WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
CHARACTER STUDY CHARRETTE SUMMARY

January 12, 13 & 14, 2000
Introduction

We have a wonderful campus. How do we move ahead, meet future needs and maintain that beauty?

The development of the campus is at a crossroads. The density of the campus with regard to buildings and increased numbers of students (FTEs) places increasing demands on space within the buildings, on the open space and with the infrastructure.

The placement of new buildings, the alignment of utilities and the development of the Institutional Master Plan are projects and events which are at hand. The manner by which these pressures are addressed will materially affect the current character of the campus.

The purpose of the “Character Study Charrette” was to identify and depict the key ingredients that compose the physical character of the Western Washington University campus, and answer the following questions:

• What are the major character ingredients that compose the campus?

• What specific aspects are strengths and what are weaknesses?

• What actions are recommended to sustain and improve campus character?
Character Study Charrette Participants

CHARRETTE TEAM

**Michael Durbin, PE**
Mr. Durbin is a registered professional engineer and an associate with David Evans and Associates, Inc. He has been responsible for a variety of infrastructure projects at all levels of design, from preliminary feasibility studies and utility system master planning to preparation of construction documents and management of construction for multi-million dollar infrastructure projects. Recent accomplishments include completion of the Campus Infrastructure Development Predesign for Western Washington University, two regional stormwater management projects in Skagit County and two public school campus developments in Ferndale. Mr. Durbin’s special interests involve campus planning and public involvement programs for projects that require resolution of conflicting stakeholder interests. Prior to becoming an engineer, Mr. Durbin had 15 years experience in the construction industry. Mr. Durbin is a graduate of Fairhaven College.

**Bill Johnson, FASLA**
Bill Johnson has focused on campus planning and issues of environmental design throughout his 35-year career as planner, designer, teacher, and academic administrator. He has pioneered the development and use of integrative processes whereby human needs are adapted to particular environments, both natural and cultural. In his practice concerned mainly with projects of urban design, campus and regional planning, natural resource management and historic preservation - a balance of social, cultural, and environmental factors is a perennial concern. The scale of his projects ranges from small communities to extensive regions.
The scope of his personal involvement ranges from designer to catalyst to facilitator in the resolution of conflicts among the different parties concerned.

Bill combines computer-aided design systems with his exceptional skill as an artist to foresee the physical character of new development. Continually refining the design process, he is exploring the potential for adapting traditional patterns of community development to the more complex social, technological, and environmental requirements of modern life.

In his community planning work throughout the country, Bill has been able to bring diverse groups together through the workshop process, thus facilitating the development of implementable master plans.

Ron Kasprisin, AIA, APA
Ron Kasprisin conducts design and planning studios and teaches courses in design communication and urban design process at the University of Washington. As a Partner of Kasprisin Pettinari Design since 1975, Professor Kasprisin has had extensive experience in physical planning and urban design with special emphasis in downtown redevelopment, waterfront revitalization, and historic adaptive reuse. Some current projects include the Eighth Street Landing waterfront project in Hoquiam, Washington; the Yakima Downtown Urban Design and Land Use Plan; and award winning projects in Missoula MT (First Place, National Design Competition for the downtown riverfront corridor); Milwaukee WI (Honorable Mention in the International Design Competition for the downtown lakefront); American Planning Association Merit Award for the Haines AK Comprehensive Plan and Waterfront Revitalization; APA Mention Award for the Ketchikan AK Creek Street Public Facilities Design; and, Planning Association of Washington Outstanding Achievement Award for the Port Townsend Urban Waterfront Master Plan. Professor Kasprisin has recently completed Watercolor in Architectural Design, Van Nostrand Reinhold New York, July 1989, a
reference book for designers on the process, methods and techniques of using watercolor in design. He is an Adjunct Professor at Eastern Washington University in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning. He received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Notre Dame and a Master of Urban Planning degree from the University of Washington. Professor Kasprisin is vitally interested in the ecological responsibility of design and planning.

Rolfe Kellor, AICP, APA, SCUP
Rolfe Kellor is the Principal of Kellor Associates, a Seattle-based consulting firm that specializes in campus and facilities planning. Mr. Kellor has over 30 years experience as a campus planner, including approximately 20 years as the University of Washington’s Campus Planning Officer. Recently, as a consultant, he has completed campus master plans for Seattle University and Seattle Pacific University. He is currently providing technical assistance to Western Washington University on the Institutional Master Plan and is a member of the design team for the campus infrastructure development project. Mr. Kellor has a BS in Landscape Architecture and a MS in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Wisconsin. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners, American Planning Association, and the Society for College and University Planning.
Kenichi Nakano, FASLA

Kenichi Nakano has been involved in landscape architecture in the Seattle area for over 30 years as both a professional landscape architect and as a lecturer at the University of Washington School of Landscape Architecture. His work has received both local and national recognition for excellence in landscape architecture. Kenichi served as a trustee for the American Society of Landscape Architects for several years and is active in local civic groups including the Seattle Planning Commission. Through his involvement with public agencies and community groups, Kenichi has developed critical experience and keen insights into the public process. He has successfully balanced programmatic concerns and public desires with site opportunities to produce aesthetically pleasing and ecologically sound landscapes while meeting budget constraints.

Under Kenichi’s direction, Nakano Associates has worked on a number of projects at Western Washington University in recent years. We are currently working on the Campus Service Center and the Campus Infrastructure project; past projects include the Communications Facility Predesign, Haggard Hall Renovation, Shannon Point Marine Center Master Plan, South Campus Infrastructure Predesign, Wetland Design Alternatives, Washington State Regional Archives, and Rainforest Sculpture Plaza Design. The firm has also worked on and successfully completed projects at the University of Washington, Washington State University, Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, the University of Puget Sound, Pacific Lutheran University, Seattle Pacific University, Bellingham Technical College, and Renton Technical College.
Vince Vergel de Dios, AICP
Vince Vergel de Dios has been a principal at NBBJ for 15 years. He is an expert in architecture, urban design, and planning, particularly environmental design, site analysis and feasibility, and implementation studies. His recent work has concentrated on pre-design planning that assists in major development decisions, including numerous development potentials analyses. His project responsibilities reflect his skills in conceptual design as well as his understanding of cultural, social, and political forces.

Vince has been a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners since 1982.
WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION
Karen Morse, President
George Pierce, Vice-President, Business & Financial Affairs
Philip Sun, Director, Planning, Facilities & Operations

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY STAFF
Rick Benner, Planning
Mitch Blanton, Operations
Gail Kuromiya, Planning
Bill Managan, Operations
Robert Schmidt, Construction Administration
David Sherwood, Operations
Ed Simpson, Planning
Tom Thorp, Operations
Sherrie White, Planning
David Willett, Facilities
Jeff Winslow, Planning
Jerome Wolfe, Operations
Gene Wright, Operations
Impressions of Character

Western staff provided a strong beginning for the work with the character analysis from the “Existing Land Use Section” of the Institutional Master Plan document currently being developed. They participated enthusiastically in the charrette and provided words and phrases to describe the essential character of the campus along with the charrette consultants:

Consultant Input
- Northwest, natural, and green
- Pedestrian and bicycle friendly
- Sculpture garden
- Land form/valley squeeze
- Brick, concrete, grass, trees, and rain
- Stepped valley with hierarchy of flowing spaces
- Large “pools”, narrow cascades, eddies and coves
- Cascade steppes

Western Staff Input
- Penny arcade – beginning and end
- Flow – sequence of outdoor spaces
- Flow – pulse of students and energy
- Linear form – mall
- Diversity of spaces and functions
- Regional
- Residential
- Preservation
- Classic sanctuary of learning
- Edges – big and small
- Relationships – rocks, sky, and trees
- Secure community
- Protection
- Connected individualism
- Natural setting
- Sequence of open spaces
- Intimacy of detail
- Village
- Comfortable scale
Character Analysis

The consulting team spent most of the first day exploring the campus, sketching, taking photos, and preparing an analysis of the campus character. Drawings were prepared to illustrate major elements comprising or influencing campus character, including the natural environment, places and activities, development patterns, circulations and access, organizing lines and spaces, gateways, edges, open spaces, and views. The analysis also included illustrations of campus edges and existing and planned centralized facilities.
Environmental Influences

Strengths
• Distinctive natural landform setting
• Abundant northwest vegetation
• Valley campus squeezed by slopes
• Expansive water views
• Precious southern solar exposure

Weaknesses
• Restricted access at east & west campus edges
• Natural valley drains to the south – complicates development
• Southerly wind and weather exposures

Actions
• Reinforce linear character & natural features
• Maximize sun exposure & protect from weather
Places & Activities

Strengths
- Mature landmarks & places in north campus
- Protected Sehome Arboretum
- Established residential pockets/clusters close to academic area
- People dominance in north campus

Weaknesses
- Unclear transitions to neighborhood at north & south campus ends
- Car dominance & vast open spaces in south campus
- Remove Physical Plant & questionable neighborhood compatibility
Development Patterns

Strengths
- Regionally organized pattern in north campus
- Hillside residential clusters
- Continuity in building materials, colors & textures on north campus
- Hillside/campus juxtaposition

Weaknesses
- Grid shift & juxtaposed pattern south of Carver Gym with unrefined open spaces
- Contrast of institutional building scale with neighborhood at north and south campus ends
Major Organizing Lines & Spaces

Strengths
• Topographic hillside lines clearly define east & west campus edges
• Street alignments also establish organizing basis for development
• Connected pattern of open spaces is established in north campus
• Controlled campus approach/progression along Bill McDonald Parkway

Weaknesses
• To be defined connection of south campus with north campus
• Expanded walking distances with lineal campus
• Lack of clear campus arrival at Bill McDonald Parkway

Actions
• Assure that building setting defines open spaces & connects with existing patterns
Gateway & Edges

Strengths
- Distinctive separation & edges along east & west campus areas
- Logical north & south campus gateway locations
- Remote gateway at I-5 freeway to intercept & direct

Weaknesses
- Restricted east/west access & connections with neighborhoods
- Lack of definition of north & south campus gateways
- High Street connection with Bellingham/downtown/north
- Expansion of proposed south campus loop establishes car dominance in contrast with north campus pedestrian dominance and may create barrier for flexible future development
Circulation & Access

Strengths
- Pedestrian/bicycle priority in north campus with few vehicular conflicts - 'few cars in the valley'
- Proposed West College Way bypass connection improves safety & traffic flow

Weaknesses
- High Street appears as vast city street & closure creates traffic confusion
- Backside service functions along East College Way with little connection to Sehome Hill vegetation/space
- Proposed loop road brings cars closer to campus activities but may create vehicular/pedestrian conflicts
- Little relationship between campus roadway network with neighborhood grid
Primary Character Principles

Primary character principles were developed and refined during the charrette. Photos and sketches were added to illustrate the principles. It was agreed that the following primary character principles represent the essence of what makes the campus a beautiful and special place.
PEDESTRIAN FOCUSED

- People & bicycle dominance
- Controlled vehicular access
- Bicycle friendly

Pedestrian Focused
- People dominance
- Controlled vehicular traffic
- Bicycle friendly

CONTINUITY OF PEOPLE FLOW

- Linear
- Valley - spatial flow
- Like a stream
- Has diversity
- Stepped progression

Continuity of People Flow
- Linear
- Valley - spatial flow
- Like a stream
- Has diversity
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CLOSE NATURAL/PEOPLE & BUILT RELATIONSHIP

- Strong connections & juxtapositions
- Omnipresent
- Dramatic dynamic balance
- Natural "walls" contain the place

Close Natural/People & Built Relationship
- Strong connections and juxtapositions
- Omnipresent natural features
- Dramatic and dynamic balance
- Natural "walls" contain the place
**INTIMACY & BREAKDOWN OF SCALE**

- Primary and secondary open spaces
- "Eddies"
- Village feel
- Setting for art

**PROTECTED SANCTUARY**

- Ease of way finding
- Sense of edges
- Comfortable
- Friendly
- Caring

**VISUAL PORTALS**

- Windows out
- Transparency
- Linkages with mountains, water, vegetation
- Linkages with neighborhoods

"Village" - Intimacy/Breakdown of Scale
- Primary and secondary open spaces
- "Eddies"
- Village feel
- Setting for art
**Windows to the Past**
- Evolution of campus expressed
- Sequence of time

**Sense of a Community**
- Community of scholars
- Recreation/athletics
- Common ground of learning
- Interconnected
- Intellectually charged
Character Patterns

Based on the analysis of campus character and the identification of the primary character principles, “character patterns to be reinforced” and “character patterns to be avoided” were defined.
Patterns to be Reinforced

- Buildings contribute to and define adjacent spaces/plazas

- Clear building front door and presence on public space

- Juxtaposition of buildings and nature
• Housing and academic proximity with integration of nature

  Canvas Character Patterns to be reinforced

  Housing & Academic Proximity with Integration of Nature

  Example: Ridgeway

  Future: Housing Village south of Bill McDonald Pavilions

• Buildings aligned along key organizing lines

  Canvas Character Patterns to be reinforced

  Buildings aligned along key organizing lines

  Example: High Street

• Orient plazas and open space to capture the sun

  Canvas Character Patterns to be reinforced

  Orient Plazas & Open Space to capture the sun

  Example:
• Multiple “front doors” to the campus

• Sustainable development/environmental enhancement

• Contiguous academic core
• Athletics integrated with academic and residential

  Atheltics/Recreation
  Integrated with
  Academics/Residential

  Example: Soccer Field + Recreation Fields

• Asymmetrical linked plazas

• Informal organic structure
• Appropriate restraint in architectural design

• Setting for campus art

• People friendly spaces at building ground level
• Compatible transitions with community edges (fit)

• Protection from the weather

• Parking located at west campus periphery
• Neighborhood connections
Patterns to be Avoided

- Pedestrian pathways that cross major vehicle routes

- Expansive surface parking lots

- Excessive and dominating roadways
• Buildings over-powering the natural environment

• “Paving your front yard”

• Overly grand vehicular entries
• Abrupt pedestrian transitions at campus edges

CAMPOS PATTERN TO AVOID

ABRUPT PEDESTRIAN TRANSITIONS AT CAMPUS EDGES

• Unattractive building backsides

CAMPOS PATTERN TO AVOID

UNATTRACTIVE BUILDING SERVICE BACKSIDES
EXAMPLE: EAST COLLEGE WAY