

STRATEGIC PLAN



WESTERN
CONNECTICUT
STATE UNIVERSITY

February, 2007

Message from the president

The following pages contain the Strategic Plan that will shape the development of Western Connecticut State University in the years ahead. It represents the work of literally hundreds of members of our extended academic community over the past three years. These individuals are acknowledged on the next page, and I know all in the community share my sincere gratitude for their work and input. Beginning with the Values and Vision process in 2004-2005, continuing with the Action Teams of 2005-2006, and culminating with the drafting and wide community comment on the plan this year, this roadmap for our future is the product of engaged, collective effort. In my experience, it is a model of collaborative university planning.

This plan presents a vision for our future that is ambitious, yet achievable. Its recommendations build upon the considerable strengths that our university possesses and confront with realism areas of opportunity for improvement. Many of its directions and recommendations are extensions of work currently underway and so build upon successes. On this foundation, which I described in my inaugural address as the “Four Pillars” of Mastery, Creativity, Diversity, and Opportunity, the plan’s roadmap will lead us to new levels of excellence in service to our students, colleagues, and extended local and professional communities.

As I learned more about WSCU in the process that brought me to the job I’m honored to hold today, I became convinced that the university possessed opportunities to grow and develop that are truly unique in public higher education today. And I also recognized that many prospective colleagues shared that conviction. My three years here, and the collective work which has created this plan, have only strengthened this belief. In its organizational culture, people, and promise, WestConn is indeed a special place. And we can become, as a public university with “many of the characteristics of New England’s best small private universities,” one of the leading institutions of our type in the Northeast.

From this document will result not more plans and assignments for ad hoc committees, but engagement by the departments, governance bodies and people who will conduct the work necessary to maintain momentum toward our ambitious goals. If the history of the past three years is any guide, that momentum will be built on the dedication, intelligence and commitment that typifies the people of WestConn. I’m proud to be with you on this journey, and I do look forward to our next steps together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jim Schmotter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James W. Schmotter

The following members of the university community were actively involved in the strategic planning process. I thank them for their dedication to our university.

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WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN

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**This strategic plan was developed for implementation
within the context of all applicable laws and regulations,
collective bargaining agreements, and CSU and WCSU policies.**

Western Connecticut State University Strategic Plan

Vision Statement

Western Connecticut State University capitalizes on its **outstanding faculty** and its **location** in the greater New York metropolitan area to create a **diverse university community** that— in its **range of quality academic programs** and in its enriching and supportive **student-focused environment**— is characteristic of New England’s best small private universities, but with **much more affordable costs**.

Strategic Planning Goals

1. **Outstanding Faculty:** Retain and attract outstanding faculty who excel in their subject area and discipline and are committed to excellence in teaching, ensuring student success, and fostering a diverse academic community.
2. **Location:** Create opportunities for students and faculty by capitalizing on Western Connecticut State University’s location in Danbury, Connecticut, a New England city characterized by its economic vibrancy and its diverse citizenry, as well as our proximity to the educational and cultural riches of New York City.
3. **Diverse University Community:** Further develop an environment that values and affirms the unique contributions of Western’s many constituent populations, recognizes the learning opportunities that differences can create, and strengthens connections among our various community members.
4. **Range of Quality Academic Programs:** Offer a range of quality academic programs, including featured signature programs that together educate a diverse student population and meet the needs of the state and region within the context of a global environment.
5. **Enriching and Supportive Student-focused Environment:** Foster a holistic approach to intellectual and social growth and development that prepares students to be productive citizens of the state of Connecticut and the world by developing their knowledge, experience, and critical thinking and by fostering life-long learning characterized by intellectual curiosity, imagination, and creativity.
6. **Affordability:** Deliver outstanding value to students through effective management of the university and the provision of student financial assistance, thereby maintaining the affordability and access of a mid-sized public university while creating the quality experience of the best private institutions.

**Western Connecticut State University
Strategic Planning Goals**

Goal 1: Outstanding Faculty – Retain and attract outstanding faculty who excel in their subject area and discipline and are committed to excellence in teaching, ensuring student success and fostering a diverse academic community.

1.1 Facilitate recruitment, hiring, and first year success of outstanding faculty through process improvements. Toward this end, the university will explore the feasibility of the ideas listed below:

- A. Flexibility in the total compensation package to attract and retain strong faculty, including exploring third party supplements of negotiated faculty salaries, (e.g.: University Foundation, endowed chairs, etc.).
- B. Possibilities for supporting faculty and administrator housing (e.g. rental and purchase properties, on-campus faculty in residence).
- C. Graduated moving expenses for office contents based on distance of move.
- D. Adequate office space and clerical, secretarial, and technical support for all faculty, full-time and part-time.
- E. Research/creative activities “start-up” funds for new faculty.
- F. Reduced load in first year for new faculty.
- G. Sufficient financial support throughout the faculty search process.
- H. Recruit and hire, where appropriate, international faculty.

1.2 Articulate the set of preferred faculty qualifications and characteristics that best describe WCSU’s commitment to outstanding faculty within our teaching and student-focused mission and vision. Evaluate candidates relative to these qualifications and characteristics when making hiring decisions.

- A. Define the qualifications and characteristics that typify outstanding faculty for WCSU and determine how to assess those credentials in candidates. Include excellence in subject area and discipline, commitment to excellence in teaching, excellence in scholarship and creative activities, commitment to student success, and commitment to fostering a diverse academic community.
- B. Clearly communicate in recruitment materials and emphasize in the recruitment process the preferred characteristics and qualifications for WCSU as defined above. Establish the preferred qualifications as employment objectives where appropriate.

1.3 Develop and maintain an enriching academic environment consistent with WCSU's mission and vision that contributes to retention and development of outstanding faculty.

- A. Hire full-time faculty adequate to the needs of the students and their programs of choice. Develop objective criteria for determining appropriate numbers of faculty (adjunct credits, overload credits, etc).
- B. Schedule courses so that our class sizes fit the recommendations of disciplinary and/or accrediting bodies.
- C. Provide quality facilities and technological infrastructure.
- D. Explore the feasibility of educational and professional opportunities, such as those listed below:
 - 1. Increased resources for special initiatives such as the "President's Initiative for Global Realities".
 - 2. Increased resource allocations for faculty success, especially among non-tenured and adjunct faculty, e.g. travel money for faculty to attend conferences, funds for faculty performances, guest lectures, etc.
 - 3. Increased resources for adjunct faculty to participate in classroom enrichment experiences.
 - 4. Additional opportunities for team teaching and other collaborative learning experiences.
 - 5. Increased opportunities for faculty to study abroad and for faculty exchange programs abroad and in the states; development of international partnerships.
 - 6. Faculty in residence concept.
 - 7. Increased funding for faculty-student collaborations (research and creative activities).
 - 8. Funding for the creation of endowed chairs.
 - 9. Engagement of faculty members in activities which enrich their professional development and add value to their discipline and to the university and are consistent with the vision statement elements.
 - 10. Opportunities for faculty members to explore new modes of course delivery, teaching tools, and classroom management.
 - 11. Enhanced support for sponsored research and other faculty grants.

1.4 Support and promote quality academic advising as an attribute of outstanding faculty, especially as related to ensuring student success.

- A. Offer advisement training in the Advisement Center and encourage departments to improve student advisement. For degrees that are collaborative between departments, involve both departments in the process.

- B. Generate a rubric for defining good advisement in the disciplines and in General Education.
 - C. In order to facilitate optimal advisement conditions for students and faculty mentors, determine the appropriate number of advisees for full-time faculty and full-time advisees using guidelines from accreditation associations and other appropriate sources. For example, ACT suggests no more than 20 students for full-time teaching faculty (defined as teaching 12 credits or more per semester) and 300 students per full-time staff advisors.
 - D. Strengthen advisement in the summer. One possible means to consider is possibly using faculty who would like to assume responsibility for advisement in their areas during summer and intersession terms and offering load credits for summer advisement.
 - E. Offer new training programs for advisors that include input from student, staff, faculty and professional associations, recognizing the different types of advisement that are necessary for fostering student success.
 - F. Establish connections between faculty advisors and other academic advisors to deliver coordinated and consistent high quality advising.
 - G. Assess effectiveness of academic advisement; develop and apply advisement assessment tools. (Consider use of NSSE for this purpose).
- 1.5 Develop a uniform and transparent faculty evaluation process with clearly articulated expectations. Include expectations for demonstrating excellence in subject area and discipline, excellence in teaching and creative activity, ensuring student success including the role of student advisement, and fostering a diverse academic community. In the interim, provide training on proper application of the existing evaluation process.**

Goal 2: Location - Create opportunities for students and faculty by capitalizing on Western Connecticut State University's location in Danbury, Connecticut, a New England city characterized by its economic vibrancy and its diverse citizenry, as well as our proximity to the educational and cultural riches of New York City.

2.1 Enhance the teaching and learning environment for WCSU students and faculty by developing and drawing on relationships with prominent organizations and individuals in the region in areas spanning the arts, sciences, business, other professional programs and technology.

Develop and expand relationships

- A. Determine the types and nature of relationships in the region that would be beneficial for the university overall and for each area to develop.
- B. Compile lists of organizations and individuals in the region that meet the criteria.
- C. Develop compelling materials expressing the mutual benefits to be gained through relationships with WCSU.
- D. Contact organizations and individuals by drawing on introductions from advisory boards and faculty (full and part time), through identifying mutual connections, and through cold calling. Continually cultivate relationships for the benefit of WCSU.
- E. Join appropriate/high profile professional organizations with expertise relevant to programs, centers, etc. Where possible, assume responsible positions within these organizations, sponsor/co-sponsor conferences, symposia, etc.

Leverage educational benefits of relationships

- F. Bring representatives of the region's rich cultural and professional mosaic into the classroom to serve as lecturers, student mentors, and advisors on student projects.
- G. Create a professional/artist in residence, depending on the expert's background. Publicize the professional/artist in residence internally and externally.
- H. Recruit experts as adjunct professors.
- I. Create advisory boards for all relevant university programs.
- J. Tap advisory board members for assistance in areas such as creation of internship and cooperative experiences, development of a speakers' bureau, student mentoring programs, and fundraising for specific initiatives.
- K. Carve out a role as facilitator/resource for conferences/symposia for region's leading professionals and their organizations. Assess the potential of developing a conference facility and associated services.

- L. Foster and arrange opportunities for students to attend and participate in cultural enrichment programs (e.g. Yale Repertory Theatre, Metropolitan Museum, Tanglewood Arts Center).
- 2.2 Take advantage of and seek opportunities for integrating global perspectives into curricular and co-curricular activities that emanate from the cultural diversity of the NY/CT metropolitan area.**
- A. Encourage global perspectives as learning outcomes in appropriate courses.
 - B. Integrate global issues and perspective in curricular and non-curricular areas and organizations. Additionally, build on community and organizational partnerships that offer cultural diversity to our students and faculty in student life activities.
 - C. Use experimental opportunities such as the President's Initiative as a platform for creating global content for courses.
 - D. Identify and pursue grants from funding sources that emphasize/ focus on global education initiatives.
- 2.3 Establish additional career development and placement opportunities for students by drawing more effectively on business, artistic, scientific, and other professional resources available to the university community.**
- A. Further develop and use contacts from advisory boards, faculty, alumni, etc.
 - B. Highlight student work in areas such as service learning, art exhibits, etc. to create a portfolio /dossier to make a case for student employment opportunities.
 - C. Promote the value of WCSU academic programs in fostering readiness to enter careers and the general job market.
 - D. Join relevant professional associations and generate leads/opportunities from organization placement services.
 - E. Create additional student internship/coop opportunities.
 - F. Foster collaboration and feedback between career services and academic departments regarding career development and placement.
- 2.4 Implement a robust fundraising program for scholarships, the general endowment, university programs, centers, and other needs. Position the university for fundraising with individuals and organizations in Fairfield, Litchfield, Westchester, and Putnam Counties, New York City and other opportunistic locations.**
- A. Develop a series of compelling cases for support based on strategic, programmatic, and facilities plans.
 - B. Hire fundraisers and researchers to identify and target prospective donors; develop and implement strategies geared to engage prospects and ultimately increase private contributions.

- C. Consult with and engage advisory boards, faculty, alumni, etc. to develop and follow-up on fundraising leads.
- D. Cultivate sponsorship of programs (e.g. lecture series, arts events, degree programs, schools) based upon the identified and potential strengths of programs.
- E. Create recognition/sponsorship levels for individuals and organizations based on philanthropic support.

2.5 Develop and implement a comprehensive governmental affairs program, with emphasis on state and local (town-gown) relationships and programs. Work with area legislators to gain their support for the university's mission-related role in the community and unique economic realities.

2.6 Publicize our regional distinctiveness.

Include a regional distinctiveness component in WCSU branding and marketing efforts. Where meaningful, connect location, including proximity to NYC, with marketing efforts geared toward enrollment management and specifics of academic programs.

2.7 Leverage location-based opportunities to secure grants for university initiatives from federal, state, and private funders.

Goal 3: Diverse University Community - Further develop an environment that values and affirms the unique contributions of Western's many constituent populations, recognizes the learning opportunities that differences can create, and strengthens connections among our various community members.

3.1 Expand and enhance the diversity of our student body.

- A. Further develop and implement our Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan to identify all the types of students that WCSU wants to recruit (demographics, majors, etc.), and include immediate and long-term goals.
1. Include strategies which address student, faculty and staff orientation activities, as well as ongoing academic and student life programs, in order to develop and sustain a diverse university community.
 2. Define criteria for use in targeted recruitment by major or program. Academic departments should establish criteria that identify a prospective student profile that is consistent with student success and with the department's goals and the university's mission.
 - a. Raise the academic standards and competency bar for incoming freshmen, thus improving their graduation rate. Required applicant essays are one method to do so.
 - b. Establish target profiles for full-time incoming students and recruit accordingly. Targets would include GPA, SAT, in/out of state, major, residential/commuter, athletics, others.
 3. Include special populations at WCSU such as part time, summer, graduate, international students, student-athletes, online CSU, and representatives from diverse community groups in overall SEM plan.
 4. Benchmark results of the implementation of the SEM to the criteria annually.
- B. Identify and expand recruitment strategies consistent with the SEM plan.
1. Expand inquiry pool and increase applications through targeted recruitment and outreach activities directed toward prospective student populations including those in high schools, community colleges and non-traditional student sources.
 2. Provide mechanisms for sharing "lessons learned" among faculty for best practices of high school student recruitment by department/program.
 3. Strengthen appeal of WCSU to community college students through increased visits/presence, targeted scholarships, articulation agreements.
 4. Formalize dual admissions agreements with appropriate feeder institutions and provide necessary administrative support for transfer students.
 5. Selectively expand geographical scope of recruitment activities; evaluate lower Fairfield and Bridgeport counties, eastern CT, and NY more aggressively.

6. Build connections with the local immigrant populations to develop understanding and relationships that enhance recruitment and engagement of a more diverse student body.
 7. Link with local businesses, educational institutions, and other organizations to develop interest in graduate programs among employees.
 8. Further develop connections with targeted high schools to build Western's reputation with principals, guidance counselors, and students.
 9. Explore an extension of the New England Regional Student Program tuition discount – or some similar financial arrangement – to nearby New York state residents, since they represent our largest feeder of out of state students.
- C. Ensure that the SEM plan is in alignment with all other relevant university plans such as marketing, financial aid and development plans. Use the SEM plan in conjunction with marketing, recruitment, and scholarship award decisions.
- D. Increase faculty involvement in the recruitment process, with a goal of 100% participation by academic departments in conversion activity.
1. Solicit faculty who would be willing to allow prospective students to attend their classroom lectures on specified occasions. Have outstanding faculty provide special "one time" lectures for prospective students on high visibility occasions, e.g., honors student recruitment.
 2. Involve faculty in advisement and/or teaching programs with prospective students both on and off campus.
 3. Solicit information from each academic department about the activities/programs that prospective students in their discipline are likely to be involved with; use this information for targeted recruitment by major.
- E. Involve students, alumni, and parents in the recruitment process. For example:
1. Establish a Student Ambassador Program for recruitment and as a resource for converted students, and explore structuring the ambassador program "for credit" as an internship.
 2. Ask parents to provide testimonials for marketing.
 3. Involve alumni in recruitment – to answer questions, and to demonstrate the value of the WCSU experience.
 4. Foster student, alumni, and parent representation at admissions fairs.
- F. Support the SEM plan with a comprehensive institutional marketing plan and a robust financial/aid scholarship program — especially as it relates to developing an environment that values diversity, access, and excellence.

1. Identify key audiences, messages, and vehicles; be willing to expand prospective student audience beyond the traditional feeder areas and schools.
2. Develop marketing efforts that focus on the diversity of on-campus programs and activities and design specialized marketing approaches to highlight unique programs.
3. Create a cohesive WestConn scholarship program with a marketing identity; promote and administer the program to recruit targeted students using a combination of need and merit/talent based awards. Develop specific scholarship program elements designed to recruit specific student profiles, e.g. possibly offer scholarships to every valedictorian in key recruiting areas.
4. Increase fundraising efforts to grow the number of merit/talent based scholarships available for student recruitment.

3.2 Recruit and support a diverse faculty, staff and administration.

- A. Expand efforts to create diverse candidate pools. Increase collaboration among the academic and administrative departments, Human Resources, and the Director of Multicultural Affairs and Affirmative Action in developing recruitment strategies.
- B. Explore grant and other funding opportunities to support diverse faculty and diverse interests.
- C. Develop a mentoring plan that supports a diverse faculty and staff.
- D. Generate synergy between faculty recruitment and the university's marketing plan so that diversity can become a selling point for potential hires.
- E. Generate synergy between the community opportunities and a diverse faculty and staff.
- F. Enhance the appreciation for the diversity of positions in the university by creating a "job shadowing" program.

3.3 Enhance and expand connections between students, faculty, and programs and the diverse community surrounding WCSU.

- A. Promote areas of excellence in the university and invite the Danbury and regional communities to participate in WCSU's activities and programs that highlight diversity as a way to enrich all parties.
- B. Provide expertise, service and representation from university personnel to organizations whose missions are similar to WCSU's. (e.g. Hord Foundation, The Bridge to Independence Through Career Opportunities, Latino Scholarship Fund).
- C. Reach out to create and sustain strong relationships with ethnic communities and actively cultivate activities and programs of mutual interest and benefit.

- D. Encourage WCSU alumni to return to campus for special events and assure them that their donations and participation are important to the University.
 - 1. Ensure that development activities reflect the great diversity of programs, people, and activities on campus and in the community (e.g. Macricostas Endowed Chair).
 - 2. Tie alumni invitations to campus to activities that encourage or promote diversity.
 - 3. Tie requests for alumni giving to programs that encourage or promote diversity.
- E. Support international student associations and the International Center, highlighting their contributions to the university community and emphasizing global awareness.
- F. Support other student associations that contribute to the diversity of the university and the region.
- G. Establish international partnerships and integrate the inherent diversity into curricular and non-curricular university life.

3.4 Build on the diverse student body, faculty, staff, administration, and community, by developing and encouraging programs, events, initiatives, and opportunities that promote and reflect diversity.

- A. Provide appropriate programming activities and support for special populations such as part-time, evening, graduate, non-traditional, persons with disabilities, and offsite location students as well as for traditional age students.
- B. Support existing and innovative programs that develop and promote diversity in academic programs and disciplines, as well as in library resources, software, travel, etc.
- C. Identify, expand, and enhance places where diverse interactions can occur.
- D. Encourage and promote student participation in university committees.
- E. Promote alumni involvement in the campus community.
 - 1. Identify alumni liaisons to various aspects of the university.
 - 2. Involve alumni in orientation and student life activities. Invite successful alumni to the university to speak and meet with students.
 - 3. Establish student support programming by alumni such as resume writing and career networking.
 - 4. Involve alumni in the annual graduation ceremony.
- F. Involve parents in orientation, student life, and parents' club.
 - 1. Offer the opportunity each semester for parents to address faculty and staff regarding their expectations of WCSU for their children (focus/feedback groups).
 - 2. Provide a role for parents in fundraising.
- G. Plan academic and student support programs with diversity in mind.

H. Evaluate the potential of offering more online and hybrid courses to meet the needs of working adults and of technologically savvy students.

Goal 4: Range of Quality Academic Programs - Offer a range of quality academic programs, including featured signature programs that together educate a diverse student population and meet the needs of the state and region within the context of a global environment.

4.1 Develop and apply guidelines that balance and prioritize components of the objectives of (a) offering a *range* of programs that educates a diverse student population and meets the needs of the state and region, and (b) offering *quality* programs, which generally require limiting the number of programs to ensure adequate resources necessary to sustain quality.

4.2 Identify the range of academic programs to be offered at the university, both at the undergraduate and graduate level, across all schools.

A. Investigate and provide the appropriate mix of academic programs for our role as a comprehensive university. Offer academic programs that respond to the interests and needs of our students for liberal arts and professional education and to short and long term workforce needs of the state and region within the context of WCSU's mission, vision and resources.

1. Benchmark the university's offerings with peer and aspirational institutions' programs.
2. Develop methodologies that allow for evaluating academic program offerings and outcomes within the context of the university's mission and vision statements. Develop guidelines for implementing new programs and eliminating those that may not be needed.
3. Assess the balance of graduate and undergraduate programs on a regular basis.
4. Improve and support ongoing advisement of students across all programs, including undergraduate and graduate, part-time and full-time, day and evening, non-traditional and transfer populations.
5. Increase opportunities for experiential, cooperative and internship experience across academic programs.
6. Stimulate and prepare students to pursue life long learning and educational experiences while preparing them to achieve success and contribute as productive citizens in the diverse, global environment of the 21st century.
7. Provide a meaningful first-year experience for all incoming freshmen and transfer students where appropriate. Incorporate both academic and student services/affairs elements. Consider involving current upper-class students in teaching roles.
8. Partner with community colleges to identify and provide degree completion program offerings for their graduates as consistent with WCSU's priorities.
9. Enhance/incorporate global perspectives into academic courses.
10. Evaluate distance learning options for academic programs; develop a university position and strategy regarding distance learning.

11. Evaluate use of summer and intersession courses within academic programs.
- B. Promote and support university-wide interdisciplinary activities that encourage interaction of diverse populations such as the President's Initiatives, common readings, performing arts events, student cultural passports, distinguished speaker and athletic events.
1. Utilize the university website and other media to promote activities to students, faculty and staff. Foster use of WestConduit to communicate upcoming events and activities.
 2. Group activities together to maximize participation across diverse populations.
 3. Consider offering credit for attendance at activities that promote learning across disciplines.
 4. Provide increased opportunities for interdisciplinary course offerings.
- C. Improve student registration and course transfer processes for WCSU students in courses at other CSU's, and vice versa.

4.3 Identify quality standards for each academic program in keeping with the mission and vision of WCSU. Engage in continuous assessment of all programs to ensure that they meet established quality standards. Develop and implement improvement plans for any programs that fall below the standards.

Quality standards may include:

- A. All programs eligible for accreditation will develop a plan to achieve this quality standard; those without accrediting bodies will engage in program review involving outside experts in their discipline.
- B. Student learning outcomes will meet discipline-specific standards.
- C. Pass rates on professional examinations such as Praxis II, CPA, NCLEX.
- D. Placement rates with employers; possibly implement employer satisfaction surveys and assess results as feedback on the quality of education WCSU students received in preparation for their careers.
- E. Graduate school acceptance rates; possibly implement surveys of WCSU alumni who go on to graduate school for feedback on their view of the quality of education they received in preparation for graduate school.
- F. Evidence of ongoing creative activity that supports faculty members' teaching and provides currency in their disciplines.
- G. Academic achievement.
- H. Quality of academic advising delivered to students.

4.4 Provide resources and foster activities that promote quality in university programs.

- A. Provide sufficient full-time faculty to maintain program integrity.
- B. Improve opportunities for faculty development.
- C. Provide infrastructure and support for faculty and staff to meet student and program needs.
 - 1. Full-time faculty: provide release time/support for scholarly activity;
 - 2. Adjunct faculty: create the appropriate physical and technological environment; communicate university policies and procedures.
- D. Link planning, budgeting, quality considerations, marketing, and academic programs.
- E. Incorporate assessment and action on student learning outcomes for all programs.

4.5 Improve and maintain facilities and technology infrastructure that encourage university-wide interaction and engender quality.

- A. Public spaces such as cafés, lounges, computer labs, quad areas, library group study spaces, student center facilities, athletics and recreation facilities, Ives Concert Hall, Higgins Art Gallery and those at Western at Waterbury should be available to students, faculty and staff.
- B. All university gathering spaces should be listed in one on-line location and University individuals and groups should be assisted in reserving such facilities for academic and non-academic activities.
- C. Areas conducive to faculty interaction should be developed on each campus.
- D. Technology enhancements, such as wireless gathering areas, should be explored, with a goal of bringing diverse university groups together. Develop IT infrastructure to support virtual communities.

4.6 Develop a process to define and articulate our signature programs for the purposes of university identity, marketing, and recruiting.

Potential criteria for Signature Programs may include:

- A. Strengthen our **partnerships** with the people and institutions of Connecticut.
- B. Meet the **needs** of the state and region.
 - 1. Workforce
 - 2. Personal and professional lifelong development
 - 3. Citizenship.

- C. Contribute to and be consistent with the university's unique **identity**.
- D. Be **attractive** to donors, potential students, and faculty in relation to the mission, goals, and objectives of the university.
 - 1. Enhance recruitment of students.
 - 2. Improve institutional advancement opportunities.
 - 3. Serve as an intellectual and cultural center for the region.
 - 4. Meet niche interests/opportunities (e.g. meteorology, music) afforded by our unique region, expertise, or needs.
- E. Be **accredited**, have potential for accreditation, or external recognition if no accrediting body exists.

4.7. Communicate effectively to targeted audiences about the range and quality of academic programs.

- A. Incorporate messages and descriptions of academic programs in institutional marketing plan.
- B. Identify and implement strategies to improve U.S. News and World Report ranking, consistent with mission and academic plan.

Goal 5: Enriching and Supportive Student-focused Environment - Foster a holistic approach to intellectual and social growth and development that prepares students to be productive citizens of the state of Connecticut and the world by developing their knowledge, experience, and critical thinking and by fostering life-long learning characterized by intellectual curiosity, imagination, and creativity.

5.1 Expand opportunities to strengthen partnerships between faculty and students in the academic arena in order to strengthen the collaborative nature of the educational experience provided by WestConn.

- A. Implement first year experience proposed by the General Education Committee. Evaluate expansion of FYE program scope to include student support services in addition to academic emphasis.
- B. Promote and support extra-curricular student research and scholarship.
- C. Create learning communities.
- D. Strengthen faculty/student connections.
- E. Encourage respect and respectful treatment for all people by incorporating the values into the university culture.
- F. Strive to maintain small class size.
- G. Create places for informal interaction between faculty and students; consider faculty/student mixers once per semester.
- H. Better utilize technology as a means of facilitating communication between faculty and students.
- I. Develop programs that encourage pride, cooperative efforts between faculty and students (e.g. research day) and other activities that build spirit.

5.2 Emphasize connections between learning opportunities on WCSU campuses and the regional and global environments.

- A. Develop and promote social action programs for students (e.g. American Democracy Project, community service opportunities, etc.).
- B. Build connections with the Danbury community.
- C. Encourage study abroad experiences.
- D. Integrate existing work experiences with learning experiences; consider building internship and community service projects as components or options associated with student academic majors.
- E. Encourage experiential learning for every student.
- F. Actively communicate these opportunities within the university community.

5.3 Strengthen and expand academic support practices so that our students are more likely to realize their potential and better able to take advantage of the opportunities that our university provides.

- A. Establish a consistent and sustained effort to prepare freshmen before and during their first year for college-level work and assess their overall and academic performance carefully and frequently.
- B. Provide timely recognition of and intervention with at-risk students.
- C. Recognize and celebrate outstanding students.
- D. Explore additional support for students in reading and developmental math; explore increasing the number of student tutors in learning labs.
- E. Explore additional support for students with disabilities and other situations that affect academic success.
- F. Create a “Student Success Center” in which support services are delivered in student-accessible space.
- G. Explore partnerships with community colleges to deliver developmental math and English courses at Danbury and Waterbury.
- H. Continue to develop partnerships with high schools to improve preparedness of high school graduates for university-level academic work.
- I. Determine the need for various student services on each campus and the need for extended hours at certain times of the year, and provide these services to students.
- J. Coordinate retention efforts systematically.
- K. Improve coordination and cross-functional understanding between offices of cashier, registrar, and financial aid to improve student services. Strive more toward efficient services and avoid sending students to multiple offices.
- L. Educate the university community about student support systems.

5.4 Further develop and maintain a university culture that enriches students, faculty, staff and the community on all campuses (Midtown, Westside, Waterbury).

Physical Plant

- A. Create a Master Plan to improve all physical campuses.
- B. Provide appropriate student housing facilities.
- C. Establish a visitor’s center function on each campus.
- D. Improve transportation between campuses.
- E. Provide physical spaces conducive to informal interactions between students, faculty and staff
- F. Build and maintain a focus on the environment, incorporating recycling, material and energy conservation, sustainability, civic-mindedness to local and global risks, needs and challenges.

- G. Develop a wireless campus.
- H. Conduct on-going assessment of two-campus university environment and take steps to counter any negative impacts.

Programming opportunities

- I. Enhance and focus student life programming to meet student interests while providing intellectual and social development.
- J. Improve recreation and fitness/wellness programming for students, faculty and staff. Design programs to appeal to and engage the majority of residential students.
- K. Establish and maintain a perpetual calendar of regular and predictable activities; develop a key dates to remember ID card.
- L. Position and promote intercollegiate athletics in university life to develop university pride and affinity among students, alumni, faculty, and staff. Build connections between people and programs in athletics, academic affairs, and other university areas.
- M. Define and assign responsibilities for summer school and intersession.
- N. Continue to examine and revise non-credit programming; establish and deliver consistent programs as appropriate to the university's mission.
- O. Plan and implement ongoing cultural programs for students including music, the arts, theatre, dance, and film events aimed at intellectual and social growth as well as entertainment.
- P. Develop protocols for communication of campus events to students on a regular basis (e.g. electronic, print and other media). Establish means of communicating with students regarding programs and activities.
- Q. Develop and implement a plan for the best use of the new Westside Campus Center to meet university needs and priorities.
- R. Develop an awareness of specialized services such as counseling, career development, campus ministries and disabilities office among those who would benefit from them. Consider incorporating this information into orientation, FYE, and other established programs.
- S. Establish joint academic/student affairs programs in the residence halls such as faculty in residence, theme housing, arts in the residence halls, featured lectures, and international programs, when beneficial.
- T. Extend hours for needed services such as the library.
- U. Increase student activities/programming on weekends.
- V. Develop specific programs that introduce the history of WCSU to current students and celebrate university highlights over time.
- W. Develop and support efforts and programs to enhance the sense of pride for WCSU.
- X. Improve collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs relative to student services and programming.

- Y. Consider awareness and action programs concerning local and global issues of environmental stewardship.

5.5 Improve and enrich the advising experience so that both faculty and students value advising as an integral part of life at a university.

- A. Improve advising by:
 - 1. Creating a comprehensive advisement manual and website.
 - 2. Designing and offering an advisement module for new and existing faculty members and new students.
- B. Hire faculty members who value the priorities and environment of a primarily teaching institution.
- C. Clarify expectations for delivering quality academic advising.
- D. Enhance focus on advising relative to general education requirements in addition to major-specific requirements.
- E. Create specialized programs or expertise for advisement of transfer students.
- F. Incorporate advising into faculty evaluation.
- G. Strengthen advisement during the summer.

5.6 Improve scheduling to optimize the academic experience.

- A. General education course scheduling

Within departments, courses that fill general education requirements should be available in both MWF and TR schedules, with reasonable balance between these two formats.
- B. Evening scheduling
 - 1. Periodically assess evening scheduling practices. Determine whether multiple-section evening courses on two evenings rather than one would be practical and desirable for some courses and students (e.g. developmental courses and general education courses). Also assess whether classes held in the evenings would have sufficient/more demand during the day.
 - 2. Assess whether sufficient demand exists to offer more evening classes so that evening students may complete their degrees in a quicker time frame.
- C. Standard time slots

For courses below the 300 level that are taught between 8:00 AM and 3:00 PM, use standard MWF and TR slots.
- D. Systematically stagger class start times on the two campuses.
- E. Use software to project course scheduling needs to allow students to move through their programs in a more timely fashion.
- F. Consider preferred registration in general education courses

Upper-level students who have not filled particular general education requirements should be given priority registration for the required general education course, followed by lower-level students, and last by upper-level students who have already filled the general education requirement in question.

- G. Block schedule freshmen students.
- H. Publish course offerings further in advance – one to two years, if feasible.
- I. Where feasible, build a schedule of offerings that is sustained over time. Determine the right mix of courses, and the best dates and times for them to run based on student needs, and maintain that core schedule consistently to the extent possible every semester. (This may not be the best arrangement for all disciplines). Avoid cancelling classes.
- J. Establish a “common hour” during the school week.

Goal 6: Affordability - Deliver outstanding value to students through effective management of the university and the provision of student financial assistance, thereby maintaining the affordability and access of a mid-sized public university while creating the quality experience of the best private institutions.

6.1 Effective university management through integrated planning and decision-making.

A. Develop and implement our strategic plan to guide the direction and decisions of the university. Incorporate strategic plan vision, objectives, and strategies in an integrated manner across functional and cross-functional areas. Emphasize fundamentals of institutional quality and student affordability. Establish processes for regular review of the plan, assessment and reporting of progress vs. goals, and adjustments as warranted.

Planning and decision-making structure to include:

- Strategic plan. The strategic plan sets forth the vision and goals of the university and the primary strategies for achieving these goals. From the strategic plan, implementation will occur through the achievement of integrated, outcome-oriented priorities in the following functional and cross-functional areas:
 1. Academic
 2. Financial
 3. Strategic enrollment management
 4. Diversity
 5. Physical plant/facilities
 6. Information technology
 7. Student engagement
 8. Identity and institutional advancement (including fundraising, marketing, and other advancement activities)

B. Develop the means to align resources with highest priorities in a transparent manner. Consider the impact of all decisions on both quality (as set forth in plans and strategic objectives) and on student access and affordability.

6.2 Affordability and access through scholarship and student aid.

Develop and apply a well-funded scholarship and student aid program, consisting of need, merit and talent based awards, to facilitate recruitment and retention of targeted students and to maintain access and affordability.

A. WCSU scholarship program

Create a cohesive WestConn scholarship program with a marketing identity; promote and administer the program to recruit targeted students using a combination of need and merit based awards. Develop specific scholarship

program elements designed to recruit specific student profile, e.g. possibly offer scholarships to every valedictorian in key recruiting areas.

B. Fundraising campaign for scholarships

Establish fundraising goals and the case for support for the need and merit based scholarship program; kick-off and implement scholarship fundraising campaign.

C. Packaging/marketing financial aid and scholarships

Coordinate administration and communication of awards for need, merit and talent for admitted students; package, label, and market combined awards to recipient students on a more timely basis for greater impact. Convey the total amount of all awards, and clearly reference the percentage of total tuition and fees covered by the combined award when appropriate for recruitment. Institute deadlines for scholarship applications.

D. Recognition of scholarship recipients

Institute annual traditions honoring incoming and returning scholarship students (and possibly prospective students not yet committed); consider a recognition event with students, faculty and donors; consider a special event at orientation for scholarship recipients.

E. Maximization of scholarships and other student aid for recruitment purposes

Give first priority for all WCSU and WCSU Foundation scholarship and student financial aid awards to the admissions office to use in recruitment, including those designated by major; if not awarded via recruitment, then departments would take responsibility for awarding for retention. Exception: talent-based scholarships that require auditions; these programs would work with the admissions office to provide selection criteria and would make the final decision.

F. Student employment

Provide meaningful student employment opportunities on campus, at expanded levels if possible. Communicate effectively to students, faculty, and staff regarding the availability of student employment opportunities and how to participate.

G. Internal student aid

Explore potential internal techniques for increasing student aid, such as summer housing discounts, increasing the tuition set-aside, earmarking operating funds for student aid. Analyze the cost/benefit of these potential techniques to the university within the context of its plans and strategic objectives.