

WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA 2015/2016 ACTION PLAN

University Strengths, Opportunities, and Challenges (Anticipated within the next 3 years)

In addition to identifying university strengths, please identify specific opportunities and challenges that the university will be addressing (currently or within the next 3 years), including financial conditions, enrollment trends, community/regional engagement, and student experiences and outcomes.

Core Capabilities

- An academic environment that promotes student success as seen in WCU's strong persistence, retention and graduation rates.
- Accomplished faculty who have distinguished themselves by their excellence in teaching, advisement and research.
- Experienced leadership coupled with a strong group of emerging leaders across the institution. The University has fully implemented distributed leadership, which increases individual accountability for achieving excellence.
- Outstanding stewardship of the University's financial, physical, and human resources through such measures as efficient and sustainable operations, and robust fundraising.
- Staunch dedication to justice and inclusiveness, recognizing the need to prepare WCU students for life in a richly diverse and global society.
- The growing internationalization of WCU as reflected in a 28% increase in study abroad participation in the past year as well as new agreements between WCU and international partners for cultural, educational, and scholarly exchanges.
- All undergraduate and graduate programs have now been evaluated using the Assurance of Student Learning (ASL) rubric, which evaluates the assessment efforts of all programs of study. Student learning assessment plans are critical to obtaining better student learning outcome results as well as in maintaining the high standards of national and program accreditation.
- A culture of service that meets community needs while helping to place students on a lifelong path of active citizenship. In 2014-15, WCU students performed more than 812,000 hours of public service through service-learning coursework, setting a new record. Co-curricular service programs generated an additional 93,000-plus hours.
- A leader in sustainability, as illustrated by the fact that WCU now heats and cools 50 percent of its buildings square footage with geothermal energy and 50 percent by high-efficiency natural gas boilers. By transitioning to these energy sources, the University reduced its annual carbon foot print by 16,000 tons of CO₂ annually.
- A commitment to community engagement and the establishment of beneficial alliances with external partners. One example is the development of the Center for Community Solutions, which links business and civic leaders who have research needs with University faculty and staff who can address those needs. Focusing campus talent on the pursuit of the public good benefits external stakeholders while providing WCU students with experiences that enhance their learning and commitment to leadership.

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University Strengths, Opportunities, and Challenges *(Continued)*

Opportunities

- Respond to the strong demand for a WCU education by multiple strategies, all of which build revenue streams. Specific initiatives include expansion of distance education as well as co-located programs, such as WCU's presence at the State System's Center City Philadelphia location and dual enrollment options at Chester County high schools.
- Continue to increase educational opportunities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) as well as the health sciences to respond to a critical need for skilled workers. Occupations in health care are the fastest growing in the U.S. and occupations in STEM fields are the second-fastest growing. In 2014-15, WCU awarded 931 STEM and health sciences degrees, in contrast to our peer institutions, which awarded, on average, 618 STEM and health sciences degrees in 2014-15.
- Strategically grow graduate education, as illustrated by the 2015 launch of two new doctoral programs, the Doctor of Public Administration and the Doctor of Education in Policy, Planning and Administration. In 2015, WCU also introduced master's degrees in applied and computational math and in clinical health counseling. These programs meet critical educational needs for local employers.
- Prepare students to be career-ready through the development of internship and co-op relationships with regional businesses, nonprofits and government organizations. These relationships begin early via the WCU Shadows program, which pairs sophomores with WCU alumni who are working in their desired field of study.
- Create new initiatives related to sponsored research, with a long-term annual goal of \$10 million in annual sponsored program expenditures, reflecting the creativity and entrepreneurship of WCU faculty and staff as well as their command of their disciplines.
- Close the gap in enrollment, persistence and graduation rates for underrepresented minority students via tutoring, mentoring and other programs, many of which are housed in the Undergraduate Studies and Student Support Services (USSSS) area.
- Close the access and achievement gap for transfer underrepresented minority students through such measures as an orientation program specifically designed for transfer students and by providing more campus visitation opportunities to such students.
- Secure new agreements between WCU and international partners for cultural, educational, and scholarly exchanges while fully developing the many new partnerships that have been forged in the last two years alone.
- Continue to improve academic advisement for all students -- undergraduate, graduate, transfer, and non-degree. An Advising Task Force is currently collecting data to issue recommendations in summer 2016 to support faculty in meeting the highest standard of advising.
- Strengthen the link among planning, assessment and resource allocation to provide more flexibility to move resources across divisions. Expand campus transparency with the University Budget Review Committee recommendations and reporting out to all campus constituencies.

Challenges

- Tuition levels that have not aligned with mandatory cost increases, such as collective bargaining agreements, medical insurance costs and mandatory reporting, resulting in a widening gap between revenues and expenditures that universities must accommodate. Declining state support only exacerbates this gap.
- Overcrowded office and research conditions for faculty, which will be partially improved when the 90,000 square-foot Business and Public Affairs Center opens in 2017. Policies and procedures of Pennsylvania's Department of General Services hinder the ability to keep construction on time and on budget.
- Operating in a highly regulated setting, which limits the University's ability to respond nimbly to a rapidly changing environment.
- On WCU's main campus, an aging infrastructure in need of facility and technology upgrades, with very limited room for expansion.
- Campus expansion that is restricted by multiple municipal zoning ordinances.