

# Western Washington University

## SB5800 Pilot: Public Baccalaureate Institution Pilot Program Work Plan Requirements

### Instructions

Prepare a clearly written *pilot program work plan* including all sections described below. Submit it as a PDF file attached to an email to Grant Administrator Ami Magisos, [AmiM@wsac.wa.gov](mailto:AmiM@wsac.wa.gov). **Work plans are due by close of business on November 1, 2019.**

### 1. Contact information

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### 2. Pilot Program Overview

A number of converging factors make this project particularly timely for Western Washington University. A new University strategic plan identifies goals that include increasing access to higher education and graduation rates for all students in our region and state, as well as our impact in and service to the state of Washington. The Washington Student Achievement Council has made serving youth from foster care a priority, and the College Success Foundation is expanding the range of youth eligible for their Passport to College program. WWU wants to be a key partner in this important work in the state.

Recent institutional efforts have included the addition of food pantries on campus, a Swipe Out Hunger campaign that supports students donating unused portions of their meal plan for other students to use, emergency funds for food and shelter available via the Office of Financial Aid, and the creation of an Office of Off-Campus Living to educate and support students. In addition, financial support for the AS Food Pantry has been a focus of Western's Annual Give Day fundraiser. These efforts are outlined in more detail later in this report.

While there are various efforts underway and some communication among working groups addressing the food and housing needs of our students, there still remains many efforts that are operating in isolation. This project supports utilizing a dedicated support coordinator to further create a centralized and coordinated effort in order to maximize our use of resources and best serve our student population. The primary focus of this pilot will be to (1) develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to addressing food and housing insecurity, (2) learn from students experiencing food insecurity and/or homelessness what basic services and supports are needed and not currently being provided or which could be improved, (3) create a highly visible presence so that students are aware of and will access the resources available, (4) educate the campus on the prevalence of food and housing insecurity among our students, and (5) develop partnerships on and off campus to identify and address barriers to food and shelter.

As a result of these efforts, we would expect to see increased utilization of services, an improved understanding on campus of the issues students are facing that impact their well-being and their ability to do well academically, and systemic improvements that address barriers to success.

### 3. Needs Assessment

In recent years, issues of food and housing insecurity have been a growing concern at WWU. Results of the Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) conducted by Western’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness in the spring of 2019 with sophomores and seniors pointed to the following concerns regarding food insecurity:

Thinking about the last 30 days, how frequently would you say the following statements were true?	Almost Always	
	Senior (n=841)	Sophomore (n=772)
I couldn’t afford to eat a balanced meal.	7.02%	7.25%
I worried my food would run out before I got money to buy more.	5.95%	8.04%
The food I bought just didn’t last and I didn’t have money for more.	3.81%	3.50%

Approximately two-thirds of respondents indicated they had cut the size of their meals, skipped meals or ate less than they felt they should have because they didn’t have enough money for food and nearly one-fourth of respondents indicated they didn’t eat for a whole day because there wasn’t enough money for food. This data is quite troubling as adequate nutrition is critical to one’s physical, mental and intellectual health.

On those same surveys, the issue of permanent residence was also asked:

Do you have a permanent residence to which you return between quarters?	Senior (n=1667)	Sophomore (n=759)
Yes	55.4%	73.6%
No	44.6%	26.4%

Approximately 75 students who are new students attending Western in fall 2019 responded affirmatively to questions on the FAFSA or WAFSA regarding unaccompanied youth who were homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless. While not quantified at this time, we assume based on the high cost of living in our community that many more students are also facing housing insecurity while trying to pursue an education.

Western currently has some data collected via federal financial aid forms, provided by the Passport to College program staff, and via student self-selected responses to an Admissions application question regarding foster care. Western is also participating in the Hope Center survey to gather additional information about our students. In addition to those data points, program staff will work with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to develop a campus-wide survey that expands on work already started with the WELS study.

#### **4. Community Social Services**

There are a number of agencies in the local community that are accessible to students in the Bellingham area related to food and housing insecurity. These agencies include [the Opportunity Council](#), the [Whatcom Homeless Service Center](#), [Northwest Youth Services](#), [Lighthouse Mission Ministries](#), [Lydia Place](#), [Bellingham/Whatcom County Housing Authority](#), [Chuckanut Health Foundation](#), [DCYE](#), [Youthnet](#) and the [Whatcom County Coalition to End Homelessness](#). The [Whatcom Housing Alliance](#) also exists to bring together a broad range of organizations invested in finding innovative solutions to provide affordable and diverse housing in our community.

The Whatcom County Anti-Hunger Coalition maintains a [brochure of food and meal resources](#) in the county which includes the location of area food banks and resource locations. The Bellingham Food Bank has a broad reaching impact in the city and surrounding area and the Washington State Department of Social and Health's [SNAP program](#) is also a resource students can access.

WWU is an active participant in our local community and has relationships formed with many of these local community organization and agencies. Melynda Huskey, Vice President for Enrollment Services, serves on the board for the Chuckanut Health Foundation and Cezar Mesquita, Director of Admissions, is a board member for United Way. The Western Success Scholars Program, a new hire to Western in October 2019, will partner with WWU colleagues to initiate additional outreach and build upon and develop new connections with partnering agencies.

#### **5. Current Institutional Efforts**

As mentioned in the summary, WWU has initiated a number of initiatives in recent years to address food and housing insecurity needs. Here is a more detailed description of these efforts.

##### **On Campus Food Pantries and the Outback Community Garden**

- The Associated Students of WWU and the Residence Hall Association have created the WHOLE (WWU Hub of Living Essentials) program that includes two food bank locations: in the Birnam Woods apartment complex on and on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the Viking Union building. The VU location also provides free clothing and personal care products.
- Students in the Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies also run a food pantry out of their college location

- The Outback Community Garden is an educational farm on Western’s campus designed to help individuals learn to produce their own food. The Outback hosts 40 individual plots that are available free of charge on a first come, first serve basis to students, staff, faculty and community members.

### **Swipe Out Hunger**

In June of 2019, WWU launched the “Swipe Out Hunger, Western” program. Swipe Out Hunger is a student to student meal swipe sharing program that assists students in “swiping” into the dining commons free of charge with their Western ID card. This program was made possible through an institutional partnership involving Aramark Dining Services, the Office of Sustainability, the Associated Students, and University Residences. In the program’s first quarter SOH received donations from over 200 students, giving over 1,000 meal to students in need.

Students with meal plans are now able to donate their meal swipes throughout the year at any dining hall cash register or online. These meals are then placed in an account to be reallocated for students facing food insecurity. “Swipe Out Hunger” is a national non-profit organization with over 70 chapters across the country. Western is now the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter in Washington State, following Eastern Washington University.

### **Financial Aid Emergency Funds**

[Emergency Loans](#) are available to WWU students who need funding on a short term basis. Emergency loans are available for 30, 60, and even 90 days. This loan program can be helpful to students in between paychecks, are experiencing a delay in financial aid disbursement, or have some other short term cash flow difficulty. Visit our web page for eligibility and application information. Students needing short term food funding can also contact the Financial Aid office to secure emergency food funding.

### **Office of Off-Campus Living**

Through a reorganization in the division of Enrollment and Student Services, a position was repurposed in the past year and the office of Off-Campus Living was created to serve the more than 12,000 Western students who don’t reside on campus. OCL’s mission is to provide education in regards to tenant rights, to support students in their explorations about housing options, to connect students with local resources, and to assist with short-term housing displacements that are the result of an unforeseen emergency (e.g. house fire, flooding, house deemed uninhabitable).

Students and staff involved in these initiatives will be included in coordinated efforts as this pilot is implemented. Their time is in-kind for this project. In addition, the university will support the costs associated with establishing an office for the Western Success Scholars Program Manager.

## 6. Pilot Program Proposal

### a) Objectives, Strategies and Rationales:

Objectives	Strategies	Rationale
<p><i>Develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to addressing food and housing insecurity</i></p>	<p>Establish Western Success Scholars office to create a single point of access to services and support</p> <p>Establish university work group to coordinate program implementation and provide support services</p>	<p>While there are various initiatives underway at Western, particularly regarding food insecurity, these efforts aren't all in a coordinated fashion and it could be confusing to students looking for assistance. Creating a single point of access and an internal work group provides for better coordination, more efficient use of resources, and a better user experience.</p>
<p><i>Implement strategies that address the barriers students experience when trying to secure permanent housing</i></p>	<p>Establish a campus support fund to assist students with one-time needs related to securing housing (e.g. application fees, security and/or utility deposits, furniture purchases)</p> <p>Initiate conversations with the Whatcom Housing Authority about possible implementation of a College Housing Assistance Program (<u>mirrored after efforts in the Tacoma area</u>)</p>	<p>Based on feedback to the Office of Off Campus Living, many of our students face barriers to housing because they can't afford the upfront costs of getting into a place or they can't secure co-signers. These efforts would provide some emergency funding via the institution while also identifying ways to partner with the local Housing Authority to secure more cost affordable housing for students with financial need for ongoing housing.</p>
<p><i>Learn from students experiencing food and/or housing insecurity what basic services and supports are needed and not currently being provided or which could be improved</i></p>	<p>Host focus groups and conduct an institutional survey to learn directly from students about their specific needs in this community</p> <p>Develop a strategic plan to implement the needs identified from the assessment work with students</p>	<p>Western has collected some information from students about their food and housing needs but this effort hasn't been comprehensive. Data collected from the HOPE survey along with qualitative information gathered from focus groups will help shape program efforts to those needs specific to our students and their individual circumstances.</p>

<p><i>Create a highly visible presence so that students are aware of and will access the resources available</i></p>	<p>Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy that can be pushed out through a variety of mediums (e.g. website/print materials/social media presence, media screens, university email, tabling).</p> <p>Partner with the Office of Off Campus Living to sponsor Housing and Hashbrowns – an educational event to explore housing options/tenant rights and responsibilities</p> <p>Partner with interested faculty to incorporate assessment findings and the availability of support services into classroom instruction</p>	<p>Reaching students with information about resources is central to this effort as they can't access services they don't know exist. Multiple forms of outreach will be required to reach students as they interact with the university in a variety of different ways.</p> <p>Housing and Hashbrowns provides an opportunity for students to learn about resources and considerations if wanting to rent locally and to interact with other students who might also seek roommates.</p>
<p><i>Educate the campus on the prevalence of food and housing insecurity among our students</i></p>	<p>Host awareness activities to educate the campus community in general on issues of food and housing insecurity and homelessness.</p> <p>Develop a media campaign to share data and information gathered specifically from WWU students</p>	<p>Discussions about housing and food insecurity are relatively new to Western's campus and many faculty and staff are completely unaware of how the needs of students today have changed. Securing more comprehensive data provides Western with an opportunity to educate within and to raise more awareness of the obstacles students face and the impact this has on their academic performance and their physical and/or mental well-being.</p>
<p>Develop partnerships on and off campus to identify and address barriers to food and shelter</p>	<p>Establish a HomeStays program to support the needs of students during breaks in the academic year</p> <p>Explore with local laundry providers a means for discounted facilities use.</p> <p>Explore options for students experiencing a temporary loss of housing (e.g. emergency</p>	<p>In addition to the upfront needs students face trying to secure a rental, students also face short-term or transitional needs for housing that lead to temporary homelessness. Most often in these instances, students couch surf with friends but this is not a suitable solution. More organized and available options need to be identified.</p>

	<p>displacement) or who have transitional needs for housing (e.g. in between leases)</p> <p>Partner with the Office of Off Campus Living to create a Landlords Work Group to explore rental options in the community</p>	
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**b) Evaluation Plan:**

The primary goal of this pilot is to increase assistance to students experiencing home and food insecurity so that their basic needs are met and they can be academically successful at Western and to increase campus awareness. A combination of quantitative and qualitative strategies will be incorporated into the assessment of this pilot program. Focus groups and surveys (the Hope Survey and an institutional survey) will be utilized to identify the needs of the populations being served. Surveys will also be conducted to assess the campus’ understanding of student needs and any improvement as a result of marketing and awareness efforts.

Western uses an online advising platform to manage student advising. The Program Manager will have access to that program and its data management, reporting, and analytics capabilities to track student progress and to identify various places where students are seeking support. Other institutional data systems will also be available through Banner 9, our enterprise system, to assess student retention and student attendance will be tracked at programs and activities. Evaluative comparisons of student success will be conducted in partnership with Western’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

The key outputs for the program include:

- Increased identification of the population needing services
- Development of services to support student needs
- Improvements in coordination, both on and off campus
- Increased collaborations, both on and off campus

The key outcomes of the program include:

- Reduction in the number of students reporting food and/or housing insecurity
- Academic performance rates (academic standing) are strong and consistent with the general student population
- Improvements in retention rates; retention rates consistent with the institution’s overall retention rates

### c) Budget and Budget Narrative:

A budget request document is attached that outlines our funding request. Here is a more detailed explanation of expenses:

#### Personnel

Two student employee positions (Student Web Developer 3; Student Graphic Artist 2) are requested. These positions are critical to the development of materials and an online presence to reach the populations this pilot is serving, in the creation of resource materials, and in generating information for campus awareness efforts. These costs (salary and benefits) is calculated at \$10,692 in year 1 (Y1) and \$14,288 in year 2 (Y2).

#### Operating

*Marketing/Awareness:* Funds are requested to generate materials for marketing and awareness. This will include printed materials (e.g. resource guides, table tents, posters, banners, bus signage, handouts), costs associated with postings on social media, and promotional items to support the program and create awareness. These costs are calculated at \$7,000 in Y1 and \$9,000 in Y2.

*Assessment/Evaluation:* Participation in the HOPE Survey requires providing \$1,000 in incentives for survey completion (10 - \$100 prizes). Funds are requested in Y1 and Y2 for this purpose. Our plan includes hosting 6 focus groups/year to continue to learn from students and assess our efforts as the pilot project progresses. Funds are requested to cover the cost of providing food and beverage at each of these sessions (\$150/session).

*Programming Costs:* A range of awareness activities will be hosted to publicize the program and to educate the campus community. Costs are estimated at \$500 per event to provide food, room rental fees, custodial fees, etc). There are plans to host 7 events (\$3500) in Y1 and 13 events (\$6500) in Y2. In addition, funds (\$1,000 annually) will be used to support Housing and Hashbrowns, an annual event to educate and inform students on tenant rights and responsibilities and considerations when looking for housing in the community.

*Landlord Workgroup:* Funds (\$1,000 annually) will be used to support costs associated with meetings throughout the year. This includes costs for space, refreshments, and meeting materials.

*Campus Support Fund:* Funds will be used to establish an emergency support fund to assist students with one-time needs securing housing such as deposits, application fees, or furniture. It is expected that the majority of the first year will be in establishing this program with the availability of a small disbursement (\$5,000) in Y1 and then full implementation (\$35,000) in Y2.

*Strategic Supports:* These funds (\$7,000 in Y1 and \$12,000 in Y2) will be used to support activities/services that have yet to be determined. Assessment data and feedback collected from students will be used to identify and develop strategies for implementation.

*Travel/Professional Development:* Funds will be used for local and statewide travel to meetings and conferences (\$1,500 annually), to attend two meetings annually for the Student Supports Advisory Committee (\$2,000 annually) and to attend a national conference each year (\$2,500 annually) for further understanding and implementation of best practices as it pertains to this work.



#### d) Key Staff:

- Sara Wilson, Senior Director for Student Success Initiatives: General pilot oversight
- Lorrie Bortuzzo, Western Success Scholar Program Manager: Day-to-day oversight for implementing pilot objectives, assembling key partners, organizing data collection, generating reports, and supervising student employees
- Julia Burns, Program Manager, Office of Off-Campus Living: Serve as a representative on both internal and external work groups; facilitate partnerships with local providers regarding housing needs; lead sponsor for Housing and Hashbrowns.
- Leonard Jones, Director, University Residences: Serve as a representative on internal work group; offer strategies to address food and housing insecurities that might involve his department
- Additional representatives on the internal work group
  - Brandon Artino, Aramark Dining Services
  - Amber C, AmeriCorps VISTA, Feeding Western Coordinator, Office of Sustainability
  - Jon McGough, Director, Disability Access Center
  - Dina Murphy, Scholarships Manager, Financial Aid
  - Molly Paterson, Counselor, Financial Aid
  - Karen Deysher Fernandez, Coordinator, Student Advocacy and Identity Resource Centers
  - Adam Leonard, Director, Campus Recreation Services
  - Leti Romo, Assistant Director, Student Representation and Governance
  - Christian Urcia, Assistant Director, Residence Life
  - Seth Vidana, Director, Office of SustainabilityStudents/student groups (e.g. Residence Hall Association, Associated Students) will be included on the internal work group as identified by key staff involved in these efforts.

#### e) Community Resources to Leverage toward Project Objectives:

As mentioned earlier, WWU is an active participant in our local community and has relationships formed with many local community organization and agencies. This pilot provides the opportunity to initiate additional outreach and build upon and develop new connections with partnering agencies. Particular focus will be on strategies to create a housing assistance program similar to the program established in Tacoma, to address access to laundry facilities, and to work with local landlords and other community partners to provide options for temporary and/or transitional housing needs.

## 7. Strategic Planning Statement

As mentioned in the summary statement, this pilot project is quite timely for Western's campus. Last year, a new University strategic plan identified goals that include increasing access to higher education and graduation rates for all students in our region and state, as well as our impact in and service to the state of Washington. This plan is centered on three main themes: Advancing Inclusive Success, Enhancing Academic Excellence, and Increasing Washington Impact. Metrics have been established to measure our progress, which includes raising our first to second year retention rate to 90% and our six year graduation rate to 80% by 2025, while also eliminating the achievement gap. Furthermore, this proposal aligns with the mission of the Division of Enrollment and Student Services which is to "engage students to promote healthy development of the whole self and our communities." This work to address the basic living needs, well-being, and support of our students is mission critical.

Access to these services will be both broadly promoted while also providing targeted outreach, where possible, to students known to be of high likelihood for support. The office for the Western Success Scholar Program Manager is very intentionally located in our new Multicultural Center (opened fall 2019), an addition to our Viking Union (Student Center). The office location will provide high visibility and is in a very active gathering spot for students from marginalized communities.

The office is co-located with other Multicultural Services (e.g. LGBTQ+) as well as our Student Advocacy and Identity Resource Centers (Queer Resource Center, Womxn's Identity Resource Center, Disability Outreach Center, and Blue Resource Center) and the Ethnic Student Center, a student run organization of Associated Student clubs helping students affirm their identity, build a sense of community, and cultivate leadership.

Additional planning regarding access and equity needs to be discussed with the newly hired WSS Program Manager. Oversight for the Passport to College Program is being shifted from Student Outreach Services to the WSS Program Manager to create a centralized contact for populations being served by this pilot project and the Passport program. The WSS Program Manager will partner with departments across the university in support of the students who are identified as Passport eligible.