AQIP Category 8 Planning Continuous Improvement

Processes (P)

8P1 Planning processes - In developing a strategic plan, Western seeks input from all regional stakeholders including community leaders, alumni, Board of Governors, students, faculty, staff, and administration. Western holds five to seven open forums to assure full participation by stakeholders. Stakeholder feedback is collected at all forums, analyzed, and provided to the Strategic Plan Steering Committee for further analysis and discussion. If clear opportunities are identified, the process of goal development moves forward. If further stakeholder input is needed, additional forums are held. Once clear opportunities areas are identified, the Strategic Plan Steering Committee reviews the numerous opportunity areas and refines the opportunities into specific areas for consideration. Options are provided to the various teams at Western for feedback including the Board of Governors, President’s Cabinet, Deans’ Council, SALT, and the faculty, staff, and student governance groups. Final strategic plan opportunity areas (including goals, objectives and action items) are recommended by the President to the Board of Governors for final approval.

In addition, Western’s planning process is intentionally aligned with the nine AQIP Categories (Figure O.2) and is under continuous implementation from development through full implementation. Western’s vision, mission, and values guide all planning at Western enabling Western to support the educational, economic, cultural, and social development needs of the people and the region through a focus on applied learning.

Once the strategic plan is approved by Western’s Board of Governors and Western’s mission, vision, and values are reaffirmed, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, composed of institution-wide representatives, meets quarterly to oversee the progress on the implementation of the plan. This systematic review of progress on plan goals and objectives assures regular progress as well as updates on current AQIP Action Projects and AQIP Systems Portfolio updates. Implementation teams for each of the current strategic plan seven opportunity areas/AQIP Categories and each AQIP Action Project Team leader reports at each Strategic Plan Steering Committee meeting. The Strategic Plan Steering Committee reports annual progress on implementing Western’s Strategic Plan through an Annual Progress Report distributed widely through print and electronic media across the campus, community, region, and state. This process has worked successfully for developing and implementing the most recent strategic plans: The Western Advantage (2002-2007) and Building the New American Regional University (2007-2012).

Western’s planning process is systematic and comprehensive. Every five years, Western renews its commitment to strategic planning through a complete review of institutional priorities and needs, allowing all aspects of the Western community have input into the development of strategic goals and the final focus of the plan. Western’s approach to maintaining its AQIP Systems Portfolio is equally systematic. As part of the regular Strategic Plan Steering Committee meeting process, Western reports quarterly on AQIP Systems Portfolio changes and annually updates its AQIP Systems Portfolio to assure continuously current processes, results, and improvements.

Western’s AQIP Action Projects are equally systematic and comprehensive. Western has launched nine AQIP Action Projects since 2004 (Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1 Western AQIP Action Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AQIP Action Project Title</th>
<th>Dates of implementation</th>
<th>Alignment With AQIP Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applied Learning</td>
<td>2004-2007</td>
<td>1 – Helping Student Learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Engagement</td>
<td>2004-2007</td>
<td>3 – Understanding Students &amp; Other Stakeholder Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating Quality</td>
<td>2004-2007</td>
<td>5 – Leading and Communicating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Graduate Programs</td>
<td>2007-2009</td>
<td>1 – Helping Students Learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>2007-2009</td>
<td>1 – Helping Student Learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Measurement and Assessment</td>
<td>2007-2009</td>
<td>7 – Measuring Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preserving Gold</td>
<td>2009-2012</td>
<td>5 – Leading and Communicating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money Matters for Life</td>
<td>2009-2012</td>
<td>3 – Understanding Students and Other Stakeholders Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion of Available Courses through Distance</td>
<td>2009-2012</td>
<td>1 – Helping Students Learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Technologies</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 – Understanding Students and Other Stakeholder Needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Progress on Western’s AQIP Action Projects is reported externally annually and reported internally quarterly at Strategic Plan Steering Committee meetings. Western develops and implements AQIP Action Projects as long term projects that become a permanent part of Western operations. Even in challenging economic times, Western has committed funding to ensure that all (previous and current) AQIP Action Projects are fully implemented and ongoing.

8P2 Selecting short- and long-term strategies – Short-term strategies are identified through the variety of teams (Student Affairs Leadership Team, Enrollment Development Team, Technology Management Team, Deans’ Council, Development Council, etc.) that manage the daily operations at Western. Most teams can implement routine changes and adjustments almost immediately since teams are staffed with operational leaders. When recommendations and decisions impact additional sectors of the institution, teams have sufficient joint membership to facilitate routine communications as strategies are being developed. To formalize and communicate across all aspects of the institution, short- and long-term strategies are proposed through the Governance structure (Figure O.4), specifically the Governance Advisory Council. Both short- and long-term strategies are aligned with Western’s strategic plan/AQIP categories.

Western’s leadership teams, including the Strategic Plan Steering Committee, function under the direction of the President’s Cabinet. Advisory and governance boards meet regularly to provide input into short- and long-term strategies for improving Western’s operations and regional impact. Whether a short- or long-term strategy, all actions are aligned with Western’s mission, vision, and values.

Another aspect of selecting short- and long-term strategies is the role of program accreditation in continuous improvement. Western has numerous academic programs that seek recognition of quality and continuous improvement through national accreditation processes (Figure 8R2). Teams across Western work collaboratively to support accreditation success. For example, as part of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) review, all 13 teacher education degree programs work together to prepare a joint report as well as individual program reports for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The teacher education programs maintain an assessment system that routinely monitors student progress through the programs. The same emphasis on student learning and program effectiveness is a component of all Western accreditation processes.

8P3 Developing key action plans to support organizational strategies - As a part of the development of the strategic plan, stakeholders identify opportunity areas. The current strategic plan includes seven opportunity areas: Building Graduate Programs, Enhancing Academic Programs, Sustaining Institutional Accreditation Priorities, Building Connections, Using Measurement and Assessment, Valuing People, and Building and Managing Resources. Within each opportunity area, stakeholders identify goals, objectives, and action items. Each level further refines the exact steps need for goal attainment. All aspects of the action plans involve Western internal and external stakeholders. For example, in Western’s Strategic Plan Building the New American Regional University (2007-2012), Opportunity Area Five - Using Measurement and Assessment has two goals: 1) develop the framework to support institutional research and assessment, and 2) create and implement a comprehensive University assessment plan focused on student learning and mission effectiveness. Both are long-term goals with two – four objectives identifying the steps guiding full implementation. In addition, each objective has specific, short-term action items that direct immediate, short-term progress toward objective/goal completion.

Western’s four administrative units: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Financial Planning and Administration, and University Advancement all report annually on progress toward short-and long-term goal implementation through the annual reporting process.

8P4 Coordinating planning processes, organizational strategies, and action plans – Western coordinates and aligns institutional strategies and action plans within Western’s legislated mission of applied learning, mission review processes by the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE), and input received from various institutional teams, accreditation requirements, and advisory boards supporting institutional effectiveness. Functional and regular planning occurs throughout Western’s leadership teams, with each team communicating through regular meetings, minutes, and reports (Figure O.4). The Strategic Planning Steering Committee is a key organizational structure in coordinating all planning processes. With regular meetings and a thorough reporting/recordkeeping process, this group of nearly 40 leaders from all stakeholder groups supports coordinated communication and activities.

Western must coordinate planning processes with external oversight bodies such as the MDHE and the CBHE. The CBHE and consists of nine members appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Missouri
Senate. CBHE approves new degree programs, establishes guidelines for appropriation requests, approves new university or residence centers, establishes admission status, develops policies and procedures on resident status of students, establishes guidelines for transfer of students among Missouri state educational institutions, and collects comparable data for all Missouri institutions. The CBHE directs the activities and operations of the MDHE.

The Western Board of Governors (seven members appointed by the Governor), Western’s President, four Vice Presidents, numerous deans and directors provide the executive/administrative leadership for Western’s planning. The President’s Cabinet, consisting of the President, Executive Assistant, four vice presidents, and the Director of External Relations, meets weekly to plan and coordinate the general objectives of the institution and its budget planning.

The Governance Advisory Council (GAC), chaired by the Provost, consists of the four vice presidents, the Associate Provost, the Associate Vice President of Student Affairs, the Director of External Relations, the academic deans, the associate deans from Student Affairs, and the presidents and vice presidents of the three governance groups of the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and the Student Government Association. GAC facilitates communications within the university, acting as a clearing-house for proposals originating within the university. It insures that existing policies and procedures have been discussed by all campus governance groups, compares new proposals with existing policies and procedures, and submits proposals to the President for action. Several institutional committees contribute to planning and submit their proposals or recommendations to GAC for communication and reaction campus wide such as Calendar, Classification, University Hearing Panel, Cultural Events, Equal Opportunity, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Campus Environmental Impact, Registration Procedures, Safety Committee, Traffic Appeals Board, Legislative, Admission and Graduation Committee, Enrollment Development Team, Student Affairs Leadership Team, and Technology Management Team. GAC meets regularly in an open forum.

The Deans’ Council, chaired by the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs, is comprised of deans and directors from academic and support units. The Deans’ Council evaluates and implements academic policy, plans budgets, generates new programs, and responds to the academic needs of the institution. The Vice President of Student Affairs is an ex-officio member of the Deans’ Council and regularly attends Deans’ Council meeting to facilitate accurate and timely communication. The Vice President for Student Affairs chairs the Student Affairs Leadership Team which oversees four areas of student affairs including Student Development, Student Services, Health and Wellness, and Academic Support Services. Teams within the Divisions of University Advancement and Financial Planning and Administration follow a similar process for coordinating planning.

Deans of the College of Liberal Arts and Science, the College of Professional Studies, and the Craig School of Business meet with the chairpersons’ councils or school faculty on a regular basis to facilitate budgeting and planning and to respond to the needs of the Colleges/School. They also hold regular meetings for the membership of the two colleges and school to facilitate unit wide knowledge of important issues. To coordinate planning and actions, the Faculty Senate and Staff Senate meet regularly with the administration to support the overall operations of the institution. Finally, the academic deans meet regulary with the Graduate Council.

The Student Government Association (SGA), composed of elected representatives from the student body, provides the primary means for student participation in institutional decision-making. SGA officers and members frequently and routinely serve as student members of institutional committees (e.g. major institutional search committees, Strategic Planning Steering Committee, Budget Advisory Council, Online Attendance Policy Committee). The SGA Constitution and Bylaws define the communication system within the student organization. SGA consists of the executive branch followed by the legislative and president-appointed standing committees. The Western Activities Council (WAC) and the Residence Council (RC) represent specific student interest groups.

8P5 Defining objectives, selecting measures, and setting performance targets - Western encourages a systems-wide process for selecting measures and setting performance projections. Each strategic planning group defines action items for goals and objectives in its area. Careful attention is paid to precise wording that captures the exact result intended and to identifying a clear measurement tool for documenting success. Each group creates an implementation timeline and identifies the individuals responsible for overseeing implementation of each action item. The Strategic Planning Steering Committee receives regular, quarterly progress reports for the goals and objectives in each opportunity area and AQIP Action Project and provides
feedback to the individual groups in quarterly meetings. In addition, all units provide annual reports on individual unit progress toward identified plan goals as well as the annual report on the strategic plan. These reports are reviewed by the individual unit employees prior to forwarding to the next supervisory level. All reports are reviewed by the appropriate vice president.

**8P6 Linking strategy selection and action plans with resources and future needs** – Western reviews all available resources including employees, community resources, institutional space, and equipment to best match strategic planning needs and priorities. In addition to identifying physical and human resources, Western designates funds each year to the Strategic Plan Implementation Fund (SPIF) to assist in promoting strategic plan goals and objectives. Grants and private funding also provide additional resources to achieve objectives. For example, since 2004 Western has initiated nine AQIP Action Projects that were completed for AQIP purposes, but continued for Western improvement purposes (Figure 8.1). Western identifies Action Projects that address long term needs enabling the project to fully develop and have an ongoing impact. Action Projects such as Communicating Quality, Applied Learning, Student Engagement, Building Graduate Programs, Critical Thinking, and Using Measurement and Assessment had funding ($100,000 per year with annual funding going in to the institutional base budget for permanent fiscal support) to support project implementation. Despite challenging economic times, Western remains committed to financial support for strategic initiatives and current AQIP Action Projects have continued funding support. For example, Preserving Gold, Expansion of Available Courses through Distance Learning Technologies, and Money Matters for Life (2009-2012) have funds allocated, based on project needs to support project completion.

**8P7 Assessing and addressing risk** – Western recognizes that any effort to meet future demands holds risk. To minimize risk, Western seeks input from a wide range of key stakeholders (students, faculty, staff, administrators, Board of Governors, alumni, and community members), carefully identifying strategic opportunities with the greatest impact and need. Numerous open forums provide opportunities for identifying and minimizing risk within the planning process. Forums, websites, email notices, and recognition events serve as communication tools to assure that all stakeholders are as informed as possible of issues and progress.

Western addresses risk through a constant review of the status of data and information related to progress toward goals. However, risk may be somewhat outside an institution’s control. For example, weather or illness related (swine flu) emergencies, changes in the economy and workforce, state mandated program reviews and budget cuts are all issues Western prepares for, but cannot control. Western has a full time risk manager who provides a proactive approach to protecting students, staff, faculty, administrators, and the community from harm. All contracts, agreements, and health/safety mandates are quickly reviewed to advise the affected unit of the potential risks. All units have regular emergency preparedness training with drills and equipment testing done regularly (4P13, 4R2). Western’s Griffon Alert system is a state-of-the-art, comprehensive emergency alert system that allows the entire campus to be notified of emergency situations via texting, telephone alerts, email notices, visual alarms, and strategically placed announcement Beacons across campus. The system is regularly tested to ensure readiness and effectiveness.

Western’s Continuity of Operations Plan provides a process for allowing the campus to resume key business and educational activities following a critical incident. With a primary focus on prevention and personal preparedness through process evaluation and training, the plan addresses everything from natural disasters to hazardous waste spills. Hands-on training for employees and students in the areas of fire extinguisher usage, Active Shooter Training, personal protective equipment, hazardous waste disposal, and use of the campus provided automated external defibrillator are examples of Western’s efforts to address risk.

Western has a fully staffed Police Department with ten officers, one dispatcher, and two administrative assistants that provide 24/7 coverage for campus safety. Western works closely with regional police units to coordinate crime related information. The Western Police Department provides Clery warnings as appropriate and keeps a record of all crime statistics on the website with statistics updated annually each September. In addition, Western Police oversee parking and security of buildings, equipment, and campus employees, students and guests. Western Police Officers are authorized to carry firearms.

**8P8 Developing and nurturing faculty, staff, and administrator capabilities** - The current strategic plan includes Opportunity Area Four – Valuing People which is focused on developing and nurturing faculty, staff, and administrator capabilities as well as meeting employee and stake-
holder needs. Western supports the professional development of employees (4P8-4P9), promotes employee health and well-being (4P13), and provides a variety of services to enhance employee development. For example, Western’s employee tuition waiver program provides full tuition waivers for employees seeking to take Western coursework and an 80 percent tuition reduction for eligible dependents.

New faculty and staff (including those new to a position, but not new to Western) have mentors to support success and to develop capabilities. Dedicated professional development funds continue to be provided at all employee levels. The team structure at Western nurtures faculty, staff, and administrator development by creating connections with colleagues who can provide advice and strategies for addressing challenges. Most employees have external organizational support structures to enhance capabilities. For example, the Missouri Faculty Senate provides a statewide forum for Western Faculty Senate members; service offices such as the Bursar, Registrar, Financial Aid, and Admissions can seek advice through statewide and national listservs; and Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) in Missouri regularly communicate through telephone conferences and meetings.

Results (R)

8R1 Measures of the effectiveness of planning processes and systems - Western measures the effectiveness of institutional planning directly through quarterly and annual reports on the implementation of the strategic plan and annual reports from all campus units and employees on progress toward individual and unit goals during the previous year. Those annual reports require an analysis of progress as well as goal setting for the next year. Specifically:

- Western assesses institutional performance in its strategic planning through specific and measurable objectives and action items in the seven areas of the strategic plan. Building the New American Regional University
  
- Strategic plan implementation teams review action item progress at quarterly meetings and make needed adjustments to support attainment of five-year goals and objectives. Meeting minutes and progress updates are posted to the Strategic Plan webpage.
  
- Western evaluates the effectiveness of annual strategic planning each year and publishes an annual progress report on the implementation of the strategic plan.
  
- Western develops a comprehensive strategic plan every five years.

- Every two years, Western creates a Community Impact Report.

- Western reviews AQIP Action Projects quarterly, and submits them for external review annually. For its first AQIP Action Projects (2004-2007), Western chose three-year projects associated with applied learning, student engagement, and communicating quality. The next series of Action Projects (2007-2009) included graduate programs development, increasing critical thinking strategies for teaching and learning, and using assessment information systematically. Current Action Projects focus on financial literacy, developing online courses, and documenting the recent history of Western (last 25 years).

- Western has a process of academic program review (every five years) that assures program currency.

- Western maintains national accreditation for numerous programs (See Figure 8R2).

8R2 Performance results - Western’s Annual Report on the Strategic Plan indicates the accomplishment of specific objectives for each goal in the seven areas of strategic planning. In preparing for the future, Western carefully examines its past and current results, paying close attention to its legislatively mandated mission category related to access (open) and its statewide mission of applied learning. Further, Western attempts to document improvements over time in a systematic and routine manner. The purpose of the AQIP Action Project Preserving Gold is to assure that the history and culture of Western are documented so its continued evolution as a leader in higher education is easily documented and available to stakeholders.

Another example of performance results linked to Western’s mission is found in the Community Impact Report (2009) which documents Western’s continuing impact on the region including a $183.5 million economic impact, and service support by students of more than 100,000 hours of service to schools, organizations and businesses. Western employee’s volunteered almost 22,000 hours of time for community service.

As a continuation of the Communicating Quality Action Project from 2004-2007, Western continues to increase the number of individual who recognize Western as a “quality” institution with quality faculty, quality programs, and quality students. This continuing emphasis on quality has
enabled the average ACT score of incoming freshman to increase from 19.83 (2006) to 20.88 (2010) while maintaining open access for all students.

The Student Engagement Action Project (2004-2007) had a focus on retention of students. Using fall to fall data, Western has seen a steady improvement in retention of first-time, full-time freshman from 56.7 percent (Fall 2005) to 72 percent (Fall 2009). Retention of all degree seeking students increased from 85.8 percent (Fall 2005) to 87.2 percent (Fall 2009).

With applied learning established as Western’s statewide mission in 2005, Western has adopted six definitions of applied learning, created a process to identify all courses that have applied learning components, and required all academic units to annually report on the progress toward 100 percent participation in meaningful applied learning. In 2010, Western had more than 87 percent of all students completing a documented and assessed applied learning experience prior to graduation.

Another approach to determining results could be Western’s ability to attract generous donors who support the Craig School of Business (5.5 million), construction of Remington Hall (5 million private contribution bundled with state funding), creation of the entrepreneur course that enables a successful business plan to be selected and a franchise awarded to a Western business student, creation of the Koenig-Simmons Trading Room for finance majors (real-time access to stock transactions), and purchase of twelve Steinway pianos making Western an All Steinway school.

Western has been continuously accredited by the North Central Association since 1919 and maintains national accreditation for many programs (See Figure 8R2).

8R3 Performance strategies and action plans – Over the next five years, Western will develop a new strategic plan (2012-2017) with some needs already surfacing. Western’s open admission and low costs are increasingly attractive to international students. A recent increase in international students indicates that Western should prepare for the services needed and the opportunities that develop when international exchanges occur. Thorough research will occur before residence facilities, personnel, and other services are requested. A second emerging need is the importance of degree completion. Western has students who nearly complete a degree program yet lack the 1-3 courses for graduation. In preliminary analysis, Western is considering incentives for degree completion, reverse transfer with regional institutions, and stronger employer collaborations program to support degree attainment. Of course, Western will remain focused on institutional and program level accreditation since those processes have served Western well and supported a focus on continuous improvement.

Figure 8R2 Institutional and Program Accreditations

| The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools - The Higher Learning Commission \n| Institutional Accreditation |
| Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc. (ABET) and The Technology Accreditation Commission (TAC) |
| BS, Construction Engineering Technology |
| BS, Electronic Engineering Technology |
| American Chemical Society (ACS) |
| BS, Chemistry |
| Commission on Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) |
| AAS, Physical Therapist Assistant |
| National Association of Schools of Music |
| BA, Music |
| BSE, Music |
| Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) |
| BSW, Social Work |
| American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) |
| Certificate, Health Information Technology |
| AAS, Health Information Technology |
| Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education |
| BSN, Nursing |
| National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Science (NAACLS) |
| Clinical Program Medical Technology |
| National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) |
| BSE, Elementary Education |
| BSE, French |
| BSE, Art |
| BSE, Spanish |
| BSE, English |
| BSE, Speech and Theatre |
| BSE, Music |
| Teacher's Certification: Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physical Education, Social Sciences Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB) |
**8R4 Comparative performance results** – Western strategic planning development process is one of the most comprehensive and inclusive of any Missouri regional institution of higher education. With over 400 stakeholders involved in planning efforts and Western annual report card, Western has a system of continuous focus on quality and improvement that permeates all facets of the institution. Currently, there are no means of comparison among institutions regarding projections for strategies and action plans. However, Western’s planning processes do include the use of peer and benchmark data from national surveys such as the SSI, NSSE, and EBI Resident Assessment. Western routinely refines its list of peer institutions and regularly makes comparisons with peer open admission institutions with the same approximate number of students and total budget.

Western compares favorably with other AQIP institutions, peer institutions, and Missouri public four-year institutions in the following areas:

- Western compares well with other Missouri institutions, especially regional institutions and institutions with open access, across a number of comparisons available in the MDHE’s Annual Statistical Summary.

- Through the MDHE, Western participates in mission and program review. Through the mission review, institutions demonstrate achieving mission-specific outcomes. Program review assures that Missouri public institutions are meeting state quality expectations. These reviews enable Missouri public institution comparisons.

- Western tracks a number of student and institutional variables in relation to a peer group of institutions selected through the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).

- Western tracks comparative data and results through the National Center for Education Statistics Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Data Feedback Report. In 2010, the peer comparison group included 11 institutions: Coastal Carolina, Colorado State University-Pueblo, Fairmont State University, Lock Haven University, Mesa State College, Missouri Southern State University, University of Pittsburgh-Johnston, University of South Carolina-Aiken, University of Wisconsin-Parkside, West Virginia State University, and Westfield State College.

**8R5 Evidence of effective Planning Continuous Improvement** – Western regularly and systematically evaluates the effectiveness of its planning processes. Strategic Plan Steering Committee member feedback was important to recent restructuring of the meeting format and the reporting format (slightly fewer meeting, more electronic dialogue and reporting, revised committee responsibilities). As Western prepares to develop a new strategic plan, stakeholders will be surveyed to determine the development approach that best meets current needs.

Other evidence of effective planning include:

- Over 100 individuals contributed to the revision of the Western AQIP Systems Portfolio (2010).

- Over 100 faculty have developed online courses linked to the current AQIP Action Project for distance education.

- Western has successfully achieved all attempted national accreditation efforts, most recently AACSB accreditation. Only five percent of all business schools in the world have achieved this rigorous accreditation status.

**Improvement (I)**

**8T1 Recent improvements** - Western utilizes data to make improvements such as:

- Creating a Safety Plan

- Requiring Emergency Preparedness training annually for all employees

- Updating all web pages to assure currency and user satisfaction

- Refining the meeting frequency and presentation format for Strategic Planning Steering Committee quarterly meetings

- Expanding the use of R-25 (scheduling software)

- Implementing a process for rolling the semester course schedule (fall to fall, spring to spring, summer to summer) to reduce the entry processing handled by academic administrative assistants.

- Scheduling orientation activities based on parent feedback (more emphasis on financial aid)
Western clearly identifies the close alignment between its strategic plan opportunity areas and the AQIP categories (Figure O. 2).

In addition to the overall coherence of the Western Strategic Plan with the nine AQIP Categories, Western has made significant progress on each of the seven Strategic Plan Opportunity Areas including:

**Opportunity 1: Building Graduate Programs** offers Western the opportunity to enhance the economic and personal goals of individuals and the economic and social development of the community and region. Western has:
- created and staffed a Graduate Studies Office,
- developed the policies and procedures for a Graduate Council to oversee the program and curriculum needs of graduate programs,
- developed and received approval to offer graduate programs with an applied learning focus,
- created a process for determining graduate faculty status,
- recruited highly qualified graduate faculty,
- recruited and graduated graduate students,
- established a graduate student support system, and
- provided a support structure for graduate faculty and staff.

**Opportunity 2: Enhancing Academic Quality** offers Western the opportunity to provide excellent educational programs to a diverse student population, taking into consideration the academic and career goals of students, and the economic, social, and cultural needs of the region and beyond. To accomplish this Western has:
- improved student learning through instructional innovations, scholarship, and applied learning,
- refined administrative and academic policies and procedures to sustain high quality academic programs,
- conducted nationally-recognized faculty and student applied research and creative activities,
- developed and implemented teaching and learning strategies that emphasize critical thinking skills, including questioning, interpreting, analyzing, synthesizing, and creative problem solving,
- enhanced academic support programs, services, and mentoring for students,
- prepared students for the workforce by promoting an understanding of diverse cultures and peoples and an expanded program of international studies, and
- provided opportunities for participation in integrated applied learning experiences, including internships, practica, faculty and student research, service learning, and study away.

**Opportunity 3: Sustaining Institutional Accreditation Priorities** offers Western the opportunity to continue to develop exemplary practices in applied learning, student engagement, and communicating quality. To address this area, Western has:
- marketed Western as a prototype of the new American regional university, characterized by applied learning and applied research and service,
- increased awareness of Western’s status as a university that is building graduate programs and is emphasizing a statewide mission in applied learning and applied research to external and internal audiences,
- increased the ability of employees to recognize Western’s brand,
- increased placements in regional media outlets each year, with a special focus on strategic feature-length coverage,
- assessed and improved programs and services to support recruitment and retention of students, and,
- increased the number of students who participate in an applied learning experience prior to graduation.

**Opportunity 4: Building Connections** offers Western the opportunity to focus on the educational, economic, cultural, and social development of the people and the region that the University serves. Western has:
- become the regional employers’ source for outstanding employees,
- increased applied learning, applied research, and service opportunities by partnering with business, industry, education, healthcare, and community leaders,
• increased student participation in co-curricular experiences that foster academic, career, and personal development,

• increased student participation in experiences that develop life, social, and leadership skills,

• assisted in the improvement of P-20 education in the region (Northwest P-20 Council),

• advanced partnerships with community and professional groups as a way of developing and expanding programs for life-long learning,

• created a process to facilitate and use the ongoing research, instruction, and service of retired faculty both on-campus and as University representatives in the community,

• increased the number of academic departments that use advisory boards drawn from beyond Western,

• increased partnerships between Western and regional performance arts groups,

• increased the number of activities provided on campus that involve the region,

• enhanced and increased parent and alumni engagement with Western, and

• evaluated and enhanced the efforts of the athletics program to serve as a partner integral to the campus and the community.

Opportunity 5: Using Measurement and Assessment offers Western the opportunity to provide evidence of the quality of student learning and the University’s effectiveness in meeting its mission. Accomplished are:

• creating an Institutional Research Office,

• managing of the collection, interpretation, and reporting of institutional data,

• improving the usability of institutional data,

• developing a University-wide assessment system focused on unit, program, and institutional improvement, and

• showing evidence of data-informed decision-making and assessment effectiveness.

Opportunity 6: Valuing People offers Western the opportunity to sustain a learning and working environment where students, employees, and others choose to invest considerable time, talent, and other resources. To accomplish this Western has:

• improved the processes the Western uses to recruit, hire, support, and retain employees,

• developed and implemented a comprehensive plan to address the health, special needs, and safety of students, employees, and guests,

• established clear expectations of all employees in terms of ethical standards, campus participation, professionalism, and values, and

• developed a culture that promotes dialogue, commitment, and productivity, and that treats people fairly, with dignity, and with integrity.

Opportunity 7: Building and Managing Resources offers Western the opportunity to use its resources efficiently and effectively to enhance student learning and student life, to connect the campus and larger community, and to support regional development. Western has been successful in:

• improving the teaching, learning and living environment, and the functionality of existing facilities and equipment,

• providing for efficient and effective operation of new and emerging facilities and programs,

• supporting Western’s mission and strengthening linkages within the region through strategic land use,

• providing resources, training, and services to support existing and emerging technologies in instructional and business operations, and

• improving the efficiency of all business functions through alignment with existing software processes and through future hardware and software upgrades,

• promoting a collaborative culture that encourages private financial support and increased applications for federal, state, and private grant support, and

• developing public and private partnerships that support Western’s strategic initiatives while at the same time generating revenue or reducing expenses.
8I2 Culture and infrastructure for improved performance results - Western’s open approach to shared governance and strategic planning provide a culture and infrastructure that encourages creativity and improvement. Strategic planning, operational committees, and governance groups work closely to have effective communication on issues so consensus can be reached and changes made. Despite challenging economic times, Western’s employees, students and other stakeholders are committed to preserving high quality academic programs and expanding academic and career opportunities. Funding for strategic planning and AQIP Action Projects continues to be a priority. The meeting format encourages discussion so new ideas can emerge.

Recent gifts, construction projects (Remington Hall and renovation of Agenstein Hall – science and math instruction and research facilities, new residence hall, indoor sports complex, and spring sports complex) are all manifestations of the positive environment at Western. Often described as a Western “family,” Western’s employees, students, and community stakeholders remain focused on the future and fulfilling the mission of meeting the educational, economic, cultural, and social development of the people and the region Western serves.