

A photograph of an ornate black wrought-iron gate with a central shield emblem, flanked by large green trees. A blue semi-transparent banner is overlaid across the middle of the image.

Strategic Plan Final Progress Report 2015-2020



WORCESTER
STATE
UNIVERSITY



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Introduction

As we move forward with the development of our next strategic plan, it is imperative that we reflect on the successes and challenges of the current strategic plan.

The past five years have been tumultuous, starting with enrolling the largest class in Worcester State University history, and ending with a national decline in enrollment, a recession, and global pandemic. Through it all, Worcester State University has remained strong.

This five-year review of the Worcester State Strategic Plan 2015-2020 demonstrates the strength of the Worcester State community, re-affirms our core values, and highlights areas where there is still work to be done.



Strategic Plan 2015-2020

Introduction

During the 2014-2015 academic year, a steering committee of faculty, staff, administrators, students, alumni, and trustees was convened to develop a new strategic plan.

Worcester State University's mission and core values were reviewed, a new vision emerged from the campus dialogues, and the plan was unveiled to the community at the fall opening day ceremony. It was approved by the Board of Trustees in October 2015.

Mission

Worcester State University champions academic excellence in a diverse, student-centered environment that fosters scholarship, creativity, and global awareness. A Worcester State education equips students with knowledge and skills necessary for lives of professional accomplishment, engaged citizenship, and intellectual growth.

Core Values

Academic
Excellence

Engaged
Citizenship

Open Exchange
of Ideas

Diversity
and
Inclusiveness

Civility
and
Integrity

The Strategic Planning Review Committee



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Sarah Strout, Chair

Assistant Vice President
Assessment and Planning

The Strategic Planning Review Process

In the 2019-2020 academic year, the Strategic Plan Review Committee, comprised of faculty and staff from all divisions of the University, reviewed the progress of the Strategic Plan for the last five years.

Each committee member was assigned to work on reviewing materials for one goal. The entire committee then evaluated each goal's progress, determining whether minimal, moderate, or significant progress had been made. This determination was made by evaluating both quantitative and qualitative measures associated with the goal.

For each goal, an executive summary, hallmark achievements, and key performance indicators are presented.





Academic Program and Excellence

Enhance the undergraduate academic program and expand graduate programs in a community of learning that promotes academic excellence and innovation



Significant Progress



Executive Summary



Worcester State University has made **significant progress** towards the goal of academic excellence.

New undergraduate and graduate programs have been created in response to student interest and work-force alignment.

Increased support for research and creativity for both faculty and students, careful development of library resources, and an increase in the number of high-impact practices utilized by our faculty has helped to change WSU's reputation from a 'back-up school' to a regional university with high caliber faculty and students.



Curriculum

New majors in Liberal Studies and Environmental Science

New minors in Forensic Science, Psychobiology, Substance Abuse Counseling, and Spanish for Health Professionals

New concentrations in Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies, Global Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Environment and Sustainability Studies

New graduate programs in Master of Public Policy/Administration and Public Management

A post-professional doctorate degree in Occupational Therapy submitted to the DHE



Articulation Agreements with:
Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Mount Wachusett Community College, Nichols College, Quinsigamond Community College, Springfield Technical Community College, UMass Dartmouth School of Law, and Western New England University School of Law



High-Impact Practices



60% increase in the number of students participating in **study away** since 2014

Increased the number of faculty led **short-term study away opportunities**

Built prototypes of **interactive learning spaces**

9,263 students participating in **experiential learning courses** in 2019-2020

3,820 students participating in an **internship, practicum, fieldwork**, or **individual research** course in 2019-2020





Research and Creativity

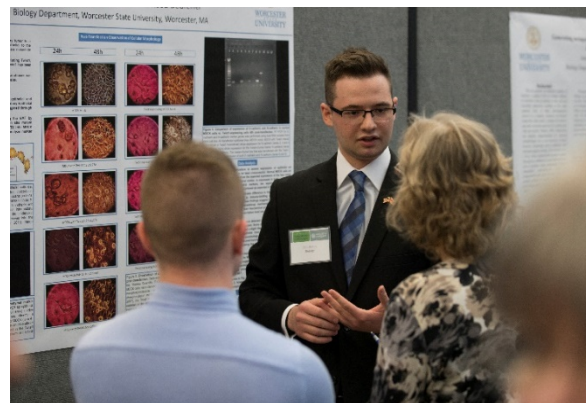
Established the **Aisiko Stem Center** which supports the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) initiative, Summer Research Fellowships, the Bridge to Excellence Program, and the AISIKO Interdisciplinary Research Program Award

Celebration of Scholarship and Creativity expanded to include interactive displays of student research projects

Provost's **Faculty Scholarship Travel Fund** increased by \$30,000

WSU Foundation **Faculty Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activity Grant Program** launched

The Mary Cosgrove Dolphin Gallery offers 3 to 4 exhibits per year of current renowned artists and Worcester State faculty and students





Library



Hired 5 librarians as **department liaisons** offering information literacy and instructional services

Awarded a **\$150,000 Performance Incentive Grant** with other MA institutions to advance the adoption of open educational resources (OER)

\$191,000 saved by students through **OER courses** since Spring 2018

Created a dedicated space for **WSU Archives and Special Collections**

Avoided cutting **library subscriptions** by negotiating lower pricing and instituting multi-year contracts





Differentiation and Impact in the Wider World

Leverage WSU's distinctive strengths, both to enhance the University's reputation and to prepare students to lead, serve, and make a difference in the world



Moderate Progress



Executive Summary



Worcester State University has made **moderate progress** towards the goal of differentiation and impact on the wider world.

Progress has been made capitalizing on our urban location by increasing the number of partnerships with Worcester area organizations and the number of civic engagement opportunities for students.

However, recent surveys show that students want more career preparation opportunities, including career advising, networking opportunities, internships, and training related to job-seeking.

More relationships with organizations in the area will increase the likelihood that our students are able to find appropriate internships and employment following graduation.



Community Involvement

Developed **new partnerships** with Worcester area businesses, hospitals, schools, and non-profits

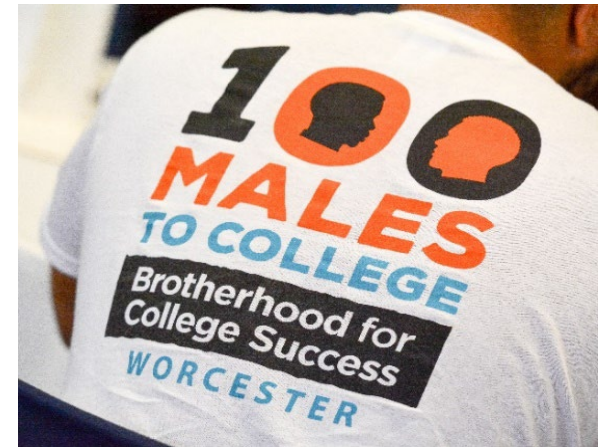
Created **CityLab**, which collaborates with Worcester Public Schools to research voting patterns

Created **CitySpeak**, which uses theatre to analyze and propose solutions to urban problems, and VITA, which provides free tax services for the local community

Launched **100 Males to College**, a cross-campus effort Multicultural Affairs, LEI, and Enrollment Management and long with city partners Worcester Public Schools and QCC

Increased the number of students participating in **civic engagement** opportunities

The **Latino Education Institute** serves over 2,000 students and families in K-12 through academic enrichment and college/career readiness





Student Leadership



Launched a leadership **rebranding campaign** designed to increase awareness of student involvement opportunities outside of the classroom

Focus on **leadership skills programming** that challenge students to become empowered, inclusive, and knowledgeable future leaders



Implemented a new three-phase **student leadership** training model, Circle of Leadership: Emerge, Engage, and Excel

Residence Life and the Binienda Center for Civic Engagement developed the **Community Leadership Experience (CLEWS)** living-learning community



Initiated **Jumpstart AmeriCorps** Program

Athletics hosts **Captain's Leadership Breakfasts** 1-2 times each semester to discuss what it means to be the captain of a team and the responsibilities that are associated with it



Career Preparation

Increased the number of opportunities for career preparation through interdivisional collaborations including **mock interviews**, **Backpack to Briefcase**, **career fairs**, and in class **presentations**

Initiated new database called **Lancer Link**, which posts job and internship opportunities for students



Increased the number of workforce related trainings offered by the **Center for Business and Industry**

Inter-divisional collaboration to create event where students are trained on **professional table manners**, **interviewing techniques**, and **networking**





Enrollment, Retention, and Student Success

Attract and enroll a diverse pool of highly motivated students and attach institution-wide priority to promoting their retention and success



Significant Progress



Executive Summary



Worcester State University has made **significant progress** towards the goal of enrolling, retaining, and ensuring the success of students.

While other Massachusetts public universities have seen a significant decrease in enrollment, our enrollment has remained steady.

Our retention and graduate rates continue to rise, and a majority of our students reported finding employment or beginning further education within one year of graduation.

With the addition of new online graduate programs and a focus on non-traditional students, we will be able to recruit students despite the decline of traditional-age students nationally.

Major efforts relating to recruitment, marketing, scholarships, and advising have contributed to our success.



Recruitment and Enrollment

Stable enrollment compared to other MA State Universities

Improvement in the **HS GPA** of incoming students

SAT Optional Admissions approved

Creation of dual-enrollment and **early college** partnerships with QCC and K-12 schools

Collaboration with Academic Partnerships on launching **100% online graduate programs** in Nursing and Education

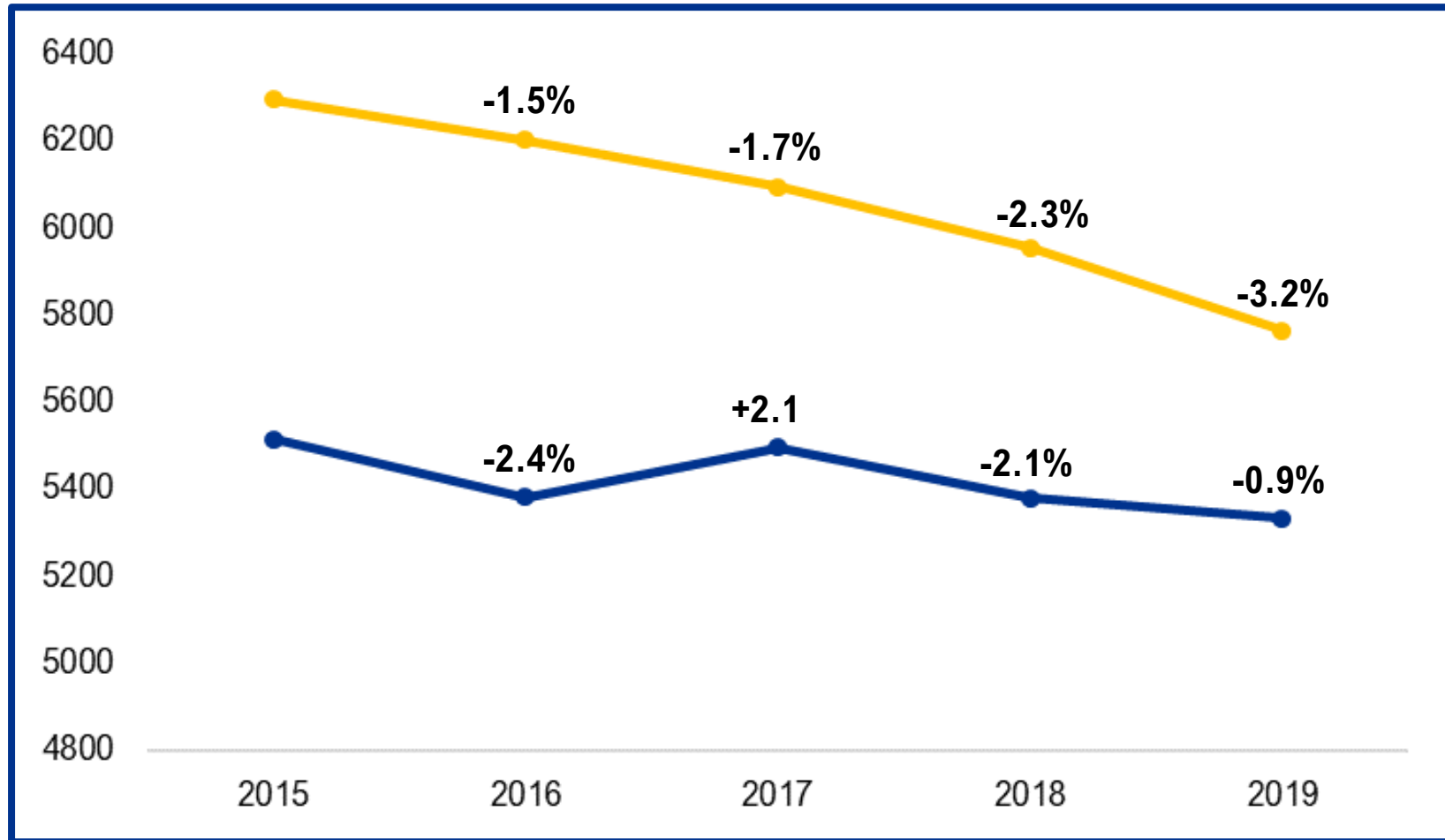
Featured in Princeton Review as a **Best College in the Northeast** since 2005





Recruitment and Enrollment

Enrollment Change 2015-2020



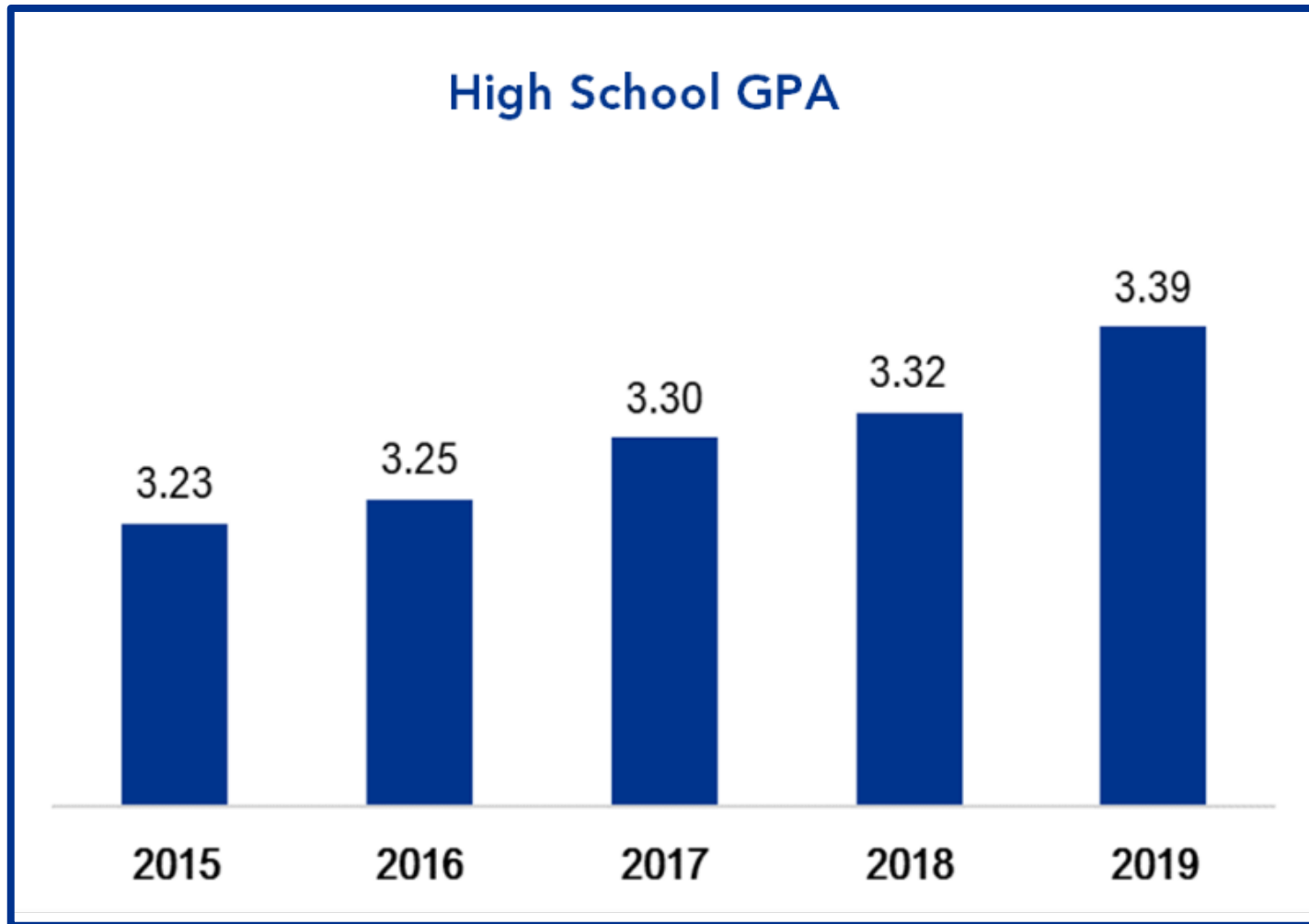
MA State Universities*
Overall Change
-8.4%

WSU
Overall Change
-3.3%

*Bridgewater, Fitchburg, Framingham, Salem, Westfield



Recruitment and Enrollment





Retention

Continued increase in **retention** rates

Early intervention and warning systems developed and utilized by the Retention Office in coordination with faculty

Creation of **Success Coach Program** with all incoming freshman being assigned a Success Coach

\$100,000 **Higher Education Innovation Fund Grant** to boost completion rates, close achievement gaps, and attract, enroll, and graduate students from underserved populations

Created the **1st Generation celebration** to recognize and support first generation students, faculty, and staff

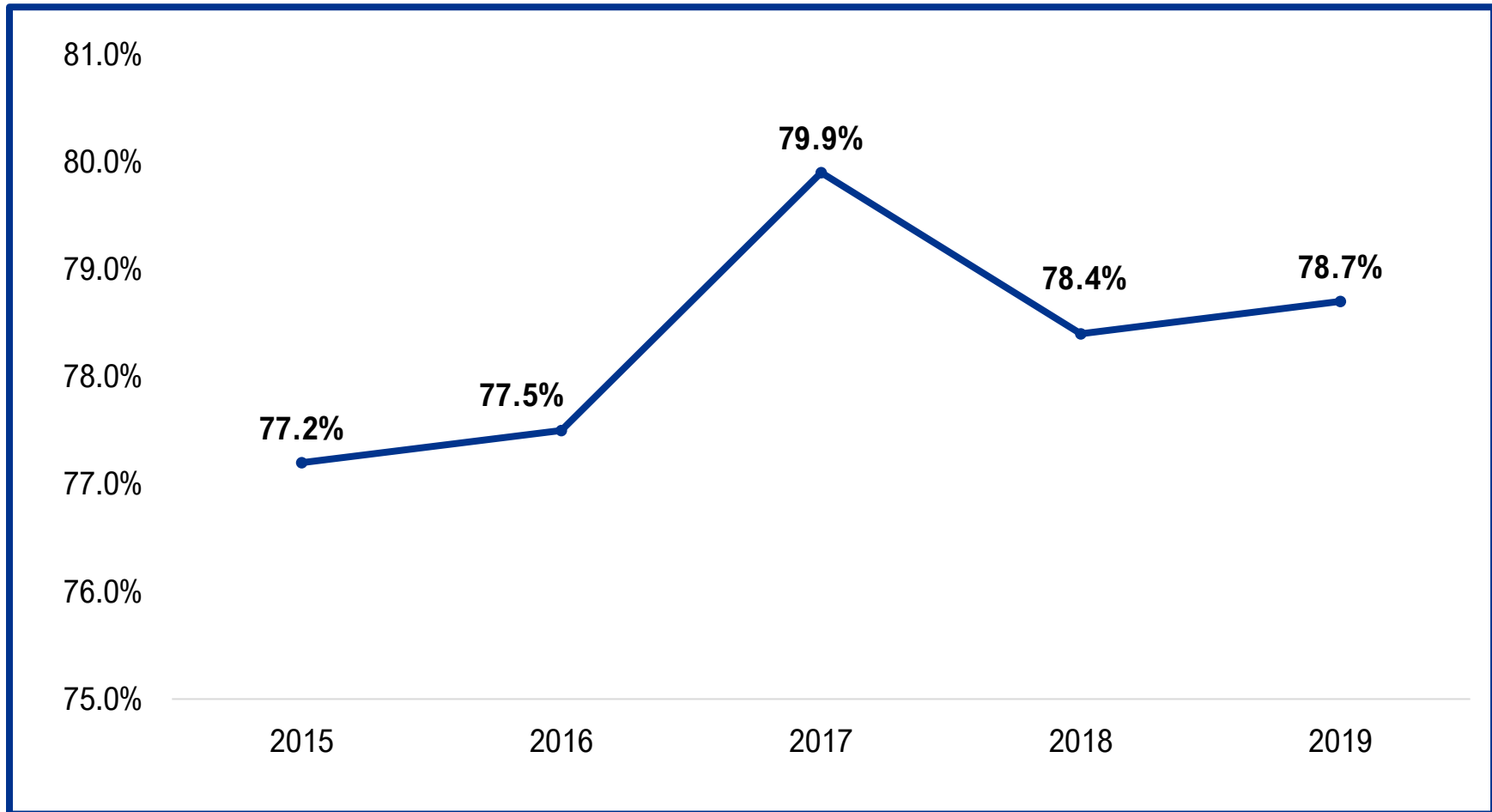
New guidelines created for coaches when recruiting student-athletes to increase retention and graduation rates





Retention

1st Year Retention Rate





Advising



Academic Success Center provides intensive academic support to first-year students identified as developmental level based on placement tests - 66% increased their scores

Created the **Advising Innovation Grant Program**, which funds faculty members and teams for developing new advising approaches



New advising resource materials and workshops have been created, including a web page for faculty advisors that outlines **best practices for advising** different populations of students



Student Support

Full-time enrollment for **graduate programs** moved from 9 credits to 6 credits to allow students to qualify for more **financial aid**

Creation of the **WSU Emergency Fund**

Student Accessibility Services, Health Services, and Counseling Services and other student-facing offices have increased the number of **evening hours**

Hired new Non-Matriculated/ Adult Student Advisor to assist **non-traditional student populations**

Created two **food pantries**: Thea's Pantry and the DGCE Pop up Pantry





Student Success



Continued increase in **retention** and **graduation** rates

94% of the Class of 2018 is **employed**, pursuing **further education** or both within one year of graduating

90% of the Class of 2018 has remained in **Massachusetts** following graduating

Featured in U.S. News & World Report as a **Top Performer on Social Mobility**

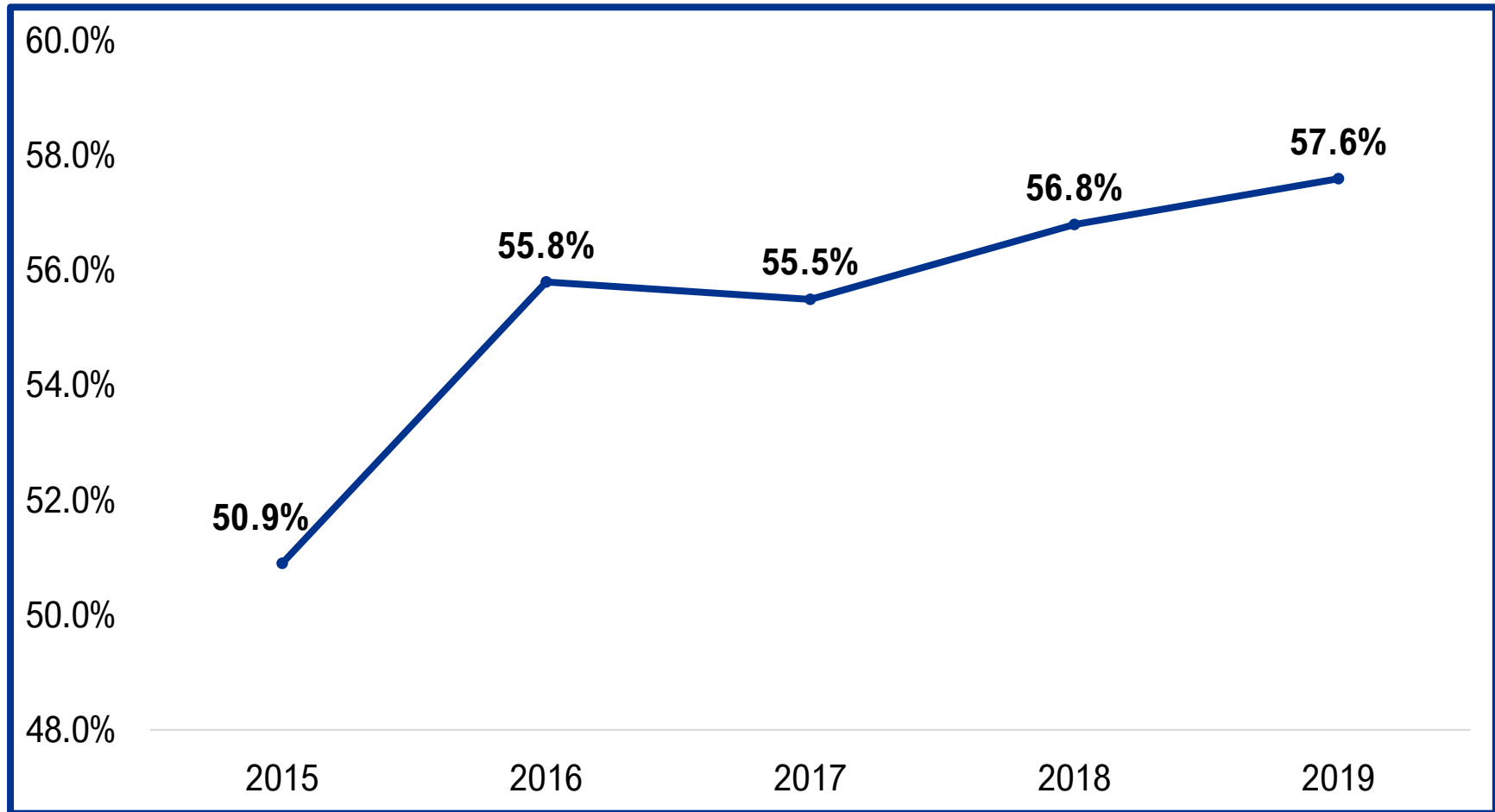
100% pass rates for Nursing, Occupational Therapy, and Speech Language Pathology program national examinations





Student Success

6 Year Graduation Rate





Community and Campus Life

Cultivate a vibrant campus life and a collaborative work and learning environment in which all members of the WSU community feel welcomed, included, respected, empowered, and valued



Moderate Progress



Executive Summary



Worcester State University has made **moderate progress** towards the goal of community and campus life.

While progress has been made in diversity, equity, and inclusion, as demonstrated in the increase in ALANA representation and initiatives to support marginalized groups, we continue to struggle with internal communication and sense of belonging on campus.

In addition, commuter students, transfer students, graduate students, and older-adult learners reported a low sense of belonging.

The equity gap for some of our students was highlighted during the Coronavirus pandemic, with a significant number of our students not having access to reliable devices or internet, as well as having to manage schoolwork with other responsibilities.



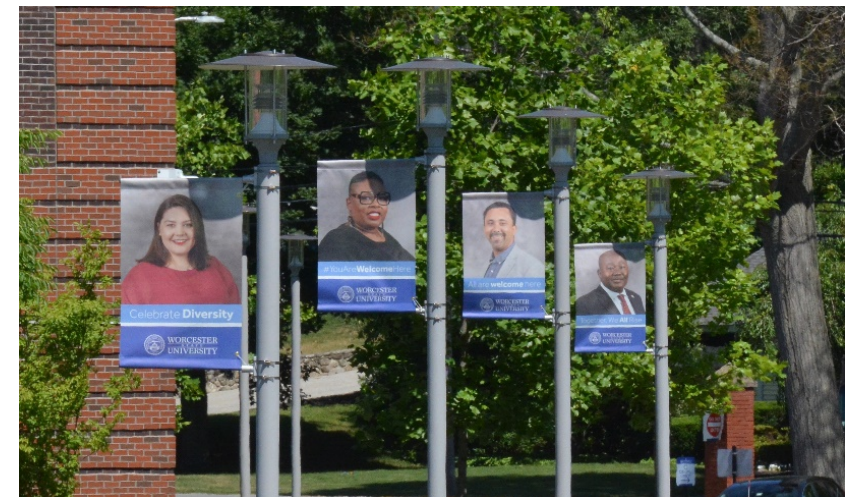
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Launched **Five Points of Action** Toward a More Inclusive Campus Climate in 2016

Created the **Campus Climate Committee** (CCC); the **Bias Incident Response Team** (BIRT), the Advisory Committee for **Equal Opportunity, Diversity & Affirmative Action**, and the **LGBTQ+ Advisory Group**

Created a policy to allow faculty, students, and staff to use a **chosen name** and indicate pronouns

Creation of visual representations to highlight **diverse images** of students, staff, and faculty and flags on display that represent the 206 countries of **national origin** of WSU community members





Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

ALANA faculty, staff, and student representation has increased

Implementation of the **Equal Opportunity, Diversity and Affirmative Action Plan** and achieving overall faculty diversity goals

Student Accessibility Services provides assistance to over 550 students each year

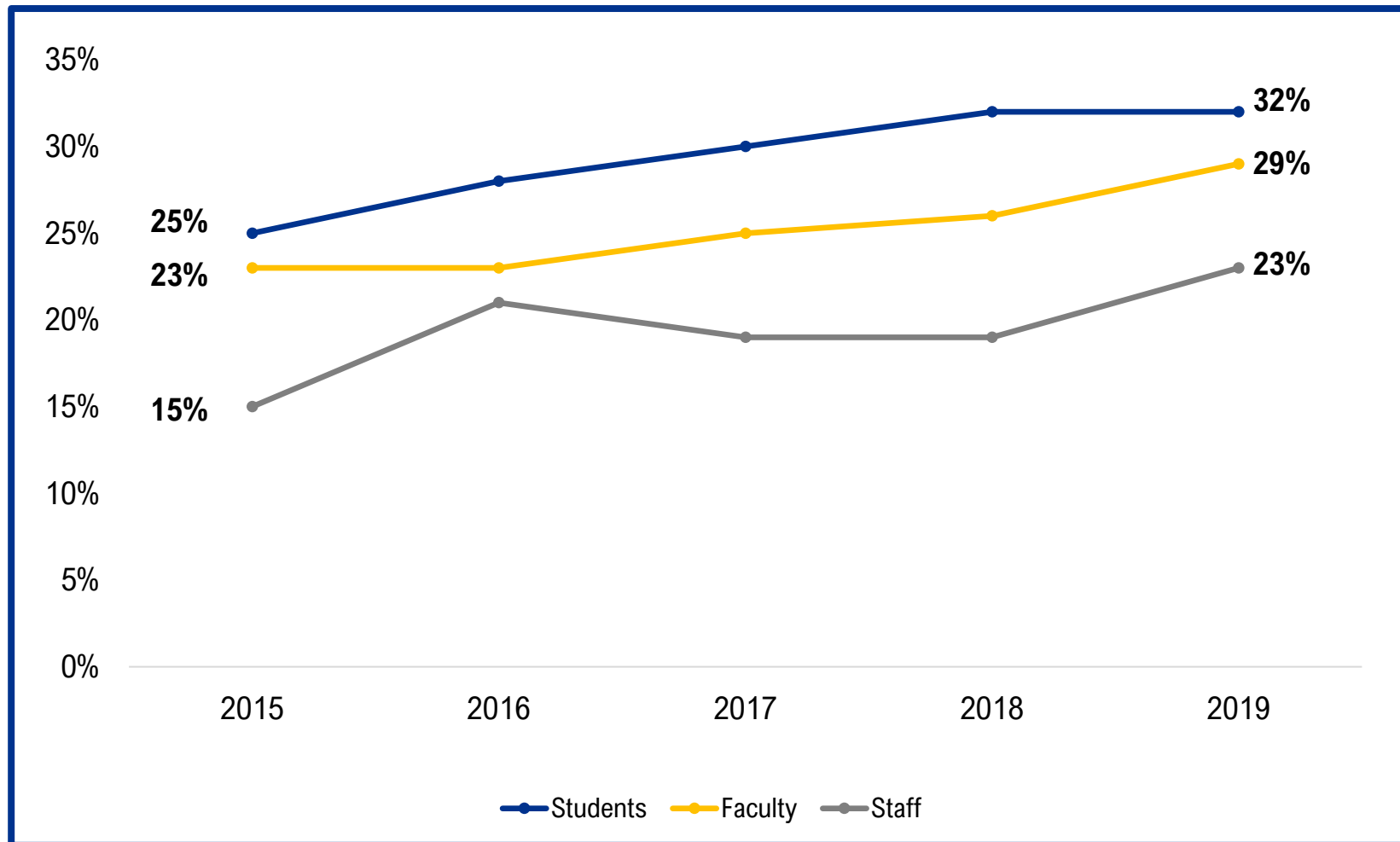
Increase in the number of **public speakers** related to diversity, equity, and inclusion





Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

ALANA Representation Students, Faculty and Staff





Faculty, Staff, and Student Recognition



Creation and expansion of opportunities to recognize faculty and staff including the **Employee Service Recognition and Retirement Celebration** and **Employee Fun Day**

Resumed participation in the **Commonwealth Performance Recognition Program**

Began celebrating adjunct faculty through the annual **Adjunct Faculty Dinner** and through **adjunct faculty teaching and research awards**

Academic achievement awards are given to students each year and celebrated at **Academic Achievement Awards Ceremony**

Creation of the **Showcase of Faculty Scholarship and Creativity**





Campus Life

Sponsored campus-wide **International Food Festival**

Department of Visual and Performing Arts mounts three **theatrical productions** annually, including one student-directed production

More **evening and weekend** events and events targeting **commuter students**

Instituted the annual **Global Action Fair**

Multicultural Affairs celebrates Latin Heritage Month, Black History Month, Asian Heritage Month and more

Increased the number of local, national, and international opportunities for **alumni** to connect with Worcester State





Resources, Revenue, and Sustainability

Promote financial strength and organizational sustainability while continuing to secure and invest the resources required to maintain WSU's reputation for excellence and value



Moderate Progress



Executive Summary



Worcester State University has made **moderate progress** towards the goal of financial strength.

Although we have made significant progress in increasing our endowment, financial concerns remain. Despite our ten-year increase in enrollment state appropriations have remained the same.

To alleviate reliance on state funding, a higher investment in revenue-generating programs is needed. In addition, more resources for grants would assist in growing new revenue as well as promoting a reputation for academic excellence and innovation.

Lastly, the recent Coronavirus pandemic has highlighted our need to invest more heavily in technology through funding and staffing levels, including support for faculty for online course development.



Financial Stability

Wellness Center is on pace to generate about \$100,000 in **net revenue**

Center for Business and Industry increased the number of trainings offered and revenue obtained

\$1,416,907 **grant funds** received in 2019

Best College Value by Kiplinger's Personal Finance

Featured as a **Best College for your Money** by Money Magazine in 2017, 2018, and 2019

Convened a cross-divisional **Budget Working Group** to evaluate opportunities for efficiencies, cost-savings, and improvements to operating procedures and reporting





Infrastructure



Secured the largest allocation of five-year **critical repair funds** for State Universities in the Commonwealth; funding will be used for large scale building renovations focusing on the LRC and Student Center

Acquisition of Temple Emmanuel Property (**May St. Building**) and parking, the property at the 537 Chandler Street location which currently houses the **Latino Education Institute (LEI)**, and 531 May Street which houses the **WSU Teaching Garden**, run by the Urban Action Institute



Construction of the **Wellness Center**

All new or renovated buildings will have **gender-neutral facilities** to provide all students with the opportunity to belong to the Worcester State community



Sustainability

Achieved **LEED Gold** certification for four buildings

Created **hydration stations**, **recycling** initiatives, **charging stations** for electric vehicles (EVs), and **rainwater collection**

Purchased fitness equipment that, when used, **generates electricity** that goes back into the Wellness Center's power

Transitioned to copy paper is 30% and notepads that are 50% **post-consumer recycled**

Supporting **two solar fields** by purchasing net metering credits totaling 6.5 megawatts

Featured in **Princeton Review's Green College Guide** for 6 years in a row





Giving



Continued increase in **endowment**

Implemented **Changing Lives Campaign** for scholarship support, the **Transfer Scholarship** program, **Giving Tuesday** and the **Adopt a Scholar** program

Creation of the **Young Alumni President's Circle**, an exclusive incremental giving society for recent graduates

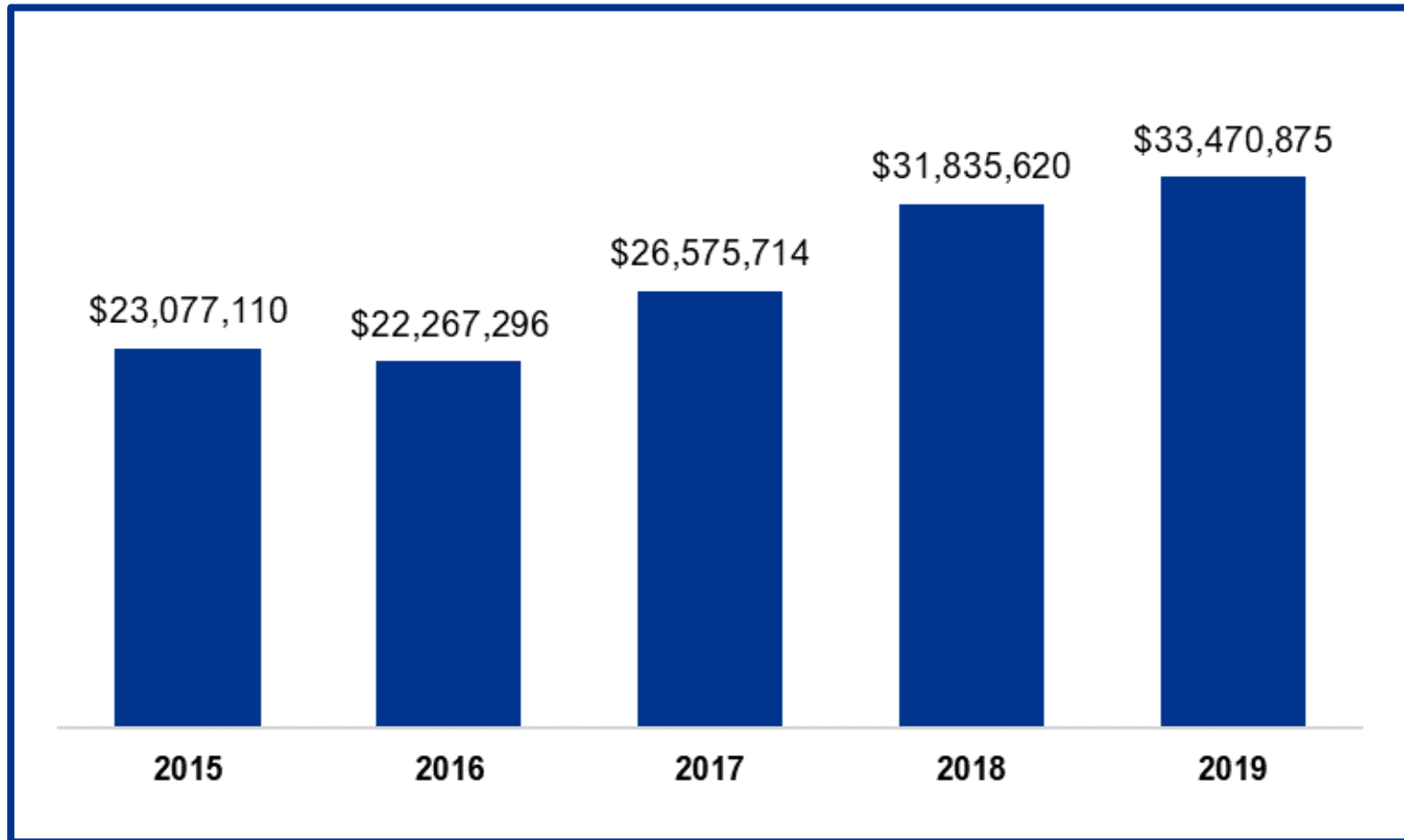
Highest **alumni participation** in annual giving among Massachusetts state universities

Recognized with a **2019 CASE Educational Fundraising Award**, which honors exceptional fundraising programs at educational institutions in the United States





Endowment Growth





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