

Alissa Mahar – Statement of Approach

My approach to addressing the financial, academic, and operational challenges faced by Eastern Washington University (EWU) students, faculty, staff, and the broader community is rooted in a combination of strategic foresight, collaborative decision-making, and a focus on operational efficiency. My focus will be ensuring an effective balance of short-term needs with long-term sustainability so that all resources are allocated in a way that supports the University's mission and aligns with its core values. This approach is based on information I found in the position profile and the EWU Strategic Plan. Here is how my approach will respond to EWU challenges:

- **First and Foremost:** Relationship building. I will get to know the EWU team, understand perspectives, create spaces for two-way communication, and meet key partners internally and externally. Through this work, my intent is to build trust, assess/understand the landscape, and demonstrate transparency. Based on what I learn at this phase, my strategies below may change.
- **Financial Challenges:** I will employ a data-informed approach to ensure sound financial decision-making. With robust financial analysis and modeling, I will work collaboratively to forecast revenue projections and identify cost-saving opportunities. I'll work closely with the President's Cabinet and other stakeholders to develop and implement a comprehensive, multi-year financial strategy that integrates with EWU's academic and operational goals. I will work hard to create a transparent and accountable financial culture where faculty, staff, and stakeholders can understand and contribute to resource allocation decisions. Additionally, I will explore public-private partnerships (P3s) and innovative funding models to secure sustainable financial support for the University's initiatives and capital projects.
- **Academic Challenges:** I will work in close partnership with academic leaders to guarantee the financial and operational strategies are aligned with EWU's academic mission. My approach involves integrating academic priorities into budget planning, ensuring that resources are allocated to enhance teaching, research, and student support services. I will support the development of programs and initiatives that foster academic excellence, particularly for first-generation, low-income, and marginalized students, by ensuring that academic departments receive the resources they need to develop inclusive, high-impact programs. Furthermore, I will support pathways for faculty professional development, empowering the faculty with the tools and resources needed to thrive in their teaching and research roles.
- **Student Success:** My approach to elevating student success begins with understanding that each student's needs are unique. I will support efforts to enhance student engagement, retention, and support services by advocating for strategic investments in both academic and non-academic resources that directly benefit students. By working with enrollment management and academic departments, my team and I will deliver comprehensive services that are accessible to all students, especially those from underserved backgrounds. Additionally, I will advocate for the development of applied learning opportunities, internships, and experiential programs that help students gain skills relevant to their future careers and community leadership. I have seen firsthand the benefits of this learning at prior institutions and look forward to bringing that experience to EWU.
- **Operational and Organizational Efficiency:** I will apply a systems-thinking approach to the operational challenges faced by the University. This involves evaluating existing processes across various administrative areas—such as budgeting, procurement, and IT—and identifying areas for improvement, optimization and transformation. Through collaborative methods, my team and I will partner with key departments at EWU to test previous practices while promoting

operational efficiency (and continuous improvement) through the implementation of best practices and streamlined processes to reduce redundancy and improve service delivery. Furthermore, I will work with facilities management and IT to ensure the campus infrastructure is maintained and upgraded in alignment with the University's goals of sustainability and decarbonization.

- **Community and Regional Engagement:** Understanding EWU's deep connection to the region, I will work to further solidify the University's role as a regional driver of economic and social impact. The work to be done in this area really excites me. My approach will involve expanding and nurturing community partnerships to grow opportunities for students and faculty to engage in real-world problem-solving, research, and service. I am a connector and I plan to bring external partners into conversation with internal academic leaders to create win-win opportunities for EWU students. I will push for experiential learning which prepares students and the workforce pipeline for jobs with our community partners. I will also advocate for strong communication channels with local government, businesses, and community organizations to ensure that EWU is a central player in addressing regional workforce needs, promoting inclusive economic development, and being the go-to partner for academic excellence and learning.
- **Commitment to EWU's Values and Strategic Planning:** Central to my approach will be a steadfast commitment to EWU's core values of academic excellence, accessibility, regional impact, and sustainability. I will work with my team and leadership to normalize all strategic and financial decisions be made with a long-term focus, balancing the University's immediate needs with its evolving future goals. I have a proven track record for being able to see] the big picture, but fully capable of rolling up my sleeves and diving into the weeds when needed. By aligning the VPBS area priorities with the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan, we can achieve great things collectively – what an exciting opportunity!
- **Last but not least:** I will focus on the people throughout this work, which means EWU faculty and staff. I plan to advance "employer of choice" concepts by tracking employee needs and organizational culture. I will emphasize employee and leader development, empowerment and support them in their career journey. We need all employees to participate in the EWU journey going forward as they are our greatest asset.

Through collaborative leadership, innovative problem-solving, and a commitment to operational excellence, I will help to ensure that EWU not only overcomes its financial and academic challenges but thrives as a leading institution in higher education, serving both its students and the greater region. I will be compassionate, strategic, and results-oriented, and hopefully have some fun along the way.