

To: Members of the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees  
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Cathy Early                Yvonne Savala  
Carolyn Ehlert Fuller

From: Joe Rives, Vice President, Quad Cities and Planning

Date: April 28, 2016

Re: April 2016 Strategic Plan Update

This month's *Strategic Plan Update* shows that Western Illinois University is ranked in the top 2% of 2,053 public and private four-year institutions in the retention and graduation of low-income students, according to data published by the United States Department of Education in March 2016. The University's placement in this ranking and designation as an "Institution Excelling in Access and Success" is consistent with *Higher Values in Higher Education's Vision* to be a leader in quality, opportunity, and affordability.

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Western Illinois University is a leading institution for successfully addressing concerns expressed by the United States Department of Education (DOE). In *Fulfilling the Promise, Serving the Need*, the DOE expresses concerns related postsecondary enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of low-income students. The *Report* states, "Too many colleges and universities are missing the mark. Some remain beyond the economic reach of many low-income students, others provide access without doing enough to help students complete their degrees, and still others fail to prepare students for good jobs."

Contrary to these concerns, 43% of Western Illinois University students receive Pell grants, and the six-year graduation rate of Pell recipients at the University was 56%. This graduation rate is identical to students at WIU who did not receive a Pell grant.

The *Report* goes on to emphasize that low retention and graduation rates for low-income students have individual and public policy implications. With regard to the latter, "Taxpayers have a direct stake in student success. With nearly \$30 billion in federal dollars paid each year in grants for low-income students to attend college — and billions more in federal student loans — we must ensure a strong return on this critical investment." Western Illinois University is successfully providing a strong return for students, families, and taxpayers. We are a best practice institution in serving low-income students.

The DOE evaluated enrollment and graduation rates of Pell Grant recipients as reported in College Scorecard, and related analyses from The Education Trust, Institute for Higher Education Policy, New York Times, and Washington Post. Appendix A provides the complete DOE methodology.

The table below compares the University's performance in this prestigious national ranking. No Western Illinois University peer institutions were included in the best practice designation. The DOE indicates, "The institutions identified in the table below are some of those cited by many

organizations as ones that outperform their peer institutions in enrolling and graduating Pell Grant recipients. The Department is pleased to lend its voice to the others calling for greater recognition of institutions like these.”

Student, Alumni, and Institutional Characteristics for Colleges and Universities Selected As Best Practice Institutions By the United States Department of Education March 2016					
	Percent of				
	Pell Recipients Enrolled	Pell Recipients Graduating in Six Years	All Students Graduating in Six Years	Pell Recipients Earning > \$25,000 Six Years After Enrolling	Annual Net Price of Education for Low Income Students
California State-Stanislaus	58%	53%	52%	58%	\$5,128
CUNY-Baruch College	45%	69%	67%	72%	\$5,559
Florida International	58%	53%	52%	68%	\$9,763
Georgia State	51%	53%	53%	64%	\$13,718
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts	45%	53%	57%	56%	\$11,963
Rutgers-Newark	46%	62%	68%	74%	\$8,212
California-Irvine	43%	87%	86%	69%	\$8,521
California-San Diego	43%	84%	86%	71%	\$9,279
Illinois-Chicago	49%	54%	57%	71%	\$9,920
Michigan-Dearborn	43%	56%	52%	63%	\$6,908
North Carolina-Greensboro	44%	52%	55%	61%	\$7,880
Pittsburgh-Bradford	45%	57%	52%	74%	\$13,246
Western Illinois	43%	56%	56%	67%	\$15,114

Of these 13 nationally recognized public institutions, Western ranked:

- 10<sup>th</sup> in the percentage of students enrolled who received Pell grants.
- 6<sup>th</sup> in the percentage of Pell recipients graduating within six years.
- 7<sup>th</sup> in the percentage of all students graduating within six years.
- 8<sup>th</sup> in the percentage of Pell recipients earning \$25,000 or more annually six years after starting college.
- 13<sup>th</sup> in the annual net price of attendance for low-income students.

The DOE *Report* shows that Western Illinois University provides high-achieving students with access to an affordable, high-quality postsecondary education. Previous *Strategic Plan Updates* presented during this academic year triangulate this finding. From the November and December 2015 *Strategic Plan Updates*:

- The Washington Monthly ranks Western Illinois University 30<sup>th</sup> among 403 Midwestern colleges and universities, and in the top 32 of percent nationally in our combined contributions to social mobility, research, and public service.
- The Economist analysis of alumni salaries placed Western Illinois University in the top 24 percent nationally.
- The Brookings Institute “value added” rankings for predicting median alumni salaries shows that a Western Illinois University education helps students earn higher salaries than projected when controlling for student characteristics, institutional type, and location.



Appendix A  
Methodology Used in *Fulfilling the Promise, Serving the Need*

“Using data from the College Scorecard data on the Department’s technical website, The Education Trust’s Pell Partnership project, Institute for Higher Education Policy’s (IHEP) *Serving Their Share* report, and The Upshot’s (*New York Times*) College Access Index, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) constructed a file with institutions matched to data on access, affordability, and outcomes measures. The initial institutions in this file were predominantly four-year colleges and universities located in the 50 states plus the District of Columbia that participate in Title IV financial aid programs (a total of 2,053 institutions). ED then applied the following filters to narrow the list to those with strong outcomes in the 2012-13 Scorecard measurement year by excluding institutions with

- A repayment rate of less than 50 percent;
- Threshold earnings of less than 50 percent (i.e., institutions at which fewer than 50 percent of borrowers were earning more than the typical working high school graduate [\$25,000] six years after enrolling);
- A six-year Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) rate or, where available, a Pell completion rate of less than 50 percent;
- Fewer than 200 degree-seeking undergraduates; and/or
- Data missing on repayment, earnings, graduation rate, or Pell.

Next, ED applied a filter to create a shortlist of institutions that provide high-quality opportunities to a significant share of low-income students. These institutions included ones with the percent of Pell recipients in the top 33 percent (unweighted) of institutions in the same sector (control and predominant degree).

ED also created a shortlist of institutions that have significantly increased their number and share of Pell students over the last five years. This list included institutions with percentage increase in Pell enrollment in the top 33 percent (unweighted) of institutions in the same sector (control [private nonprofit, public, proprietary] and predominant degree [predominantly bachelor’s degree-awarding, for example]).

Once these two shortlists were created, ED selected example institutions, considering such factors as geographic diversity, size, and control, to highlight institutions based on

- The Education Trust’s measure of the six-year graduation rate among first-time, full-time Pell students;
- The net price paid of students who received Title IV aid in 2012-13 and belong to the bottom two family income quintiles (less than \$48,000);
- Whether the institution is also highlighted in The Education Trust, *New York Times*, and IHEP reports; and
- The extent to which the institution’s mission indicates that it is committed to serving students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

For identifying areas with significant room for improvement, we explored sectors and schools that were outperformed by their peer institutions in the IPEDS Data Feedback Report.<sup>59</sup> We also looked at The Education Trust’s estimated gap between Pell completion and the overall IPEDS graduation rate in award year 2012-13 and highlighted in this report cases in which sectors had above-average overall graduation rates, but relatively low six-year Pell completion rates. And we noted that there are some institutions with exceptional outcomes, but below-average access for low-income students, relative to other schools in the sector.”