



# News Release

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## **WESTERN LOOKS TO IMPROVE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS**

**St. Joseph, Mo.** —May 27, 2003—Working to enhance learning and retention of first-year college students, Missouri Western State College is one of 123 colleges and universities offering input to establish “Hallmarks of Excellence in the First Year of College,” a model for how to design and execute an effective set of programs for the first year of college.

The 123 institutions, all members of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), are partnering with the First Year Policy Center, which is hosted by Brevard College of North Carolina. “This project will develop and validate a model of excellence for the first year specifically for AASCU institutions, and develop a process to help campuses measure the attainment of excellence as embodied in these ‘hallmarks,’” said John Gardner, executive director of the Policy Center on the First Year of College. “By the project’s end, a research- and AASCU-based model will be available to enhance student learning and retention.”

Bob Klostermeyer, assistant professor of criminal justice and legal studies, is serving as the chair of Western’s Hallmarks Advisory Task Force. The 14-member task force is looking at all aspects of students’ first-year experiences at Western, he said.

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“It requires us to look at our entire first-year program: the direction, content and substance, and ask ourselves, ‘Are we continuing to push for the best first-year program we can possibly have?’ The set of hallmarks will serve as a model to which institutions would aspire.”

Western’s task force has been meeting since April and will submit a report on June 15.

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.

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