Retreat advances Strategic Planning process

About 50 WesternU staff, faculty, Board of Trustees members, and administration – including eight of the University’s nine college deans – took part in a daylong Strategic Planning Retreat Wednesday, February 29 at Red Hill Country Club.

The retreat was an opportunity for key participants in the strategic planning process to pool their ideas in several major “theme” areas, including what the vision, mission and purpose of the University is; the importance of collaboration; what things make us unique; how WesternU can “break the silos” that develop around operating units; how to better focus on outcomes; what the future of health holds, and how WesternU can innovate to meet it; and how to improve the University’s “internal fitness,” including human resources and infrastructure.

The retreat was the latest step in what is expected to be a year-long process of updating the University’s 10-year Strategic Plan.

During several small group “strategic question” sessions, retreat participants also tackled a wide range of topics, from what WesternU’s identity is to what its present and future orientation should be. A small cross-section of the many points raised:

- WesternU is “the future of health” because of its collaborative care training and development as a “bench to bedside” research and patient care organization.
- Decision-making should be circular, not linear – any point on the circle should be an entry point for a new idea, process, etc.
- What is unique about WesternU? What do we have that people want and will pay us for?
- Growth in infrastructure should coincide with any physical or programmatic growth.
- The way students are selected for admission should include gauging their propensity or aptitude for collaborative education.
- Whatever the University does needs to be successfully accomplished on a local level first – “We’ve got to do it here” – before it will work on any other level.
- Different partners, including businesses, research organizations and other schools – that buy into “the WesternU way” should be cultivated regionally.
- We know what the WesternU “gene” looks like, and we continue to be successful in somehow selecting people to come here who already have this gene.
These and other topics addressed at the retreat are expected to be part of a WesternU Town Hall session in the next six weeks. The Town Hall will be an opportunity for the larger WesternU community to weigh in on the Strategic Planning process and offer ideas and suggestions.