

Western Carolina University Strategic Plan 2008-2013

Characteristics and Purpose

The strategic plan establishes specific long-term directions for WCU based upon its core values, vision and mission in relation to the institution's perceived strengths, weaknesses, external opportunities and threats. The plan is a management tool that assists decision-makers in evaluating initiatives and allocating resources to reach institutional goals. The strategic plan includes parameters that help decision-makers:

- establish priorities among competing initiatives;
- determine whether new initiatives should be pursued; and
- evaluate programs and services.

Since a strategic plan is designed to have a life span of five or more years, the goals outlined in the plan must be robust and flexible. A strategic plan must be specific enough to provide direction, yet flexible enough to allow mid-course corrections in response to unforeseen conditions. The ultimate purpose of any strategic plan is to keep the institution working toward pre-established strategic goals/outcomes that decision-makers have identified as important to the institution's future.

Relationship to Budget

As part of the Strategic Plan, WCU is identifying how budgeting will be linked to planning as well as the role of the University's Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) in facilitating this work. In general, WCU's approach to funding strategic planning priorities includes:

- allocating new and redirecting current resources to achieve strategic planning goals;
- improving services without increasing costs;
- realignment of current resources to achieve goals; and
- validating connections between use of current resources and institutional goals.

Budgeting and Planning Cycle

Prior to the beginning of the budgeting process, the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) conducts an internal and external scan to determine major institutional budget needs and priorities related to the Strategic Plan. The SPC presents its findings as suggested planning and budgeting priorities to Executive Council. After reviewing the SPC recommendations, the Executive Council recommends institutional priorities to the Chancellor who sets the final institutional strategic priorities and budget parameters for the planning cycle. The Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance begins the budget process mandating that all budget requests relate to the Chancellor's strategic priorities and budget parameters. The Chancellor, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance hold budget hearings with each Vice Chancellor or division head to evaluate budget needs against the strategic priorities and budget parameters established by the Chancellor. Once the Chancellor makes allocations, a report is distributed to both the Executive Council and SPC.

WCU 2008-2013 Strategic Plan

Description

Western Carolina University is a premier regional university with nationally and internationally recognized teacher-scholars dedicated to student learning. A constituent member of the University of North Carolina, WCU deploys its resources statewide either singly or collaboratively with other institutions to address state needs. The university offers courses in the arts, sciences, technologies, humanities, and professions through degree programs at the bachelor's, master's, education specialist and doctoral levels. Western offers the advantages of a large university while maintaining its small college atmosphere.

The Regional University

As a regional university, WCU is committed to serving constituents within its geographic domain by offering services and appropriate educational programs that serve bona fide needs. Wedded to its region, WCU strives to take advantage of its locational advantage by capitalizing on assets unique to the region. As a result, WCU's educational portfolio and services will be strongly influenced by its location and the opportunities within it. Although WCU has a defined region as specified below, it will utilize venues outside of the region including national and international sites for educational purposes and training.

WCU's Region

WCU's core geographical region is defined as the 17 western most counties of North Carolina. As such, it is obligated to work most closely with educational, governmental, and business entities in this area. Historically, WCU has provided educational programs and services to an extended region as far east as the I-77 corridor when invited to do so. WCU will continue to serve its extended region selectively when called upon and when it fits within the university's resources and programming. Further, WCU has multiple programs that will interact with its larger economic region extending from Atlanta in the west, Raleigh in the east, Knoxville in the north, and Greenville/Spartanburg in the south.

Promise

Western Carolina University helps those who aspire to make a difference in their world.

Mission

Western Carolina University creates engaged learning opportunities that incorporate research and service through residential, distance education, and international experiences. The university focuses its academic programs, educational outreach, research and creative activities, and cultural opportunities to improve individual lives and enhance economic and community development in the region, state, and nation. (Approved Mission, June 2, 2006)

Vision

Western Carolina University will be a national model for student learning and engagement that embraces its responsibilities as a regionally engaged university.

Core Values

Western Carolina University:

- demonstrates institutional integrity through transparent and accountable practices, policies, and procedures;
- encourages and protects the free and open interchange of ideas within the communities of which it is a part;
- fosters the development of respect among all its members and toward the larger communities which it serves;
- advocates and practices organizational and environmental sustainability; and
- values and supports cultural diversity and equal opportunity.

Strategic Goals/Directions/Initiatives

WCU's Strategic Plan is based upon three subordinating constructs. Each construct plays a specific role in the Strategic Plan and the strategic planning process: They are:

- Strategic directions – general statements of planned action consistent with the core values, vision and mission.
- Strategic goals – moderately specific statements of action derived from the strategic directions that establish expected outcomes.
- Strategic initiatives – statements describing initiatives that will lead to action plans designed to reach the outcome(s) established by the strategic goals. Action plans will include costs, implementation schedule and responsible parties.

Strategic directions are the heart of the Strategic Plan. They provide organizational structure and institutional focus and define the major long-term emphases or themes of the institution. Strategic directions are typically set only every five to six years or when significant externalities require a shift in direction but are reviewed at least annually. While new strategic directions may arise during this time, they are generally not expected to change significantly over the life cycle of the plan.

Strategic goals give specificity to strategic directions and establish expectations of success. They, too, are key features of the written Strategic Plan. Strategic goals set the parameters for the institution in terms of how the approved strategic directions will be realized.

Strategic initiatives, by definition, are those initiatives that 1) have institutional impact and 2) are directly linked to specific institutional strategic goals. All strategic initiatives will include an action plan that outlines the unit(s) responsible for implementation, a timeline, resources needed, and performance targets.

Strategic Direction 1: Prepare students to meet 21st Century needs and demands

Goal: WCU will continue to align its academic programs and services consistent with its unique and nationally significant philosophy of integrative education.

- Initiative 1.1:* Fully implement model of integrative, intentional life-long learning (QEP) into all instructional and academic support programs.
- Initiative 1.2:* Expand engaged scholarly activities to enhance WCU students' global competitiveness.
- Initiative 1.3:* Enhance the study of languages and culture through curricular and co-curricular partnerships and in collaboration with other UNC campuses and institutional partners.

Strategic Direction 2: Serve the educational needs of North Carolina

Goal: To address the projected demand for higher education in North Carolina, WCU will utilize an educational extension model to provide programming and services to non-traditional, underserved, and place-bound students; as well as increase the main campus capacity.

- Initiative 2.1:* Establish higher education centers in collaboration with regional community colleges.
- Initiative 2.2:* Collaborate with and support UNC GA in the development of initiatives to solve core conceptual and funding problems with distance education and summer session.
- Initiative 2.3:* Continue to expand partnerships with community colleges.
- Initiative 2.4:* Develop and expand innovative recruitment and retention activities with historically underrepresented populations in higher education, placing special emphasis on the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), Hispanic population, low income students, military and adult (non-traditional) populations.

Strategic Direction 3: Improve public education

Goal: Through its partnerships with the region's schools and its applied research, WCU will influence public policy and practice with regard to teacher preparation and retention, administrative quality, and school performance.

- Initiative 3.1:* Seek funding for a new College of Education and Allied Professions Building to provide adequate space and facilities to improve B-20 education in the Western region.
- Initiative 3.2:* Implement the Teacher Education Recruitment Plan within specified timeline as determined by UNC GA.

Initiative 3.3: Expand the type and nature of WCU's professional development activities, ensuring best practices and basing them on 21st Century Standards with an emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) as adopted by the NC State Board of Education.

Initiative 3.4: Expand the role of WCU's Educational Leadership doctoral program to improve public policy as it relates to an effective state system of public education.

Strategic Direction 4: Promote economic and community advancement in WCU's region

Goal: WCU will apply the Stewards of Place model as adopted by the Board of Trustees to advance the region.

Initiative 4.1: Implement the Millennial Initiative.

Initiative 4.2: Increase WCU's emphasis on innovation, entrepreneurship, applied research and development.

Initiative 4.3: Continue to strengthen key disciplines and programs that support economic development in WCU's region.

Initiative 4.4: Collaborate with local and regional economic agencies to analyze community needs and implement initiatives to foster regional development.

Initiative 4.5: Better integrate academic programming with regional visual and performing arts and crafts to enhance the livability of the community.

Initiative 4.6: Implement BS in Engineering to better address economic and community development in WNC.

Initiative 4.7: Seek approval to offer tuition and fee reciprocity for students located in adjacent counties in states bordering WNC.

Strategic Direction 5: Improve health and wellness in Western North Carolina

Goal: WCU will expand its role as the major provider of allied health and nursing education, applied research, and service in the Western North Carolina region.

Initiative 5.1: Align curriculum, programs, and community outreach to address health and mental health needs in WNC with particular emphasis on aging and rural healthcare.

Initiative 5.2: Align curriculum and programs to address health and wellness education of WCU students, faculty and staff, with particular emphasis on healthy lifestyle choices.

Initiative 5.3: Convert current MS program to Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) in order to preserve the program support for the increasing need in the region for well-educated health professionals.

Initiative 5.4: Develop and implement those curricula, research and service programs that have been identified as meeting current (health informatics and gerontology) and future critical allied health needs in the region.

Initiative 5.5: Address the critical shortage of nurses in the region and state.

Strategic Direction 6: Model environmental sustainability

Goal: WCU will expand its focus on education and research tied to environmental sustainability with particular emphasis on biodiversity and land use.

Initiative 6.1: Implement the STARS (Sustainability, Tracking and Rating System) accountability system to monitor its goal to become an environmentally conscious campus.

Initiative 6.2: Implement additional advanced degree programs in the environmental sciences focused on applied research related to environmental issues and to take advantage of unique institutional resources.

Initiative 6.3: Align as appropriate institutional resources, curriculum, and community outreach to address critical land use issues, including environmental reclamation, land use planning, and sustainable development.

Strategic Direction 7: Promote outreach and engagement within the region

Goal: WCU will encourage the application of scholarship and research through its adaptation of the Boyer Model of Scholarship and its model of integrative, intentional learning (QEP).

Initiative 7.1: Implement WCU's adaptation of the Boyer Model of Scholarship campus wide.

Initiative 7.2: Focus student engagement on regional needs through integrated learning initiatives.

Initiative 7.3: Modify and develop internal policies to facilitate research and development.

Initiative 7.4: Develop mechanisms to support interactions between WCU and its regional audiences.

Strategic Direction 8: Demonstrate institutional integrity, responsibility, and effectiveness

Goal: WCU will align its internal policies and processes to achieve its stated objectives as outlined in the strategic plan.

Initiative 8.1: Establish an Administrative Program Review process

Initiative 8.2: Implement the UNC GA recommendations regarding effectiveness of institutional systems

Initiative 8.3: Revise institutional policies and make recommendations regarding UNC System policies to facilitate collaborative research and educational programs

Initiative 8.4: Establish and publicize key performance data on institutional quality

Initiative 8.5: Implement the recommendations of the President's Advisory Committee on Efficiency and Effectiveness (PACE).

Initiative 8.6: Continue to develop public/private partnerships between WCU, local government, and private entities