



News Release

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WESTERN ONE OF 12 SELECTED FOR NATIONAL PROJECT

St. Joseph, Mo. — Sept. 30, 2003 —Missouri Western State College received national recognition for its first-year student programs. The college has been selected as one of only 12 colleges and universities in the nation, and the only one in Missouri, to be a founding member of the Foundations of Excellence Project. The purpose of the project, which is sponsored by the Policy Center on the First Year of College and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), is to develop a model for designing and executing an effective set of programs for students in their first year of college.

As a participant, Western will conduct surveys and evaluate their programs over the next 15 months. The results of those studies will be used to develop a national first-year program model, which will be a resource for public colleges and universities to develop and refine their overall approach to educating new students.

Originally 123 colleges and universities were chosen to offer input into the project, and of those, almost 70 applied for selection as one of 12 founding institutions.

“After a very competitive review of almost 70 colleges and universities, Western was selected as one of 12 founding institutions because of our demonstrated commitment to both the Foundations Project in Phase I and our present focus on current first-year students,” said Dr. David Arnold, vice president of academic and student affairs.

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“We at Western were seen as ready and able to be a national leader by the Policy Center staff.”

“We have a well-established first-year program. We were chosen based on the strength of Western’s students, staff and administration,” said Bob Klostermeyer, acting dean of student development

The studies will integrate several aspects of the first-year experience, including recruiting, admissions, housing, orientation, advising and teaching. Klostermeyer said the college will first take a current practice inventory of Western’s first-year structure and policies and inventory the data sources for first-year students. “Evaluation of our first-year program will allow us to identify where we are strong and those areas that need improvement.”

A task force from the college will identify performance indicators in order to evaluate Western’s advancement toward fulfilling the aspirational goals of the Foundations of Excellence Project. Also, the National Survey of Student Engagement will determine a sample group and conduct a survey of Western first-year students.

“It’s one of the biggest honors I’ve been associated with since I’ve been at Western,” said Klostermeyer.

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Missouri Western State College is a four-year public institution providing a blend of traditional liberal arts and professional degree programs. The college offers student-centered, high quality instruction that focuses on experience-based learning, community service, and state-of-the-art technology. Western is located in St. Joseph, Mo. and is committed to the educational, economic, cultural and social development of the region it serves.