



UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

FY2021 Annual Review Narrative Survey

Unit Name: Continuum College (255)

Programmatic & Academic Vitality Narratives

- 1) Have you made any changes to your unit's annual budget development process from the response provided last year? If yes, please briefly describe the changes you've made to your unit's annual internal budget development process. If no, please answer with a simple, "no changes." *Word Limit: 500*

No changes.

<OPB inserting FY20 response, below>

UWC² primarily uses a zero-based budgeting approach for individual program budgets and administrative budget salaries and benefits. We categorize our budget process into three groups: School/College programmatic budgeting, UWC² programmatic budgeting, and UWC² administrative budgeting.

For programmatic budgeting, the budget process starts in Autumn quarter the prior fiscal year. Each program is provided with a budget template with known expense formulas pre-filled (e.g., benefit load rates, UW Overhead rates, UWC² fees).

- Schools/Colleges: UWC² works collaboratively with campus partners to develop fiscal year budgets; there are over 150 programmatic budget numbers (cost centers) used to support our campus-partner fee-based programs. The budgeting process includes working with campus to identify faculty, staff, and programmatic expenses. Estimation of program enrollments and revenue generation against historical enrollment trends is utilized to calculate the fee rate to be charged to students in order to create a financially sustainable, low risk budget.
- UWC² Programs: UWC² works internally to develop almost 200 non-credit budgets annually. Like the school/college budgeting process, we start with estimating instructor and programmatic expenses at the cost center level. We compare our estimation of program enrollments and revenue generation against historical enrollment trends to determine the fee rate that will be charged to students in order to create financially sustainable programs.
- Administrative Budgets: The UWC² annual budgeting process for administrative cost centers starts in early Spring for the upcoming fiscal year. UWC² leadership discusses headcount increases/decreases and promotional/salary increase proposals. Salaries and benefits are calculated based on leadership's agreement regarding new FTE, promotions, and anticipated salaries for existing staff. Typically, 80-85% of our annual administrative budget is salaries and benefits, which is why we use zero-based budgeting for this activity to ensure accuracy.

In contrast, an incremental-based calculation is used for the remainder of the budget, which typically mirrors recommendations from OPB during the previous budget cycle (e.g., 2% or CPI forecasts), along with funding for specific projects that may increase a unit's budgeting for the duration of the project. Funding for our administrative budget comes from the fees (program management and infrastructure) that we charge to programs; the rates and estimated funding were determined the prior October (6 months earlier); our campus partners need our rates to increase at stable rates (usually 2-4%).

- 2) Have you made any changes to your unit's strategic plan in the past year? If yes, what are 3-5 key elements of your unit's new/revised strategic plan? If no, please comment on the progress you've made in 3-5 key areas of

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your strategic plan. *Word Limit: 500*

Our UWC² strategic plan is designed to address the reality that employees now change jobs and careers many times and that rapidly evolving industries require them to continually learn new skills. Also, we're living and working longer. Today's college students will need to extend their learning over the 6 decades or so that they will work. A new model called the 60-year curriculum is taking shape to address this reality.

We are building a framework to support the needs of students who return again and again to learn new skills and prepare for new careers.

Online Learning: The online learning strategy has evolved since last year. Rather than the creation of a "center" for online learning, we are instead focused on growing our internal capabilities. In the upcoming year we'll identify UW degree opportunities that would be competitive online. We'll actively engage in conversation with academic departments, likely in the professional master's degree space, to discuss online. Key to this will be continued partnership with the VP for Academic Affairs and a small working group of deans, faculty and administrators. This group is charting a course for using external vendors mixed with internal capabilities.

Non-Credit Credential Framework: UWC² mapped our current credentials and started the process to identify skills/knowledge by program. We were awarded a small grant to delve deep into a single knowledge/skill area this year and are working in collaboration with WSAC, CareerConnected Washington, and the U.S. Department of Education to connect to larger skill frameworks.

Updating the Academic Stack: Improvements to the digital infrastructure are ongoing for the foreseeable future. In FY20 we are building an Online Application for the students in our portfolio who currently complete paper applications. Other key initiatives include preparation for Financial Transformation by the retirement of our Dynamics AX financial reporting system and continuing to invest in integrations between our SIS and CRM systems to support an anticipated increase in SQ enrollments.

Non-credit Scholarships: Our scholarship program that launched in 2017 is incrementally increasing, and we were thrilled to award 16 scholarships that cover 80% of course fees to low-income students in the Seattle community in FY20. All 16 students enrolled in career-advancement certificate programs. We have significant work ahead of us to reach our goals.

Improving relationships with UW Schools/Colleges:

- After a pilot last year, UWC² launched a new annual report for deans who have fee-based programs. The report includes enrollment and financial history, along with brief outlook/recommendation for each program.
- UWC² facilitates a workshop series for our campus partners. The workshops are structured with 30 minutes of presentation and 30 minutes of discussion for a shared learning experience.
- UWC² sends a quarterly newsletter to campus partners that features relevant articles and important dates, covering a range of topics for fee-based programs.
- UWC² has created two new survey tools to ensure we are receiving timely feedback from campus partners. The first is an annual survey (similar to TAP) and the second is sent after notable project/initiative work with campus partners.

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- 3) What major obstacles or institutional barriers currently do, or will, hinder execution of your strategic plan? What are you doing to address these challenges? If no changes from your response to either component of this question from last year, please answer “no changes”: *Word Limit: 250*

No Changes

<OPB inserting FY20 response, below>

Online Learning: Our largest challenge will be to meet the expectations of faculty and deans who are now increasingly interested in online learning and have many different ideas about how it should be supported. Should support be local, central, external, or some combination? Running a sustainable online development program will mean that a sustainable number of programs will need to use our services.

Data: We’ve long considered our ability to effectively leverage data for decision-making as a barrier to our success. In FY2020, our intent is to make strides in this area, so leadership has better insight into progress towards goals throughout the year.

Updating the Academic Stack: We face some challenges in updating the Academic Stack. The design and implementation of systems and infrastructure that integrates with legacy built systems and dead programming languages is one of the obstacles we face. We also have a backlog of work (e.g., online application, registration and payment of non-credit programs/courses), which is imperative for reducing the amount of manual work, and to allow our colleagues time to focus on value-added activities in support of programs and students.

Scholarships for non-credit students: UW Advancement has limited resources to support our scholarship goals. As a result, we have very limited access to services that support our fundraising efforts. UWC² will engage a consultancy, at the council of advancement leadership in order to assess our Certificate alumni and Osher member database and recommendations for a strategy.

Improving our relationship with UW Schools and Colleges: We have made significant improvements in our communications and service approach with some campus partners over the past year. These were areas that were identified as areas of weakness. Our work is not done, resentment has built up over the course of many years and it will take time to change long held beliefs and attitudes. The root cause of frustration for many partners is that our fee-based structure does not work for all programs. It is challenging to identify low-cost solutions that meet all school/college needs and are also flexible enough to support the different programmatic shapes, sizes, and student populations reflected in fee-based credit programs. Although these hurdles are genuine, we are actively working towards a positive future in which campus partners want to work with UWC², rather than feel forced to.

- 4) Over the next year, could any of your planned strategic activities result in material changes to revenues or expenditures, faculty or staff workload, or the student experience within your unit/campus and/or another unit/campus? *Word Limit: 500*

UWC² is not anticipating material changes to revenues/expenditures or workload. However, we are always working on projects to improve the student experience. A theme this year and next is the emphasis on ensuring our non-credit portfolio maintains its relevancy and that curriculum is adjusted to meet the changing needs of our adult learners. Here are a few projects:

- In 2019 UWC² launched a formal committee for evaluating quality metrics for noncredit certificate programs. The quality of these programs is measured from the student perspective, including satisfaction, successful completion rates, and student outcomes. UWC² has benchmarked quality metrics to assess our areas for improvement. Future improvements to quality metrics will include

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long-term student career outcomes and the results of our quality improvement efforts.

- UWC² conducted a deep-dive analysis of 30 non-credit programs over the last year, focusing on each program's finances, market demand, student experience, and academic rigor. The analysis will result in improvements to these programs in the upcoming year and should improve access, financial health, and retention.
- UWC² reinvigorated our non-credit advisory boards this year with the focus on updating content that businesses are looking for when they hire staff who have completed our certificate programs. Overhauling curriculum ensures our students are competitive on the job market and in upskilling their abilities in preparation for promotion.
- A team of technology and student-support staff in UWC² is working on a project to launch a new online application system for non-credit students. The application is the first application within a centralized student web portal. The web portal is a multi-year project in progress to improve both the student and instructor experience.

5) What is your unit doing to effectively use or redeploy resources in a way that benefits your unit/campus and/or other units/campuses? *Word Limit: 500*

UWC² offers a centralized shared services model for fee-based degree programs on the Seattle and Bothell campuses. UWC² serves an important compliance role, ensuring fee-based policies are adhered to and that students receive a consistent student experience within the fee-based portfolio of degrees. Continuum is also a very good program-level tactical partner, launching specific programs and degrees. UWC² is now working to become a strategic partner across our partner portfolios, rather than on a program-by-program engagement.

- Supporting faculty through the launch of new fee-based degree programs and other for-credit courses/certificates
- Use of our UWC² student information system (called EOS and originally designed to support non-matriculated students) that interfaces with the campus SDB and allows campus partners to choose between per credit hour rates and/or quarterly rates for their fee-based programs. The campus SDB is not able to support fee-based degree programs.
- Our marketing services include program websites, search optimization, brand-level marketing, market research, and related support focused on helping programs in the fee-based portfolio achieve financial sustainability. Ad placement support is also available for program-specific advertising campaigns charged to the applicable program budget number.
- Budgeting tools and budget development support to ensure fee-based degree programs are financially viable and/or on a path to repay start-up deficits. Escalating financial concerns to the appropriate individuals within schools and colleges.
- Registration services for students in fee-based degree programs, to include answering student questions via email and phone; accepting payment via phone, web, and in-person; handling escalated issues related to student payments, withdrawals, refunds, and petitions.
- Accounting-related services including collections on past-due student and company invoices, answering questions from faculty/program directors in fee-based programs regarding expenses, providing ad hoc reports and analysis for faculty and administrators, providing regular budget-vs-actual financial statements and year-end reporting, and transferring year-end net revenue to schools and colleges.



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After a deep-dive analysis of services offered to individual fee-based degree programs, UWC² leadership is concerned about the extent of manual work performed in support of fee-based programs. Manual work results in increased human error, often resulting in a poor student experience. While continuing to provide centralized services and more flexibility than tuition-funded programs, UWC² will consider moving in a direction to reduce the number of “exceptions” that occur outside of our automated systems to improve efficiencies, which could result in fewer support service options managed outside of EOS, higher quality results, and a better student experience.

- 6) For UW student facing units, what are you doing to improve the experience and outcomes of students on your campus or in your unit? What could the University do to support your efforts? *Word Limit: 500, Leave blank if N/A*

In addition to #4 above

- In December 2019 UWC² launched a new website for international students. The previous site featured over 300-pages, a complicated architecture, and a vast amount of text. Using focus-group feedback from international students, we learned that they want all of the content, but in an easier-to-navigate structure with better search and imagery so that they can find the content they need when they need it.
- In addition to financial support of Othello Commons, UWC² provided funding for 12 local students to enroll in a beginner technology course held at Othello Commons. In Winter Quarter 2020 we are running another technology course called Foundations in Programming (Python) at the southeast Seattle location.
- After years of researching, planning, testing, and piloting, UWC² implemented changes to online learning technologies that had wide-reaching impact. By replacing Adobe Connect with Zoom, Adobe Presenter with Video, and adding scrolling transcripts to media players, we reduced the errors students and instructors encounter, simplified interfaces, and increased the time learners can spend on learning. We also increased and added new training and coaching for instructors – so that everyone can combine these technologies with powerful active learning techniques. Our coaching, support, and training has been increasingly highly rated, with many words of praise and thanks for the combination of much-needed technology and active learning knowledge.
- We've adopted H5P, a new, best-in-class cloud solution for in-video active learning. We've tested and used virtual labs solutions (Vocareum, Ed) that empower students to run data analyses, programming, and machine learning tasks online without complicated installations, and gives instructors opportunity to construct detailed automatic grading and feedback.