

VIBRANT • HEALTHY • PROSPEROUS • SUSTAINABLE



**A Partnership for
Thriving Communities**

University Strategic Plan



University of Wisconsin
Stevens Point



University of Wisconsin Stevens Point

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Foreword

In 1966, our catalog listed several goals for graduates of our university. Perhaps the most striking is this: our students will show concern for “the ideals of democracy and social justice” and for their responsibility to their fellow human beings. This is a worthy, timeless goal. In this latest edition of the university strategic plan, we recommit to these ideals and responsibility.

The people who work and learn at UW-Stevens Point will continue to exemplify caring, engaged citizenship. Our high-quality professionals choose to work here because we put students first. Our students go forth to achieve goals of their own, demonstrating by word and deed the worth of a broad-based education. We prepare passionate, empowered citizens for a global community.

Such citizens are clearly needed! This is an exciting and challenging time for our neighbors both near and far, a time of change in technology, economics, culture and more. More than ever, quality education is indispensable to maintaining and improving communities. Communities that aspire to be vibrant, healthy, prosperous and sustainable need students such as ours. In turn, our students need a university that is responsive, inclusive, engaged and adaptable.

As our General Education Program says, we want to kindle in our graduates a “willingness to place their newfound abilities in the service of a larger community.” Such willingness cannot be taught directly, but arises from experiences that are only possible in a university such as UW-Stevens Point. This is a place where people from a variety of backgrounds and with a myriad of futures come together. This is a place where we teach and learn from one another. We ask hard questions and then strive to answer them together. How can we be more inclusive? How can we work together? How can we be more engaged?

We encourage you to be part of this effort. Join your strengths with ours. We need an abundance of ingenuity, generosity and humility, and we need the courage of our convictions. Our students and our world deserve nothing less.

Bernie Patterson
Chancellor

Greg Summers
Provost



Introduction

The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point is a great university. Once a school for preparing teachers, we now educate students in a variety of fields and to meet a variety of needs in Central and Northern Wisconsin and beyond. We're proud of our broad, multi-disciplinary capabilities and continue to value broad-based education.

We recognize that to meet the challenges of the 21st century, UW-Stevens Point must become a new kind of public university: more engaged with area stakeholders, more responsive to local needs, and more relevant to solving regional problems. We seek to join with individuals, businesses, and other organizations throughout Central and Northern Wisconsin to build A Partnership for Thriving Communities to help our region stay vibrant, healthy, prosperous and sustainable.

Community engagement is integral to our heritage and our future. A Partnership for Thriving Communities—this strategic plan—will better focus our limited resources on our most promising opportunities. By acting with greater harmony, UW-Stevens Point will help ensure Central and Northern Wisconsin remains a great place to work, live, learn and thrive.

At the same time, we continue to honor the agility of individuals and units throughout our university and to protect the key virtue of academic freedom. This strategic plan values our right to pursue a variety of inquiries and endeavors, and to express our ideas, results and opinions. Similarly, we honor and perpetuate shared governance as one of UW-Stevens Point's most important strengths, as both students and employees have indispensable roles and essential rights and responsibilities in strategic decision-making.

Vision, Mission and Values

Our vision, mission and values underlie all our work.

Vision: The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point will continue to be recognized for developing, supporting and educating students and citizens to constructively engage in local, regional and global communities.

Mission: Through the discovery, dissemination and application of knowledge, the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point fosters intellectual growth, provides a broad-based education, models community engagement and prepares students for success in a diverse and sustainable world.

Values: In addition to our primary value of education, we also value:

- Community engagement
- Critical thinking
- **Diversity** and inclusivity
- Lifelong learning
- Professional preparation
- Research, scholarly and creative activity
- Student-centered environment
- Sustainable management of natural resources and other resources

Diversity:

Differences in background, identity, ability and more; includes race/ethnicity, gender role and identity, age, religion, political perspective, sexual orientation, nontraditional student, veteran, disability, chronic illness, socioeconomic status, and more.

Impacts: Thriving Communities

Our vision becomes a reality through strategic impacts. Our greatest **strategic impacts** come from our students. Our students judge our university based on their experiences while learning and living here, including whether they feel safe, welcome and supported. Then our students' choices and engagement in communities reflect the preparation and values we nurture. Our students' impacts cumulatively affect external beliefs about the quality, culture and worth of our university.

We indirectly achieve strategic impacts through how we educate our students. We also directly achieve impacts through our engagement with communities and community partners. With A Partnership for Thriving Communities, we target four broad outcomes in ways that best advance our vision, mission and values. UW-Stevens Point blends our efforts with others' to help communities stay vibrant, healthy, prosperous, and sustainable.

These impacts are equally important and deeply connected. They emerge from many disciplines and colleges. We strive to make our university a model of a thriving community.

Vibrant

A vibrant community includes lively, varied cultures and supports a life of expression, appreciation and reflection. We support exploration, creation and experimentation in a range of cultural areas, such as the arts, humanities, media and design. We prepare our students for numerous career opportunities, as well as deeper personal enjoyment and interaction with diverse cultures. Our students add their visions, voices and patronage to the communities in which they work and live.

Healthy

A healthy community includes access to products, services and lifestyles that promote health and wellness. A healthy community supports a life of fitness, nutrition, wellness and longevity. As the need for health and wellness professionals grows in our state, our programs will help provide them. We remain a visible leader in helping communities work on important problems, such as promoting workplace wellness and ensuring that all citizens have access to first-rate, state-of-the-art prevention, treatment and care.

Prosperous

A prosperous community includes access to good jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities and supports a life of socioeconomic mobility, financial security and job satisfaction. We prepare our students to be creative, caring professionals across many fields. We work with communities and businesses to nurture innovation and support entrepreneurship. We adapt to the changing global economy in collaboration with external partners. We believe that broad-based education remains a highly desirable quality in our graduates. Moreover, such preparation helps our students discover their personal definitions of prosperity and the good life, then work and live accordingly.

Sustainable

A sustainable community manages its resources in renewable ways and supports a life of balance, stability and future abundance. Our university is at the forefront of sustainability issues, such as using natural resources wisely, building and rebuilding businesses and economies, and fostering citizen engagement. We teach our students to engage with issues in respectful, productive ways. We prepare them for numerous career opportunities and instill an appreciation of the connections among natural and human-made systems.

Strategic Impacts:

The cumulative effects on the world from our students and our engagement; results that advance our vision, mission and values.

Capacities

Strategic Capacities:

Our readiness to achieve strategic impacts; our investment in people, infrastructure and other resources; what we need to succeed.

UW-Stevens Point's readiness to build this Partnership for Thriving Communities depends on our **strategic capacities**: our investment in the people, infrastructure, and other resources that we need to succeed. We group these capacities in four broad categories and assign leadership of planning, action and assessment to a vice chancellor and his/her division. Each division is responsible for selecting and pursuing initiatives to increase our capacities. Each division is responsible for consulting with the rest of the university, through formal and informal channels.

- Advance Learning : Academic Affairs
- Enhance Living : Student Affairs
- Develop and Use Resources : Business Affairs
- Honor and Advance Our Legacy : University Advancement

Assigning leadership confers authority and responsibility to a specific office. However, strategic capacities and divisions are not silos. Planning, consultation, action and assessment should often cross divisional boundaries and may require a division to engage in new areas and reach out to stakeholders beyond its usual scope.

Strategic decision-making depends on dialog: individuals and groups must communicate about their current and intended activities. However, excessive consultation can become burdensome, including to those who volunteer for leadership and service. Excessive consultation can also be impractical or obstructive, especially when leaders need to make decisions promptly. Our vice chancellors and other leaders make a good faith effort to balance dialog with urgency.

Advance Learning (Academic Affairs)

We are primarily a teaching institution and each of us contributes to educating and supporting our students. To remain relevant and rigorous, we contemplate what we teach and how we teach it. We create opportunities beyond traditional classrooms for developing and applying learning, such as labs, studios, service learning and study abroad. We meaningfully assess student understanding and achievements.

Faculty members are teacher-scholars. Their research, scholarly and creative activities increase understanding and appreciation of the world and help individuals and communities thrive. Their activities enrich the quality of education for students, informing our faculty's expert appraisal of what they teach and providing hands-on learning experiences. We are supportive of undergraduate research, scholarly and creative activity (URSCA) as opportunities that distinguish the UW-Stevens Point experience.

We apply the following core principles to guide our work in teaching and learning engagement:

- A student-centered learning community supported by substantive interactions among students, faculty, advisers, peer educators/mentors and staff
- Practices promoting deep, profound learning in and out of the classroom, studio, library and lab
- The synergistic relationship between teaching, learning and scholarship
- Recruitment and retention of high-quality professionals through recognition, reward and ongoing professional development
- Recruitment and retention of a diverse student body

Enhance Living (Student Affairs)

Transformational education and growth occur within a community that supports the development of every individual's intellectual, social and personal potential. To enhance living, we continue to:

- Provide programmatic and physical resources that enable students and other community members to thrive;
- Promote collaboration both within our university and with communities near and far;
- Nurture a campus climate that is accessible, safe and supportive for all students, employees and visitors; and
- Affirm our interdependence by how we treat each other.

Our efforts are informed by our commitments to promote inclusivity, wellness and the sustainable management of resources.

Develop and Use Resources (Business Affairs)

We are careful custodians of our resources, including our time and energy. Our talents drive intellectual and economic sustainability. We invest in professional development and growth. We support and retain our employees, for their talents and institutional wisdom and to honor their commitment to our university. We explore better ways to recruit new colleagues.

We don't assume that traditional revenue models will remain viable, so we explore new ideas, opportunities and partnerships. We welcome and encourage experimental programs and activities. We actively nurture the Central and Northern Wisconsin region as economically competitive and vibrantly livable.

Honor and Advance Our Legacy (University Advancement)

UW-Stevens Point began as a school for educating teachers and has grown into a comprehensive university. Our legacy lives on in our students, employees and alumni through their impacts on communities near and far. Our legacy lives on in our long history of mutual support with Stevens Point, the communities and businesses of Central and Northern Wisconsin, and educational partners throughout the world. Our legacy includes all we hope to share as we move into the future. We best honor and perpetuate our university's story through prioritizing our Thriving Communities strategic impacts.

Assessments

Assessment:

Evidence-based strategies to determine our progress toward increasing our strategic capacities and achieving our strategic impacts.

Given our limited resources it is vital that we measure our return on investment to improve our decisions. However, before we invest resources, we define what we hope to achieve and our means of **assessment**. We “design backwards” from our desired outcomes when selecting and investing in initiatives: we first consider desired outcomes and then decide which initiatives are promising. Here are some relevant assessments.

Our Vision, Mission and Values

Our vision, mission and values underlie all our work, and thus inform some of our self-assessment.

Higher Learning Commission

We continue to meet the Higher Learning Commission’s Criteria for Accreditation. We measure our strategic impacts using these criteria and consider them when selecting and investing in major initiatives.

Performance Measures

We continue to collect, analyze and report data about our performance at all levels of the university. Wherever possible, we collect and analyze data using the common framework of our strategic plan and in ways that allow for aggregation.

Student success is critical to our financial stability and possible growth. Thus, the following data is especially relevant, in aggregate and by major, minor, gender, race/ethnicity, disability and other breakdowns:

- Direct measures of student learning
- Retention, semester-to-semester and year-to-year
- Time to degree, chronological and number of semesters
- Total credits at graduation
- Student satisfaction (enrolled and graduated)
- Graduates’ employment or matriculation
- Input from communities

Employee Satisfaction

Our strategic impacts depend on our employees, so we do our best to reward the time, energy and passion they invest in our institution. Eliciting and honoring input from employees is essential. We continue to seek ways to value, support and competitively compensate our colleagues. We continue to seek ways to make UW-Stevens Point a thriving community, including how we interact with each other.

Student Satisfaction and Collaboration

One of our distinct strengths as a university is our highly engaged student body. Our students continue to demonstrate the motivation and abilities to participate in strategic decision-making. Collaboration with the Student Government Association, other groups and individual students helps the university stay informed on student issues and concerns, to prioritize responsive initiatives and to increase student satisfaction.

Guiding Questions

Strategic decision-making is a complex issue. As we continue to explore it together, the following guiding questions can help. We offer tentative answers and encourage further dialogue on these and similar questions.

How can we be more inclusive?

Everyone at our university is entitled to feel safe, welcome and supported. We have achieved an admirable level of **inclusivity**, but have much room for improvement.

Commitment to an inclusive climate is a recurring priority in our decisions, including recruitment and retention of students and high-quality professionals. It includes design and delivery of curriculum and the climate we foster in classrooms, offices and across campus. In the physical, online and social environments we manage, we strive for **universal design**. Without concerted effort, we risk maintaining privilege and discrimination.

We strive to serve students from a variety of backgrounds and life circumstances, including but not limited to transfer students, nontraditional students, international students, veterans, commuters, full-time professionals, place-bound students and students with family responsibilities. We strive to build stronger relationships with tribal communities. We highly value our campus in Stevens Point, while extending our work beyond its physical boundaries.

Honoring difference is a moral imperative. It is also part of responsive education. The students we can recruit and the jobs they will pursue are both changing. If the unique value of a brick-and-mortar university is the rich interactions among its students and professionals, then provision of a positive, empowering experience to all determines our success, ethically and financially.

How can we work together more?

Strategic decision-making requires a special institutional culture. We consider how our leaders model engagement and strategic decision-making, and how they include and empower other stakeholders. We honor the perspectives and wisdom of people closest to an issue or problem, and we value agility and adaptability.

We value transparency and participation in decision-making. However, some opportunities or crises require swift, unilateral decisions. We proactively build agreement on our priorities so we can respond swiftly when necessary. Conversely, some pursuits require early seeding and/or long-term commitment, so we look beyond the horizon whenever we can. We consider how well we unite our efforts to achieve shared goals, including how we communicate internally.

Inclusivity:

A commitment to helping everyone feel safe, welcome and valued; a commitment to honoring diversity.

Universal Design:

Creating places and systems that are accessible to the broadest variety of people, including people with disabilities.

How can we remain resilient?

We face many challenges, so we use our integrity, resourcefulness, ingenuity and resolve to thrive. The world for which we prepare students is changing, external perceptions of our university's utility are worrisome, and our morale is threatened. We honor our values yet our resources are limited, including our time and energy. We ensure resilience by allocating our resources today in ways that ensure continuing resources tomorrow.

We blend the actions of faculty and instructional academic staff, non-instructional academic staff, classified staff, administrators, student employees and other stakeholders for strategic impacts. This blending requires collaboration among all of us to identify priorities and access resources, thereby enabling us to align more of our work with our strategic plan. All of this requires leadership and vision from the entire university community.

Many friends and supporters share our concerns, and we should cultivate more internal and external relationships. We nurture partnerships and a sense of common cause with those who share our vision of UW-Stevens Point having indispensable, positive impacts.

How can we be more engaged?

We best demonstrate the worth of our university by how we serve our communities, on and off campus. We are proud of our legacy of community engagement under the Wisconsin Idea, including our roots in teacher education and our current partnerships with UW-Extension and numerous other organizations. We further strive to expand our engagement with external stakeholders, and be more responsive to local needs and more relevant to solutions in our region and beyond. We engage with confidence and humility. We seek to learn as well as teach, and to be sincerely receptive and thoughtfully responsive to others' values and ideas. Civil discourse is a practical application of critical thinking in a social context, and we have an obligation to model civil discourse.

Our internal community affects our readiness to engage. When we empower and collaborate with everyone in our university community, they have more willingness and energy for engagement. Community engagement is already integral to the work of many students and employees, and we value their wisdom.

Our engagement spans all levels of community, including our area, state, nation and world. Our engagement includes our inquiry, research, development, application and dissemination of new knowledge. It includes our formal partnerships and our informal relationships, from the residents in our neighborhood to our colleagues in global professions and disciplines.

Using Our Playbook

Our playbook is an integral piece of our strategic planning. It contains lists of possible initiatives that will increase our strategic capacities. Each division identifies a few initiatives to pursue each year, rather than trying to pursue most or all initiatives simultaneously. Some initiatives may extend or recur over multiple years.

Every member and group of our university looks to our playbook when considering how to integrate strategic decision-making into daily and long-term activities. Initiatives in our playbook are promising possibilities, not imminent activities.

Our playbook is separate from our plan to increase our flexibility and agility. We can regularly discuss changes to our playbook without needing to revise our plan. Indeed, we make changes at least annually, including reporting successes, updating initiatives in progress and adding promising initiatives.

Leaders for each strategic capacity are responsible for their respective playbook sections. Each year, by choosing specific initiatives in consultation with shared governance, vice chancellors communicate to their own divisions and the larger university where we need to spend our labor, money and other resources. Chosen initiatives then become a framework for upward reporting and for evaluation of programs.

Each initiative is numbered for easy reference (e.g., “Advance Learning #2”). The order is happenstance and not based on merit or priority. Some initiatives may require little explanation, because their nature is already well-known. Others initiatives will require elaboration, including referring to other documents or processes.

Finally, our playbook is not comprehensive. We value agility and responsiveness, so individuals and groups should continue to pursue other initiatives based on their unique issues and opportunities. In other words, an initiative not listed in our playbook may still be worthwhile. However, as much as possible, we should add promising or fruitful initiatives to the playbook to improve our harmony of action.



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