

Council on Postsecondary Education
January 29, 2007

Regional Stewardship Proposals

Murray State University and Western Kentucky University are seeking Council approval of their respective regional stewardship infrastructure plans. With that approval, each university will qualify to receive \$200,000 in 2006-07 and \$200,000 in 2007-08 infrastructure funds to support the development and maintenance of organizational structures, personnel, information systems, and community relationships necessary to sustain a viable stewardship program.

<p>ACTION: The staff recommends that the Council approve regional stewardship program infrastructure plans for Murray State University and Western Kentucky University.</p>
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On April 24, 2006, House Bill 380 was enacted by the 2006 General Assembly. The bill authorized funding of \$1.2 million in 2006-07 and \$3.6 million in 2007-08 for a Regional Stewardship Program. The Council approved guidelines governing the distribution and application of these funds at its May 2006 meeting. The guidelines stipulate that \$1.2 million each year of the biennium will be used to bolster infrastructure at Kentucky's comprehensive universities in preparation for performing stewardship work. These funds are to be allocated among the six comprehensive universities in equal amounts of \$200,000 per institution each year and will be used to develop and maintain organizational structures, personnel, information systems, advisory committees, and external partnerships necessary to sustain stewardship activities.

To qualify to receive infrastructure funds, each participating institution is required to submit a comprehensive plan to the Council for making regional stewardship a priority consistent with Council-approved guidelines and indicating how program funds will be used to support implementation of that plan. Council staff then provides detailed written feedback followed by meetings with the teams responsible for the plan at each campus. The university then provides a revised plan based on the written feedback and meeting discussion. All of this material is available on the Council Web site to support plan development at each university. Infrastructure plans for Murray State University (Attachment A) and Western Kentucky University (Attachment B) are presented for Council approval. A summary of each plan is provided below, along with CPE staff's assessment of proposal content.

If approved, funds will be made available to each university to implement their regional stewardship plan according to the goals and timelines included in each. Funds will not be allocated to the institution on a recurring basis until the plan is fully implemented.

Murray State University's Infrastructure Plan

On September 29, 2006, Murray State University submitted its regional stewardship plan to the Council. A revised plan was submitted in January 2007. The plan includes a request to the Council for \$200,000 in 2006-07 and \$200,000 in 2007-08 Regional Stewardship Program funds. If approved, these distributions will deplete the university's 2006-08 infrastructure pool allocation. The university proposes to use these funds to staff and provide operational support for a newly created Office of Regional Stewardship and Outreach to lead implementation of its regional stewardship plan.

About 80 percent of the requested funds will pay salaries and benefits for a full-time director, half-time administrative assistant, and full-time secretary for the Office of Regional Stewardship and Outreach. The director, working in conjunction with community partners and the Regional Stewardship Advisory Committee, will oversee the development and implementation of strategies to advance regional development. The remaining 20 percent of requested funds will support office operating expenses, including travel and related expenses associated with establishing and maintaining external relationships, and costs or services associated with convening advisory meetings, hosting public forums, hiring stewardship consultants, implementing a public awareness campaign, providing faculty professional development, and integrating public engagement into the curriculum. These proposed uses of infrastructure funds comply with guideline requirements for the stewardship program.

MuSU has an extensive history of public engagement activity in its region. The university's proposal identifies a number of ways that campus officials plan to expand and focus engagement activity in response to the stewardship initiative. Indeed, the ultimate goal of the plan is to advance core stewardship values, commitment, and action by revising the institution's administrative structure, providing expanded service incentives, and creating policies and procedures to enhance the institution's ability to form working partnerships. Listed below are selected components of MuSU's stewardship implementation plan.

- Using the institution's assigned areas of geographic responsibility (Attachment C), establish a Regional Advisory Council and begin the process of surveying citizens, meeting with business, education, and other important external constituents, conducting research, and hosting town hall meetings to determine the long-term needs of western Kentucky. The results of this research will drive the identification of regional priorities in the next phase of regional stewardship funding.
- Modify collegiate guidelines to ensure that effective stewardship work is a clear criterion for annual evaluation, merit, tenure, and promotion.
- Require units across campus to develop strategies and action plans to advance strategic goals, including those related to public engagement activity, and to establish key indicators for measuring progress.
- Establish a new Office of Regional Stewardship and Outreach on campus with the sole mission of leveraging institutional resources and expertise to promote the welfare of the region. The office will serve as a clear "one-stop" point of contact for regional partners needing university assistance.

- Hire a director of regional stewardship and outreach who, working in conjunction with community partners and the Regional Stewardship Advisory Committee, will oversee the development and implementation of strategies to advance regional development.
- Develop policies providing release time and resources to support faculty and staff stewardship activities.
- Recognize engagement through an institutional award similar to those for teaching and research excellence.
- Consider a new model for faculty workloads and evaluation based on differential roles for faculty that better allow a focus on stewardship work.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive institutionalized plan for integrating stewardship into the curriculum, including more engaged classroom teaching, directed coursework and engagement strategies for students, new teaching materials, and a new tracking system.
- Enhance ongoing faculty development and training for new research/teaching methods directed at stewardship.
- Review employment policies and practices related to faculty and staff engagement and modify to make stewardship activity a clear priority.
- Restructure budget tracking systems to bring all public engagement accounts under one umbrella in a separately identified part of the budget.
- Devise a statement regarding the university's commitment to regional engagement and include that statement in employment advertisements.
- Add an institutional definition of service to faculty and staff handbooks.
- Inventory public engagement activities already occurring on campus conducted by individuals in both academic and administrative units to identify strengths and gaps in the stewardship work being provided.
- Create an outreach directory and publicize it externally via Web site and other more traditional means.
- Develop a data system for reporting and updating the public engagement inventory linked to a statewide system for tracking the impact of the regional stewardship program.

MUSU's proposed use of infrastructure funds meets eligibility requirements for the program and campus officials have outlined a detailed action plan for promoting and supporting a culture of engagement.

Western Kentucky University's Infrastructure Plan

On October 4, 2006, Western Kentucky University submitted a request to the Council for \$200,000 in 2006-07 and \$200,000 in 2007-08 Regional Stewardship Program funds. A revised plan was submitted in January 2007. If approved, these distributions will deplete the university's 2006-08 infrastructure pool allocation. The university proposes to use these funds to pay salaries and benefits for three full-time positions and to provide operational support for "A Local Information and Volunteer Exchange" (ALIVE) Regional Stewardship Center that will have primary responsibility for ensuring implementation of WKU's comprehensive regional stewardship plan. ALIVE is an existing office that will be converted to regional stewardship.

About 80 percent of the requested funds will pay salaries and benefits for a community engagement coordinator, faculty engagement coordinator, and communications and marketing coordinator. The community engagement coordinator will serve as the primary interface between WKU and its community partners, and will work closely with the Regional Advisory Committee to identify regional needs, explore opportunities for campus/community collaboration, and develop a strategic plan for the region. The faculty engagement coordinator will help faculty and staff focus their teaching and scholarly activities on regional priorities and will conduct research to identify best practice models. The communications and marketing coordinator will collect, store, and disseminate data related to ALIVE Center functions and will be responsible for stewardship program marketing and public relations activities that promote involvement of regional partners in the initiative.

The ALIVE Regional Stewardship Center will serve as the hub of WKU's engagement infrastructure and center staff will have direct responsibility for bringing together campus and community leaders to identify and address regional priorities. The remaining 20 percent of requested infrastructure funds will support center operating expenses, including travel for professional development and supporting stewardship initiatives, equipment and supplies, and costs or services associated with convening advisory group meetings, hosting public forums, and developing information/tracking systems. These proposed uses of infrastructure funds comply with guideline requirements for the stewardship program.

Western Kentucky University has a long tradition of engaging students, faculty, and staff with the local community. Although WKU already has committed considerable personnel and resources to community outreach activity, campus officials propose to expand that commitment by matching regional stewardship funds, better coordinating regional stewardship efforts, and focusing on regional priorities in response to the stewardship initiative. Selected components of the university's action plan are listed below.

- Using the institution's assigned areas of geographic responsibility (Attachment C), engage in focus group conversations with partners throughout the region to create a representative Regional Advisory Committee and establish regional priorities for the next phase of regional stewardship funding.
- Dedicate a facility (i.e., 2,100 square feet) and the expertise and energies of five professional positions (two funded by WKU and three funded with infrastructure funds) to the stewardship initiative.
- Hire a community engagement coordinator to serve as the primary interface with community partners in identifying regional needs and exploring opportunities for campus/community collaboration.
- Hire a tenure-track faculty engagement coordinator to work with faculty in advancing projects that bring their disciplinary or interdisciplinary expertise to bear on projects that address identified regional priorities.
- Hire a communications and marketing coordinator to serve as the primary point of contact for material related to the university's regional stewardship mission and to promote that mission with regional partners.

- Conduct a campus-wide review of tenure, promotion, and merit pay policies to ensure that community-based scholarship and engagement activities are included for consideration.
- Create an equitable faculty rewards system (tenure, promotion, merit pay, and workload) that values stewardship work on an even par with traditional research.
- Provide faculty the opportunity to opt for reassigned time to reduce teaching loads and increase capacity to participate in stewardship initiatives.
- Use evidence of stewardship as an important determinant of accountability and reward for each college and administrative unit.
- Include stewardship as an item of accountability in the deans' annual reports to the provost.
- Adopt common language in advertisements and position descriptions identifying priorities related to the university's stewardship mission.
- Include community partners in campus planning and decision-making processes.
- Develop accountability systems that value the stewardship program.
- Refine university planning and budgeting processes to operationalize systems that will facilitate and support the university's public engagement agenda.
- Transform the ALIVE Center into the ALIVE Regional Stewardship Center by formulating a new mission and organizational goals to promote regional stewardship and by establishing additional partnerships with business and governmental sectors.
- Designate the ALIVE Regional Stewardship Center as the hub of the university's public engagement infrastructure.
- Continue to emphasize community engagement as a means of enhancing student learning through faculty and staff professional development that supports activities like service learning.
- Establish an "Engaged Department" grant program that provides awards for departments desiring to be engaged with at least one regional priority.
- Develop recognition systems for faculty and staff that engage in stewardship and outreach work (e.g., publications that highlight the work of both individual faculty and departments).
- Fully integrate Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) outcomes, including the outcome of engaging students with individuals, groups, and issues beyond campus boundaries, into the curricular and co-curricular learning environment for all students.
- Increase the number of courses put forward for review by the curriculum committees that add service-learning designations.
- Implement a co-curricular transcript/e-portfolio system that will track and record student participation in diverse types of learning experiences, including service learning, study abroad, and leadership, and that will link activities to discrete learning goals.

As demonstrated by its proposal, WKU is committed to working with community partners to address regional needs. The proposed uses of program funds meet eligibility requirements for the program, and campus officials have outlined a detailed action plan for promoting and supporting regional stewardship.