President's Advisory Committee on Institutional Resource Modeling
2018-19

Retention / Graduation Rate Working Group
CHARTER

CHARGE

1. Focus on a particular outcome or set of outcomes
   a. Degree completion
      i. Overall student population
      ii. Pell grant eligible
      iii. Students of color, underrepresented

2. Develop operating assumptions and identify major drivers and evidence-based types of programs that will positively impact the outcomes
   a. Can be direct or indirect
      i. For example, programs that increase retention will increase graduation rate indirectly
   b. Stay general
      i. For example, high-impact experiences in general instead of each individual type of experience
   c. Focus on the top 2-3 items that will make the most impact

3. Identify costs associated with improving outcomes
   a. Should be general in nature
   b. Concentrate on recurring operational costs

4. Develop no more than two scenarios for the upper and lower ranges of the performance measures in strategic plan.

MEMBERSHIP

Brian Burton, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Chair (PACIRM)
Steve VanderStaay, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
Sara Wilson, Special Assistant to the Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services
Clara Capron, Assistant Vice President, Enrollment & Student Services (PACIRM)
Ed Geary, Director, Science, Math and Technology Education (SMATE)
Natasha Hessami, AS Vice President for Governmental Affairs (PACIRM)
Molly Vogel, Director, Administration and Finance, Extended Education (PACIRM)
David Brunnemer, Registrar
Jon McGough, Director, Disability Access Center
Joan Ullin, Assistant Director, Student Outreach Services

Approved 11/21/2018 by: Richard Van Den Hul, Vice President, Business and Financial Affairs
Brian Burton, Associate Vice President, Academic Affairs

TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP

Working Group dissolves upon completion of its work in spring 2019.

REPORTAGE

Reports to the committee.

1. Initial report on drivers and assumptions due by January 4, 2019
2. Report on updated drivers/assumption and prosperity gaps/costs by February 15, 2019
3. Final report on gaps/costs, drivers and assumptions by March 22, 2019

Retention/Graduation Rate Working Group

Drivers:

1. Clear pathways for students to graduation
2. Fewer access barriers to fulfilling completion requirements
3. Proactive, tailored advising and counseling throughout time at Western on all aspects of student life
4. Financial resources along with greater literacy to make informed decisions
5. Early and broadening student experiences and engagement that are accessible to all
6. Adequate academic support for incoming students
7. More diverse faculty and staff
8. Proactive communication between the University and its students and an improved structure related to diversity

Assumptions:

1. Inclusive practices will be adopted and explained across the university.
   a. Related to all drivers
2. Western will be a caring and supportive community where all its member are treated fairly and with respect.
   a. Related to all drivers
3. Resources (financial and otherwise) will be applied effectively and efficiently to assist students.
   a. Related to Drivers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8
4. Western can understand why students will change plans when necessary and put programs and policies in place to encourage such behavior.
   a. Related to Driver 1
5. Students want to graduate in a timely manner.
   a. Related to Drivers 1 and 2
6. Staffing levels will be sufficient to provide adequate student support services.
   a. Related to Drivers 1, 3, 4, 6
7. Structures are student- and retention-centric
   a. Related to Driver 2
8. Western can implement programs and policies that will encourage students to use student support services.
   a. Related to Driver 3
9. Students will take advantage of student support services where available.
   a. Related to Driver 3
10. Sufficient financial aid of all types will be available for students at understood *(known)* key points to persist toward graduation.
    a. Related to Driver 4
11. Engagement will reinforce clear pathways and increase success in those pathways.
    a. Related to Driver 5
12. Teaching practices will meet students 'where they are' rather than 'where we wish they were' to support student success for all populations.
    a. Related to Driver 6

13. Western will help all students gain adequate preparation for their academic experience.
    a. Related to Driver 6
14. Western can make itself attractive to diverse faculty and staff.
    a. Related to Driver 7
15. Diverse faculty and staff will want to remain in their respective employment locales (e.g. Bellingham, Poulsbo, etc.).
    a. Related to Driver 7
16. Hiring practices will be designed to increase Western's attractiveness to diverse faculty and staff.
    a. Related to Driver 7
17. Diverse faculty and staff will not be overcommitted and tokenized in service activities.
    a. Related to Driver 7
18. Timely communications that are important or relevant to affected groups will be initiated by the University.
    a. Related to Driver 8
19. Mechanisms for informal resolution of disputes or to raise concerns about campus climate are in place and effective.
    a. Related to Driver 8
20. The University moves beyond a diversity compliance structure to a community more informed about diversity.
    a. Related to Driver 8
21. Students will take advantage of new complaint resolution and bias reporting resources.
    a. Related to Driver 8

Name Driver	Clear pathways for students to graduation	
Expected Impact	Rethinking and removing historical structural barriers within the University opens pathways for students to graduation.	
Confidence Level	*High*	*Affording equitable access to resources for first-generation students, students of color, and low-income students enables them to adapt to thrive personally, educationally, and professionally as their multigenerational peers.*
KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption A *Inclusive practices will be adopted and explained across the University.*	**Assumption B** *Western will be a caring and supportive community where all its members are treated fairly and with respect.*
Why is this assumption important?	*First-generation students, students of color, and low-income students will remain behind if pathways do not acknowledge different starting points in knowledge and resources.*	*The desire to help students is one aspect of a supportive community, and the desire to give such support is necessary to the development of pathways.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Inclusivity must be embraced by the university, and its faculty and staff.*	*Western's efforts in this area have begun, but much work is left to be done to build trust within the student community and to fulfill this goal in the strategic plan.*

KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption C *Resources (financial and otherwise) will be applied effectively and efficiently to assist students.*	Assumption D *Western can understand why students will change plans when necessary and put programs and policies in place to encourage such behavior.*
Why is this assumption important?	*Western cannot afford (in any sense) to use resources or assist students in an ineffective or inefficient manner if it wants to improve students' graduation rates.*	*Programs and services have to begin with a clear picture of who they are trying to serve before the curriculum or plan is developed.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Understanding where and how to apply resources will take study and likely some experimentation.*	*A narrow focus on student achievement comes at the exclusion of questions of institutional responsibility to address policy, systems, and environmental factors that contribute to student achievement or failure.*

KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption E *Students want to graduate in a timely manner.*	Assumption F *Staffing levels will be sufficient to provide adequate student support services.*
Why is this assumption important?	*Identity-conscious retention or student success programs must be tied to institutional success metrics (i.e., yearly persistence or timely graduation rates).*	*Staff will attend comprehensive training to learn about students with intersecting identities and how to set clear identity-conscious objectives outside of hierarchical relationships and models.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*First-generation students, students of color, and low-income students often face numerous psychosocial risks that can dampen their engagement in the college experience.*	*The university has funding and space to diversify staff, bringing in more staff of color, who provide adequate student support services in spaces conducive to having courageous conversations.*

Complicating Factors (if any)	Viewpoints that assume deficits within underserved populations. Less opportunity for exploration of actions that teach underrepresented students to decode and navigate the system as well as challenge it in order to open pathways for students to graduation. Conversations that tend to blame those who are persistently underserved for their bad academic performance outcomes continue and progress to eliminate curricula, pedagogies, and programmatic approaches that were created for a considerably less diverse student population. Change deficit mindsets about students into asset mindsets, "No student rises to low expectations." (Vincent Tinto) Students with intersecting identities experience greater risk. If students are not retained, they cannot persist and, therefore, cannot graduate. The gains for privileged students will outpace the gains for marginalized students. Institutional agents (staff) socialized to view particular groups of students as troubled, underprepared, unmotivated, anti-intellectual, and/or dangerous.

[1]*Graduation rate includes overall, for Pell-eligible students, and for underrepresented students of color.*

Name Driver	*Barriers |* Fewer access barriers to fulfilling completion requirements	
Expected Impact	*Minimizing, reducing or eliminating access barriers to completion of degree requirements (i.e. restriction, prerequisite, sequence, qualification, etc.) that are unintentional or inappropriate will improve both retention and graduation rates.*	
Confidence Level	*Moderate to Low*	*Fewer barriers would logically improve retention and graduation, however barrier identification and determining if the barrier is appropriate or not, and if not identifying solution, stakeholders, authority and governance processes to accomplish barrier reduction or removal is a substantial undertaking in a highly decentralized institution.*
KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption A *Inclusive practices will be adopted and explained across the university.*	**Assumption B** *Western will be a caring and supportive community where all its members are treated fairly and with respect.*
Why is this assumption important?	*Barriers (i.e. restriction, prerequisite, sequence, qualification, etc.) are both appropriate and inappropriate, objective and subjective, and all can lead to exclusionary, privileged based outcomes unless carefully examined for inclusivity. Privileged based barriers are inherently interwoven historically and therefore exist and influence explicit and implicit bias that both sustains barriers and contributes to the creation of new barriers.*	*Barriers (i.e. restriction, prerequisite, sequence, qualification, etc.) are often justified as "caring and supportive" by blocking a student's inevitable failure or reducing access to academic pathways in order to ensure a quality academic experience for those who qualify. Unfortunately this long held justification/ philosophy avoids the probability that privilege (financial, family, educational background & preparation, etc.) improves the likelihood of access over those who do not have privilege.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Adopting inclusive practices across the university assumes the institution can agree on definitions of barrier and inclusivity, and is able to agree on an institution-wide barrier evaluation and reduction effort.*	*The institution would need to address fundamental philosophical challenges mirrored in societal issues about how care and support is provided and to whom. In addition, the institution would be facing a historical post-secondary philosophy that supports privileged access.*

KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption C *Resources (financial and otherwise) will be applied effectively and efficiently to assist students.*	**Assumption D** *Students want to graduate in a timely manner.*
Why is this assumption important?	*Once the great philosophical leap and subsequent commitment is made to evaluate and reduce barriers from an inclusivity/caring & supportive perspective, resource reallocation and expansion would need to align with those conclusions.*	*The likelihood that students would prefer graduating sooner rather than later is a safe and reliable assumption given the increasing costs of education which includes post-graduation debt, and intrinsic desires to "get on with life" tend to be more powerful a motivator than lingering via exploration and/or pathway selection (i.e. choosing a major and any accompanying support minor(s) or certificate(s)).*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*The greatest challenge is the tremendous commitment needed across multiple academic and support/service departments and programs to agree on changing to a philosophically based student-centric (inclusivity) approach to barrier identification and reduction plan, which may include the risk or gain of resources.*	*It is possible that students would intrinsically prefer the opportunity to linger and explore to ensure programs of study satisfy personal and career based outcomes, however, "lingering" can be reduced programmatically (see Drivers 1, 3, 5, and 6) and thus reduce any truth in this assumption.*

KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption E *Structures are student- and retention-centric*	
Why is this assumption important?	*This response is interdependent on Assumption C meaning that structures (as in restructuring) are codependent on resource allocation in the broadest sense (i.e. financial, space, reduction or expansion of support programs/systems, etc...)*	
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Within the assumption is the notion that barriers at Western are not based on inclusivity nor are the based on a caring and supportive community. This is a generalization applied to all barriers and cannot be 100% true, therefore the challenge becomes the evaluative process first and the serious commitment to what change is identified second.*	
Complicating Factors (if any)	Defining "barrier" is in the eyes of the beholder, and therefore quite subjective. Additionally, there exists many barriers across an institution of this size as contributed by and sustained by a decentralized organization not likely to fully commit to an evaluative process of this size and scope.	

[1]*Graduation rate includes overall, for Pell-eligible students, and for underrepresented students of color.*

Name Driver	*Advising |* Proactive, tailored advising and counseling throughout time at Western on all aspects of student life	
Expected Impact	Comprehensive and tailored advising and counseling should help students make consistent progress toward graduation, help them pay for their education, and be at least a first step toward solving other problems that may arise during their college careers.	
Confidence Level	*High*	Evidence shows that comprehensive advising and counseling improves student outcomes in many areas.
KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption A *Inclusive practices will be adopted and explained across the university.*	Assumption B *Western will be a caring and supportive community where all its members are treated fairly and with respect.*
Why is this assumption important?	*All students must have advising that works for them, no matter their backgrounds. This is especially important for students from groups where the graduation rate is lower than for the overall population.*	*Without all students feeling a sense of community they may not take advantage of advising and counseling services, and they may rebuff proactive efforts at advising and counseling.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Advisors and counselors with whom students from different multiple populations and with different perspectives are comfortable must be found, or a group of specialists must be employed.*	*Western's efforts in this area have begun, but much work is left to be done to build trust within the student community and to fulfill this goal in the strategic plan.*

	Assumption C *Resources (financial and otherwise) will be applied effectively and efficiently to assist students.*	Assumption D *Staffing levels will be sufficient to provide adequate student support services.*
Why is this assumption important?	*Western cannot afford (in any sense) to use resources or assist students in an ineffective or inefficient manner if it wants to improve students' graduation rates.*	*Insufficient staffing levels will almost certainly mean less effective overall advising due to time constraints, even if technological support is possible.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Understanding where and how to apply resources will take study and likely some experimentation.*	*Finding and retaining qualified staff may be difficult.*
	Assumption E *Western can implement programs and policies that will encourage students to use student support services*	Assumption F *Students will take advantage of student support services where available.*
Why is this assumption important?	*Students do not always use support services; programs that encourage such use thus should help increase graduation rates by getting more students help where needed.*	*Many students choose to not take advantage of student support services, even if offered; if this continues, the investment in services will not translate into improved graduation rates.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*The success of such programs at Western will be seen only through implementation, which may be inefficient because of trial and error type efforts.*	*Without programs that make advising mandatory, students may not change their current behavior.*
Complicating Factors (if any)	Many of these assumptions are related, and failure in one will affect many.	

[1]*Graduation rate includes overall, for Pell-eligible students, and for underrepresented students of color.*

Graduation Rate Driver 3, Updated 1/7/2019

Name Driver	*Financial Aid* | *Financial resources along with greater literacy to make informed decisions*	
Expected Impact	*Financial aid of all types, and the knowledge to use the correct types in the right ways, will help students from all backgrounds stay in school and graduate at a higher rate. This is especially important for populations without much family experience with college.*	
Confidence Level	*High*	Research shows financial issues are a prime source of students not persisting and graduating.

KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption A *Inclusive practices will be adopted and explained across the university.*	**Assumption B** *Western will be a caring and supportive community where all its members are treated fairly and with respect.*
Why is this assumption important?	*Financial aid needs to be inclusive in its coverage, to meet enrollment goals and assist students with financial need.* *Financial literacy training needs to be inclusive in its nature to ensure that students from all backgrounds are provided the opportunity to learn to make financial choices that serve their best interests, as well as comply with Washington state legislative requirements.*	*In working with students with financial challenges, a caring approach and a willingness to work to find solutions for all is vital to getting resources where they are needed.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Completely adopting inclusive practices will take time. Additional financial aid is warranted: per national measures (College ScoreCard), Western ranks second-highest among the four-year public universities in Washington state for average, out-of-pocket cost for students and families. Increasing financial aid for students will require sources for increased aid, including the likelihood of financial aid derived from tuition revenues.*	*Western's efforts in this area have begun, but much work is left to be done to build trust within the student community and to fulfill this goal in the strategic plan.*

KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption C *Resources (financial and otherwise) will be applied effectively and efficiently to assist students.*	**Assumption D** *Staffing levels will be sufficient to provide adequate student support services.*
Why is this assumption important?	*Financial aid is limited, so inefficiencies will cause fewer students to have access to that aid.*	*Without staff to guide students through the financial aid process and provide financial literacy training, students will be forced to learn on their own, leading to frustration and increased likelihood of leaving the university.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Staff time is needed to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.*	*Finding and retaining qualified staff may be difficult.*

KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption E *Sufficient financial aid of all types will be available for students at understood (known) key points to persist toward graduation.*	
Why is this assumption important?	*The average financial aid awarded to Western students should at a minimum be proportionally comparable to that of competing institutions. Aid should be directed to meet institutional enrollment goals, which include increasing diversity among Western students.*	
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Students enroll at Western for a variety of reasons. A small but nevertheless significant percentage of students do not receive aid because they do not need it. Therefore, whether or not the average financial aid awarded to Western students is comparable to that of competing institutions or whether aid is managed effectively or whether expanded financial literacy programming is available would not impact these students nearly as much as students who require financial aid to persist to graduation.*	
Complicating Factors (if any)	Tuition revenues are a significant source of funding for student financial aid at Western. Tuition revenues are inextricably tied to enrollment, which to a large extent is tied to the awarding of financial aid. The three concepts are interrelated. The average EFCs (expected family contributions) of students of color at Western have consistently lagged behind those of majority students for years. Relative student perceptions concerning the receipt or non-receipt of scholarships, grants and tuition waivers and the need to borrow through educational loan programs tend to vary between students of color and majority students, as well. Estimates show Washington students complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at a rate that is the 48th highest (or third lowest) in the country. Given differences between institutions, possible underutilization of federal financial aid by Western students is worth investigating.	

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Name Driver	Early and broadening student experiences and engagement that are accessible to all
Expected Impact	Students who complete high impact experiences, including but not limited to study abroad, writing intensive classes, internships, learning communities and research, are more engaged and more likely to graduate. High impact experiences should be formally incorporated into a student's plan of study to increase first-year retention rate and six-year graduation rate. See additional notes below.

Confidence Level	*High*	Multiple studies and articles (see small sample below) cite the benefits students and faculty experience when students complete high impact experiences.

KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption A Inclusive practices will be adopted and explained across the university.	**Assumption B** Western will be a caring and supportive community where all its members are treated fairly and with respect.
Why is this assumption important?	Without inclusive practices, high impact experiences will not be accessible to all students.	It is important for Western to be a caring and supportive community to all members so that everyone feels comfortable to participate in high impact experiences.
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	Intentional promotion/advising of high impact experiences must be designed to reach to all students.	Western's efforts in this area have begun, but much work is left to be done to build trust within the student community and to fulfill this goal in the strategic plan.

Strategic Objective: **Graduation Rate**[1] Driver #5

KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption C *Resources (financial and otherwise) will be applied effectively and efficiently to assist students.*	**Assumption D** *Engagement will reinforce clear pathways and increase success in those pathways.*
Why is this assumption important?	*There is a high cost factor to participate in high impact experiences. Whether paying fees to study abroad or committing time to participate in research/internships, students without adequate resources are unable to take advantage of these experiences.*	*Without intentional engagement, the burden to select appropriate high impact experience(s) falls completely on the student. These experiences tend to receive lower priority when a student is balancing academics, employment, family, etc.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Students will have a variety of engagement choices, so directing resources to the correct areas will be difficult early in the process, until more understanding of student preference is shown.*	*Not all students willingly engage, so engagement must include outreach.*
Complicating Factors (if any)	Requirements, encouragement, and support for such experiences vary across majors at Western.	

Additional notes/support

Additional benefits for students who complete high impact experience include;

- *Students who participate in paid internships are more likely to receive a job offer and a higher salary rate after <u>graduation</u>.*
- *Actively engaging undergraduate students in research helps students build professional skills including refined intuition, mentorship skills, data analyzation etc. Benefits also extend to <u>faculty members</u>.*
- *Studying abroad helps shape stronger <u>leaders</u>.*

[1]*Graduation rate includes overall, for Pell-eligible students, and for underrepresented students of color.*

Name Driver	*Support* / *Adequate academic support for incoming students*
Expected Impact	*Students who start their college career with solid academic preparation graduate at a higher rate than those without such preparation. To help bridge the gap, academic support services can be offered to those who need it in an effort to meet students "where they are."*

Confidence Level	*High*	*Evidence shows the positive impact of academic preparation and support on retention and thus on graduation rates.*

KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption A *Inclusive practices will be adopted and explained across the university.*	**Assumption B** *Western will be a caring and supportive community where all its members are treated fairly and with respect.*
Why is this assumption important?	*Students coming from various socioeconomic backgrounds have varying degrees of preparation, and only an inclusive approach will reach all students.*	*Only a caring and supportive community can respect all students' places on the spectrum of preparation and work closely to help all students.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Tailoring academic support to particular circumstances requires understanding and flexibility.*	*Western's efforts in this area have begun, but much work is left to be done to build trust within the student community and to fulfill this goal in the strategic plan.*

KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption C *Resources (financial and otherwise) will be applied effectively and efficiently to assist students.*	**Assumption D** *Staffing levels will be sufficient to provide adequate student support services.*
Why is this assumption important?	*Western cannot afford (in any sense) to use resources or assist students in an ineffective or inefficient manner if it wants to improve students' graduation rates.*	*Insufficient staffing levels will almost certainly mean less effective academic support due to time constraints, even if technological support is possible.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Understanding where and how to apply resources will take study and likely some experimentation.*	*Finding and retaining qualified staff may be difficult.*
	Assumption E *Teaching practices will meet students 'where they are' rather than 'where we wish they were' to support student success for all populations*	**Assumption F** *Western will help students gain adequate preparation for their academic experience.*
Why is this assumption important?	*The varying nature of students' academic preparation is increasing, and methods that have worked in the past for most or all students will not be sufficient for improvement in graduation rates.*	*Without offering the help needed, Western cannot help students stay on track to graduate; if this is the case, retention and graduation rates will stay constant or even decline.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*This assumption is dependent on faculty willingness to change practices as well as evaluation criteria for both students and instructors.*	*Students' academic preparation must be evaluated individually to ensure they receive needed support.*
Complicating Factors (if any)	Many of these assumptions are related to or dependent on Assumptions A and B.	

[1]*Graduation rate includes overall, for Pell-eligible students, and for underrepresented students of color.*

Name Driver	*Diverse Faculty and Staff	More diverse faculty and staff*	
Expected Impact	*A more diverse faculty and staff will provide more support for students from diverse backgrounds, increasing the likelihood that such students will persist at and graduate from Western.*	
Confidence Level	*High*	*Evidence shows the positive impact of a highly diverse faculty and staff on student comfort at a university and thus on persistence and graduation.*
KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption A *Inclusive practices will be adopted and explained across the university.*	Assumption B *Western will be a caring and supportive community where all its members are treated fairly and with respect.*
Why is this assumption important?	*Without an orientation toward inclusivity, Western will find it hard to recruit and retain a diverse faculty and staff.*	*Western must be a caring and supportive community to be attractive to all faculty and staff, and that caring must extend across all groups.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Western needs to identify practices that lead away from inclusivity and change them.*	*Western's efforts in this area have begun, but much needs to be done to build trust within the student community and to fulfill this goal in the strategic plan.*

KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption C *Western can make itself attractive to diverse faculty and staff.*	**Assumption D** *Diverse faculty and staff will want to remain in their respective employment locales (e.g. Bellingham, Poulsbo, etc.).*
Why is this assumption important?	*If Western cannot be attractive to diverse candidates, it will not be able to hire and retain them and increase its faculty and staff diversity.*	*Even if Western as an institution is attractive to diverse candidates, they will not stay with Western unless their communities allow them to be comfortable.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Changing culture in an organization is seldom easy or quick.*	*Western has limits in its ability to improve the cultures of the communities in which it operates, even with the cooperation of governments and other organizations.*
	Assumption E *Hiring practices will be designed to increase Western's attractiveness to diverse faculty and staff.*	**Assumption F** *Diverse faculty and staff will not be overcommitted and tokenized in service activities.*
Why is this assumption important?	*Such practices, including recruitment and onboarding, are crucial to diversifying pools and getting acceptance of job offers.*	*Without support for faculty and staff to focus on success in their positions, they may not succeed and they may also decide to leave even if they are successful.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Best practices, such as diverse search committees, including students on committees, and targeted recruiting and onboarding, must be identified and implemented.*	*Both the employees and the organization must guard against the imposition (or self-imposition) of "invisible work" on the employees.*
Complicating Factors (if any)	Assumptions A and B are key to this driver; without those, the others likely will not happen.	

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Graduation Rate Driver 7, Updated 1/7/2019

Name Driver	*Proactive communication between the University and its students and an improved structure related to diversity (training, initiatives, and bias/discrimination reporting)*
Expected Impact	*A more diverse student population will be retained when there are sufficient channels for this diverse student population to be engaged and made aware of complaint resolutions and diversity education.*
Confidence Level	*Medium* — Communication may not be effective without more fundamental change at Western.

KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption A *Mechanisms for informal resolution of disputes or to raise concerns about campus climate are in place and effective.*	**Assumption B** *The University moves beyond a diversity compliance structure to a community more informed about diversity.*
Why is this assumption important?	*Having an ombud, chief diversity officer or other mediation/diversity education resources separate from compliance services increases communication channels and confidence in those channels.*	*Students, faculty and staff would benefit from diversity training and safe spaces to engage together, increasing the ability to communicate openly.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*There may be confusion regarding which channel to use in any specific situation.*	*There is currently no required diversity training nor entity tasked with this work. Some may question the effectiveness of required training or be reluctant to attend with sincerity.*

KEY ASSUMPTIONS		
	Assumption C *Resources (financial and otherwise) will be applied effectively and efficiently to assist students.*	**Assumption D** *Timely communications that are important or relevant to affected groups will be initiated by the university.*
Why is this assumption important?	*Communication requires resources; the wrong type of communication will waste resources that could be better used as well as being ineffective in helping students.*	*Lack of timely communications is equated with lack of priority.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*The best means of communication changes constantly and may be variable within or across groups.*	*There is distrust amongst students that efforts to improve diversity are being taken seriously by the institution.*
	Assumption E *Inclusive practices will be adopted and explained across the university.*	**Assumption F** *Western will be a caring and supportive community where all its members are treated fairly and with respect.*
Why is this assumption important?	*Communication may be seen as insincere by specific populations unless those populations can see rhetoric in action.*	*Proactive communication must be the product of a truly caring and supportive community to succeed.*
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Western needs to identify practices that lead away from inclusivity and change them.*	*Western's efforts in this area have begun, but much work is left to be done to build trust within the student community and to fulfill this goal in the strategic plan.*

	Assumption G *Students will take advantage of new complaint resolution and bias reporting resources.*	
Why is this assumption important?	*Communication is not effective if students fail to follow through by seeking help and support when necessary.*	
What challenges affect whether this assumption is true?	*Lack of trust in and discomfort with administrative resources may keep students from engaging.*	
Complicating Factors (if any)		

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