

Purpose Made Possible

Determination to lead the way

A plan for strategic action for
the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

Our Vision:

UW-Stevens Point in 2025

UW-Stevens Point is a catalyst for resilient and innovative Central and Northern Wisconsin communities, relied upon as a thought leader and responsive partner on issues including health and wellness, economic vitality, and environmental stewardship. We offer national models for sustainability and inclusivity. As dynamic hubs for community gathering and creative expression, our campuses are Central Wisconsin's gateway for vibrant cultural life and together form a regional "town square" for the exchange of ideas.

Whoever you are, we have a place for you at UW-Stevens Point. We serve a diverse student body in face-to-face as well as non-traditional classroom settings, providing equity in access to exceptional educational opportunities. Through a distinctive approach to applied learning and the liberal arts, our campuses foster meaningful experiences that allow students to take risks, discover a sense of purpose, and achieve success as they define it. We provide an unparalleled environment for students to take lead roles across the university and to make a difference in their communities. Students, faculty, and staff are all engaged in growing our university community and its connections with regional businesses, industry, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. Our partnerships in Wisconsin, nationally, and internationally enrich our students and the world while serving particularly to strengthen Central Wisconsin.

We are a data-informed institution that prioritizes shared governance and is known for its collaborative spirit. We stay aware of enrollment trends and create new pathways to meet student needs. We focus on what is possible even in the face of challenges. When we learn there's a way to improve how we serve our students, faculty, staff, and communities, we do not hesitate to make the necessary changes. We have a strong understanding of financial realities and make fiscally responsible choices in an environment of trust and collegiality. We use our collective knowledge and ideas to ensure that our university will remain solvent and relevant, making decisions to achieve our most important goal: academic excellence.

Both on and off campus, we shape leaders who embody and promote intellectual curiosity, global awareness, critical thinking, problem-solving, civic engagement, and equity-mindedness. Our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and donors take pride in our university and passionately share stories of how UW-Stevens Point changes lives.



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Background: UW-Stevens Point Today

As a publicly assisted regional university, we have been especially challenged by shifting demographics and declining enrollment, reduced state support, a years-long tuition freeze, and broader skepticism about the value of four-year degrees. As we have experienced reductions in state aid and declining enrollments, we have exhausted our financial reserves.

The UW System’s restructuring has added complexity and uncertainty but also affords an opportunity to expand access and reimagine our shared impact. Our three campuses remain integral to the region, and we continue to be a vital gateway for first-generation, underprepared, and lower-income students, along with place-bound students who want or need in-person learning experiences. Our engaged and hands-on approach fosters not just discipline-specific skills but also essential whole-person development in communication, empathy, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and leadership. Local industries recognize the role this university has in recruiting, developing, and retaining diverse talent and adding to the vibrancy of area communities. Graduates in our backyard and in places across the globe point to the transformational experiences they found at this “hidden gem” university.

UW-Stevens Point has evolved and adapted countless times throughout our 125-year history. Today, within a changing landscape for higher education and in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the evolving cultural challenges, we have had to become more agile and adaptable than ever before. We must continue to make changes to enhance access and address structural inequality as we work toward inclusive excellence for all students, faculty, and staff. We can only do so together, and with clearer purpose and direction. Listening carefully to the many stakeholders who want both this university and this region to thrive, we are crafting a renewed vision to guide our next steps forward.

As we face these challenges, we will build on our considerable strengths. UW-Stevens Point is among the best regional comprehensive universities in the nation and simultaneously offers several unique nationally recognized programs while providing an affordable, high-quality education. All UW-Stevens Point students receive a solid foundation in science, humanities, art, social science, and critical thinking from their general education coursework, which supports and enhances the development of skills and perspectives graduates will use in their professional, civic, and personal lives. As students explore different areas of study, they find opportunities to engage with knowledgeable and skilled faculty who are passionate about teaching and dedicated to the success and development of all students, regardless of their identities or backgrounds. All degree programs at UW-Stevens Point employ practices and experiences to aid our students in achieving their goals, including a variety of hands-on and applied learning opportunities. We have a variety of excellent



programs, including strong programs in the liberal arts and in a number of professional fields; among our nationally recognized and distinctive programs are those in Natural Resources, Fine Arts, Education, and Health and Wellness.

Students, faculty, and staff are all hard-working and highly engaged; ours is a can-do university. We have high-quality online and in-person services to support student success, a robust number of student organizations, and high-achieving athletics programs with an enthusiastic following among students, alumni, and the community. We lead Wisconsin’s comprehensive universities in student participation in international programs. We have a strong tradition of shared governance – we get things done collaboratively.

We have three compact campuses in a beautiful environment. Our location in Central Wisconsin makes us easily accessible from any part of the state. Known for our environmental focus and sustainable practices, we have a nature reserve on the Stevens Point campus, an arboretum on the Marshfield campus, and field stations that provide opportunities for teaching, research, and recreation, with numerous venues for outdoor recreation in the surrounding cities and counties. Our arts programs support a vibrant culture for our area. We have strong partnerships with our local communities. We embody the Wisconsin Idea.

The Road Ahead: Our Strategic Themes

We will realize our vision of UW-Stevens Point in 2025 by focusing our work in four major themes. We have created goals within each of these themes. In the work ahead, teams will continue to develop the strategies, tactics, and metrics by which we will achieve these goals.

1.

Align Financial Model with Institutional Vision

We must not only be able to balance the university's operating budget, but also align our financial models and strategies with the institutional vision of our university. Now more than ever, this will require proactive planning and the use of reliable data to inform financial decisions that reflect the core values of the institution. The COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified and made more difficult the need to achieve and maintain financial sustainability, which can only be accomplished through continued financial alignment, increased student enrollment, pursuit of growth opportunities, and a willingness to shift resources.

We commit to employing various financial models across the university that allow for agile responses to increasingly diverse and evolving student needs. To enable prioritization, decisions will be made regarding resource allocations and reallocations using agreed upon, data-informed metrics, including national standards. We will decide not only what current activities should continue and what new avenues should be pursued, but also which existing areas must be reduced. Given the institution's and state's fiscal realities, financial support of institutional priorities will almost certainly require reallocation of resources. We will create and improve systems for sharing knowledge of activities and goals across campuses and allocate resources to incentivize collaboration. As a student-centered university, UW-Stevens Point will have a budget that promotes and rewards activities that are responsive to the desires and needs of the student body. Additionally, alternative revenue resources will be fully explored and developed to provide stability and growth. Expansion into innovative methods of instructional delivery will not only increase financial stability but will allow the university to support its vision of providing educational access to lifelong learners.

We will be transparent within our university community as well as with regional stakeholders about institutional goals, metrics, and processes in financial decision-making. Members of the university community will be given timely access to financial data and review processes that will be used to make future curricular, programmatic, and services decisions. Taking these actions will encourage trust among students, faculty, staff, and administration. This shared knowledge will provide all constituents with an understanding of university-wide financial implications and a means for unifying toward a sustainable future.

Goals:

- We will align university expenditure levels with available

resources. Annual expenditure levels in university departments will be within the annual state budget allocation or the program revenue generated.

- We will utilize financial models that are data informed, transparent, objective, and action-oriented in order to respond to over-arching institutional priorities as well as the goals outlined in the other strategic themes. The financial models will inform decisions to allocate new and reallocate existing resources.
- We will create ethical processes and metrics to support the financial models and to inform decision-making, resulting in greater transparency and understanding of the current financial situation of the university, the rationale for decision-making, and the need to ensure long-term financial sustainability.
- We will encourage and achieve financial growth. New revenue sources will be explored and analyzed for financial viability. These new revenue sources will complement existing financial resources to allow diversification of university finances.



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2.

Expand Educational Opportunities for Student Success

We will take a multifaceted approach to adapt our program content and delivery to meet the demands of a changing economy, an evolving higher education landscape, and shifting demographics. UW-Stevens Point has always been a university that serves primarily traditional-age students. However, as the size of that population continues to decrease, we can improve our financial sustainability and better serve our region by increasing our ability to serve post-traditional students while also maintaining the open access that our branch campuses have long provided.

Even as college enrollments decrease, the demand for workers increases. There is a substantial population of adults in Wisconsin with some college experience but no degree. While much of this population has an interest in further education, they may need, or prefer, courses and programs offered in online or hybrid formats and structured outside the traditional 15-week semester. They also need course design and instructional approaches tailored to post-traditional students. Some of these potential students need a flexible pathway with value added that is professionally recognized along their degree progression. Such students will be better served with a variety of ways to earn credentials; in addition to associate degrees, these could include certificates that will advance their careers and, over time, combine with other certificates and courses to lead to a degree, as well as non-credit continuing education courses and experiences. Some rising professionals who already have a bachelor's degree will be interested in graduate programs, and market analyses will be needed to identify new enrollment opportunities for them.

Serving these students will require a coordinated effort to identify the programs we bring to market, changes to the ways we deliver courses, and the provision of needed support services. We will make evidence-based decisions about which programs meet the needs of our students and local communities, and how we can best deliver them to this population. We will bring together people with expertise in post-traditional student populations, the northern part of the state, our academic departments, and support services to work together to identify and prioritize the opportunities.

In addition to better serving post-traditional students, we will also increase and expand access to serve a more diverse student body. Not only will we serve the school districts in central and northern Wisconsin, utilizing distance education and campuses in Wausau and Marshfield to provide dual-enrollment courses and CESA programs, but we will also extend our resources to serve our communities and the state.

While we adapt to the needs of the post-traditional students in our region, we must also refine our program array to better serve diverse traditional-age students. We have high-profile programs that help define our identity as a university and that can attract students from out of state, and we will maintain

the quality of these programs. At the same time, we must maintain adequate breadth in our offerings to serve the students in our region, for some of whom UW-Stevens Point is their best (or even their only) choice for a four-year degree due to cost or location. While we cannot provide every program students may desire given our limited resources, providing a broad array of programs is crucial to meet the needs of these students. Any decisions to eliminate programs must be informed by this necessity.

We will also make our course array fiscally responsible. Often our most high-profile programs are also expensive to offer. We must balance our high-cost programs with others that are less expensive, determining the number and size of the high-cost programs we can sustain, and what other programs best complement them.

As we expand our services for the post-traditional students, we will continue to offer programs sought by diverse, traditional-age students. This will require ongoing review, informed by knowledge of the new generation of students.

To accomplish this, our budget experts will collaborate with our marketing team and our academic units. Our decisions will be based on quantitative and qualitative data from our program review process and informed by the need to find the optimal mix of programs to serve our students in a fiscally sustainable way. We will work to create mutualistic and collaborative relationships between programs.

Goals:

- We will increase and expand access by enhancing strategic partnerships with high schools and other educational institutions that support college-bound student success, college completion, and enrollment growth for a diverse student body.
- We will grow programs and harness technologies to support post-traditional and graduate learners through creative delivery methods including but not limited to branch campuses, hybrid, online, or collaborative models. This shall involve strengthening student support in terms of course timing/availability, academic calendars, evening/weekend classroom, office and service access, and prior learning experience.
- We will develop and implement internal systems and structures to better serve diverse prospective students in our market. The system should use data to determine financial and program viability, and inform new programs/offerings relevant to K-12 traditional, post-traditional, graduate, and continuing education students.
- We will increase our unique cross-disciplinary work to leverage (or promote) our strengths in sustainability, global awareness and diversity, equity and inclusion, for prospective students at all credential and continuing education levels.

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3.

Enhance the Student Experience

UW-Stevens Point is a place where students explore an array of opportunities to grow in knowledge, skills, and dispositions to prepare for professional careers, additional post-graduation pathways, and experiences as global citizens. Whether students are high-achieving, under-prepared for college, or between, faculty and staff meet students where they are, and do what it takes to help them find their path. While at UW-Stevens Point, students learn to step outside their familiar habits and beliefs to see connections between themselves and the world around them, to empathize with the differences they encounter, and to place their newfound abilities in the service of a larger community. Students also experience applied learning in the classroom through substantial interactions with instructors and peers, hands-on laboratories, field-based courses, structured opportunities to reflect and to integrate learning for real-world applications, and meaningful engagements with diverse ways of knowing. At the same time, students apply learning outside the classroom through internships, student employment, performances and exhibitions, student research, student leadership, athletics, recreation, and student organization opportunities. From their first year onward, UW-Stevens Point students will be engaged in and out of the classroom in high-impact practices that enhance their learning, foster their intellectual and emotional development, and help achieve their personal and career goals.

Preparing students to excel and lead, UWSP will take full and systemic advantage of the most advanced evidence-based scholarly teaching practices and educational tools. We will provide expanded opportunities for experiential learning, as well as opportunities to work across disciplines and fields of knowledge. In particular, UWSP will continue to serve as a leader in the region for innovative pedagogies, clearly defined learning outcomes, and critical thinking skills and dispositions essential for our students to make a life, a living, and a difference in our world. Utilizing our post-pandemic lens, we will continue to reinvest in transformative face-to-face classroom experiences that students have come to cherish. At the same time, we will provide new and enhanced professional development training for instructors to facilitate student success in virtual spaces through adaptive curricular approaches that create a culturally responsive digital environment. With more flexible course offerings and course modalities including flipped classrooms, hybrid models, asynchronous and synchronous online learning, we will help students maximize their potential, reduce barriers to graduation, and allow more students to complete degrees in a timely manner.

For our students to thrive in an increasingly diverse and complex context, we must help them develop their abilities to communicate, understand, and work with people who are different than themselves. Building a community where every member is welcomed, supported, and valued is an essential foundation to education and learning. We will continue

providing professional development to foster an equity-minded approach to teaching and learning. We will promote strategies that validate the experiences of all students. To close the equity gap, we will ensure that students have equitable access to faculty mentorship, campus engagement, programs and services, and chances to participate in high-impact practices. We prepare our students not just to participate, but to lead, and to understand how to build teams that are diverse in this global society.

We will maintain and improve services that promote student success, including advising, professional and personal development, and support for the overall well-being of our students. We will enhance our services while paying attention to the specific needs of our students by creating responsive processes that adapt to change. In particular, we will improve our support for rural, first-generation, post-traditional, and underprepared students as well as for students from traditionally underrepresented and underserved groups. We will continue to focus on strategies to improve student retention, academic success, and personal growth, while enhancing the existing student involvement experiences and networks.

Goals:

- We will prioritize and expand high-impact practices (HIP) to boost student learning, development and engagement.
- We will deliver vibrant yet tailored student services that support the retention and success of all students.
- We will build and enhance a community that values inclusion, equity and diversity.
- We will create an enriched learning environment through the use of advanced evidence-based practices and educational tools, innovative technologies and equity-minded pedagogies.



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4.

Serving our Internal and External Communities for Impact

As articulated in previous portions of the plan, collaborative efforts among faculty and staff on our campuses provide transformative student experiences. These robust internal collaborations, focused on cooperation rather than competition, naturally lay the foundation for deeply impactful engagements in our communities. We realize these impacts through cultural enrichment, economic development, and workplace partnerships for our students. There is a significant interdependency between UW-Stevens Point campuses and the northcentral Wisconsin communities we serve. Economic impacts are greater when business and faculty/staff work together to solve issues in our region. We are all stronger when we work together to attract and retain talent. We will continue to foster relationships that build trust and are mutually beneficial for our campuses, students, partner organizations and the region. To best serve these stakeholders, we must first gather information about all our current activities so we may focus on collaborations that have the greatest impact. Measuring these impacts will serve as the basis to better tell our story, both internally and externally.

Goals:

- We will collaborate both internally and with community members and organizations to create initiatives that support economic and community development. We will share our stories with each other and our stakeholders and work together to enhance our community.
- In our internal and external collaborations we will focus on our commitment to be more inclusive and promote equity and diversity.
- As an educational and cultural resource for the communities we serve, we will develop and promote new types of collaborations that align with the mission of UW-Stevens Point and that lead to greater efficiency, greater opportunity for a UWSP credential, and greater student success through internships and other experiential learning.



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