

**WORCESTER STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**The Strategic Plan 2015-2020:**  
***Scholarship, Partnership, and Leadership for a Changing World***

**MISSION**

Worcester State University champions academic excellence in a diverse, student-centered environment that fosters scholarship, creativity, and global awareness. A Worcester State education equips students with knowledge and skills necessary for lives of professional accomplishment, engaged citizenship, and intellectual growth.

**CORE VALUES**

As a public institution, Worcester State University embraces the belief that widespread access to high-quality educational opportunities is the cornerstone of a democratic society. Members of the Worcester State community share the following core values:

- **Academic Excellence:** We are committed to providing opportunities to excel in a close-knit learning environment characterized by distinguished faculty, excellent teaching, and creative linkages between classroom learning and real-world experiences.
- **Engaged Citizenship:** We are committed to promoting community service, social justice, the democratic process, environmental sustainability, and global awareness to prepare students to be active and informed citizens.
- **Open Exchange of Ideas:** We are committed to inviting and considering the most expansive range of perspectives in teaching and learning, in scholarly and creative work, and in the governance of a complex, diverse institution.
- **Diversity and Inclusiveness:** We are committed to being an inclusive community in which our diversity enhances learning for all and in which people from all cultures and backgrounds have the opportunity to participate fully and succeed.
- **Civility and Integrity:** We are committed to respecting the dignity of all members of our community and to demonstrating this commitment in our interactions, decisions, and structures.

**VISION FOR 2020: Our Destination**

The WSU we envision in 2020 will be more widely recognized as an educational innovator. Its faculty and staff will be unified behind a model of transformative change in students. Its academic program, which creatively integrates classroom learning with experiential learning that takes place beyond the classroom, will be responsive to the identified priorities of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the evolving needs of a complex global community. As a public university grounded in the liberal arts tradition, WSU will be preparing well-rounded, culturally sensitive and socially conscious critical thinkers and problem solvers who are well prepared for chosen professions or advanced study.

By the year 2020, WSU will have solidified a reputation for student-centered educational best practices. The university will continue to be known for the value of the education it provides while also building its reputation for the quality of its academic program, faculty, staff, students, and facilities. In an environment that prizes academic excellence, nurtures creativity, and expects civic engagement, students will be pushed and supported by a faculty and staff committed to helping them succeed – in their studies and in life. The impressive success of WSU alumni, who are leaders in their professions and caring citizens of the world, will be a source of inspiration for students and a testament to the value of a WSU education.

By 2020 – 10 years after WSU attained university status – graduate school offerings will have expanded strategically to meet growing demand. WSU’s commitment to supporting the scholarly pursuits of its faculty will be deeper than ever, thereby fortifying the university’s reputation for thought leadership.

WSU’s unique place within the Massachusetts state university system and among regional institutions of higher learning will be clearly established as a result of well respected programs that serve as beacons and also as a result of strategic marketing that draws attention to WSU’s distinctive strengths. WSU’s already strong offerings in the liberal arts and sciences will be further distinguished and enriched through interdisciplinary connections and foundational support from WSU’s innovative and integrative general education program. The university also be viewed increasingly as a destination school; its growing appeal as a first-choice option will be attributable in part to distinctive offerings such as a new Honors College, highly regarded pre-professional degree programs in traditional and emerging fields, and a number of centers and institutes designed to serve both the campus community and the greater community of central Massachusetts.

WSU’s urban location will represent a competitive advantage for WSU because of how it is leveraged as a valuable educational asset for those who study, teach, and conduct research here. Reflecting its longstanding and deep commitment to community engagement, WSU will be more tightly and broadly connected with its surrounding neighborhoods, the City of Worcester, and the wider world in ways that enrich students’ academic experiences and expand their worldviews. The university will be perceived and appreciated in Worcester and the region as a committed community partner, a vibrant cultural resource, and a welcoming place for those seeking lifelong learning opportunities.

The sense of community, sense of belonging, and sense of pride on campus will be stronger than ever. WSU’s faculty, staff, and students – traditional and non-traditional, undergraduate and graduate, part-time and full-time – will all feel embraced, equipped, and empowered to do and be their best. A collaborative work environment based on mutual respect and mutual accountability will foster commitment, teamwork, and excellence. Effective leadership and transparent communication will encourage the open sharing of information and ensure alignment around shared goals for WSU.

Alumni, particularly young alumni, will be more engaged with and better supported by their *alma mater* than ever. WSU’s enhanced reputation and higher profile will be resulting in a growing number of applications for admission and an expanding pool of donors eager to support the university’s mission, faculty, and students. These and other strategies to generate revenues, together with ongoing efforts to contain costs, will create a financially sustainable business model while yielding resources that can be invested strategically in WSU’s future. The university’s physical plant and infrastructure will be well maintained, up-to-date, and supportive of WSU’s paramount objectives: to promote academic excellence and to build community among diverse constituents who have at least one thing in common: their decision to choose Worcester State University.

### **STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES: *Scholarship, Partnership, and Leadership***

- WSU will channel scholarly creativity in new, exciting, and potentially important directions.
- WSU will be a dynamic, valued partner with and resource to Worcester, the region and the world.
- WSU will be a model of best practices in promoting retention across the student body and in empowering students to attain both academic and career goals.
- All members of the WSU community will feel included and valued, and they will hold themselves and each other accountable for upholding shared values and achieving common objectives.
- WSU’s plans and priorities will support the public agenda for higher education in Massachusetts as reflected in the Vision Project’s goals and seven key outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The key outcomes relate to college participation, college completion, student learning, workforce alignment, preparing citizens, elimination of disparities, and research.

## **OVERARCHING GOALS AND STRATEGIES: Our Roadmap**

### Academic Program and Excellence

#### **1. Enhance the undergraduate academic program and expand graduate programs in a community of learning that promotes academic excellence and innovation**

##### **STRATEGIES:**

- Develop and offer innovative, integrative academic programming that supports and advances a model of transformative change in students
- Encourage more interdisciplinary and cross-departmental collaboration in teaching and research
- More clearly articulate the purpose of WSU's general education program and promote greater cohesiveness within the Liberal Arts and Sciences Curriculum/LASC
- Strengthen intellectual life on campus and foster an environment that promotes discourse, discovery, and practice in the liberal arts of learning and expression
- Develop and offer distinctive programs that emphasize community impact, service learning, creativity, and environmental stewardship
- Make stronger connections between students' classroom learning and experiential learning achieved through extra- and co-curricular programming
- Place greater emphasis on research and strengthen the research infrastructure to support the creative and scholarly pursuits of WSU faculty
- Build the infrastructure to support growth in graduate offerings and enrollments
- Expand high-quality online (hybrid) classes and develop new online programs
- Strengthen the process of collecting, sharing, and using data to create a culture of assessment and learn from assessment feedback in order to improve the student experience
- Grow institutional commitment to information literacy and instructional technologies
- Ensure that WSU's library is a 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning resource center that supports the evolving needs of students and faculty

### Differentiation and Impact in the Wider World

#### **2. Leverage WSU's distinctive strengths, both to enhance the University's reputation and to prepare students to lead, serve, and make a difference in the world**

##### **STRATEGIES:**

- Capitalize on WSU's urban location as a programmatic strength and educational asset
- Expand efforts to integrate arts and sciences in innovative ways that enhance learning and distinguish WSU
- Better articulate the relationship between academics and workforce alignment, particularly in the arts and humanities
- Promote and stress curricular inter-disciplinarity and programmatic connectedness to enrich learning and create multiple potential paths for WSU students to pursue upon graduation
- Cultivate and enhance local, regional, and global connections to benefit students and strengthen WSU's contributions in the wider world
- Nurture student interest in and appreciation for diversity, global awareness, environmental literacy, and engaged citizenship
- Expand opportunities that encourage development of leadership potential within the student body
- Strive to have the top degree-completion rate among the state universities in Massachusetts
- Improve career-related services and expand professional networking opportunities for WSU students and graduates

### Enrollment, Retention, and Student Success

#### **3. Attract and enroll a diverse pool of highly motivated students and attach institution-wide priority to promoting their retention and success**

##### **STRATEGIES:**

- Strategically align programmatic offerings with student interest and employment trends
- Implement a sustainable approach to online programming that meets market demands and is attractive to students, supported by faculty, and consistent with government requirements
- Implement a comprehensive marketing strategy and effectively position WSU as a first-choice option through clear messaging and by articulating a compelling value proposition
- Implement recruitment strategies designed to increase diversity within the student body
- More effectively engage faculty, students and alumni as active participants in the recruitment and admissions process
- Increase financial support to make enrollment and the overall WSU experience more affordable
- Leverage WSU's current K-12 initiatives to create a pipeline of applicants from urban areas
- Establish stronger articulation agreements with community colleges to attract more transfer students
- Ensure availability of courses to allow students to stay on track toward degree completion
- Strengthen academic advising across the University
- Expand services in the evening for all students
- Provide excellent customer service to students in all divisions and offices

### Community and Campus Life

#### **4. Cultivate a vibrant campus life and a collaborative work and learning environment in which all members of the WSU community feel welcomed, included, respected, empowered, and valued**

##### **STRATEGIES:**

- Foster a culture of engagement, pride and gratitude among all WSU constituencies
- Promote greater collaboration across divisions in support of shared, university-wide goals and mutual accountability for progress
- Increase options for all students to participate in campus life outside the classroom
- Establish living-learning communities in the residence halls and more student gathering spots throughout campus
- Create more opportunities for informal interaction among students, faculty, and alumni and between senior administrators and the rest of the campus community
- Nurture a campus culture that promotes cultural awareness and sensitivity as well as commitment to social responsibility and environmental stewardship
- Significantly improve internal communication and ensure faculty and staff feel they have a voice in setting strategic direction and priorities for the University
- Celebrate contributions to campus and community by faculty, staff, students, and alumni who embody WSU's core values
- Ensure opportunities to succeed at WSU are equally available to all members of the faculty and staff
- Promote a pluralistic student experience and ensure that students of diverse backgrounds see themselves reflected in the adult population and leadership ranks on campus
- Seek ways to increase alumni presence on campus and engagement with WSU through events and lifelong learning opportunities that correspond with their interests

Resources, Revenues, and Organizational Sustainability

**5. Promote financial strength and organizational sustainability while continuing to secure and invest the resources required to maintain WSU's reputation for excellence and value**

**STRATEGIES:**

- Align programs and allocate academic resources in response to student interest and strategic priorities that support the academic vision of the University
- Mitigate uncertainty and offset reductions in state funding by identifying and growing new streams of revenue
- Implement the campus master plan based on evolving strategic priorities and consistent with the principles of green building and environmental sustainability
- Secure funding for deferred maintenance work on campus
- Explore options for expanding the campus footprint in creative, cost-effective ways
- Bolster WSU's technology capacity and infrastructure through investment in administrative and instructional technology and through collaborations that maximize savings and efficiencies
- Strengthen and sustain efforts to inspire financial support from WSU alumni
- Develop a long-term plan for increasing financial support and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff through enhanced operational efficiencies and fundraising