



Campus Visit Summary
Western Carolina University

Campus Visit Date: June 6, 2007

Brief Overview

A regional comprehensive university, Western offers programs at the baccalaureate, master's, intermediate and doctoral (in education) levels. As a focused growth institution, Western is committed to increasing access to its programs by at least 40% more students by 2015 while enhancing its efforts to meet the state's need for teachers, engineers, nurses and entrepreneurs and to encourage economic development throughout the region. As it grows, Western will continue to provide small class sizes and personal attention for all students. Western offers career-focused degree programs in the arts, sciences, technologies, business, humanities and more. Courses are available on the main campus in Cullowhee, in Asheville and Cherokee, and on-line.

Located in a beautiful valley between the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky Mountains, Western's Cullowhee campus is 52 miles southwest of Asheville and six miles south of Sylva – an outstanding location for outdoor research and recreation in the nearby forests, waterways, national parks and Qualla Boundary of the Cherokee.

- Total Enrollment Fall 2006: 8,861
- Undergraduate Enrollment Fall 2006: 7,146
 - 86% white, 5% black, 7% other, 2% American Indian
 - 52% female, 48% male

Campus' definition of its "region"

Located in Cullowhee, the campus primarily serves 17 counties in southwestern North Carolina, many of which border Tennessee, Georgia, and South Carolina.

Current responses to regional and statewide needs

The campus highlighted the following programs and initiatives as representative of its efforts to meet regional and state wide needs:

- Economic Development -
 - The *Construction Management program* supplies educated project managers to the region's construction industry.
 - The *Center for Rapid Product Realization* – engages faculty, staff, and students with businesses and entrepreneurs in 23 counties to develop new potential products and support existing business competitiveness through process redesign and product improvement, proof of concept, and reverse engineering.

- *Canton recovery* - Students and faculty from Entrepreneurship, Computer Information Sciences, and other disciplines at WCU are working to assist the town of Canton in its ongoing efforts to fully recover from the 2004 floods as it undertakes economic revitalization efforts in partnership with Haywood Community College, the City of Canton, and WCU's Western Regional Service Center of the SBTDC.
- Faculty members in natural resource management are working with *Balsam Mountain Preserve* and others to support sustainable development and manage the forests that are such an important part of residential development.
- The *Rivercane Restoration Project* is a partnership with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians that partners faculty, students, and community leaders in responding to economic and community needs.
- Faculty from the *Natural Resource Management department* are working with the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee to monitor forest sustainability.
- *Western Regional Service Center of the SBTDC* works with hundreds of businesses annually in the AdvantageWest region, both existing and start-ups, to become more effective and profitable. In addition to its primary service role, the SBTDC assists WCU's faculty in finding sites and clients for engagement and service learning activities (in 2006, the SBTDC helped place 94 students with 32 clients for 4,865 hours of service).
- ***The Institute for Economy and the Future (IEF)*** surveys the community and connects its resources to traditional academic programs that have been actively involved in research and other scholarly activities that support the region. Examples of initiatives include:
 - Conducting several county economic base studies and run focus groups on key regional issues
 - Tri-County Community College: a comprehensive assessment of potential students (supply) and potential employers (demand) relative to the need for specific higher education programs in the region;
 - Western Piedmont Community College: a formal assessment of the prospects for the healthcare sector in the Western Piedmont Region of North Carolina;
 - A National Survey of State Homeland Security Officials: a state-level assessment of security accomplishments and continuing concerns;
 - A Broadband Survey: measuring broadband penetration levels in the local area and feasibility of a high-speed broadband market;
 - InRe Financial, LLC: a survey conducted for the purpose of identifying potential market opportunities to address financing challenges for capital improvement projects for K-12 education;
 - Buncombe County Citizen Survey: a survey developed to measure residents' satisfaction with current services offered by the county and to gauge interest for new services, programs, etc.;
 - Asheville Citizen Times Former Readers Survey: a survey and subsequent focus group used to elicit information from former subscribers about reasons for cancellation and to gain additional insight into how local residents obtain their media;

- Nantahala Outdoor Center Revitalization Project: a project focused on feasibility, impact and plans for an extensive river and adventure resort revitalization project;
 - Oak Ridge National Laboratory - Southeast Region Research Initiative (SERRI): a project designed to create a documented prescription for a regional emergency planning model which produces a process for continuous disaster mitigation response using the Charlotte-Mecklenburg region as a case study.
 - Key Indicators Project (KIP) initiative enhances the economic competitiveness of regional development in both the mid and long-term, by identifying, analyzing, and mapping key indicators and clusters for WNC and surrounding areas.
 - Regional Outlook Report provides a comprehensive overview of the major economic, social and political trends in WNC.
 - *Kimmel School* faculty and students have engaged with 108 businesses in various forms of consulting, rapid prototyping, process redesign, and product development.
 - *The Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation* integrates WCU's academic program in entrepreneurship in assisting the region to create new business opportunities and products, and will work closely with WCU's SBTDC, the Center for Rapid Product Realization, and the Institute for the Economy and the Future.
- Education –
 - *Chancellors Task Force on Teacher Supply and Demand* meets bi-annually to advise the campus on pressing teacher education needs.
 - *NCTEACH* provides educational programs for lateral entry teachers to achieve licensure (WCU's program is also available online).
 - *The Center for the Support of Beginning Teachers (CSBT)* sponsors research investigating induction programs and their effect on teacher retention, and supports the professional development of beginning teachers and their transition to the classroom.
 - *The WCU Adventure of the American Mind (AAM) Program* is responsible for heading up regional AAM research activities related to the use of instructional technology to improve teaching and learning.
 - *The College of Education* has conducted the following types of research and scholarship activities to address regional and state educational needs:
 - Traditional vs. alternative teacher certification for recruiting and retaining teachers
 - Dropout decisions of African American female students
 - Effects of mentoring on beginning teachers' retention
 - Effects of National Board Certification on student achievement
 - *The College of Education and Allied Professions* is conducting studies of teacher retention, inquiry methods of teaching science, and science and literacy; faculty also provide literacy coaching, support for teachers working

with students who are deaf and/or blind, and recruit students who plan to work with people who are severely disabled.

- *School-University Teacher Education Partnership (SUTEP)* is actively engaged with 96 schools in 18 different school districts and has processes in place to identify and deal with the educational issues facing the region.
 - *Center for Mathematics and Science Education (CMSE)* works to bring about improvement in science and mathematics education, and sponsors the pre-college program for students aspiring mathematics and science.
 - *North Carolina Teacher's Academy* is offering intensive learning experiences in four-day resident sessions on campus, many of which focus on the use of technology in the classroom.
 - *Educational Outreach Department* serves as the host for a wide range of community programs, including the Robbinsville GEAR-Up Program, the Associated Builder's and Contractors, MAHEC Health Careers Camp, NC Model Teacher's Consortium, Mountain Dulcimer Week, Mountain Colloquium, South Forsyth Band Camp, Principal's Institute, Coastal Hazard Mapping Meeting, and Broadway in the Mountains.
- Health –
 - *Nursing* – the campus is responding to this need in a number of ways:
 - Increasing the number of pre-licensure students by 30% (this year, 92% chose to obtain licensure in North Carolina)
 - Undergraduate RN to BSN program – a fully online program with average enrollment increasing by 56%
 - Masters program Family Nurse Practitioner track focusing on family practice (90% of graduates remain in practice in the region)
 - Nurse Educator track – helps address the shortage in nurse educators and is offered online
 - Nurse Anesthetist track meets the need for certified nurse anesthetists in the region; program developed in partnership with regional hospitals
 - *College of Health* – established to address the need for health professionals; programs prepare students for further education and careers in medicine, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and clinical laboratory sciences.
 - *Aging population* – responds to the significant increase in retirees moving to the region (people in the region age 60+ will increase 180% by the year 2030) include a *Center for Adaptive Devices*, a small “c” center created by the *WCU Board of Trustees for the purposes of providing a vehicle for faculty members from engineering, technology, physical therapy, speech and hearing, and other programs to work together on developing assistive and adaptive devices to improve the quality of life for older people. The center is focused specifically on applied research and product development and it has a primary mission related to potential device commercialization. Several projects have been completed by faculty and students that assisted disabled people in the region. In addition, a Senior College was developed to address the unique education and enrichment needs of this population.*

- Faculty in health administration completed a comprehensive analysis of the *economic impact of the health care sector* on Swain, Cherokee, Jackson, Transylvania, and Burke Counties.
- Social Issues –
 - *The Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines (PSDS)* will host an on-campus conference bringing together scientists from academia, government, and industry to find common solutions to mapping and understanding coastal vulnerability; free consulting is available to small community groups and NGO's on coastal science and policy. Additionally, WCU and the PSDS will explore ways to connect its faculty and students to programs, internships, and other activities at institutions in the UNC-system that will mutually benefit WCU and the partner institutions and related communities.
 - *The Department of History* has and will continue to work closely with the Blue Ridge Parkway to develop cultural history material such as events and brochures that are now on display in the Blue Ridge Parkway visitors' center.
 - *Waynesville Watershed (NC) study* to develop a water monitoring network that will allow for the detailed analysis of water quality within the municipality.
- Student Applied Research and Service-
 - *Graduate students* - Graduate research symposia highlight the mentored research of graduate students (more than 100 papers were presented at this year's symposium). Much of the students' work directly addresses questions that are critical to the region, including land use, economic impact of businesses, teacher retention, and health care issues.
 - *Undergraduate students* – WCU also conducts an undergraduate research symposium in which the students' work can be categorized under four broad topics: 1) environment-related, 2) microbiology, 3) American Indian/Cherokee cultural studies, and 4) local/regional issues. (This year, more WCU students presented at the National Conference for Undergraduate Research than any other UNC campus and, among all universities represented, WCU was eighth nationally)
 - *Center for Service Learning* engages students in service learning projects in many areas of the region. WCU has approximately 57 courses with service learning components taught by 47 faculty members involving approximately 1,670 students and 100 agencies/service sites. The value of this community service is estimated at approximately \$2.4 million per academic year.

Methods of identifying and incorporating regional and statewide needs into academic mission

- *Data and Survey scans* - The campus formally scans data and surveys to assess demographic, economic, and social trends in the region, periodically employs consultants (Pappas, MGT) to assist in assessing campus capabilities in areas such as

student recruitment and enrollment growth. The campus also conducts a number of needs assessment surveys which provide information on current and future needs, including:

- The Center for the Support of Beginning Teachers annually surveys public schools in the region.
 - WCU's Asheville Center conducts needs assessments of the surrounding counties to determine programming requirements.
 - The four subcommittees of Western's School University Teacher Education Partnership (SUTEP) meet with public school partners each fall semester to set goals for the upcoming academic year.
 - WCU's Educational Outreach Department conducts regional assessments to determine short- and long-term learning needs.
- *Chancellor's Listening Tours* - The Chancellor has conducted periodic "listening tours" since 1995, meeting with community, education, and business leaders in the region to identify regional needs. Information gathered by the Chancellor and campus teams from these listening tours is responded to through the campus' strategic planning committee either by providing direct services or developing curriculum and educational programming.
 - *Advisory Boards* – The campus receives regular input from advisory boards at the department and campus level. Faculty and administrators serve on a number of community boards and organizations in the region and at the state level, which provides another vehicle for community input.

Teaching Innovations (soft skills development, experiential learning, etc.)

- WCU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) – a 21st century approach to college-level education whose focus is on creating graduates who can synthesize the various components of their education and who can use what they have learned in a variety of settings.
 - It is a pathway to intentional learning that ties together learning, career aspirations, and civic engagement.
 - At the core of the QEP is the belief that the actual competencies of these graduates should be of ultimate concern if one is attempting to analyze the future impact of WCU graduates on the state.
 - The extended portfolio model--termed the "Educational Briefcase"--will provide documentation of the actual quality of learning and the ability to apply that learning as demonstrated by graduates.
 - This portfolio will allow: 1) assessment of student learning; 2) assessment of program effectiveness; and 3) documentation of institutional quality. Each student will have such a briefcase through out their time at WCU.
- The QEP initiates new and enhances current connections among existing programs to create a more holistic approach to educating students. WCU faculty and staff recognize that a major challenge of higher education is the need for

students to synthesize their curricular and co-curricular (outside of courses) college experiences.

- The QEP uses synthesis – the ability to integrate knowledge from different areas into an original whole – as the driving framework for teaching and learning. This emphasis on synthesis enhances students’ educational journey and helps prepare them for life beyond college.
- The plan’s implementation will impact academics, residential life, service learning, student leadership, study abroad, and career planning/education. The outcome of the plan will be students who are intentional participants in their own educational journey.
- The QEP defines an educated citizen as:
 - A productive worker;
 - An active community member;
 - A knowledgeable, thoughtful, responsible decision maker; and
 - An educated leader with leadership skills.
- *Campus-wide curricular approach* - The Liberal Studies Program, required of all undergraduate students at WCU, emphasizes the holistic development of our students.
 - Forty-two hours of coursework in science, mathematics, English, the humanities, fine and performing arts, history, wellness, social sciences, world cultures, and communication, foster the development of the following abilities and qualities: advanced critical thinking, effective communication, reflective problem-solving, responsible use of information and technology, appreciation for the creative and performing arts, continued personal development, and a passion for lifelong learning.

Enrollment growth – General

- WCU is reviewing vital statistics, Census data, Department of Public Instruction data including high school completion rates, various yield rates for the campus, and the expectations from the University of North Carolina General Administration of an overall enrollment target of 17,500.
 - Based on these analyses and dependent upon the degree certain limitations can be addressed, it is estimated that by 2016 WCU’s enrollment is likely to be between 13,000 and 17,000.
 - However, these enrollment ranges are dependent upon WCU and the University of North Carolina being able to address key obstacles. These obstacles include: 1) WCU’s residential (housing) capacity; 2) policies regarding branch campuses; 3) differential charges for distance education and resident credit; 4) tuition reciprocity; 5) curriculum approval mechanisms; 6) continued reliance of proxy variables for the Carnegie Classification; and, 7) transfer articulation.

Faculty Issues

- *Faculty growth* - The campus has experienced significant growth in its faculty, with 41% of the current faculty being hired in the last 4 years. The campus also has retirement and attrition rates available upon request.
- *Housing* – Because of the high value of land in the area, new faculty have difficulty obtaining quality, affordable homes which negatively impacts faculty recruitment.
- *Promotion and Tenure policies* - This semester the WCU Faculty Senate unanimously adopted Ernest Boyer’s definition of scholarship as the internal standard for tenure and promotion. The four types of scholarship included in Ernest Boyer’s model are:
 - *Scholarship of discovery* - original research that advances knowledge and may involve publishing journal articles, authoring/editing books, or presenting at conferences.
 - *Scholarship of integration* - involves synthesis of information across disciplines, across topics within a discipline, or across time.
 - *Scholarship of application* (sometimes called engagement) –involves the application of disciplinary expertise with results that can be shared with and/or evaluated by peers such as technical reports, policy statements, guidebooks, economic impact statements, and/or pamphlets.
 - *Scholarship of teaching and learning* – involves the systematic study of teaching and learning processes.

Most institutions recognize scholarship related to discovery, integration, and teaching and learning. Few institutions have adopted the “scholarship of application” as a core element of tenure, promotion and merit criteria. Most often, this form of scholarship is lumped under “service” and there is little effort to differentiate that which is truly scholarly from that which is professional service to the broader community. Scholarly work can now take the form of applied reports, patents, licenses, contracts, grants, training programs, performances and the like. *By adopting the Boyer model and “formally” recognizing the value of **applied** (i.e., the scholarship of application), WCU is positioning itself to significantly increase the types of research available, and most applicable, to address the issues affecting the region. Overall, adoption of the Boyer model along with adoption of the University’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) has allowed the institution to align its regional mission, educational programming and reward system.*

With adoption of this standard, the Board of Governors will position WCU to become one of the few institutions in the country that have successfully implemented all elements of Boyer’s model. This change is significant in that it will (1) lead to shifts in the nature of faculty assignments, faculty reward systems, and the institution’s level of engagement; (2) enable WCU to partner with traditional research extensive universities to promote entrepreneurship, innovation, licensing, and business spin-outs that can all directly affect the economic viability of the region; and (3) aligns all elements of the faculty assignment and evaluation model with the core focus of the QEP.

External Communications

- WCU is undertaking a significant institutional effort to understand and develop its brand and develop a vehicle to assist the region and state in understanding the role WCU plays in the region and its impact (WCU's strategic planning committee identified both internal and external communication as a weakness that WCU must address). Strategies include systematic communications that would go routinely to groups the campus serves, and opportunities for stakeholders to engage the campus through its website rather than waiting for individuals to discover these information portals on their own.

Barriers and Challenges facing the campus

- *Traditional faculty hiring system* – In implementing the QEP and the new P&T policies based on Boyer's model, the campus believes it will be increasingly important to hire key faculty at the associate professor and professor ranks who have significant non-university experience. Hiring an occasional professional expert in an important specific area of study would be of value to students' educational experiences. Implementing this model at WCU will present significant challenges to traditional views of hiring as well as expectations within individual departments.
- *Curriculum and program approval processes* - WCU recently restructured the faculty portion of its internal governance model. While this new model is an improvement over the old one, the campus reports that it still has too many layers of approval for simple curriculum changes. Finding more efficient mechanisms for approval of courses and curricula while assuring that faculty, both in fact and in perception, keep primary control of the curriculum presents a major challenge. The campus notes that this challenge is further exacerbated by the UNC system's curriculum approval process, and suggests that the UNC Tomorrow initiative consider the relative roles of regulation of the campuses and facilitation of institutional responsiveness. For example, the two-stage degree approval process is time consuming and does not lend itself to rapid response. It might be useful to create a "fast-track" approval process for certain programs (e.g., programs that combine already approved undergraduate programs into an interdisciplinary variant or undergraduate and graduate programs in certain CIP codes that are to be offered only within the institution's primary service region). It might be useful, from both the perspective of PACE and responding to state and regional demands, to examine a broader range of policies and procedures to determine if system level analyses are appropriate and meaningful given their costs and time it takes for approval.
- *Strong need to re-examine fees for distance and resident credit enrollment* - Currently, distance education and resident credit enrollments have different fee structures which results in the cost of distance education being appreciably less than resident credit. This creates significant difficulties. For example, students who are resident on campus but who take a distance education course are charged full resident credit rates. An individual from the next county who takes the same course by

distance is charged a different rate. This policy assumes that people at a distance do not have the opportunity to use other services of the institution so they do not wish to pay for them. This argument creates a number of difficulties: 1) it treats distance education as an add on rather than a core function of university; 2) it does not recover many of the costs associated with offering broader services at a distance; and 3) the geography of distance learning suggests that most distance learners are located within 50 miles of the institution in which they are enrolled. A close examination of the realities of distance education by location and delivery system should be undertaken. Until it is, distance education will remain an institutional “add on” and not considered by many faculty and staff to be a core function of the institution.

- *Summer school* – WCU has found it challenging to motivate students to enroll in summer school courses which have been proven to increase retention and graduation rates. Financial aid for summer school programs is not available in the capacity to which it is available during the fall and spring semesters. Nevertheless, WCU will develop accelerated programs allowing students to graduate in three years as well as take courses during the summer to keep them involved with the university. Graduate programs will also utilize the summer session to offer courses to keep students progressing toward their degree. WCU will utilize a combination of distance and hybrid courses to accomplish these goals because DL courses are fully funded the summer months. WCU believes a better utilization of the summer is beneficial to students and is a more efficient use of tax supported facilities.
- *Diversity* - Recognizing that the UNC-system believes that it will recruit a large proportion of its future student population from groups of Hispanic decent given population growth figures for the State of North Carolina, WCU is exploring ways to yield applications and enrollment among these populations. In the case of WNC, most of the Hispanic population in its region is of Mexican origin or descent. Although WCU has 2 Spanish speaking advisors/recruiters on staff and utilizes Spanish language brochures for parents of potential students, there are great differences in the propensity of various components of this particular Hispanic population to seek tertiary education. There is a relatively limited tradition in Mexican culture of enrolling in college. One of the challenges that needs addressed is how to approach people with this background given their increasing numbers. Additionally, WCU is somewhat isolated and challenged to meet the lifestyle and social needs of a culturally diverse population. WCU has attempted to address this through initiating a myriad of Student Affairs programs and enticing business development through its Millennial Initiative. Nonetheless, business development incentives to promote public/private partnerships on the campus and in the surrounding community is still a large obstacle for WCU as it attempts to attract and retain students from diverse backgrounds.

Opportunities

- *Satellite or branch campuses* – WCU is interested in establishing a satellite campus. Based on discussions with leaders in the region, there is interest in developing a significantly deeper relationship with WCU than can be provided merely by distance education. WCU believes that a physical presence greatly benefits that location (example: WCU nursing faculty teaching in Asheville, which reduces travel time to some of the more distant locations in the region and is near the major medical center), and raises UNC’s visibility (example: in many instances, universities must operate out of a community college campus if they are to have an on-site presence in a community which limits the visibility of the institution). In studying the region it serves, WCU identifies a major growth axis emanating from Greenville-Spartanburg, SC, and running north and west toward Asheville along the I-26 corridor and likely to be centered in Henderson County. WCU’s enrollment potential could be significantly enhanced if it were authorized to have a branch campus in northern Henderson or southern Buncombe County (which would also support business development in Henderson County, Polk County, and Rutherford Counties). Given WCU’s academic course mix, such a location would not be competitive with UNC-A’s location, given that institution’s mission and course mix. Other possible locations could be in the Morganton-Shelby corridor and in the Murphy area, both of which could better serve significant, place-bound populations.
- *Stewardship of place* – WNC is changing dramatically both economically and demographically. These changes bring with them substantial social and cultural challenges that the university can help to address. It is WCU’s responsibility to help the region address these issues to improve the quality of life . WCU will focus its resources and programs to help the region develop the following four key elements of place: (1) vibrant, innovative economy; (2) livable community; (3) social inclusion; and (4) collaborative regional governance. A mission has been adopted that focuses on regional engagement and work has begun on alignment of academic programs and educational outreach. This action supports the QEP and will improve both the educational experience of our students as well as the region we serve.
- *QEP and “Boyer” Promotion and Tenure Policies* – Both of these significant innovations can serve as a model for other campuses in exploring how to enhance student learning experiences, encourage and reward faculty for applied work and public service, and increase engagement with the region/state.