

**WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN  
UPDATE AT YEAR EIGHT  
FALL 2020**

**Overview**

William Paterson University has completed its eighth year under the guidance of its Strategic Plan 2012-2022, and the University continues to progress toward achievement of the goals of the plan. 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.

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly affected every aspect of the University during the past year and necessitated changes in operational strategies throughout the institution. At the same time, the University continued to make significant progress consistent with the Strategic Plan's goals and objectives. Progress is also demonstrated in the institutional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) developed by the President and the Cabinet, and shared regularly with the Board of Trustees.

Extensive support was provided to students and faculty to ensure their ability to complete the 2020 spring semester after the pivot to remote teaching and learning in mid-March. Workshops and other online teaching development sessions were conducted to assist faculty in the transition to teaching online. Faculty and staff provided students with digital resources and support for online learning and academic advising, and for access to library resources.

In 2019-20, the University launched its innovative First-Year Experience program that includes required weekly Will. Power. 101 workshops and other initiatives crafted to improve student retention rates. The programs support the transition to college for students as they build skills in academics, community engagement and personal development. Early results demonstrate progress and optimism for the future. The one-year retention rate for first-year students increased from 69.3 percent to 73.0 percent from fall 2019 to fall 2020, exceeding the KPI. The University's four-year graduation rate increased to 36.4 percent, a four percent increase, and the six-year graduation rate was 55.4 percent, a slight increase over the previous cohort rate of 55 percent, through greater engagement and more focused data-driven advisement. Both rates exceed the KPIs.

The pandemic added to the University's enrollment challenges. We fell short on KPIs for All-Student Headcount and Undergraduate Headcount while exceeding the KPI for Graduate Headcount.

The University successfully launched WP Online, a series of fully online degree programs that provide flexible, accelerated course schedules. WP Online generates revenue and initial enrollment has been very encouraging, exceeding the first-year enrollment goal by 28 percent, and driving the growth in Graduate Headcount.

The Strategic Plan contributed to decisions about funding and resource allocation for academic programs and facilities. The full implementation of the Campus Labs digital assessment platforms throughout Academic Affairs supports academic program planning and assessment. Extensive faculty training during fall 2019 facilitated the successful utilization of this important resource.

The University's deep commitment to diversity and inclusion led to new programs and plans. The Center for Diversity and Inclusion and the Black Cultural Center opened in fall 2019 with educational programming and student support as well as a pledge to promote cultural awareness, knowledge and inquiry among all students. Programs shifted online in spring 2020 when the University pivoted to remote learning. The needs of Latinx and LGBTQ+ students have been reviewed and assessed by committees charged by the President and specific initiatives are planned for academic year 2020-21. Professional development programming by Human Resources proceeded remotely during the summer with programs that support diversity and inclusion, and the importance of expanding growth mindsets to change systems. Academic Affairs is moving ahead with plans for a pre-doctoral fellowship program to encourage and support faculty career advancement for underrepresented groups. The institution also became a member institution of *Alpha Alpha Alpha* (Tri-Alpha) First Generation Honor Society with a formal induction ceremony on November 8, First Generation Day.

Fundraising greatly exceeded goals for supporting students via scholarships. The University closed the Scholarship Campaign by raising \$16 million over the course of the campaign, exceeding its goal of \$10 million. During FY20, the University raised \$8.6 million in cash and commitments, one of the institution's most successful years of fundraising, significantly exceeding the KPI of \$3.1 million. As of June 30, 2020, the total assets of the Foundation reached \$33.2 million, 14 percent ahead of the previous year and 18.7 percent more than the \$28 million KPI despite the volatile market swings caused by the pandemic.

### **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 was formatted to support the University Core Curriculum (UCC) with direct assessment which will lead to analysis and determination of appropriate next steps by the UCC Council; spring 2020 assessments were completed in Areas 2, 3e and 5 despite the online pivot.

Curricular development and redesign continued in 2019-20. WP Online launched successfully, as described in the overview, with 110 students enrolled for summer 2020 and 366 for the first fall 2020 session, adding up to 28 percent more than the enrollment goal. Bachelor of Science degrees in Medicinal Biochemistry and Sport Management were approved and implemented for the 2019-20 academic year. A new Master of Science in Finance and Financial Services began admitting students for spring 2020 and a new MS in Athletic Training was approved to replace the BS in Athletic Training. A new MS in Applied Mathematics and an MEd in Curriculum and Learning: Teaching Writing K-12 were approved and began admitting students for fall 2020. A new EdD in Leadership, the University's third doctoral degree, was approved by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education to begin enrolling students in summer 2021.

During 2019-20, progress was made in the development of 3+1 agreements and accelerated programs. A blanket agreement was signed with Mercer County Community College for 3+1 programs. This led to English, Psychology, Disability Studies and Liberal Studies programs for fall 2020. Also, 3+1 agreements in Nursing were signed with Passaic, Sussex and Essex county colleges and the County College of Morris. A proposal for a statewide 3+1 agreement in Nursing is awaiting final consideration by the NJ Council of County Colleges. Accelerated programs include a 3+2 in Sport Medicine/MS Athletic Training, a 4+1 in MAT Secondary Education with 13 different majors and a 4+1 in BM/MM Jazz Studies.

There were 15 successful new tenure track hires and 13 one-year-only hires. This reduced number from 2017-18 shows the continued attempt to keep faculty numbers in line with decreased enrollments. Faculty line reassignments across colleges continued with enrollment rises in certain programs and losses in others in our effort to continue strategic investment of faculty resources. In the spring of 2020, a number of faculty searches were halted due to budget reductions due to the pandemic.

Faculty development in 2019-20 included New Faculty and Adjunct Faculty Orientations, three pedagogy workshops conducted by the Center for Teaching Excellence during the academic year, Writing Across the Curriculum workshops, and numerous college-led online pedagogy workshops and town halls. New for 2020 was a successful week-long, virtual series of professional development events held the week following the end of the spring semester.

In the spring of 2020, IRT provided workshops for faculty teaching online to support the rapid pivot to online classes resulting from the pandemic. Academic Affairs, in collaboration with the Faculty Senate Assessment Committee, surveyed faculty to identify their needs before and during these workshops. To support hybrid and hyflex learning for fall 2020, web cameras and microphones were installed in classrooms and labs, and other technology upgrades were also made.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness provided eight workshops in fall 2019 and two in spring 2020 to train program and college assessment coordinators to use Campus Labs for assessment data loading, analysis and reporting. By the end of spring 2020, nearly all programs were using Campus Labs for assessment analysis and reporting.

## **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, and Six-Year Graduation Rate are the primary enrollment-related KPIs. As of fall 2020, the University enrolled 9,635 students, which was 520 students short of the goal; we enrolled 7,971 undergraduate students, which was 670 short of the goal; we enrolled 1,664 graduate students, which was 149 above the goal. Graduate enrollments have grown in five of the previous six years and the increase in online options is expected to continue the growth. The retention rate for freshmen was 73 percent, which is higher than the range goal of 70.8 to 71.3 percent. The four-year graduation rate was 36.4 percent, compared to the goal of 33.0 percent. We achieved a 55.4 percent six-year graduation rate, which exceeded the goal by .4 percent.

The implementation of the redesigned first-year experience, including Will. Power. 101, begun in fall of 2019, was very successful. Students benefited from interactions with facilitators and peer leaders who connected them with support systems and resources, and provided for experiences that enhance student development. New professional academic advisors have been hired as part of the University's strategic initiative funding process. The positive results for first-year students are widespread. The number of declared majors increased from 85.8 to 91.2 percent, the average credits earned increased from 24.8 to 26.5, the number of freshmen in good academic standing improved from 83.3 to 90.6 percent and the number of freshmen with a grade point average of 3.0 and above increased from 41.9 to 56.0 percent.

An innovative Pledge4Success program, which fills the gap between tuition and Pell and state grants for low-income students, was approved and implemented for the 2020-21 academic year. A waiver that allows out of state students to pay in-state tuition was also approved and implemented for the 2020-21 academic year.

The ongoing pandemic negatively and dramatically impacted student recruitment and rendered our predictive models inaccurate. High school GPA for the fall 2020 cohort increased slightly. Our yield rate decreased to 15 percent from 22.4 percent due largely to the shifts in recruitment activities forced by the pandemic.

Work in support of career development was successful. Handshake, the Career Development Center's new career management portal, was launched in August 2019 and 3,204 internships were posted, compared to only 748 on Trailblazer, its predecessor system. The Pesce Family

Mentoring Institute exceeded its KPI with 266 mentor/mentee matches and 41 percent of mentors were alumni.

As described in the overview, the Center for Diversity and Inclusion and the Black Cultural Center launched, providing opportunities for educational programs and support with an emphasis on identity, intersectionality, cultural competence, bias, and race-based trauma. A strategic plan with measurable goals has been developed. The centers implemented many initiatives and effectively pivoted to remote programming during the pandemic.

### **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.**

Partnerships with the New Jersey departments of Education, and Labor and Workforce Development, as well as with Passaic County Community College and Rutgers University, were established to support curriculum, student development and business development, and also to provide training for students, local businesses and workers. Dual enrollment programs continued to expand with four high schools participating and more than 100 students enrolled.

The American Democracy Project created an advisory committee that collaborated with organizations and groups across campus to provide programs promoting voter registration and census awareness. Campus Activities, Service and Leadership (CASL) ran numerous voting registration drives and the University participated in the state's Ballot Bowl, where more than 100 students were registered to vote.

The University has now had five 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. William Paterson is an active leader in Campus Compact and CASL staff served on the conference committee for the first Campus Compact statewide conference which 20 William Paterson students attended. Of note, many civic engagement programs and plans established for the year were cancelled due to the pandemic.

### **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.**

For the second year, CASL offered the WP LEADS Honor Society for students who earn at least three of the five digital badges awarded for participation in designated events and activities. Twenty-nine students completed the requirements. Virtual opportunities were created due to

COVID-19. For the civic engagement badge, 139 students completed for a 22 percent increase. Tri-Alpha First Generation Honors Society also held a virtual induction ceremony where over 20 students were inducted and William Paterson became a member institution. The Pioneer Leadership Institute was added to the Will. Power. 101 curriculum and 145 first-year students completed all three modules and one community service component while achieving a retention rate of 74 percent.

Diversity and Inclusion programs continued to expand and grow. The President charged a LGBTQ+ needs assessment committee to conduct a review with benchmarking and focus groups to identify the needs of LGBTQ+-identified students and develop recommendations. A committee of faculty, staff and students was also charged with assessing the needs of our Latinx students as well as identifying exemplary characteristics of a Hispanic-Serving Institution and making recommendations. Specific actions have been identified for academic year 2020-21 and beyond.

NCAA fall and winter sports garnered coaching milestones and recognition of student athletes in the classroom and in their sports. Spring sports were cancelled due to the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, intramural sports participation was trending up. Club sports were also off to a great start.

Efforts to engage alumni have been successful with a 24 percent increase in alumni event attendance, a 40 percent increase in first-time attendees at events and strong attendance for 14 webinars.

Campus improvements continued. Utilizing recommendations from the Academic Zone Plan, the Residence Hall Plan and the Athletic Zone Plan, many building, grounds and field projects have been completed. Major projects include Hunziker Hall renovations and the opening of the new residence hall, Skyline Hall, which was completed on time and on budget. The new Academic Support Center opened in the Cheng Library to centrally locate this important service. The Center for Diversity and Inclusion and the Black Cultural Center opened in the student center in fall 2019. Upgrades to street and sidewalk lighting and additional security cameras have been installed to enhance visibility for pedestrian and drivers and improve safety throughout the campus.

### **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.”**

Institutional Advancement’s support for the Scholarship Campaign included a \$5 million naming/scholarship commitment and a \$1 million scholarship grant during the past year. In

FY20, the scholarship endowment grew to \$10.3 million, a 224 percent increase since 2010, generating more than 600 available scholarships. We anticipate taking receipt of the significant estate gift in the months to come (delayed due to the pandemic) and this will increase the scholarship endowment by more than 40 percent.

Efforts continue to expand and diversify revenue streams. Revenue generated from rentals of campus facilities reached \$70,000, exceeding the target of \$53,000, before the pandemic changed plans and expectations.

Human Resources successfully provided remote professional development programming during the summer for all staff members supporting diversity and inclusion, expanding growth mindsets and building leadership skills. Plans have also proceeded for senior leaders to participate in the Equity Institute conducted by the Race and Equity Center at the University of Southern California to support equity awareness and prepare participants to make informed decisions pertaining to policy, procedures, processes and programs. Additionally, in 2020 the Office of Employment Equity and Diversity launched a Campus Climate Survey seeking information from University students, faculty and staff. Survey outcomes will be used to formulate and guide the University's diversity and inclusion strategies.

The University's commitment to sustainability continues to produce important results. Energy-efficient technologies have reduced electrical consumption by more than 30 percent and natural gas consumption by nearly 50 percent since 2000. All campus construction and renovation projects are designed with energy efficiency in mind. Design of the University's newest building, Skyline Hall, applied LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) best practices and was recognized for sustainability design in energy-efficient lighting, natural lighting, low VOC flooring and paints, and high-efficiency HVAC systems. The sustainability commitment is supported by the academic curriculum. The Department of Environmental Sciences offers degrees in environmental sustainability, environmental science, and earth science. The University has joined the newly formed Second Nature, a collaboration of colleges and universities that are committed to climate action and to accelerated local climate solutions.

### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

The University made significant progress over the course of the 2019-20 academic year toward achieving the goals and objectives addressed in Strategic Plan 2012-2022. This was accomplished during the pandemic that impacted every aspect of this complex organization and affected how faculty and staff approached all aspects of their work.

Retention, enrollment, four-year graduation rates and job placement were established in fall 2018 as the University's main priorities. Institutional commitment to these areas is firm as we work toward achievement of the goals that were developed at the start of the Strategic Plan. Strong progress in retention and four-year graduation rates reinforce the value of recent innovations and create great optimism for continued and growing success. Career development programs have evolved over the past year and will receive even greater attention going

forward. Enrollment persists as a challenge due to the combined forces of the pandemic and the inevitable decline of the college-age population in coming years. As a result, we face a troubling economic forecast that will require the University to make difficult decisions to maximize efficiency for the coming years.

The President has challenged the University faculty and staff to face the present and future with a growth mindset as we rethink systems, many of which have been in place for many years. This approach will alter the way that William Paterson University conducts its business both day-to-day and long term as we work collaboratively to strategize and innovate in support of the success of our students. As we approach the close of this 10-year plan, the University has begun to look toward development of a new strategic plan that will guide the institution on its path moving forward.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2022 COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**Steve Bolyai**, Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance

**Miki Cammarata**, Vice President for Student Development

**Mary Ann Cooper**, Alumni Executive Council

**Elizabeth Desantis**, President PBA Local 278

**Pam Ferguson**, Vice President for Institutional Advancement

**Stuart Goldstein**, Vice President for Marketing and Public Relations and Co-Chair

**Jonathan Lincoln**, Associate Provost

**Ian Marshall**, Interim Associate Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Faculty in English

**Angelo Mastrolia**, Chapter President IFPTE Local 195

**Zach Merring**, Student

**Michael Milling**, CWA Local Branch President

**Balmurli Natrajan**, Faculty in Anthropology and Chair, Faculty Senate

**Jennifer Owlett**, Faculty in Communication

**Joshua B. Powers**, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Denise Robinson-Lewis**, Human Resources and Chair, Director's Council

**Reg Ross**, Vice President for Enrollment Management

**Venkat Sharma**, Dean of the College of Science and Health and Co-Chair

**Cassandra Soto**, Student

**Sue Tardi**, Faculty in Sociology and AFT Local 1796 President