



News Release

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WESTERN LEAGUE FOR EXCELLENCE CAMPAIGN IS IN THE FINAL HOMESTRETCH

St. Joseph, Mo. —April 12, 2005— Over 70 volunteers are hard at work conducting a community campaign to enroll members in the Western League for Excellence, an honorary society of annual fund donors to the Missouri Western State College Foundation, according to Emil Sechter, president of Commerce Bank and chair of the campaign. The goal is to build a strong base of annual fund support for St. Joseph's hometown university of the future.

“Western is a huge asset to our community. It greatly enhances our education and cultural environment and is a very big factor in our economic development efforts,” said Sechter.

The campaign was planned by Western's director of development, Jerry Pickman. It is called the “Going for the Gold Campaign” to complement Western's marketing strategies. The development committee of the Western Foundation's board of directors is serving as the volunteer leadership group. In addition to Sechter, there are three vice chairs: Pete Gray, Carol Moya and Al Purcell. Each vice chair coordinates a group of “coaches” who in turn coordinate a team of “Olympians” who are making visitations to enroll individuals and businesses into the Western League for Excellence, said Pickman.

Those who enroll as League donors are in one of five giving levels: Founder's Circle (\$5,000 and above), Regent's Circle (\$1,000-\$4,999), President's Circle (\$500-\$999), Cabinet's Circle (\$250-\$499), and the Dean's Circle (\$100-\$249). All who enroll in 2005 will be listed as charter members for as long as they maintain their membership. Members have specified their giving level, make annual unrestricted contributions, and have expressed an intent (not a pledge) to continue their annual gifts in the future.

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Dan Nicoson, vice president for institutional advancement at Western, said the requirement that donors express an intent to continue their support builds consistency in the annual fund program. He emphasizes that this is not a pledge that the Western Foundation would or could try to enforce at a future time. Those who are active members of the Western League for Excellence will receive annual reminder appeals at scheduled times. Future annual campaigns will not have volunteers call on them because they are already enrolled members and other direct mail appeals will not be sent to them.

Nicoson points out, “The great universities of our country benefit from a tradition of widespread annual fund support from various constituent groups. The Western League for Excellence is the beginning of such a tradition at Missouri Western State University, which will be the institution’s name as of Aug. 28. Western’s history is a saga of community support and encouragement. It is fitting that the community will provide the initial strength to the Western League for Excellence.”

All of the members of the President’s Cabinet at Western are already among the charter members. The members of the foundation’s board of directors have generously demonstrated their support for the campaign with 29 of the 31 members enrolled to date. There are already four charter members of the Founder’s Circle. They are an anonymous trust, an anonymous individual, Pete and Staci Gray, and Gray Automotive, Inc.

The teams of volunteers have been asked to complete as many of their visitations as possible by April 15, and the volunteer leadership will meet on April 19 to assess the progress. The campaign will expand later this month to seek the support of Western employees and a mail appeal will reach out to Western’s alumni. The development committee’s objective is to add \$250,000 to the 2005 annual fund through Western League for Excellence support.

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The community volunteers include:

Chair -- Emil Sechter

Vice Chairs – Pete Gray, Carol Moya and Al Purcell

Coaches – Cheryl Bilby, Todd Ehlert, Karen Graves, Stan Hall, Steve Hamilton, Bill Hurley, Chris Looney, Corky Marquart, Bill McMurray, Lee Sawyer, Bob Simpson, Bob Slater, Loah Stallard, and Barbara Wurtzler

Olympians – Ron Auxier, Dave Bahner, Donna Jean Boyer, Brian Bradley, Steve Briggs, Chip Brock, Bob Butler, Dirck Clark, Dan Danford, Bob Dempster, Sharon Evers, Stephanie Glenn, Jane Graves, Brett Hausman, Doug Heck, Cort Hegarty, Joe Houts, David Jones, Glenda Kelly, Bruce Kneib, Melissa Koch, Kurt Kretzinger, Trish LeRette, Steve McCamy, Lisa Michaelis, Larry Morrow, Jim Murphy, Michael Nellestein, Shanda Parrish, John Pinzino, Kim Ray, Eileen Schartz, Brad Scott, Bob Swymeler, David Wegenka, and Mark Woodbury.

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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.