

**West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission  
Meeting of March 25, 2016**

**ITEM:** Approval of 2015 Institutional Compact Updates

**INSTITUTION:** All

**RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION:** *Resolved*, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission approves the 2015 institutional Compact updates.

**STAFF MEMBER:** Neal Holly

**BACKGROUND:**

Consistent with Series 49, Legislative Rule, Accountability System, the 2015 institutional Compact updates have been reviewed by a team of internal and external evaluators and are now brought before the Commission for approval. This Compact update submission was the second cycle of Leading the Way: Access. Success. Impact. and focused primarily on institutional efforts to implement strategies proposed in the Compact submissions approved by the Commission in 2015. As this was an implementation year, the review team's attention was directed at evaluating each institution's progress in implementing Compact strategies, challenges they faced and how those challenges were addressed, and on ensuring that each strategy was associated with appropriate methods for assessing outcomes and overall success. Future submissions will focus on institutional progress toward meeting goals set forth by this current submission.

The pages that follow include the review team's assessment of each institution's Compact update along with institutional responses to review team requests. Following a detailed examination of the update documents and the supplemental documents submitted by the institutions, the review team recommends approval of all 2015 Compact updates.

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Recommended Action</b>
Bluefield State College	Approve
Concord University	Approve
Fairmont State University	Approve
Glenville State College	Approve
Marshall University	Approve
Potomac State College of WVU	Approve
Shepherd University	Approve
West Liberty University	Approve
West Virginia State University	Approve
West Virginia University	Approve
West Virginia University Institute of Technology	Approve



### Academic Quality Comprehensive Plan

#### Highlights

The institution's Academic Quality plan includes multiple strategies supported by multiple activities. Academic departments are utilizing gap analysis with respect to student learning outcomes and are tasked with creating action plans toward improvements based on assessment results. There is evidence that this is being done successfully. Other strategies support at-risk populations and increasing international and global knowledge. The institution is very active in enhancing international efforts. In the coming year, it is their intent to pilot the Global Learning Inventory as an evaluation instrument for intercultural and global learning.

#### Concerns

Strategy A is focused around assessment. One of the identified activities is providing professional development to faculty with respect to enhancing student advising. It is not clear how this supports the assessment focus of this strategy.

#### Recommendations / Requests

None noted.

### Career Pathways Comprehensive Plan

#### Highlights

Shepherd's offers a well-developed and comprehensive plan with a number of activities that are already underway. Assessment strategies are in place to monitor progress.

#### Concerns

None noted.

#### Recommendations / Requests

None noted.

### Collaborative Access Comprehensive Plan

#### Highlights

The institution clearly states that it is working to increase access to adult learner, transfer, and part-time students and describes related activities to meet this goal. While not identified, activities will also reach low-income students in institution's service area. Activities include: Early outreach programs to middle grade students including "Unpacking the College Experience" and "Ram's Scholars"; Establishment of International and Transfer Student one-stop shop website.

#### Concerns

None noted.

#### Recommendations / Requests

None noted.

### Critical Regional Issues Comprehensive Plan

#### Highlights

The institution has made progress toward codifying its advisory board policies and is commended for its efforts to

collaborate with other public school systems.

**Concerns**

The review team is concerned that the strategy does not mention including students as members of advisory boards.

**Recommendations / Requests**

None noted.

## **Degrees Awarded Strategy**

**Highlights**

Shepherd University provided professional development opportunities related to DegreeWorks in 2014-15 and is preparing for a full launch in 2015-16. Assessment data have resulted in reducing the number of students dropped for non-payment. Three separate initiatives have been launched in an effort to increase fall to spring retention.

**Concerns**

None noted.

**Recommendations / Requests**

None noted.

## **Developmental Education Strategy**

**Highlights**

Shepherd has long been a leader for alternative delivery of developmental courses.

**Concerns**

None noted.

**Recommendations / Requests**

The review team recommends that the institution continue refining remedial course delivery.

## **Enrollment Strategy**

**Highlights**

Shepherd's is now offering out-of-state waivers to students who enroll in the RBA program through the Martinsburg Center. The institution is also working closely with the VA in Martinsburg to increase outreach efforts for veterans. The institution's enrollment strategy includes plans to develop and publish (via the internet) support material aimed directly at transfer students. These materials are now available online in both the future student and admissions sections of the website.

**Concerns**

None noted.

**Recommendations / Requests**

None noted.

## **Faculty Scholarship Strategy**

**Highlights**

The institution is commended for its efforts to support the development of graduate faculty status and for working to maintain professional development funds at existing levels in spite of statewide budget challenges.

**Concerns**

None noted.

**Recommendations / Requests**

The review team recommends that the institution consider including performance metrics in faculty contracts and/or annual reports.

## Financial Aid Comprehensive Plan

### Highlights

Shepherd is working to incorporate financial literacy into first year experience courses, and is conducting online student loan exit counseling for graduates and online loan counseling to all students. The institution is incentivizing students who complete the online training by holding a prize drawing.

### Concerns

None noted.

### Recommendations / Requests

The review team recommends that the institution consider requiring exit counseling as a condition of graduation in order to increase the number of students completing exit counseling. In future updates, the review team requests that the institution report on its efforts to study its student loan default rate and recommends that it focus such efforts on identifying students at greatest risk of defaulting. Normally, non-graduates are more likely to default than graduates. Outreach to the non-graduates may have a bigger impact on reducing the default rate.

## First Year Retention Strategy

### Highlights

The institution is commended for including students on its Retention Intervention Team. The review team looks forward to learning in future updates about the impact of the new software packages (Beacon and Ram Plus) on student retention and completion. The new Beacon software application enables faculty to alert the success team when student issues arise.

### Concerns

Retention rates for Academic Support Center students are not tracked. The review team believes that this would be an important indicator concerning student performance and retention and recommends that the institution consider collecting data on these visits.

### Recommendations / Requests

None noted.

## Graduate Student Success Strategy

### Highlights

The plan does not address student success in the traditional manner. Through the development of clear pathways to a graduate program and through additional offerings, Shepherd's efforts will create a qualified workforce and enhanced credentials for professionals. The institution has successfully implemented an accelerated pathway (4+1) for the MBA program. Additional articulations are being explored, particularly with respect to teacher education and the Master of Arts in Teaching program. Through the support of several initiatives, international students have been identified as a potential source for graduate enrollment.

### Concerns

The summary of the institution's original Compact submission included an expansion of graduate offerings, including the implementation of the Doctor of Nursing Practice. The Compact update did not address this activity.

### Recommendations / Requests

None noted.

## Graduation Rates Strategy

### Highlights

The institution has completed a gap analysis and has asked departments to report on plans to apply the results of the assessment. In its update, the institution shares several examples of departmental changes that positively affect student learning.

### Concerns

None noted.

**Recommendations / Requests**

The review team requests that the institution include in future reports examples of improvements that were driven by results of the gap assessment.

**Progress Toward Degree Strategy****Highlights**

The institution clearly outlines activities to improve student progress toward degrees. Activities include: Utilization of data to better engage students who are on academic probation, and providing clear and structured pathways to graduation.

**Concerns**

None noted.

**Recommendations / Requests**

None noted.

**Research and Development Strategy****Highlights**

The institution is commended for providing institutional funds to support professional development of faculty. The institution may provide mini-grants for special projects, summer stipends and sabbatical awards, and is working toward providing travel grants for faculty who will be presenting at professional conferences. Increased faculty scholarship also helps Shepherd meet Higher Learning Commission standards.

**Concerns**

The review team is concerned that a lack of funding to support faculty research makes it difficult for faculty to publish in peer-reviewed journals. The review team requests that the institution report next year on any ongoing initiatives or incentives aimed at encouraging faculty to seek grant funding. Additionally, the review team requests that the 2016 update include information on what assistance, if any, faculty receive from Shepherd University Research Corporation with submitting proposals.

**Recommendations / Requests**

None noted.

**Student Loan Default Rate Strategy****Highlights**

Shepherd already has a low student loan default rate. Efforts in financial literacy and loan counseling may have a greater impact on average student loan debt in the short-term than on the default rate since the default rate is a lagging indicator. The institution is making adjustments to its strategy by adding a communications plan and additional workshops in addition to the financial literacy in its first year experience course.

**Concerns**

As part of next year's update, the review team requests that the institution report on efforts to assess the outcomes of its counseling and financial literacy efforts. Measurable goals that provide immediate feedback should be considered as effects on the default rate will not be observed for at least 3 years.

**Recommendations / Requests**

None noted.

**Overall Impressions :****Highlights**

Shepherd University has developed many strategies and multiple activities to address the academic quality of the institution. The institution has always been active on assessment and makes valiant attempts to support professional development in times of shrinking budgets. In the area of Developmental education, Shepherd has always been a leader--especially in the revamping of course and merging developmental with the required course. The institution

was among the first in the state to adopt and fully implement the 'stretch" course model. In terms of retention and progress toward degree, there are many strategies and activities listed but the question the review team hopes to see answered in next year's report is "are they working?" Shepherd uses Degreeworks and 15 to Finish and works very hard at monitoring students' progress toward degree completion. It should be noted that the use of the Martinsburg Center will bear watching with the efforts to waive out of state status for the RBA program. As an institution that reports on research, it would be helpful in the next report of evidence could be shown as to where monies come from to support research and professional development and what role, if any, the research corporation plays.

**Concerns**

None noted.

**Recommendations / Requests**

Shepherd should be reporting the success of any software program that helps strengthen retention.