Information for Pathways Initiative

Western has for many years articulated its desire to:

- Further internationalize its campus, staff, and faculty; diversify its student body; and provide meaningful international experiences for all Western students, not only those able to study abroad.
- Increase international brand awareness of Western, enhance its reputation and standing, form linkages with international peer institutions, and proactively engage in the increasingly globalized knowledge economy.
- Improve on our <1% international student enrollment making sure that Washington resident students are not displaced or disadvantaged by the addition of international students.
- Generate revenue that would assist the institution in providing better access and support to all students.

Risk

- The university’s Office of Risk Management has evaluated this initiative, including issues such as insurance, indemnification, etc.
- The partnership and contract do not require any significant up-front investment on the part of the university. All start-up costs, including a year-long major international marketing and recruiting campaign, are borne by the pathway provider.

Timescale

- The objective is to welcome the first students in Fall 2018.
- Two important considerations made prompt action critical to the university’s success:
  - Launching an international marketing and recruiting campaign is a year-long endeavor. The information gathering, application, and decision cycle of college admissions is a fixed externality dictating an autumn marketing rollout, spring admissions decisions, and Fall enrollment on campus.
  - While the pathway program strategy has existed for more than 25 years in countries such as Australia and the U.K., it was more recently introduced in the United States. Most programs in the U.S. are less than 10 years old, but the momentum behind expansion in the U.S. market has exponentially increased in the last year, with the four major providers announcing new university partnerships every month. These partnerships are exclusive. Universities are contractually bound to a single partner, and that partner is limited to only a single partnership in a given geographic region. Two of the top four providers announced new deals in our region (WSU and
University of Idaho) even while we were talking with them. They immediately ended those conversations.

Due Diligence

Study Group and two of the other three finalist organizations were investigated thoroughly (the 4\textsuperscript{th} signed a contract with WSU and had dropped out before this phase began).

Western conducted extensive interviews with a number of Study Group’s major American university partners. Western spoke with Study Group clients James Madison University and the University of Vermont. Both are considered academic peers or broadly similar institutions in size and composition to Western. Both reported that their experience with Study Group was an unqualified success. Recruitment goals were being met, students were succeeding at the universities as predicted, and financial arrangements were met. Neither school identified any unanticipated problem or area of concern.

Reviews of Study Group were compared to similar interviews conducted with partner schools of the other two finalists. Those interviews included the University of South Carolina, Auburn University, Adelphi University, and the University of New Hampshire. In addition, delegations from Western made campus visits to Simon Fraser University and Florida Atlantic University. Finally, the representations of Study Group were compared to the firsthand experiences of President Randhawa during his tenure at Oregon State University.

Western Global Pathway

Although Western has never had large numbers of international students, it has for more than 25 years operated an Intensive English Program (IEP) for non-native speakers from all over the world. Foreign students intending to attend university in the United States don’t often arrive in this country speaking little or no English. Such students would not be eligible for admission to the university and would likely not have been granted student visa to enter the United States. Instead, most students arrive with basic, or even quite good, conversational English. What they require is immersion in an intensive English language environment focused on developing and refining the specific language skills necessary to be successful in an American university: academic writing, public speaking, reading and study skills.

Western does all of this now. What the pathway provides is the volume and scale to do this more efficiently and effectively. Further, as noted above, the “sheltered” model for the pathway component of their academic program provides significant additional support which is largely responsible for the very high retention and graduation rates.

The university will integrate these students into its existing Student Services programs, but these will be supplemented by services the pathway provider’s employees provide
to the pathway students. Over time, as the international enrollments of the pathway and the university grow, both Study Group and Western will need to add additional student services staff, as well as faculty.

Other

- Partnering with a pathway provider gives Western’s marketing and recruiting efforts global reach. One of the primary benefits of contracting with Study Group is access to their global network of corporate offices and affiliates. It is simply beyond the ability of Western to develop such a network or global presence from its own resources, and the university lacks the sophisticated knowledge of individual national educational systems or marketing or recruiting channels. Study Group has a reputation for success (and data to support it), in recruiting students from all over the world, not just from a few countries. Further, Study Group will focus on recruiting students interested in a variety of disciplines, not just two or three majors.

- Once on campus, the recruited students spend their initial quarters at Western in a prescribed “pathway” program. The pathway is a “sheltered” environment geared toward helping students improve their academic English, assimilate into the larger campus community, and acculturate into life in the United States and the pedagogical methods of American universities. This pathway program is delivered under the auspices of the university, but paid for by the partner from their share of the tuition proceeds. This greatly supplements the university’s own student services.

- The relationship with Study Group will also greatly enhance our ability to develop study abroad opportunities for both faculty and students. While this is not our immediate priority for the initiative, it is an important opportunity.