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The Senate newsletter this year will attempt to provide news and data of relevance to faculty and the wider university community. Realizing that there is a great deal to be gained with a proactive and goal-driven academic vice president now in place, the role of op-ed editorial pieces, often viewed as critical of upper administrative practices, has been minimized. Data and information provided by the various Senate committees should provide appropriate insight into university areas and issues of faculty concern.

-----Bart White

THERE'S ALWAYS A BETTER ANSWER

In light of the recent decision to add a $25 fee to each student's semestery bill in order to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (which bars sex discrimination at schools receiving federal funds), it is interesting to note how other institutions have dealt with this same issue.

The Chronicle of Higher Education (August 9, 1996) noted that that a "state appeals court has upheld a decision by the State University of New York at Albany to eliminate four varsity sports teams to bring it into compliance with federal gender-equity laws." This decision upheld the right of the president to eliminate the teams in order to comply with Title IX requirements. The teams affected were the men's wrestling, tennis and swimming teams as well as the women's swim team. The university also added a women's field hockey team and a women's golf team in order to balance the ratio of women to men in the athletic program.

Such a precedent ought to serve as valuable input here in Bowling Green where the temptation to choose the "easy way out" by increasing fees reigns supreme to the much needed discussion of the hard issues involved and the amount of money Western actually loses on intercollegiate athletics.
A BRIDGE TO HIGHER ENROLLMENTS

Mary and John Smith are a typical rural Kentucky family with two young boys in first and third grade. Both parents finished high school but neither gave college a thought. After all, no one in their families had gone to college and finding a secure job was John's first goal after high school. Following several failed attempts, he was now working at a local factory and raising tobacco for several of his neighbors in his spare time.

Mary waited until the children were in school and was now working part-time at the new discount store in town. This extra money was necessary to make ends meet.

One evening, Mary received a call from a friend named Claire. It seemed that Claire and some friends wanted to learn to play Bridge and they needed a fourth. The lessons were on Tuesdays, Mary's day off. Two weeks later, Mary attended her first Bridge lesson. The teacher was from Bowling Green and worked for "something called" the Western Kentucky University Community College.

Mary attended the full eight week course and after every class, she brought home a Western handout supplied by the teacher which she left on the coffee table. The handout read, "Western Kentucky University Community College." Don't think her children didn't notice.

On her last day of class, Mary brought home a schedule of upcoming courses. It also ended up on the coffee table until John picked it up and began to peruse its contents. What caught his eye was a course on home landscaping. This was something John had always wanted to learn. He had been thinking about landscaping his yard for the last three years. After all, Mary had taken a Bridge course. Well, it wasn't long before John was leaving his course materials, with the WKU logo, on the coffee table. Don't think the children didn't notice.

To comment: Community colleges have three distinct missions.
1. The provision of course work that will transfer to a four year institution and contribute to a baccalaureate degree,
2. associate degree programs and, perhaps their most important function,
3. contributing to lifelong learning.

This last function is the one which changes attitudes about higher education, which creates a wide base of support for higher education and which places role models in our constituents homes.

When a college reaches every home and community possible with lifelong learning opportunities, it changes lives and raises enrollments. A child's parents are every colleges most effective recruiters.

Perhaps someday you'll meet John and Mary Smith. Maybe say hello while out for a country drive or recognize their beautifully landscaped yard. But more importantly, you'll recognize
John on his riding lawnmower. It's the one with the WKU bumper sticker.

--- J. Glenn Lohr

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Western's Service Area and Student Accessibility

Commentary, by David J. Keeling

A new millenium fast approaches. Change is in the air, especially at our own institution. At the national level, higher education is under increased scrutiny. Tuition costs, student access, scholarships, tenure, multiculturalism, curriculum reform, and technological change are just a few of the myriad issues that institutions of higher education must address in the immediate future. Changes driven by these issues are having, and will continue to have, a direct impact on faculty. How we face these issues now and in the future will have a profound influence on how we carry out our educational mission. As a starting point for discussion, debate and, I hope, proactive participation by faculty, administrators, and regents alike, I offer this commentary on tuition costs and the economic profile of counties in Western’s service area.

Education and Development

A society’s ability to develop and to participate in the rapidly evolving regional and global economy is shaped directly and indirectly by education. An educated and literate workforce is better able to shape the interactions between capital, labor, and place that are fundamental to community and individual development. My own research in Latin America, specifically in the rural communities of Argentina, Ecuador, and Mexico, has focused on the crucial link between education and socioeconomic development. This link also has received much attention from international and national organizations and governments.

For example, a 1994 study by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean pointed out that completion of secondary school is a prerequisite for opening up major opportunities for social advancement. In other words, 10 or more years of basic education translate into a probability of avoiding poverty that ranges from 82 to 97 percent. When the attainment of a university education is factored in, the development index (measured in GDP per capita) can increase by over 1,000 percent. Moreover, the cultural development of a society in terms of the arts, entertainment, media, information, and literature is enhanced by improvement in the reading and writing skills of the populace.

Within this development context, Western Kentucky University faces problems similar to those experienced by many developing countries. Compared to state, regional, and national benchmarks, many counties in Western’s service area are economically depressed and lack the educational skills necessary for social and economic advancement.

Western's Service Area

Statistics from the 1990 National Census reveal that most of the counties in Western’s service area have very low percentages of the population with a college education. Compared to the
state average (13.6%) and to Warren County (19.2%), counties such as Butler (5.1%), Hart (5.2%), Metcalfe (5.0%), and Edmonson (5.4%) clearly have a smaller pool of educated adults. Another useful statistic is the percent of the population aged 18-24 enrolled in college. Percentage enrollment in these depressed counties (for example, Butler 7.9%, Green 11.9%, Metcalfe 9.3%, and Allen 11.3%) compared to the state (30%) and Warren County (54%) percentages clearly suggests that some serious problems exist in recruitment, access, and ability to pay for a college education.

Median and family household incomes also are consistently lower in Western's service area compared to the state level. This has a direct impact on the affordability of an education at Western. Statistics released by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority show that the cost of attending Western for the 1996-97 academic year is approximately $7,260 per student (tuition, room and board, books, and miscellaneous expenses).

When compared to median household income for poorer counties such as Allen, Edmonson, and Butler, the magnitude of the problem becomes apparent. According to the 1990 census, 67 percent of the households in Allen County earned less than $25,000 per year, with the mean income for this group under $15,000 per year. Extrapolating these figures to 1996-97 suggests that over 45 percent of median household income for this group would be needed to cover the cost of attending Western for an academic year. Table 1 presents a summary of this situation by comparing only tuition, room, and board costs against median household income for selected counties in Western's service area. As the table illustrates, the percent share of median household income required to meet the basic cost of an education at Western has increased beyond the rate of inflation every year since 1991.

Obviously, much more detailed analyses based on the 1990 census could be carried out on each of the counties in Western's service area. Distributions of income by income range per household and per family, levels of poverty by county, and the potential pool of 18-24 year-olds by county all support the contention that Western faces a serious challenge to its mission of providing affordable and meaningful education to residents of South Central Kentucky.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>20.6 19.7 18.9 17.6 16.1 15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barren</td>
<td>18.8 18.0 17.3 16.2 14.2 13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler</td>
<td>20.7 19.9 19.3 18.3 16.3 15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonson</td>
<td>25.3 24.2 23.5 21.9 18.4 18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan</td>
<td>16.5 15.8 15.3 14.5 13.7 12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpson</td>
<td>16.5 15.8 15.3 14.8 12.5 11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>14.7 14.1 13.5 12.6 11.5 10.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kentucky Economic Statistics/WKU Internal Statistics
Note: Data are for discussion purposes only. Certain assumptions have been made concerning the underlying data. Please consult with author for the methodologies and estimates.
Note: Figures show the portion of median household income required to cover the cost of tuition, room, and
Implications and Strategies

Social polarization is a reality in contemporary U.S. society, as the gap between the upper and lower levels of income continues to widen. Those that have the greatest need for access to higher education often are the least able to afford the access. An important question that needs to be asked, therefore, is whether Western Kentucky University is fulfilling its mission -- offering a high-quality education to ALL citizens -- or whether it is increasingly pricing those that need access to an educational opportunity the most out of the market? Is Western helping to perpetuate the social polarization problem by pricing those that are in the lower echelons of income distribution out of an educational opportunity? What can be done to avoid this problem and to reach out to these students unable to participate in the educational experience?

As a starting point for further discussion and action, here are some general ideas about strategy.

(1) Knowing the Market:

Western needs to develop a thorough understanding of the service area. We need a marketing plan that identifies the potential clientele, stratifies that clientele based on socioeconomic indicators, and proposes strategies for each of the socioeconomic strata. Exactly how many potential students in the 18-25 age-range are likely to graduate from high school over the next decade and what is their spatial distribution? What has been the educational profile of graduating seniors in Western's service area over the past decade? Where have students gone to college if not to Western?

(2) Understanding Both the Students' and the Employers' Needs:

Western must work toward satisfying the demands of the economy in Western's service area. However, using the circular argument that there is little demand for higher education in some of these counties because the economy is primarily rural in nature, and therefore we cannot attract students to higher education, makes little sense. An educated, skilled workforce creates economic opportunity, which in turn creates a demand for higher education. I have seen this process at work in dozens of Latin America communities and it can be a successful strategy for diversifying a primarily rural economic base. Higher education is a necessary, although not sufficient, component of the development process.

(3) Use Creative Financing Methods to Attract Students:

Western must reexamine its financial and scholarship policies. Who are the recipients of aid today and where do they come from? Are we providing an adequate financial incentive to encourage students from traditionally poorer counties to attend the university? My cursory examination of scholarship distribution suggests that Western has priorities that do not mesh with the needs of the service area clientele. Every student in the Western service area that wishes to attend the university should have the opportunity to do so, and Western should develop strategies and policies to ensure that they can attend.
(4) Create a Community College System that Recognizes the Different Socioeconomic Strata in the Western Service Area:

We need to examine seriously the role of Community College education in our service area. I find little logic in Western's present strategy of pricing the Community College tuition at the same level as tuition for Western students. Statistical and anecdotal evidence from around the country suggest that Community Colleges can play a vital support role to the University. Across the country, community college tuition generally is 50 to 75 percent lower than the tuition at 4-year public, regional universities. In Kentucky, the UK community college system charges $1,080 for annual tuition. Compare this to Western's Community College tuition of $2,030 per year.

In Oregon, the Lane County Community College charges $1,580 for annual tuition, compared to $3,540 for the University of Oregon (they are both located in Eugene). These two institutions have a symbiotic relationship. Thousands of students every year transfer from the LCC system into the University of Oregon, well prepared, motivated, and better able financially to complete the final portion of their degrees. Far from affecting enrollment negatively, the LCC has enabled the University of Oregon to recruit higher quality students overall in record numbers.

(5) Recruit, Recruit, Recruit:

Western has not done a very good job in the past of reaching out to schools, teachers, and students across the service area. In fact, you would hardly know in some counties that Western exists at all. Strategies and policies that proved effective in the past are not all that useful in today's society and economy. Education can no longer be like the mass-produced Model T Ford. We need creative strategies that are designed to penetrate market niches, and we need flexibility to address both students' and employees' needs. It is no longer a question of "here's our product and it will cost you X dollars." Western must say "how can we design our product to meet your particular needs (student or employer) and how can we price it to meet your particular financial circumstances?"

Conclusion

I'm sure faculty, administrators, and regents can come up with many other ideas and suggestions about how Western can address this serious issue. Think about recruitment strategies and other creative ideas. Faculty especially should get more involved with the Senate to make sure its voice is heard as Western faces some of the most important challenges in its long history.

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Comments or questions about this section of Western Online should be directed to Rose Davis, Department of Library Automation and Technical Services, rdavis@wku.edu

Last Updated: Sunday, October 12, 1997 3:02:33 PM
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