

WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2022
UPDATE AT YEAR NINE
FALL 2021

Overview

William Paterson University has completed its ninth year under the guidance of Strategic Plan 2012-2022, and the University has continued to demonstrate progress toward achievement of the goals of the plan while beginning the process of developing a new strategic plan for 2022-2025. Committee 2022 was established to conduct an annual report for the campus community to highlight progress and identify areas for further attention and action. University leadership reviews the Strategic Plan and assesses results, progress and concerns as an element of its decision-making and planning processes. Progress and challenges are also demonstrated in the institutional Key Performance indicators (KPIs) developed by the President and the Cabinet, and shared regularly with the Board of Trustees.

The Covid pandemic continued its impact on all facets of the University including enrollment, campus life, and institutional finances. At the same time, the University continued to move forward with plans and programs that enrich the experiences of our students and position the University for the future.

Implementation of successful plans and programs University wide demonstrate the University's commitment to diversity and inclusion and the positive impact of initiatives on, and beyond, the campus community. The University launched its pre-doctoral fellows program in support of diversifying faculty and hired four faculty fellows. The Center for Diversity and Inclusion expanded its programming, leading to a 155 percent increase in participation at events from fall to spring semesters, and launched a Social Justice Leadership Badge that engages students to think and act creatively about critical social justice issues. Participants in the Lavender Graduation ceremony honoring LGBTQIA allies and graduates grew 85 percent compared to the previous year. Plans for development of the Center for Latinidad progressed leading to a fall 2021 ribbon cutting. Collaboration between Student Development and Institutional Advancement led to creation of the Black Alumni Network and then to commitments from alumni to serve on the Black Cultural Center Advisory team. Administrative and faculty leaders, including the President, many members of Cabinet and deans, participated in the eight-module, 16-hour USC Race and Equity Center's Equity Institute. Learning from the Institute has and will continue to inform institutional decision-making.

The University gained momentum in development and implementation of academic programs that diversify instructional delivery models to meet the changing demands of the marketplace and capitalize on evolving markets such as adult learners. Graduate enrollment in programs that are offered as part of WP Online, a series of fully online degree programs that provide flexible, accelerated course schedules, increased by 27 percent compared to the previous fall, exceeding goals by more than 200 percent, and plans progressed effectively for the November launch of WP Online undergraduate programs. Leadership studies programs that support career advancement expanded with State approval to offer a Doctor of Education in Leadership, the University's first research doctoral program, which admitted its first cohort for Summer 2021, and a new BA in Leadership and Professional Studies. High school dual enrollment greatly exceeded the KPI goal. New agreements with Brookdale Community College and Mercer County Community College expanded the offering of 3 + 1 and 2 + 2

programs. The University also gained approval from the State for timely and traditionally offered new undergraduate degree programs in Ethics, and Community Development and Social Justice.

The pandemic, which has disproportionately affected the population of students that the University serves, continues to heighten enrollment challenges. Student retention challenges persist. The University fell short on KPIs for All Student Headcount and Undergraduate Headcount while exceeding the KPI for Graduate Headcount. With that said, All Student Headcount grew, buoyed by the dramatic growth of WP Online; however, full-time undergraduate enrollment, the University's most significant source of revenue, dropped by 12 percent.

The fiscal implications of pandemic-related enrollment challenges coupled with a structural deficit led to retrenchment plans that include layoffs and a Voluntary Separation Program for faculty and staff.

Retention support is widespread with new programs in various stages of development and implementation. Technological advances, philanthropy, and career guidance continue to support our students' ability to succeed on campus while preparing them for success in all aspects of their lives. New programs designed to improve student retention include Campus Logic – Student Forms, which reduces manual processes related to financial aid while staff gain more time for personal contact with students, and a new Virtual Advisor (Chatbot) that provides students with personalized answers to routine questions 24/7.

Fundraising exceeded goals with significant support for students via scholarships. More than 560 scholarships were awarded exceeding \$1 million and more than \$75,000 was awarded in Student Emergency Support funding to 228 students. Institutional Advancement raised \$3.6 million overall, surpassing its KPI by 10 percent. The University took receipt of \$5 million from the Grant estate, increasing the overall endowment to \$22.3 million and increasing the scholarship endowment by 58 percent to \$16.4 million.

The Career Development Center exceeded its goal with more than half of students utilizing Handshake, a career management system that facilitates job and internship opportunities. The number of job and internship opportunities posted increased by more than 90 percent compared to the previous year and the number of students who scheduled an appointment with a staff member increased more than 80 percent. Eighty two percent of the class of 2020 who completed the National Association of Colleges and Employers First Destination Survey indicated they had a post-graduation placement, four percentage points above the rate for public institutions.

In the midst of the pandemic, the University completed a decennial self-study for accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. The University hosted a successful virtual site visit with the MSCHE peer review committee followed by affirmation of our accreditation by the full commission at the June 2021 meeting.

As the University pivots to development of a new Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2025, the University continued to make strategic investments to fund important new programs and initiatives. During FY 21, The Strategic Investment process funded initiatives including peer training and mentoring of at risk students, an innovative technologically advanced dissection table for anatomy education, advanced

training of senior administrators to support inclusion and diversity on campus, and training of peer leaders to help first-year students transition to college.

Goal 1: Offer Programs of Highest Quality

Sub-categories/objectives: high-quality academic programs; UCC effectiveness; selective expansion of professional and graduate programs; recruit, develop and retain a diverse faculty; use of technology to expand accessibility and availability.

Campus Labs (now known as Anthology) was implemented last year and its significant role as an assessment tool continued to increase. For spring 2021, all Area 1 courses were assessed with results reported by individual departments. Curricular development and redesign continued in 2020-2021, with three new undergraduate degree programs approved and implemented, as described in the Overview, along with a new Master of Public Health to be launched online in March 2022. The success of the online MBA has led to three additional tracks developed for online launch in Spring 2021. Enrollment in WP Online, as indicated in the Overview, has grown rapidly along with development of new programs. Brookdale and Mercer 3 + 1 nursing agreements were signed with more expected now that HESAA has clarified financial requirements for financial arrangements for year three of these programs. The University completed 24 2 + 2 program agreements with Brookdale Community College. High school dual enrollments increased to 405, exceeding the goal of 165.

The EdD admitted its first cohort in Summer of 2021 following approval from the Board of Trustees, state Secretary of Higher Education and Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

As of Fall 2020, 360 full-time faculty were employed across five colleges. Plans to approach a daunting budget gap led to development of a Voluntary Separation Program and negotiations with the faculty union helped to minimize planned layoffs.

More than 300 internal and external participants engaged in the national webinar coordinated by Employment Equity and Diversity in support of the launch of the University's pre-doctoral fellowship program. Information Technology (IT) ensured that all classrooms are equipped with advanced video and audio capability supporting faculty ability to deliver online and hybrid courses along with fully in-person classes. Instructional and Research Technology (IRT) provided a training lab for faculty and graduate assistants to develop teaching methodologies. The Center for Teaching Excellence established an advisory board to assist in identifying professional development needs for faculty and also organized a series of workshop opportunities.

Goal 2: Achieve Student Success by Increasing Matriculation, Retention and Graduation

Sub-categories/objectives: student recruitment strategy that leads to success and professional and personal growth; increase student engagement; increase availability and variety of academic support, advisement and career guidance; enhance student academic and intellectual engagement with faculty, staff and fellow students in the classroom and through co-curricular experiences.

All-Student Headcount, Undergraduate Headcount, Graduate Headcount, Full-Time First-Year Retention Rate, Four-Year Graduation Rate are the primary enrollment-related KPIs. As of fall 2021 (Census II/November 15), the University enrolled 9,949 students, which was 71 short of the goal; the University enrolled 7,707 undergraduate students, which was 613 short of the goal; 2,242 graduate students, which was 542 above the goal. The retention rate for first-year students was 67.7 percent, which is below the range goal of 74.5 to 76 percent. The four-year graduation rate was 29 percent, compared to the goal of 37 percent. Implementation of WP Online helped to boost new graduate enrollment by 28 percent to 1,074 students and new transfer undergraduate enrollment by 19 percent to 839 with a particular increase in the RN to BSN program.

In support of student engagement, the President and members of the University administration continue to be accessible to students with interactions, including additional Town Hall meetings, this past year that addressed needs expressed by students for greater communication around enrollment, budget, organizational structure and personnel decisions.

The effectiveness of the Will. Power. 101 first-year experience program, which showed great promise after its launch in 2019, was severely tested as the pandemic persisted through 2021. Will. Power. 101 classes met online in addition to in-person and the model was not as successful as fully face-to-face and, in addition to the first-year retention decrease, also resulted in a decrease in declared majors from 92.5 to 91.2 percent and a decrease in the number of first-year students in good academic standing from 90.6 to 79.7 percent.

On a positive note, retention goals for students engaged in clubs and organizations and in the Pioneer Leadership Institute were surpassed.

As addressed in the Overview, progress in Career Development performance was widespread. In addition to the positive impact of Handshake, the Career Development Center increased the number of virtual Career Fairs in partnership with academic departments and colleges, and the Center partnered with multiple programs and cohorts, including Will. Power. 101, the EOF Summer Program, athletics, the Honors College and others, to deliver career readiness programming. The Pesce Family Mentoring Institute exceeded its KPI with 286 mentor/mentee matches.

As described in the Overview, Center for Diversity and Inclusion programming and impact grew throughout the year, including expansion of partnerships with other departments.

Goal 3: Provide students with exceptional opportunities beyond the classroom

Sub-categories/Objectives: strategic partnerships with leading institutions and governmental organizations; small number of focused, high-visibility graduate programs; link students off-campus learning intentionally and directly to their classroom experiences; develop regionally and nationally recognized co-curricular activities linked to academic programs.

High school dual enrollment grew to 405 students in fall 2021, exceeding the KPI of 165.

The American Democracy Project created an advisory committee of faculty and staff that collaborated to promote voter registration. Campus Activities, Service and Leadership (CASL) ran numerous voter registration drives, partnering with other groups campus wide.

The University has now had six Newman Civic Fellows selected by New Jersey Campus Compact. This coveted and competitive recognition is awarded annually to a small number of students in the region. The University continues to host annual civic engagement activities, all of which were held virtually, hindering student involvement.

Through legislative advocacy, the University secured \$2 million for a Child Development Center on campus to help to meet a well-documented need for childcare in Passaic County and provide students with experiential learning opportunities in multiple disciplines.

Goal 4: Enhancing the sense of community throughout and beyond the University

Sub-categories/objectives: Build a community of engaged students; engage alumni with students and faculty in order to enhance institutional and personal relationships with alumni; update masterplan to ensure campus is welcoming and modernized.

CASL offered the WP LEADS Honor Society for the third year for students who earn at least three of the five digital badges awarded for participation in designated events and activities. 842 students have completed the civic engagement badge since its inception in fall 2015, with 138 completing it in FY 21, a 33 percent increase from FY 20. During the spring, Counseling Health and Wellness surveyed students who received tele mental health services during the pandemic and 93 percent indicated that the care they received from their counselor positively affected their sense of belonging at William Paterson.

The athletics staff and health professionals worked tirelessly and successfully to develop a return to competition plan that included testing protocols, health screening and small group socially distanced workouts and practices. The field hockey team won the NJAC championship and 17 student athletes were named to the Zags/NFHCA National Academic Squad. A record 83 student athletes were named to the Academic All-NJAC Team. The club sports program continued to attract students and garner recognition for the University.

Engagement by the Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) and the Black Cultural Center (BCC) was enhanced by the use of technology. CDI managed two social media accounts and reached an average of 193 followers each month while increasing followers by 69 percent. The number of BCC followers on social media increased 24 percent during the pandemic.

Career Development's seven virtual career fairs included alumni participation in all and alumni also participated in career panels and workshops, a Women's Empowerment Social Hour Event, the Cotsakos College of Business's Employer-in-Residence and COIN programs, and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences ASPIRE program. Career Development launched an alumni database via Handshake allowing identification of alumni who are also employer partners. Of the 286 mentor/mentee matches in the Pesce Family Mentoring Institute, 32 percent were alumni.

Recommendations from the Academic Zone Plan, Residence Hall Plan and Athletic Zone Plan, and surveying of stakeholders, continued to guide campus improvement projects. Construction documents were completed for the Child Development Center and Continuing Education offices in the 1800 Valley Road Building. Planning for the Center of Latinidad, including focus groups and workshops conducted to develop the mission and goals, took place and renovations in the student center were completed leading to the grand opening of the Center of Latinidad in fall 2021.

Goal 5: Establish the University as a model of outstanding and affordable public higher education

Sub-categories/objectives: increase institutional and external resources to support students in need of financial assistance; diversity funding streams; strengthen professional development for all employees; continuous improvement of business processes; make the University fully “green.”

The successful fundraising year, described in the Overview, included a new Diversity and Inclusion scholarship established in partnership with the Center for Diversity and Inclusion and the Chief Diversity Officer. Student Emergency Fund support, addressed earlier, reached more than \$8,400 providing 17 students with books and/or laptops. More than 1,000 students completed donor scholarship applications in the spring, slightly exceeding the number during FY 20 and representing the largest of number of applicants ever. Institutional Advancement reached \$641,000 in Annual Fund giving, the most raised in University history.

Professional development continued without interruption with remote delivery of required unconscious bias workshops for faculty; all faculty participated in the workshops. Summer learning and development addressed racism, career and personal development, self-branding through LinkedIn, resume writing, and wellness workshops. A new HR sponsored mentorship program was established.

Working relationships with the unions representing University employees facilitated agreements to implement Voluntary Separation Program agreements for faculty and staff. Agreements related to the implementation of the University’s vaccination policy were achieved locally with the AFT and with University input to the state agreements requiring faculty and staff to provide proof of vaccination, with limited exceptions. Most recently, the University and unions have worked collaboratively to implement layoff processes which impact employees covered by AFT, CWA and IFPTE bargaining units in a manner that has been collaborative with the goal of minimizing harm to employees.

The University’s sustainability programs continue to have a powerful impact. In 2020, the University recycled 125 tons of aluminum, cardboard/paper, scrap metals, plastics, glass and wood. Energy-efficient technologies have reduced energy consumption by more than 18 percent compared to the previous year. Sustainability construction designs include energy efficient lighting, natural light, low VoX flooring and paints, and high efficiency HVAC systems.

Conclusion and Next Steps

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the University continued to navigate through unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic while working to position itself for success in a dramatically

changing environment for higher education. Difficulties in reaching enrollment and retention KPIs have persisted as the University manages the implications of the resulting budget crisis.

The University has steadily progressed in development and implementation of programs that address retention, enrollment and career development as primary institutional commitments established in 2018 and strongly tied to Strategic Plan 2012-2022. The University's commitment to diversity and inclusion, philanthropy, and development of new instructional delivery methods for traditional and adult learners have been particularly successful in supporting student success for now and into the future. University planning is now transitioning to development of a new strategic plan that will guide this evolving institution forward from 2022-2025 as the institution works to rethink systems for delivering higher education to students in a fast-changing, demanding environment.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2022 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Miki Cammarata, Vice President for Student Development

Mary Ann Cooper, Alumni Executive Council

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