

# Academic Affairs Vision Narrative

L. M. Smith, Fall 2025, Updated 09/24/2025

We desire to make the world a better place in which to live by empowering our students to think critically, grow professionally, achieve goals, and contribute to society. This enables them to become leaders for the voiceless, protectors for the vulnerable, learners for tomorrow, problem solvers for today, teachers for the intellectually hungry, healers for the broken, and comforters for the troubled; this is our **why**. This is also our **tie**, a tie to our applied learning identity as the region's polytechnic.

In response to our why, we embrace a campus **mission** to provide an inclusive, equitable, and transformative learning experience, driving the pursuit of knowledge with affordable academic excellence, all aligned with the president's vision.

In pursuit of our mission, we will first establish a **foundation** of safety, security, compliance, communication, basic processes, and reliable data. Our work will be underpinned by this foundation and guided by a compass identifying the intersection of two **priorities**, academic integrity and financial sustainability<sup>1</sup>. This guiding compass points toward the destination at which our mission is most realized.

**Actions** moving us toward this destination require effective decision-making. Faculty, advisors, and staff who engage students on the front-line are typically the most effective in front-line (academic) decision-making. Yet, front-line decision making, if insulated from bottom-line (financial) considerations and accountability, is not sustainable. Our academic decision-making, therefore, will be informed by financial considerations (and vice versa); this, along with adjusted performance evaluation<sup>2</sup> processes, will further establish a culture of **accountability**.

A culture of accountability complemented by opportunities for incentive-based rewards tends to grow **entrepreneurship** endowed with creativity, teamwork, bold ambitions, and optimism. We value entrepreneurship. Therefore, we will establish a culture of entrepreneurship that is powered, in part, by a hybrid Value-Based budget model featuring financial alignment incentives<sup>3</sup> in support of the mission.

Entrepreneurship requires clarity of leadership roles. Thus, although we understand the Provost's Office will continue to collaborate with stakeholders at all levels within the colleges, we recognize the **deans**<sup>4</sup> as 1) the

primary college point of contact for official consultation around policy, funding, accreditation, personnel, space use, and academic program management, and 2) the chief executive who is both responsible and accountable for college-level decision-making pursuant to the collective bargaining agreement, the strategic plan, university policies, and the president's vision.

Fully untethered entrepreneurship among the colleges tends to cause unhealthy competition and mission-drift. As such, we envision entrepreneurship that 1) operates under Provost **oversight and management**, and 2) indulges in what should be high return-on-investment relationships with academic affairs support offices<sup>5</sup>.

Milestones along our path toward the fullest realization of our mission are marked by four strategic **goals**<sup>6</sup> for EWU, and one foundational goal for academic affairs.

1. EWU: Improve Student Success
2. EWU: Improve a Sense of Belonging
3. EWU: Improve Support for Employees and Spaces
4. EWU: Improve Community Engagement
5. Academic Affairs: Improve safety, security, compliance, processes, and data quality.

We recognize that the provost holds the deans ultimately responsible for college operations, just as the president holds the provost ultimately responsible for academic affairs operations. So, leaning on our competitive advantage<sup>7</sup>, we coalesce with the provost around a **charge** to pursue the strategic plan goals with urgency while maximizing both academic integrity and financial sustainability – all because of our **why**.

Finally, we acknowledge that our progress will take **time**. As guided by our Eagle Creed, this journey will require grit in the face of challenges, grace when we fall short, gratitude to maintain perspective during times of scarcity, and a belief in our potential when we begin to doubt ourselves.

1. Academic Integrity is the quality of pedagogy, in-demand curriculum, assessment methods, and wrap-around services associated with teaching and learning. Financial Sustainability is the capacity to maintain operations for which operating revenue meets or exceeds operating expenses.
2. Evaluations will be strategic plan centric with a focus on KPIs (outcomes).
3. Subject to provisions laid out in EWU 202-14 and other campus policies.
4. The Deans are singled out, not because they are more important than anyone else, but because of considerations related to communication efficiency, and decision-making accountability.
5. Support offices exist to help the colleges help the president achieve goals.
6. Refer to the EWU Strategic Plan for exact wording and KPIs (outcomes) for the first four.
7. Our choice to collaborate around a common cause, despite our differences.