URGENT PRIORITIES

The Western Libraries is not funded sufficiently to pay the inflationary cost of subscriptions. Savings from library operations are now inadequate to cover the growing shortfall. Without a University plan for sustainable library resources, Western faces annual subscription reductions for the foreseeable future and no new subscriptions. New funding and resource access models are necessary to address Western’s subscription crisis.

Competing demands for physical collections, student collaboration and quiet study, and University teaching and learning programs require a facilities plan consistent with the University’s vision for the Western Libraries. Such a plan must offer storage solutions as well as space to accommodate learners. Failure to develop and begin implementing a viable space plan threatens both library collections and the impact of teaching and learning programs.

Cumulatively, failure to address these priorities would be damaging to the Western Libraries long-range plan to advance Western’s teaching and research enterprise.

STRENGTHS:

I  Budget
   • Reduced electronic resources and interlibrary loan costs via Orbis Cascade Alliance
   • Separation of resource access and operations budgets creates greater transparency

II  Teaching & Learning
   • Quality teaching and learning programs
   • Learning Commons partner collaborations enhance faculty and learner-centered education models
   • Innovative Research & Writing Studio model integrates support for academic literacies: research, writing, and reading
   • Public programming attracts participation from the Bellingham campus and local communities and fosters constructive dialogue (ex. the Teaching-Learning Academy and several reading and speakers series)
   • Online learning objects (ex. LIT: Library Information Tutorials) enhance learning on the Bellingham campus, at a distance, and at other institutions
• Libraries and Learning Commons foster undergraduate research by providing opportunities for student employees to advance their own teaching and learning research and present findings at conferences
• Annual Undergraduate Research Awards recognize strong student research and writing projects across a range of disciplines

III Personnel
• Depth and breadth of faculty/staff experience and expertise
• Professional contributions to Orbis Cascade Alliance
• Commitment to training and professional development
• Teamwork within and across organizational units
• Strong public service ethic
• Quality of leadership and management structures
• Faculty/staff responsiveness to change in academic libraries

IV Resources for Teaching, Learning, and Research
• Commitment to fulfill resource requests effectively and efficiently while best leveraging University resources
• Commitment to expansive and efficient resource access (specifically interlibrary loan and document delivery systems such as Summit and Rapid ILL)
• Unique/special and digital collections to support teaching and research in the humanities and arts
• Commitment to improving the user experience across resource discovery systems (ex. Primo/OneSearch, website, Islandora, CEDAR) by using methods such as usability testing, focus groups, surveys, metadata best practices, and analytics
• CEDAR institutional repository enhances open access to Western scholarship/creative activity and teaching

V Space
• Collaborative teaching/learning spaces, particularly Wilson 2 Central, HH 222, Hacherl Research & Writing Studio, Special Collections, and State Archives Building
• Spaces for public programming and community outreach (ex. Wilson Library Special Collections and State Archives Building)
• Responsiveness to student needs for improved learning spaces by using Foundation and self-sustaining dollars
  An improved Libraries web presence for its patron populations by using data derived from usability testing, focus groups, surveys, analytics, and other methods
CHALLENGES:

I  Budget
• Annual inflationary pressures on existing library subscriptions
• Inability of scholarly resources budget to accommodate new subscriptions associated with current and changing university curricula and research
• Increased budgetary pressures on operating budget, including salary and benefits expenses incurred when reclassifying or restructuring positions to meet strategic and operational needs
• Insufficient funding to meet the University’s Records Management obligations
• Insufficient funding to meet growing University needs around online/distance learning
• Insufficient funding for the acquisition of unique/special collections to support increasing demands in teaching, learning, and research
• Insufficient University funding to meet IT needs for wireless access, data storage, and digital preservation

II  Teaching & Learning
• Establishing a systematic program to assess and improve the Libraries’ impact on student outcomes
• Maximizing the impact of librarians and staff on faculty teaching and research
• Changing demands on staff and space for Libraries and Learning Commons resources and services, especially consultations, integrated workshops, and research-focused instruction
• Need for inclusive and streamlined communication across Libraries and Learning Commons programs about existing and emerging resources and services
• Incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion into the Libraries’ teaching and learning programs
• Need to enhance participation from other Western campuses in order to foster more inclusive and constructive dialog

III  Personnel
• Multiple experienced librarian and staff retirements over the next five years
• Retention of excellent Classified and Professional Exempt Staff
• Inadequate staffing to meet strategic goals, particularly related to STEM expertise, online/distance learning, digital initiatives, and information technology
• Increasing demand on Libraries staff to support expanding Orbis Cascade Alliance initiatives
• Embedding assessment in job responsibilities throughout the Libraries teaching, learning, and scholarly resources initiatives
• Increasing demands of front desk and reference responsibilities at the Northwest Regional Archives Building impact staffing availability and workflows for Heritage Resources activities

IV Resources for Teaching, Learning, and Research
• Ensuring relevance and impact of owned, licensed, and borrowed scholarly resources on Western’s curriculum and research
• Limited ability to purchase or license new library resources desired by faculty (particularly subscriptions and streaming media) to meet emerging teaching and research needs
• Educating and encouraging faculty and students to capitalize on alternative methods (ex. Summit, ILL, and document delivery) to access materials Western does not own or license
• Limited campus awareness of commercial vendor pricing models, which limit Western’s ability to strategically acquire and maintain subscriptions
• Limited campus awareness of and participation in open access scholarship
• Barriers to discovery of unique/special collections in OneSearch

V Space
• Wilson Library building lacks sufficient physical accessibility for patrons with disabilities, including easy access to ADA-compliant restrooms, sufficient room between shelves for navigation in a wheelchair, alternative signage formats, and partially inaccessible elevators
• Wilson Library building lacks sufficient technology infrastructure to support student learning needs, such as electrical outlets for charging devices and suitable furniture for studying and group work
• Effective use of space that balances access to physical collections with growing teaching and learning needs
• Need for more space in the Learning Commons, particularly for DRS, Tutoring Center, and the Center for Service-Learning
• Provision of suitable study space, particularly on Wilson Library 3rd through 5th floors
• Changing needs for digital and physical storage to support the Libraries’ teaching and research mission and the University’s records management legal obligations

Opportunities:

I Budget
• Restructure the University’s funding model to account for staffing changes and annual inflation for scholarly resources, particularly subscriptions
• Increase strategic philanthropic gifts with individuals and corporations
• Increase grant funding
• Identify other funding streams and budget models that incentivize partnerships across the University

II  Teaching & Learning
• Increase the impact of librarians and Libraries staff on Western’s teaching and learning
• Expand diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Libraries teaching and learning programs
• Enhance participation from other Western campuses in order to foster more inclusive and constructive dialog
• Augment current instructional offerings by developing learning objects and faculty/staff development programs that leverage multiple instructional modalities (i.e. F2F, online, hybrid)
• Enhance student outcomes, research, and analytical skills through learning experiences that foster the use of primary/unique source materials
• Enhance awareness among faculty and administration regarding the Learning Commons’ ability to provide leadership and support in augmenting writing instruction in curricular (ex. General Education) and co-curricular (ex. Graduate Thesis Partners) contexts
• Develop educational strategies to enable faculty, staff, and students in a range of disciplinary and curricular contexts to better leverage the Libraries’ expertise and services in order to enhance research, teaching, and learning
• Expand the use of assessment to document and enhance the impact of the Libraries teaching and learning programs on student outcomes

III  Personnel
• Increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Libraries workforce
• Increase the depth and breadth of subject and technical knowledge, especially in STEM, online learning pedagogies, digital scholarship, and information technology
• Enhance career paths that develop, recognize, and retain excellent employees, especially for Classified and Professional Exempt Staff
• Better utilize the Orbis Cascade Alliance to maximize efficiencies and reduce duplication of work effort across member libraries
• Increase collaboration with University IT to more adequately address training and effective use of technology within the Libraries
• Develop a unified focus and staff expertise across the organization in order to advance the assessment and impact of library teaching and learning programs on student outcomes
IV  Resources for Teaching, Learning, and Research

- Demonstrate the value of resource-sharing services such as Summit and ILL to effectively and efficiently meet teaching and research needs
- Increase partnerships with University IT to build digital scholarship and preservation infrastructure and services
- Maximize use of CEDAR and Islandora digital access management systems to promote open access, disseminate Western’s research and creative output, and make available unique collections
- Expand use of data analysis to guide scholarly resource acquisition and deselection decisions
- In collaboration with stakeholders, review policies and procedures regarding acquisitions and deselection, particularly in response to unsustainable vendor pricing models and license restrictions
- Enhance and integrate systems that improve discovery and access to information in support of learning and research
- Expand records management and legal compliance training and capacity
- Improve assessment of the Libraries’ core collection to ensure that it meets Western’s curricular and research needs

V  Space

- Perpetual ownership of electronic journals (ex. JSTOR) facilitates strategic deaccessioning of duplicated print materials, thereby maximizing collection storage capacity
- Minimize footprint needed to store physical materials while still maintaining timely access (ex. compact shelving)
- Increase the size, quality, and diversity of space needed for teaching and learning
- Upgrade Wilson Library building to improve spaces for quiet and group study

THREATS:

I  Budget

- Current budget model provides no annual incremental/inflationary increase for subscriptions, thereby decreasing purchasing power and requiring subscription reductions (this has become a reality)
- Current budget model threatens current staffing levels and program efficiency by recapturing salary funds needed to pay for staff reclassifications
- Inadequate funding limits quality, capacity, and impact of the Libraries’ teaching and learning mission
- Inadequate funding limits innovation and threatens long-term stability of IT systems
• Reduction in state funding for the Northwest Regional Branch of the Washington State Archives shifts financial burden for the facility’s operation to the University

II Teaching & Learning
• Libraries and Learning Commons fail to prioritize, implement, and assess effective teaching/learning programs that positively impact student outcomes
• Faculty and students cease to find value in the Libraries’ expertise and services and seek alternatives to meet their research, teaching, and learning needs
• Libraries fails to engage in staffing and succession planning necessary to sustain its new integrated research and writing teaching and learning model

III Personnel
• Current budgeting procedures, which reduce the Libraries’ ability to meet salaries and benefits of existing permanent staff, leads to operations reductions
• Due to career stagnation and/or inability to pay competitive wages, talented personnel leave for opportunities elsewhere; recruitment of excellent personnel becomes increasingly difficult
• Inability to hire, develop, cross-train, and retrain Libraries personnel leads to inefficiencies, sub-standard quality, and limited positive impact on teaching and research

IV Resources for Teaching, Learning, and Research
• Inadequate scholarly resources limits scope, quality, and positive impact of research and course assignments and creates difficulties recruiting faculty and graduate students
• Faculty and students do not find value in the Libraries information discovery systems and resources
• Infrastructure inadequate to meet long-term access to and preservation of digital scholarship results in threats to grant funding, difficulties in faculty recruiting, loss of collaboration potential, and inefficiencies

V Space
• Failure to acquire, assess, and manage physical collections and space strategically reduces their value to Western’s educational mission, ease of use, and potentially limits collection growth
• Collections outgrow existing shelving capacity, leading to expansion of collections into and disruption of study and programming spaces
• Inadequately designed and maintained spaces lead students to work and study elsewhere
• Physical collections become inaccessible due to inadequate storage options
• Non-library functions expand into teaching, learning, and collection storage spaces, thereby threatening the Libraries and Learning Commons core mission