



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



March 10, 2003

The University of Washington is actively engaged in a transformational effort, accurately captured in this self-study report. This transformation is occurring on many fronts:

- Transformation from a state-supported university to a state-assisted university;
- Transformation from a highly discipline-oriented teaching and learning setting to an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary environment of discovery;
- Transformation from a university with three campuses to a coordinated multi-campus university;
- Transformation from a classroom-based instructional academy to a service learning and technologically oriented societal partner; and
- Transformation from the classroom that merely disseminates knowledge to a vigorous learning environment that engages students in the creation and discovery of knowledge.

Through this transformation, the University is re-envisioning itself and creating a new educational paradigm.

The University's transformation also includes a change in leadership. Between the time I, as Provost, appointed the Accreditation Steering Committee in August 2001 and the time this accreditation self-study report is submitted to the Commission on Colleges and Universities, former President Richard L. McCormick moved on to be President of Rutgers University. I have been appointed as Interim President while a search committee (coordinated under the auspices of the Board of Regents) conducts a search for the University's next permanent leader. The Presidential appointment is scheduled to be made by June 2003, about the same time the Commission will meet to act on the accreditation status of the University of Washington. The University's transformation is current and ongoing: some imposed from outside (e.g., state funding restrictions and external demands for accountability) and some emanating from inside (e.g., institutional mission and goals and selection of the next leader).

This self-study report portrays an institution of enormous importance, both locally and globally. The University of Washington employs 33,000 people and educates on its three campuses over 40,000 students in its regular program and 120,000 additional students throughout the State and the world through its Educational Outreach programs. It brings into the State of Washington over \$2 billion in additional revenue each year through federal, foundation, and industry grants and contracts; gifts; and hospital and athletics revenue. It has spawned more than 180 new companies from the technology created by faculty and transferred to the business community. Faculty creativity has yielded more than 500 new patents. In 2002 alone, the University, from bachelors through doctorates, graduated more than 10,000 students from its three campuses. Thousands more students received certificates or completed post-doctoral training. The University's international community numbers over 5,500, bringing diversity and global experience to the State.

Yet despite this incredible economic, political, and social success, the vicissitudes of the State economy have created an environment requiring budgetary re-evaluation. The tragic events of September 11, 2001 and the resulting downturn in the Washington and national economy have required the University to reassess its fundamental economic relationship to the State of Washington. The State contributes less to the support of the University on a per student basis today than it has in the past.

The University of Washington has migrated from reliance on state support for educating its students, toward requiring students to pay their fair share. The proportion of students' contribution to their education has moved over the last decade from 33% to over 50% of the cost of their education. In areas where the market will bare, students are expected to pay an even greater share of the cost for receiving a first-class education. The University, therefore, is in the process of transforming itself from a state-supported institution to one that recognizes that it is partially assisted by the State supporting a fraction of the cost of graduate and undergraduate education. This economic revelation has created an entrepreneurial environment never before experienced in the institution. The positive force of this entrepreneurial revolution has created an energy and excitement that reinvigorates all of its institutional partners.

The University's entrepreneurial spirit is best characterized by the research efforts carried on by its faculty. In 2002 fiscal year, the University faculty generated \$808 million in grants and contracts from federal, foundation, and private industry sources to support its increasingly ingenious discovery endeavors. To a greater degree than ever before,

these research activities are interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary in nature: from Genome Sciences to Photonics and from Autism to Project Neptune, the study of the oceans and climate from an underwater perspective. The University's outstanding faculty and students are bending and expanding the barriers of knowledge in new and more creative ways each day.

The expansion of knowledge and recreation of educational approaches equally show up in the University's graduate and undergraduate education. The University's transformation of a large University into a smaller learning environment for its students through Freshmen Interest Group programs, its focus on personalized education, the use of technology to allow students to individualize their engagement in education, and its commitment to ensure that students can complete their programs in a timely manner, are important reconstructions of the University's approach to undergraduate education. Its expanded opportunities for international education with a goal of making an international experience available to every undergraduate student who wants one is recognition that a University education must be conducted in a global setting. The fundamental incorporation of research opportunities into the undergraduate experience sets the University apart in making the undergraduate experience rich and unique. The University's investment in "Re-envisioning the Ph.D." has advanced approaches to graduate education dramatically.

The transformation the University is engaged in applies equally to its physical presence. Since the last accreditation visit, even with reduced financial state support, the University has improved the campuses with the use of state funds, private funds, and venture investment. The Paul G. Allen Center for Computer Science and Engineering, the William H. Gates School of Law, the renovated Mary Gates Undergraduate Education Center, the Seafirst Executive Business Center, the new Bothell campus, the renovated Tacoma campus, and plans for a renovated and expanded Business School complex, are only but a few of the campus physical changes occurring over the last decade. The old, classic physical facilities are both limiting and a challenge and adventure. The transformational adjustments to Suzzallo Library, which retains its classic stature with a restructured harmonized interior to withstand earthquakes, and the marvelous renovation of the Suzzallo Reading Room, demonstrate the University's commitment to maintaining a historic academic environment assimilating the richness of modernization.

Even to the internal systems, transformation and modernization have been common. The turning of the Odegaard Undergraduate Library into a Digital Commons where students can go 24 hours a day and utilize information technology to advance their learning is but one example. The University's institutional computer systems, transmitting over 1.6 trillion bytes of information each day, support everything from e-mail to high-speed computing. And the creation of a relational database allowing for the sharing of information across the University fosters a new approach to management. The idea that 'ownership of knowledge is power' is an outdated mode of operation that has been divested and disgorged in favor of sharing data to allow all units throughout the University to know about each other so they can better manage their resources based on common information.

Recognizing that the University of Washington is one of the best universities in the world, and fully meets and exceeds all eligibility requirements and standards, the value of this accreditation exercise was the *opportunity* to take time out of a hectic schedule to assess where the University is and what more it can do to improve itself. With this approach in mind, the University has used this opportunity to institute an advanced assessment program: the Student Learning Objectives Initiative (SLO Initiative). The University has taken this occasion to ask itself:

- What do students know when they arrive?
- How can we assess what they have learned while they have been at the University and from whom?

No university has approached this assessment quest in a systematic way. The University chose to pursue this task for itself and in the process expand assessment approaches for the discipline of higher education. The University decided to approach the SLO Initiative through a faculty centered web-based structure to capture learning objectives. This approach allows professors the ability to differentiate their teaching identities while, in a meaningful way, summing across diverse units on campus. The University devised a program whereby each learning experience in each classroom is encoded using a combination of the University's institutional learning objectives as well as departmental learning objectives. The institutional learning objectives were drawn from the National Survey of Student Learning and other study sources, which have been replicated and tested on a national scale.

28,164 undergraduates took courses that were encoded into the system. Approximately 5,800 learning experiences were available for undergraduates during that period of times. From these codings, each department will be provided a matrix of learning experiences by learning objectives so that the department faculty can see the way in which

the local curriculum contributes to the whole learning experience of a student. And for the student's benefit, individual students will accumulate a personal profile of learning that they can compare against their own expectations—what do they want to get out of their education. They will be able to use their profile to guide themselves through future course choices, allowing them to fill voids in their learning experience. The SLO Initiative represents a powerful new tool in the toolbox of learning assessment.

This transformational movement has permeated all parts of the institution. The change in the University's resource base has forced whole new levels of planning upon the institution. Every department has a strategic plan, every college has a strategic plan, and the University has goals and objectives. The Regents assess performance against goals and objectives, and the University Administration assesses departments against their performance indicators. Planning and assessment are ongoing characteristics of the University of Washington.

The nature of this institutional transformation is captured by the involvement of the many people engaged in the accreditation self-study process. The Accreditation Steering Committee has representatives from every campus, college, and school, and administrative unit within the institution, 44 strong. As sections were developed, an enormous amount of person power from each of the units was engaged in order to provide an honest and telling picture of the current state of affairs at the University. Without the sustained and evolved participation of the well over 500 individuals, most of whom are identified at the end of this introduction, the depth, breath, and importance of this report could not have been communicated as well as it has been.

The University owes a debt to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities in its willingness to cooperate in an altered approach to the compilation of the University's accreditation self-study, and the approach overall to its accreditation evaluation process. The University of Washington has put together a self-study report that significantly integrates technology. The University is involved with over 53 specialized accrediting agencies that accredit more than 150 of its program on its three campuses. The University also actively internally engages a 10-year system of program evaluations. From these intense evaluation experiences, the University has a significant amount of detail and information about its individual programs, which would be impossible to duplicate in a University self-study. However, through the incorporation of a web-based approach to information access and acquisition, the University's 2003 Decennial Self-Study Report incorporates all of this enormous data allowing us to tell the University's full story (<http://www.washington.edu/about/accreditation>). Technology has been brought into the accreditation self-study process in two ways:

- It informs the important but abbreviated information contained in the self-study.
- It allows those involved in making decisions about the University's accreditation status to access the detailed information to the extent they desire.

The University of Washington is threatened and challenged by the current State financial crisis. The financial crisis threatens the security of the University's essential support for undergraduate and graduate education, its ability to retain the best faculty and staff, the commitment to its infrastructure, and its responsibility to foster educational access and opportunity to the citizens of the State. If the University had let these threats paralyze it, it would have deteriorated; instead, it thrives. In research, the faculty have redoubled their efforts to find external support. Our donors have increased their financial commitment to the institution. The University has streamlined its organization and educational programs and become more efficient. Some degree programs have moved to a self-sustaining basis. The three campuses have moved toward a greater level of coordination in programs and admissions than in the past. And while this puts stress in the system, it also has reinvigorated the University's fundamental commitment to advancing and disseminating knowledge for the benefit of the citizens of the State, nation, and the world.

Respectfully submitted,



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Interim President

## Accreditation Self-Study Participants

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