

HLC Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching

Response from the Office of Development and Alumni Programs – April 2007

The Office of Development and Alumni Programs supports student learning and effective teaching in a number of ways, most notably through its fundraising activities and alumni programming.

Since the last accreditation visit in 1998, Webster University announced publicly its first comprehensive campaign in April 1999 (the campaign began officially on January 1, 1996) and concluded on December 31, 2002 with unprecedented success. The University enlisted the support of 12,161 donors to exceed its original goal of \$30 million by more than \$14 million, raising a total of \$44 million in support of seven campaign initiatives: a new library, parking garage and expanded Loretto-Hilton Center; endowment growth, academic program expansion, technology enhancements and a presidential vision fund.

Over \$5.9 million dollars of the “New Tradition” campaign helped to underwrite the construction of the new Emerson Library, a focal point not only for the Webster Groves campus, but also for Webster University worldwide. Corporate, foundation, and individual donors were recognized appropriately for their support of this space of student and teacher learning with various naming opportunities – from study carrels to the archives, from the electronic classroom to the media center, and from current periodicals and readers to the building as a whole.

Less visible but equally important has been growth in support for the University’s endowment and scholarship funds, as well as academic program expansion. Support for endowment and scholarship funds reached \$11.8 million, exceeding the original goal of \$5.5 million. Scholarships have proven to be a popular way for Webster alumni to “give back” to their alma mater in the area of study that they have experienced career success. For example, Trustee and alumna Mary Alice Dwyer-Dobbin BA Speech ’63, retired Executive in Charge of Production for Proctor and Gamble Productions, Inc., established an endowed scholarship in stage management. In the fall of 2001, Anthony Thompson MBA ’88, owner and president of Kwame Building Group, and his wife, Kim, established an endowed scholarship for graduate minority students enrolled in the School of Business and Technology. The Thompsons have made a leadership commitment to build their endowed scholarship fund over the coming years in order to assist more students. Since 1999 student scholars are brought together with their benefactors at an annual scholarship luncheon.

Growth in support for academic program expansion has created new learning opportunities in a number of areas, most notably in undergraduate international studies, teacher education, nursing education, philosophy and ethics. A Title 6A grant from the U.S. Department of Education created an interdisciplinary international studies major and enhanced foreign language study instruction. A grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) provided traineeships for nurse anesthesia students. University friend Beatrice Kornblum created the *Beatrice and David Kornblum Institute for Teaching Excellence* with a combination of cash gifts and a bequest. The Institute provides annual funds for scholarships for MAT students; collaborative school and community ventures; and development and dissemination of a national collection of educational resources – all with an aim toward children who are considered at risk.

The University ended the “New Tradition” campaign in December 2002 and immediately began planning the current fundraising campaign “Webster Works . . .” and is quietly testing a \$75 million goal to fund capital projects (\$64 million) and endowment (\$11 million). Plans are to build a new building for the School of Business & Technology; retrofit the current business

building for exclusive use by the School of Communications; build a new science facility with modern labs; and build endowment for these buildings, the Community Music School, and scholarships. These new buildings will serve both students and faculty as they come together in the exchange of ideas and the practice of effective learning and teaching.

In addition to fundraising, the Development and Alumni Programs Office supports student learning through its alumni programming. "Alumni" are, by their very being, former "students," and encouraged to maintain a lifelong relationship with Webster. The Alumni Office works to maintain a connection between alumni and Webster under the auspices of the "Webster University Alumni Association." The Association is an unincorporated organization which exists as part of Webster University. All students automatically become members upon graduation. There are no fees associated with being a member of the Alumni Association. Currently, the Alumni Association has nearly 120,000 members worldwide.

The Alumni Association is organized for the following purposes:

1) **"To articulate the mission and activities, programs and needs of the University to Alumni."** This is accomplished through both formal and informal communications with alumni, including Webster World magazine, frequent broadcast e-mails, events, and personal meetings with alumni.

2) **"To offer opportunities for personal and professional growth of the University's Alumni."** Networking is one of the key messages of the Alumni Association. Alumni are invited to various events and activities depending on their geographical location. The Alumni Association currently recognizes 23 official Alumni Chapters in cities around the world, and hosts activities in at least a dozen more locations. The Alumni Office also works closely with the Office of Career Services at Webster to promote the career-related services available to alumni. One popular program is "Career Builders," a day-long seminar on various career topics, which travels to cities around the world.

3) **"To foster relationship among Alumni, students, and faculty."** Again, this is accomplished both formally and informally during the various activities and events sponsored by the Alumni Association. Most notable in St. Louis is the annual Homecoming/Reunion Weekend that provides activities for students and alumni alike.

4) **"To recognize and increase visibility of alumni accomplishments and achievements within their communities and the University."** Alumni accomplishments are reported in the "Alum News" section of Webster World magazine, and online in the "Class Notes" section of the Alumni Online Community. The Alumni Association also selects several alumni each year to receive the Distinguished Alumni Award, the Loretto Award for Service, and the Mary Elizabeth Award for Loyalty. In addition, the Alumni Association recognizes undergraduate and graduate students of distinction at the time of graduation at Webster campuses around the world.

5) **"To promote alumni contributions of time, talent and financial support to the University."** The Alumni Association invites alumni to volunteer in their local Alumni Chapters (or start one in their city). Alumni Chapters, in turn, work on fundraising projects to support students at their local Webster campuses. For example, the Space Coast Alumni Chapter hosts an annual alumni cruise which raises scholarship money for students at Webster-Space Coast. The African-American Alumni Chapter was the first Alumni Chapter to endow a scholarship at Webster University. The AAAC Fund for Minority Students is currently valued over \$70,000.

6) **"To serve the needs of the Alumni with special interests within the framework of the Association."** Four of the 23 official Alumni Chapters are affinity-based, not

geographically-based: the Alumni-Athletes Alumni Chapter; the International Space Alumni Chapter, the Nurse Anesthesia Alumni Chapter, and the African-American Alumni Chapter.

7) **"To focus the efforts of Alumni commitment of service to others."** The Community Service Committee of the Alumni Association Board of Directors encourages Alumni Chapters to participate in the University's annual "Webster Works Worldwide" community service day every October. There are also various community service projects in various Chapters throughout the year.

Submitted by: Jennifer Jezek-Taussig, Director of Alumni Programs, May 3, 2007