

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.
- Stable and innovative leadership coupled with the University-wide implementation of 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.
- Commitment to meeting community needs and helping to place students on a lifelong path of active citizenship. In 2013-14, WCU students set a new record, volunteering more than 600,000 hours.
- The internationalization of WCU as reflected in a 43% 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.
- A leader in sustainability, as illustrated by the fact that WCU now heats and cools 50 percent of its buildings 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 7,500 tons of CO2 annually.
- A commitment to community engagement and the establishment of beneficial alliances with external partners. 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 several initiatives, all of which concurrently build revenue streams. Specific measures 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.
- Strategically grow graduate education, as illustrated by the introduction in 2013 of WCU's first doctorate, the Doctorate of Nursing Practice, and the scheduled launch of the Doctor of Public Administration in Public Administration in fall 2015.
- Prepare students to be career-ready through the development of internship and co-op relationships with regional businesses, nonprofits and government organizations.
- 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.
- Move forward with improvements in student learning assessment plans for all undergraduate and graduate programs, in an effort to obtain better student learning outcome results.
- 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.
- Move forward with recommendations to refine the budgeting process in order to strengthen the link among planning, assessment, and resource allocation; provide greater flexibility for WCU to move resources across divisions; and address the accumulation of surplus rollover revenue in order to allocate to emerging needs.
- Continue to improve academic advisement for all students -- undergraduate, graduate, transfer, and non-degree.

Challenges

- On WCU's main campus, an aging infrastructure in need of facility and technology upgrades, with very limited room for expansion.
- Operating in a highly regulated setting, which limits the University's ability to respond nimbly to a rapidly changing environment.
- Declining state support coupled with mandated personnel costs by collective bargaining agreements.
- Policies and procedures of Pennsylvania's Department of General Services that hinder the ability to keep construction projects on time and on budget.
- 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 the summer of 2016.