

ELT Preliminary Response to University Services Task Force Report

Background

In January 2023, the University launched a Strategic Resource Allocation (SRA) initiative to evaluate academic programs and University services that may require additional resources, need transformation, are adequately resourced, or are over-resourced. On December 6, 2023, the University Services Task Force, hereinafter referred to as USTF, provided a written report at the conclusion of the Strategic Resource Allocation (SRA) process. It was the intent “that the work represented by [the] report will contribute to a strategic planning process that achieves such a balance and results in a more distinctive and sustainable EWU” (USTF Introduction). Based on direction from the Board of Trustees in the December 8, 2023 meeting, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) has thoroughly reviewed the USTF report and all submitted rebuttal/feedback documents. Currently, ELT is evaluating potential campus impacts of the proposed recommendations and engaging in thoughtful discussions within their respective teams to prepare an action report to address all quintile (invest through disinvest) recommendations.

The following is a collective preliminary response agreed upon by the ELT: President Shari McMahan; Vice President and Provost of Academic Affairs Dr. Jonathan Anderson; Vice President of Business and Finance Mary Voves; Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Lea Jarnagin; Vice President of Advancement Barb Richey; Associate Vice President and Director of Intercollegiate Athletics Tim Collins; and Chief of Staff Cesar Portillo.

We have determined that, due to the complexity and interconnectedness of university services across the entire institution, a collective narrative is a necessary first step to build the complete picture which will lead to the identification of specific actions to be undertaken through the next three to five years.

Already the ELT has begun and will continue to implement operational efficiencies that were identified in the USTF report as part of normal business operations. The implementation of these efficiencies will focus on the improvement of processes and customer service to Eastern students, faculty, staff, and community stakeholders.

We are grateful for the work of the USTF which illuminated numerous operational barriers that were hindering efficiency and effectiveness, and even contributed to morale issues when such systems were hampering a staff member or department’s ability to complete tasks in a timely manner. If we are to continue to invest in our people and their well-being, these processes must be addressed as they are identified and current resource levels are available.

Overview of the Implementation Process

The implementation plans related to university services will follow an extended timeline and adhere to the normal budget process. This is intentionally different from the plans related to academic programs. University services, unlike academic programs, do not have explicit policies that outline formal steps for review and discontinuance of programs.

The USTF recommendations are being carefully reviewed by the ELT. In Fall 2024, units will begin to draft 2025-2027 (FY26, FY27) operating and capital budget plans that will identify additional actions, investments, or disinvestments for the following years. As part of the normal budget process, those plans will be presented to the University Budget Committee (UBC) who will be responsible for preparing an

advisory report for the President. The UBC's primary focus is to ensure the University's priorities are reflected in the operating budget through coordinated consultation, discussion, education, and outreach to the University community. Following a review of the advisory report, a final action plan will be released by ELT.

This process ensures that each division engages in a thoughtful, incremental approach to minimize disruptions of campus operations, allow for on-going initiatives to help inform decisions, and enables investments to align with the goals, outcomes, and strategies being developed as part of the new strategic plan. It is important to understand that implementation plans will continue as a multi-year process with numerous opportunities for adjustments as conditions change.

Current Campus-Wide Initiatives

Several initiatives are currently underway or on the near horizon for Eastern Washington University and will play a central role in the implementation of changes to university services that the USTF report identified.

- The creation and implementation of a new strategic plan, including updated mission, vision, values, goals, outcomes, and strategies. The strategic plan will help Eastern build a regional identity and remain flexible to adapt to evolving landscapes, technological advancements, and changing student needs, ensuring our University remains competitive and relevant. The strategic plan is expected to be approved by the Board of Trustees by Fall 2024.
- A campus-wide assessment of all organizational structures, policies, and practices related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Once completed, the assessment will provide a tangible trajectory for diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging-centered organizational structures, policies, and practices to address existing equity gaps in student experience and graduation. The final recommendation report is expected to be delivered to university leadership by December 2024. This initiative is being led by Dr. Lea Jarnagin, Vice President of Student Affairs.
- Moss Adams has been selected to complete the evaluation of our current budget model and provide recommendations for adoption of a new budget model which will provide more flexibility. Their work has begun, and a recommendation is expected by Fall 2024.
- Ongoing athletic budget transformation per the Board of Trustees' direction to improve financial sustainability.
- As agreed upon by Administration and the United Faculty of Eastern (UFE), academic programs are continuing to modify curriculum or degree paths (or reached agreement to voluntarily discontinue) with the expectation to submit plans to CPAC by Fall 2024. Additionally, academic programs unable to reach an agreement to modify have begun the Program Review and Discontinuance process. Per the EWU and UFE agreement, proposals and recommendations from that process will be provided to the Provost on or before January 31, 2025.
- University Advancement is engaged in Eastern's first \$100M comprehensive campaign, engaging with both the campus community, alumni, donors, and external campus partners. The public launch is expected to take place in Fall 2024.

The implementation plans for university services will take these on-going initiatives into account and work may be deferred in corresponding areas until the initiative(s) has been completed.

Quintile Definitions

The ELT has determined common understandings of the work that will be attributed to the quintile distribution within the USTF report and the implementation plans. Programs that were identified for **Streamline, Transform, or Disinvest** may not experience a reduction in service or resources. To streamline or transform a university service/program, it may be necessary to invest resources if the outcome will improve key priorities such as recruitment and retention of students, faculty, or staff, and/or it is aligned with the university identity. Additionally, at the Dec. 8 BOT meeting, it was relayed by the USTF that programs may have been placed in the Disinvest quintile as a result of insufficient agreement on the task force. Therefore, ELT action on services within that quintile may deviate from the disinvest recommendation. [The Academic Programs Task Force Report similarly stated that "...some programs may need some investment to transform. Equally, many programs were placed into "Disinvest" for reasons having to do with curricular redundancy or the need for increased clarity for student success."]

General Guiding Themes

Upon review of the USTF report, general themes emerged that will inform the implementation plans which will be developed by members of the ELT for their respective divisions.

- **Supporting the Students of Tomorrow:** The students we serve are requiring that we continuously examine our programs and adjust to meet their changing needs. In order to support and provide for their short- and long-term success, we must invest in their education, well-being, and future prospects. It involves providing them with the necessary resources, guidance, and opportunities to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.
- **Investing in the Campus Experience:** Establishing a welcoming campus environment that provides for students, faculty, and staff well-being requires ongoing investment. The strong, regional identity of Eastern Washington University is reliant on improving the student experience and university culture. The campus experience encompasses all aspects of university life, including academics, arts and cultural experiences, student life, athletic programming, sports and recreational facilities, and alumni and community engagement.
- **Linking to Strategic Plan:** We are moving the campus forward through the development of a new mission, vision, values, goals, outcomes, and strategies. The implementation of recommendations and allocation of resources will need to align with the established strategies as will be outlined by the new strategic plan. This underscores the need to be thoughtful and take an incremental approach to changes within university services.
- **Creating and Coordinating Efficiencies:** The actions will focus primarily on creating and coordinating efficiencies in operations. Where many university services cannot function effectively with a reduction in service, staff, or programming, the USTF identified areas where there are processes that can be examined to move incrementally toward greater efficiency.
- **Embracing Innovation:** Within university services, opportunities for innovation must be explored. The changing landscape of higher education and barriers to campus efficiencies as

identified in the USTF report require evaluation to improve our use of technology, expand and strengthen our communications, and establish systems, all of which require creative thinking and problem solving.

- **Increasing Campus Awareness & Connectedness:** Communication silos continue to exist. Efforts within departments need to be undertaken to gain a greater awareness of campus services, their interconnectedness, and the roles and responsibilities as part of building a more unified campus community.

Our commitment to strategic resource allocation and operational efficiency underscores our dedication to enhancing the Eastern Washington University experience for students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community stakeholders. As the implementation plans unfold over the next several years, guided by the principles of supporting students, investing in the campus experience, aligning with the strategic plan, creating efficiencies, embracing innovation, and fostering campus awareness and connectedness, Eastern is poised to adapt, evolve, and thrive in an ever-changing landscape of higher education. Through thoughtful, incremental changes and a commitment to excellence, we aim to build a more distinctive, sustainable, and inclusive institution.
