor incoming freshman for an entire year

  o Orientation
- **How to email professors**
  - This is college, not high school
- **Maybe for all first year classes, faculty reiterate orientation, writer’s center**
- **Curriculum for success plugged-in across all departments and schools**
  - Sociology, Science, Math, English, etc. cross all classes
- **Each department needs an assessment zealot**
  - Will benefit students = success
  - Zealot = in touch, acculturate colleagues
    - Little expense
  - Already doing, but needs revised:
    - Reading Center
      - Reading assessment for every freshman?
    - Composition Program
    - Note taking class or tutoring

- **Should we be doing more in the area of assessment and feedback? What should our “crawl, walk, run” strategy be?**
  - Crawl
    - Add feedback
    - Clear point of access
    - Definitions
    - Imbed assessment within department
    - Student success as a goal
  - Walk
    - Serve other disciplines
  - Run
    - Clarity

- **What are the most important and clear first steps for us to get going?**
  - Include feedback more
    - We get caught up on assessment. Think student success!
    - Feedback is the best benefit to students
  - Need:
    - Institutional support = funding
    - Clear expectations and definition
Introduce same issues we’ve been discussing but focus on student success
   ▪ Think from perspective of students interest and benefit and less from ours

Expectations

• What are we already doing in the area of expectations that we’re feeling pretty good about? What have we learned from this work?
  o What are expectations?
    ▪ What are our strengths?
      • Develop relationships with our student populations (rural reservations, not always urban)
      • Do a good job with upper division students, but struggle a bit more to make homes for and relationships with our lower division students
  o Communications Disorders Department
    ▪ Track skills, goals, competencies
  o Physical Therapy
    ▪ Students have clear vision that helps them set expectations. Goals help set expectations
  o Journalism
    ▪ Put in professional settings to emulate professional studies
  o Economics
    ▪ The more we expect of students, the more they achieve unrealistically high expectations
  o Housing/Residence Life
    ▪ Higher than status quo
    ▪ Set bar higher, not always partying
    ▪ Other activities
  o Health and Wellness
    ▪ Surveys
      • Perception of student drinking is higher than actual numbers
      • Our university perception is that students cannot drink and be successful
    ▪ Level of success: student not as confident. Not as successful as others
  o Standards of Admission
- Cultural challenges
- Complex situations
- Support levels

- **What are the key challenges in the area of expectations?**
  - Many students work, have families or complicated family lives, so they cut corners
    - How do we help them balance this?
      - Ideas:
        - Work in groups
        - Provide assistance during other hours than 8-5
        - Class study groups
    - Set individual student expectations – some students can be pushed harder than others and can accomplish more
      - This is difficult to do in large classes
    - What is helpful to know about students before classes begin?
      - Could SOAR (system that evaluates student progress to graduation) be used to do it?
        - Is this info confidential? What do students want faculty to know
    - Faculty are knowledgeable/the expert about what students are capable of
    - Identify students who need special attention
    - Watch assignments to determine if students need assistance
    - Students receiving support from Disability Services are identified but do not always request accommodations
      - Set high expectations but need more support services
      - There are some students who don’t fit the categories but still need the extra assistance for various reasons
        - How do we deal with them?
    - Students don’t realize how well they are doing – they sell themselves short and lack self-confidence when they should have it
      - High expectation of students: high expectation of yourself
        - Burden on instructor
      - Our students often don’t have confidence in their own abilities. They start with negative ideas and let that color their experience.
    - Early warning system requires faculty involvement
Faculty need to encourage students
- You will succeed, not you will fail

Set realistic expectations of students
1st quarter faculty are important

Entry assessment must be accurate
- Makes class level difficult

TRIO surveys
- Large classes – make student success difficult to accomplish

300 – 400 Gen Ed classes
- The large amount of their grade determined at end (final project, final) makes it difficult to get feedback to student early in the quarter

- Are there new models/ideas/strategies/programs surrounding the area of expectations that are of interest to us?
  - Sometimes ignore culture and focus on learning. Students learn differently
  - PLUS
    - Group according to ability
    - Have members of the groups assist others
    - Challenge: How to get students to PLUS groups?
    - Syllabus
      - Expectation to go to help groups
      - Challenge: Cannot require students to attend help groups
  - How to schedule group assistance?
    - Lab time?
    - CPAC course changes
    - Build into courses
  - Helping students learn to help themselves
    - Need to figure out how to support vs. babysit
  - Urban and Regional Planning
    - Varied learning methods and different experiences
  - First Year Experience goal
    - Are students ready for college? This needs to be assessed
    - Contract from student asking if they’re ready
  - How people react to failures
• Now: internalize failures and personalize rather than see it as situational
• Need personal contact to help them
  • Develop relationships (i.e. that one professor who changed your life)
  
  o 1st generation students
  • Teach how to cope
  o Train more Community Advisors to talk to classes
    • Teaching students how to ask questions
    • How to coach students
    • Teaching students how to read a syllabus
  o Connect students with peer tutors earlier
    • Consider paying them?
    • Figure out how to create time for this in their schedules
  o Ask for feedback from students
  o Mentoring
    • ELI students feel more comfortable with someone who they can relate to
    • Mentoring students often helps students become mentors to other students
    • Many employees are EWU grads

• What are the most important and clear first steps for us to get going?
  o Build partnerships with faculty and staff to provide support
  o Bridging groups together
  o One size doesn’t fit all
    • Making sure that there are enough faculty to work with students
    • Assign students to faculty members based on specific needs
  o Multiple mentors from different places
  o Probing
    • Faculty should spend time doing this before and after class
    • Talk to a couple of students each day.
    • Students need a “home”/community
  o Make easy to change majors. Changing majors doesn’t mean failure
  o Resources
    • Space (physical – library is popular) – but we need other spaces
    • Staff
• Technical support (i.e. Library, IT)
  ▪ Learning Communities
    • Staff-led?
    • Tied to classes
  ▪ Time
    • Smaller class size
    • Advising hours
    • Writing assignment time requirements
  ▪ Streamline processes
    • One stop shop for faculty
    • Resource book

Support

• What are we already doing in the area of support that we’re feeling pretty good about? What have we learned from this work?
  o Learning Commons
    ▪ Provides a link to collaborative learning
    ▪ Group assignments / cooperative learning lead to better performance
      • It helps to address this in syllabus
    ▪ Centralization of support teams in Learning Commons
    ▪ Could we expand the Learning Commons type support elements to online learning?
  o Summer Bridge Program
    ▪ Social integration is a fringe benefit
    ▪ Could be scaled to accommodate more students
    ▪ Could also have more iterations
  o Student Clubs
    ▪ Increases student social engagement

• What are the key challenges we face in the area of support?
  o No Early Warning System
    ▪ Not overly burdensome
      • Software possibilities exist
      • Universal use
      • Administrative support could help
• Assigning work early helps provide feedback to the instructor early on
• Consider student self-assessments
• Challenge around how to encourage/generate faculty involvement
  • Tie involvement in these initiatives to tenure measures
• Should feel more helpful than punitive
• A lot of data already exists but there aren’t resources to use. We need a better way to ID students
• We need a method of accountability to show that we tried to apply intervention
• A university-wide/holistic Early Warning System would be better
• Predictive analytic systems already exist at EWU
• Acknowledge good performance too
  • i.e. completing student success, punching tickets
  • Maybe for faculty too

• **Are there new models/ideas стратегий/programы surrounding the area of support that are of interest to us?**
  o Adaptive learning
    • EDUCAUSE article
  o ALEKS is an example
  o Integrate study skills into curriculum/academic support
    • Tutoring
  o A standardized model on study skills (simpler)
  o Adaptive learning is more accurately “adaptive teaching”
  o More localized (departments) academic support
    • Location and time
  o Replicate PLUS/Learning Commons in more areas
  o First Year Experience
    • Part of Gen Ed
    • Reduce Gen Ed credit requirements
      • Can we integrate more?
    • Extended orientations
    • Seminars
    • Weekend
    • Campus social app (like twitter)
      • Provides social integration
- Make Gen Ed more discipline specific
- Career Services involvement around choosing majors

- **Should we be doing more in the area of support? What should our “crawl, walk, run” strategy be?**
  - To-do list:
    - Scale-up Summer Bridge program
    - Student clubs for freshman
    - Dining Services on art side of campus

- **What are the most important and clear first steps for us to get going?**
  - Early Warning System
    - Look into current work existing committee is doing
  - Provide catering/common spaces at more locations (i.e. Art)
    - Even a portable
  - Faculty buy-in / incentive to student support efforts (long term step)
    - Tied to tenure
  - Advising loads (long term step)
  - UC Davis (RHAT’s) (long term step)
    - Resident Hall advising by peers
  - Mentor programs are great (but need more resources)
  - Tailored assistance based on student type (i.e. commuters)
  - Academic/student support “SWAT” team
  - Speaking to integration:
    - Example: Write scholarship essay in English Comp Class