

Challenges and Opportunities

Washington State University has made tremendous gains in the quality of its students, programs, and faculty, and in its reputation. These gains have been driven by a comprehensive strategic plan and concurrent brand analysis, development, and integrated marketing communication plan, all of which have helped to position the University internationally as a world-class research university that provides outstanding undergraduate education. These strides are reflected in the University's tagline "*World Class. Face to Face.*" which has come to symbolize the progress of the institution and its focused efforts.

Washington State University's market position has improved dramatically by most indicators. Student quality has improved, with average entering freshman SAT scores increasing by more than 65 points in five years from 1043 in 2000 to 1109 in 2005. Selectivity has also improved, from an 84 percent acceptance rate for entering freshmen in 2000 to 74 percent in fall 2005. Almost 40 percent of entering freshmen at WSU come from the top 10 percent of their high-school class.

Improved student quality has led to improved rankings: In the *U.S. News and World Report's 2007 America's Best Colleges*, WSU ranks 54th among public universities. The University has also moved up several notches to 112th among the total of 248 national universities. Of the universities in this ranking, only three northwest institutions are in the top two tiers: the University of Washington, Washington State University, and the University of Oregon.

Research benchmarks are also on the rise. In 2006, WSU was classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a member of the elite group of 96 public and private universities with very high research activity. For fiscal year 2006, federal grant expenditures were in excess of \$92 million and total research and public service expenditures were in excess of \$242 million. WSU's faculty include members of the National Academies, Fulbright Scholars, and winners of nationally recognized awards, including the National Book Award and Beckman Young Investigator Awards.

WSU's statewide reputation among key influencers—government, business, civic, and media leaders—also continues to rise. Qualitative and quantitative data show increased awareness and willingness to recommend the University among influencers statewide, as well as increased recognition of WSU's quality.

Strong efforts system-wide to implement the highest priorities of the strategic plan are ongoing. Key areas of focus include improving undergraduate education, expanding graduate education and research capacity, and recruiting senior faculty and faculty, staff, and students of color.

The major opportunity that awaits WSU's next president is unlike any in the institution's 115-year history: to consolidate WSU's progress and firmly establish it as one of America's premier land-grant universities, as measured by student and faculty performance, market position, and the contributions of its mission toward the advancement of our world.

Washington State University's next president will:

- Advance and refocus the University's strategic plan in order to solidify gains and accelerate progress toward the goals of providing the best undergraduate education and conducting world-class research, scholarship, and graduate education;
- Lead the University in developing areas of pre-eminent academic excellence through strategic planning and focused investment, based on existing strengths as measured by performance, capacity, and impact;
- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for investing in the recruitment and retention of high-quality faculty as measured by such indicators as National Academy memberships, nationally recognized awards, and research productivity evidenced by grant and contract awards;
- Ensure a comprehensive and strategic undergraduate and graduate enrollment plan, focused on the recruitment and retention of high-quality students, for the flagship Pullman campus and the statewide system;
- Lead the next comprehensive private fund-raising campaign, defined and driven by the University's highest academic priorities;

- Continue to strengthen strategic partnerships with the University of Washington, the state's other public research university, and influential business organizations that value and advance the role of the research university in building the economic competitiveness of the state and the region;
- Advance a sophisticated political strategy that secures the state and federal resources necessary to advance the University's world-class teaching, research, and engagement.

The Washington State University Board of Regents is committed to the strategic direction of the University and the achievement of its highest goals. The Regents are active partners in garnering support for the University from private and public sources and in advancing the institution's reputation. The governor and many significant business leaders also recognize the strong role of Washington's public research universities as economic drivers in the state and region and actively support WSU in this role.

The Regents look forward to working collaboratively with the new president to continue to move Washington State University into a position of pre-eminence as one of the top tier public research universities in America and as one of Washington's most valued assets.

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