STANDARD X

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PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

Description

As an institution within the Connecticut State University system, WestConn has an obligation to present itself accurately to its various constituencies and to the general public. Moreover, it is in the University's best interests and in accord with its Mission, Principles, and Values to make information available about students, faculty, staff, programs, events, and opportunities on our campuses. This was particularly the case during the University's celebration of its Centennial (2002-2003).

The University's core values -- quality, intellectual integrity, and respect – are strongly adhered to in the preparation and dissemination of information about the institution, whether by verbal communication, in print, on the web site, or other media.

WestConn conforms to all applicable federal and state laws, protecting the privacy of individuals, but also fully disclosing information that the public and appropriate University officials have a right to know. The University conscientiously complies with the 1974 federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, together with the "Buckley Amendment"). Student records, with the exception of dates of attendance and degrees earned, are not disclosed to a third party unless the student authorizes the disclosure. Appropriate faculty and staff are given access to student records.

All non-exempted documents (medical and personnel files are exempt, as is any other information that might constitute an invasion of privacy) are subject to disclosure to the general public and the news media under the provisions of Connecticut's Freedom of Information Act. The University assures that all information it provides is truthful and accurate.

The University will publicize the CIHE's review at least one month before the October visit, and will provide an opportunity for third-party comment on the self-study.

Information on all undergraduate and graduate programs is provided in the *Undergraduate Catalog* and the *Graduate Catalog*, respectively. The catalogs include comprehensive descriptions of the University's Mission, Principles, and Values, expected educational outcomes, admission policies and procedures, financial aid information, degree requirements, faculty, and course offerings, as well as a listing of the obligation and responsibilities of both the institution and its students. The Office of Academic Affairs supervises the revision of the catalogs to ensure accuracy and completeness. Every new student receives a print copy of the appropriate catalog, but the documents are also conveniently and readily accessible online through the University's website. To ensure consistency between the website and the printed catalog, updates to the website catalog are made when a new catalog is printed. Corrections may be made in the website version before a new printed version is available.

Other key publications include: the *Student Handbook*, the *Faculty Handbook*, the "Policies and Programs Manual," the schedule of classes, financial aid publications, the Admissions Office viewbook, the President's *Annual Report*, *Communiqué*, "WestConn Report," and *The Pillars*. All of the publications are reviewed regularly to ensure that the content accurately reflects and is consistent with the University's Mission, Principles and Values.

The schedule of classes is published three times a year (Fall, Spring, and Summer) in both print and online versions. The schedule lists all courses offered during the current or upcoming semester or session, as well as fees and charges. The Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs is responsible for assuring that courses listed in the catalog are in fact offered.

Information on educational services and co-curricular and non-academic programs is provided in published brochures and websites, as well as in the catalogs. Many academic and administrative departments have their own websites, linked to the official University website. Each lists the e-mail address of the person responsible for the site. Appropriate telephone numbers and the Universal Resource Locator (URL) for WestConn's web site appear on advertisements for the institution and its programs. The main telephone number for the University connects callers to an automated message system that directs them to specific offices and provides an option for them to speak to a campus operator. The Information Desk in the Student Center is staffed Sunday through Saturday (Monday-Thursday, 8: a.m.-11:00 p.m.; Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.; Saturday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.; Sunday, 1:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.).

A copy of the University's most recent audited financial statement may be obtained from the Interim Director of Fiscal Affairs/Controller**.**

Departmental assessment plans are on file in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. The plans include measures of student attainment of departmental learning objectives, as well as timetables for collection of data. Each October, the University submits an accountability report to the state legislature through the Department of Higher Education. Faculty achievements are listed in the University's annual report, the annual reports of the School deans, and the program booklet for the Faculty Recognition Ceremony held in the Spring. Information about program excellence and learning outcomes for programs with external accreditation can be found in accreditation reports available in the Office of Academic Affairs. The Alumni Office maintains a database of information on graduates.

The University's Public Safety Office regularly publishes a public safety report, providing information on campus crime statistics and reports of the department's efforts to create a safer environment. Programs and services available to the campus community are also listed.

Appraisal

Overall, the University makes a concerted effort to meet NEASC standards for public disclosure. Efforts are made to ensure consistency and accuracy in both print and online information.

A new print phone directory was published for 2002-2003. There is no online University faculty and staff directory on the University's web site. This information is available on the Connecticut State University System website, but there is no link from WestConn's home page. Faculty who are on Lotus Notes are listed in the software's electronic directory; there is no listing of e-mail addresses for faculty those who are not, however. It would be helpful to students especially if instructors, including adjunct faculty, were listed in the online schedule of courses.

Some years ago, names of alumni who did not continue their membership in the association were dropped from the alumni list, but a major effort is underway to build a more comprehensive record. Individual departments also make an effort to track alumni and to highlight their accomplishments. The Art Department, for example, in conjunction with the Office of Institutional Advancement, has a

new web site called "Art after Western," devoted to alumni. The Communications and Theater Arts, Biology, and Chemistry departments, among others, also highlight alumni achievements.

Faculty submit information for the Faculty Recognition Ceremony booklet on a voluntary basis. As a consequence, the booklet's listing of faculty accomplishments may be incomplete.

The University catalogs state the institution's Mission, Principles, and Values, and these documents, as well as other publications, state obligations for student behavior, standards relevant to academic responsibilities, admissions, purpose, and non-discrimination policies. The catalogs represent the University's role and Mission accurately. The Mission, Principles, and Values should be included in publications such as the *Student Handbook for 2002-2003*, the "Policies and Programs Manual," and information materials prepared for new students.

Regular review of printed information about the University ensures accurate and current information. WestConn's website pages indicate a date and time when they were last updated, and there is a direct link to the web master. Specific changes of information on the web site can be authorized only by University Computing's web master. Departmental web sites should be updated frequently to ensure that they are current.

Projection

The University's website is rapidly becoming the primary source for current information about WestConn. The University's web team has 10 members: the Chief Information Officer, the Director and the Assistant Director of Public Relations, the Director and Assistant Director of Publications and Design, the Enrollment Management Officer, an assistant librarian, a graphic designer/photographer, the client-server programmer from University Computing, and the Director of Media Services. This team will continue to ensure that the site maintains high standards of integrity, public disclosure, reliability, timeliness, accessibility, cost, and good design. Strategies for featuring and updating information will be added. The Banner ERP system provides a database that will facilitate the posting of complete and accurate information.

The availability of student web expertise through the Western Technology Association should help some departments to bring their websites up to date, but clearly the University will need to develop a plan for regularly reviewing and updating departmental sites for accuracy and timeliness.

All University information pertaining to the Mission, Principles, and Values, admissions policies and procedures, student fees, student behavior, and other academic and co-curricular requirements and policies will continue to be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

A searchable directory that includes e-mail addresses for all faculty and staff would be very helpful.

The University will continue to provide accurate information regarding its current accreditation status in its catalogs, recruiting materials, and its web site. Procedures for reporting and correcting information in both printed and online materials will be made clear and more easily accessible. All University offices should have procedures for quick review and updates of information. As University Computing conducts its review of the website functions and develops the website management plan, these recommendations will be taken into consideration. Suggestions for improving the user-friendliness of the website will be solicited and incorporated wherever feasible.