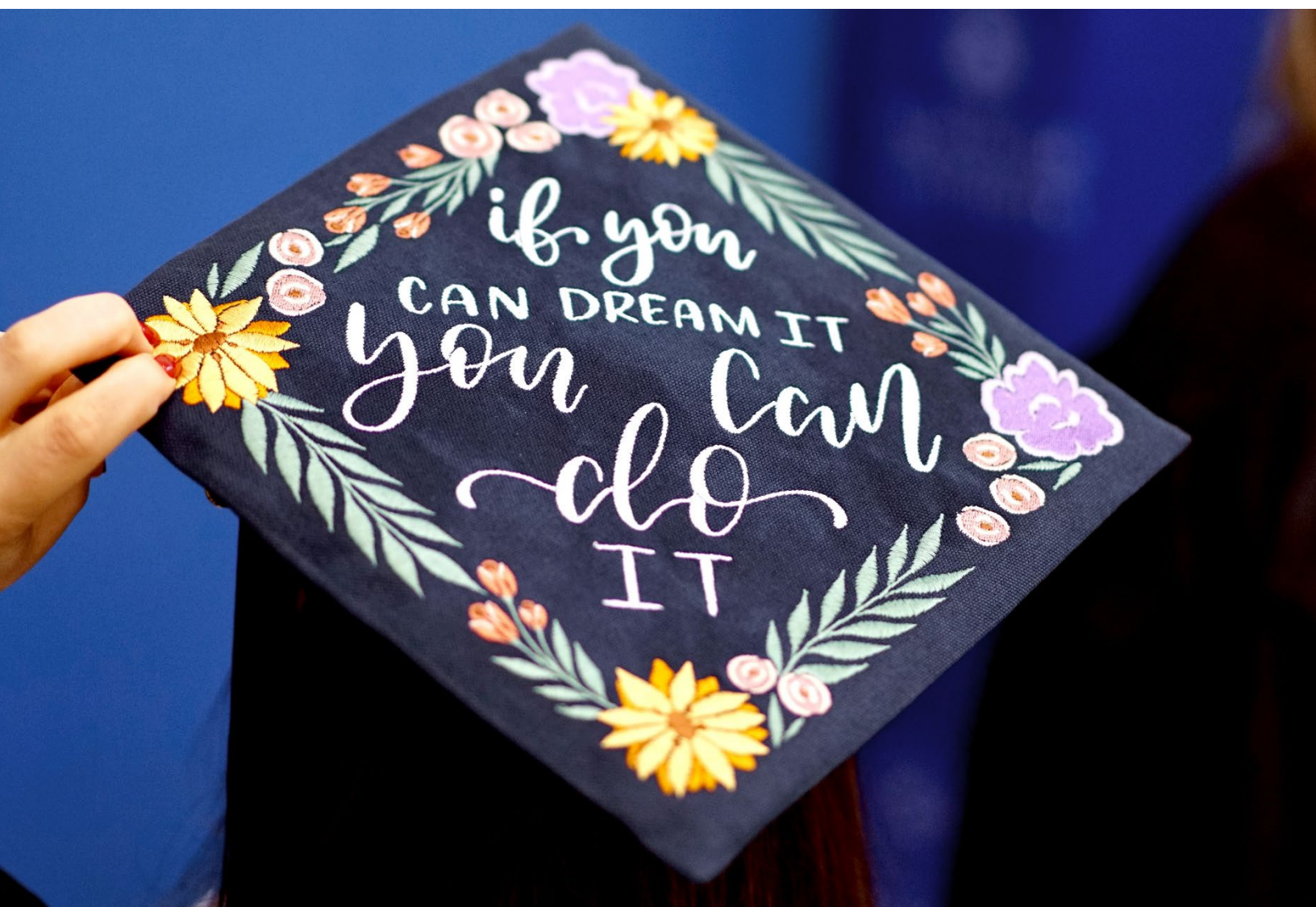


Strategic Plan

Fifth Year Progress

2024-2025



WORCESTER
STATE
UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

The 2024-2025 academic year marks the fifth year of Worcester State University's Strategic Plan: ***Beyond 150*** and demonstrates substantial progress across the University's six goals.

Over the past five years, we have expanded experiential learning opportunities, enriched student support, increased community partnerships, improved operational processes, and enhanced visibility through faculty scholarship, grants, and external recognition.

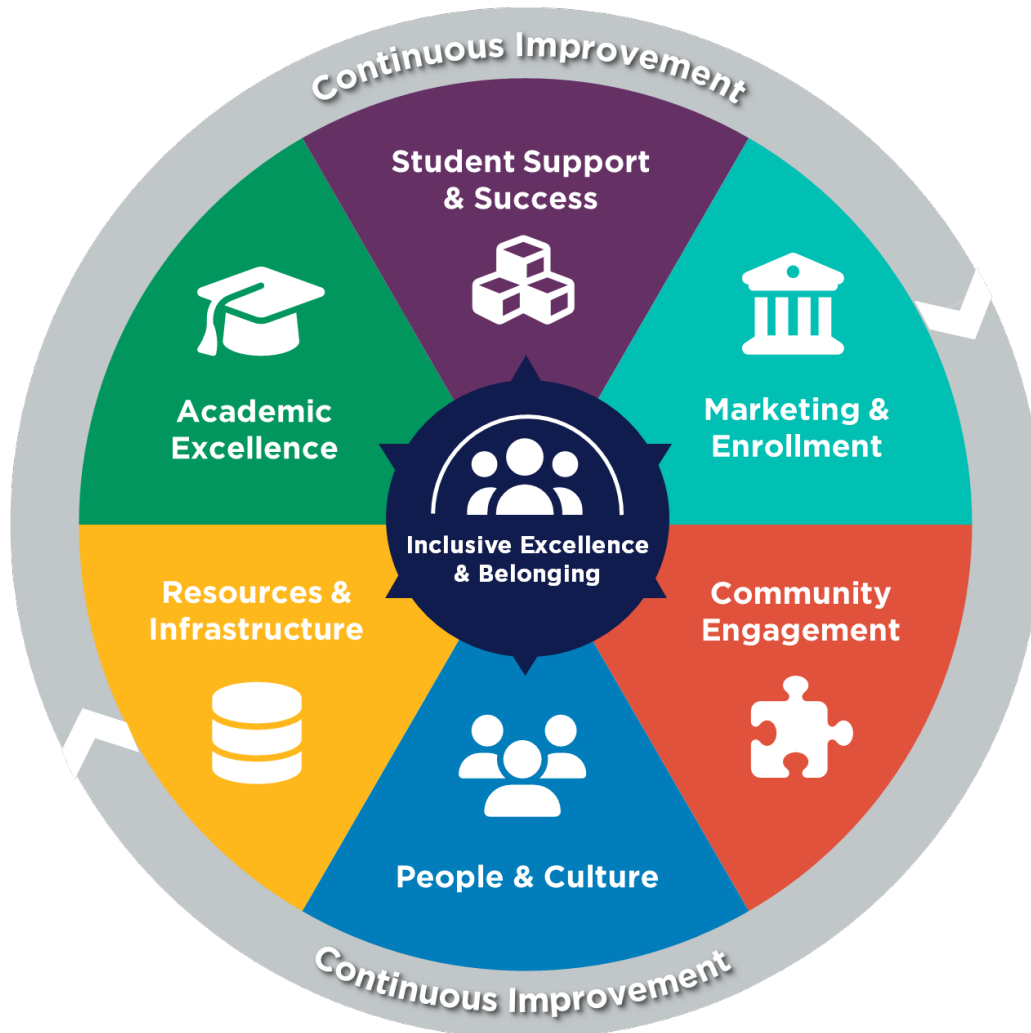
In addition to achieving measurable progress towards our goals, we have also made strides in the development of sustainable practices that will continue beyond the current plan. Many initiatives launched as part of the Strategic Plan have become embedded in the ongoing work of the University and continue to shape institutional culture, decision-making, and student experiences.

This report provides an overview of our progress through key metrics and initiative implementation tracking, and highlights some of the many achievements of the 2024-2025 academic year.

As we enter the final year of the current Strategic Plan in 2026-2027 and begin preparing for our next plan, we are well-positioned to build upon this momentum.

Strategic Plan Framework

The Strategic Plan consists of six goals, with inclusive excellence and belonging and continuous improvement infused throughout.



Metrics Progress

Progress towards meeting our targets is on track, with most metrics at least 75% of the target.

All Metrics

94%

At least 75% of target

Inclusive Excellence & Belonging

97%

At least 75% of target

Continuous Improvement

93%

At least 75% of target

Academic Excellence

100%

At least 75% of target

Student Support & Success

95%

At least 75% of target

Marketing & Enrollment

100%

At least 75% of target

Community Engagement

100%

At least 75% of target

People & Culture

93%

At least 75% of target

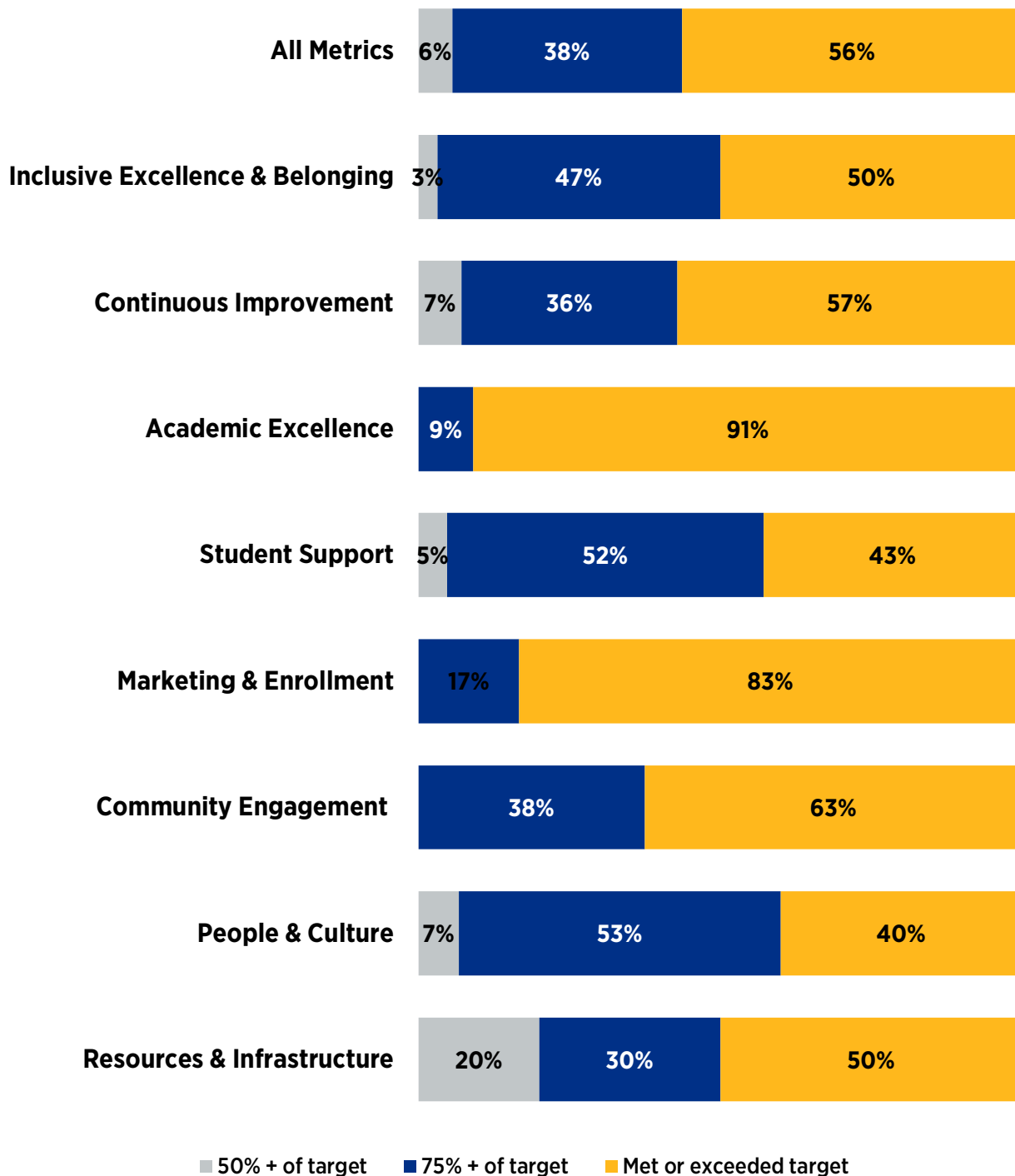
Resources & Infrastructure

80%

At least 75% of target

Progress to Target

More than half our metrics have already met or exceeded the target.



Initiative Progress

Most initiatives have been fully implemented or are established practices.

All Initiatives

90%

Fully Implemented or
Established

Inclusive Excellence & Belonging

93%

Fully Implemented or
Established

Continuous Improvement

91%

Fully Implemented or
Established

Academic Excellence

100%

Fully Implemented or
Established

Student Support & Success

86%

Fully Implemented or
Established

Marketing & Enrollment

89%

Fully Implemented or
Established

Community Engagement

91%

Fully Implemented or
Established

People & Culture

86%

Fully Implemented or
Established

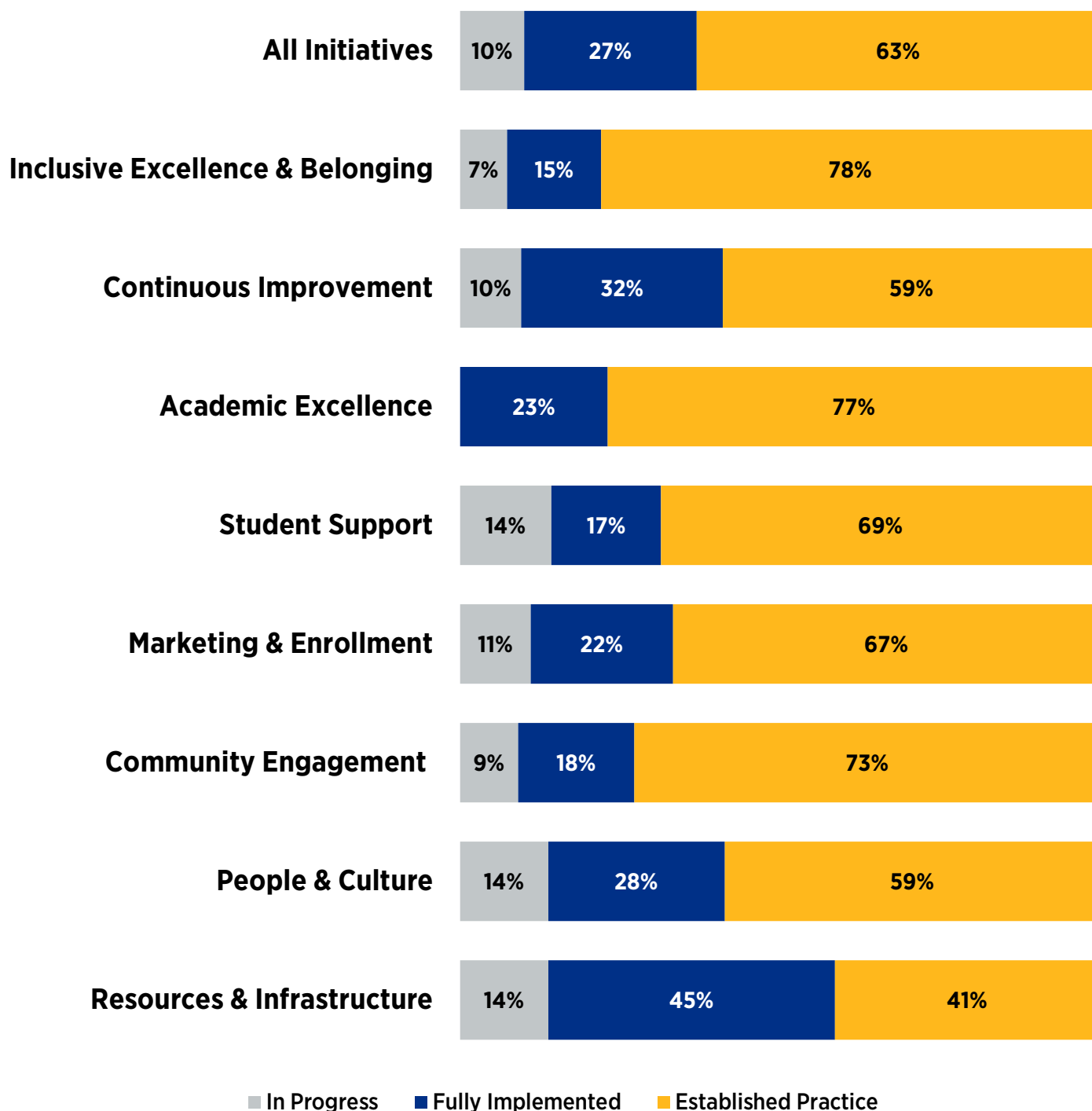
Resources & Infrastructure

86%

Fully Implemented or
Established

Initiative Implementation

More than 60% of initiatives have been completed or established as ongoing practices.



Key Progress Indicators

The following indicators represent selected outcome measures associated with each strategic goal.

Inclusive Excellence & Belonging	African American Undergraduate Enrollment	10%	10% Target
	Latine Undergraduate Enrollment	21%	15% Target
	ALANA/BIPOC Full-time Faculty	26%	31% Target
	ALANA/BIPOC Full-time Staff	26%	31% Target
	Diversity Course Sections	9%	10% Target

Continuous Improvement	Operational Excellence Projects Reviewed	28	20 Target
	Operational Excellence Projects Initiated	17	15 Target
	Operational Excellence Projects Completed	11	10 Target
	Financial Sustainability Recommendations Reviewed	70	70 Target
	Financial Sustainability Recommendations Initiated	40	50 Target
	Financial Sustainability Recommendations Completed	30	40 Target
	Processes and/or Practices Improved	312	300 Target
Academic Excellence & Distinction	Students in Internship, Practica, or Fieldwork	22%	25% Target
	Experiential Learning Sections	42%	40% Target
	Undergraduate Online Sections	27%	25% Target

Student Support & Success	1st Year Retention	78%	80% Target
	African American 1st Year Retention	81%	80% Target
	Latine 1st Year Retention	74%	80% Target
	6 Year Graduation Rate	57%	60% Target
	African American 6 Year Graduation Rate	54%	60% Target
	Latine 6 Year Graduation Rate	38%	60% Target
Marketing & Enrollment	Undergraduate Enrollment	4892	5200 Target
	Graduate Enrollment	880	840 Target
	Early College and Dual Enrollment Sections	132	100 Target

Community Engagement	Partnerships with Local Organizations	705	500 Target
	Students in Civic Engagement Sections	3281	3000 Target
	ALANA/BIPOC Students in Civic Engagement Sections	42%	32% Target
People & Culture	Full-Time Faculty Retention	92%	95% Target
	Full-Time Staff Retention	88%	95% Target
Resources & Infrastructure	Endowment Funds Transferred to the University	\$2,200,000	\$2 M Target
	Estimated Savings/Cost Reduction from OpEx/FSTF	\$5,600,000	\$6 M Target
	Grants Awarded	35	35 Target



Unique Learning Experiences

Worcester State offers transformative learning opportunities that connect academics to real-world applications.

Two new language courses: Quechua and Vietnamese.

Quechua is the language spoken by descendants of the Incas. The new courses were prompted by an influx of Quechua-speaking immigrants in recent years, as well as significant Vietnamese immigrant communities in the region.

The Zombie Survival Challenge

An epidemiology simulation of a viral pandemic for public health majors and non-majors.

Field trip to the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)

Students enrolled in the Emergency Management course learned about real-world statewide disaster response and coordination.

Museum of Worcester Partnership

Established a multi-faceted, continuous partnership to create a hands-on learning laboratory for students.

Ulster University (Northern Ireland) Agreement

Allows undergraduate students in English, History, Political Science, Sociology, and Urban Studies to seamlessly transition into graduate programs at Ulster University.

Faculty Scholarship

Worcester State faculty are experts and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in their fields.

Dr. Eleanor Fondell, Dr. Jaime Vallejos & Dr. Mariana Calle (Health Sciences). “Lifestyle behaviors associated with weight loss intent in adolescent girls: Findings from the US 2021 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey.” *Nutrients*.

Dr. Meghna Dillip & Dr. Margaret Kerr (Chemistry). “Circles of sustainability: an activity for visualizing synergies and trade-offs in a systems thinking environment.” *Green Chemistry Letters and Reviews*.

Dr. Nicole Rosa, Dr. Jacquelyn Raftery-Helmer, Dr. Kathryn Frazier & Dr. Colleen Sullivan (Psychology). “Motivational Needs Satisfaction and Universal Design for Learning.” *Teaching of Psychology*.

Dr. Brittany Jeye (Psychology) & Dr. Riley McGuire (English). “Effective use of vision and art assignments in an undergraduate sensation and perception course.” *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology*.

Dr. Yan Hu (Biology). “Resistance to Cry14A family *Bacillus thuringiensis* crystal proteins in *Caenorhabditis elegans* operates via the nhr-31 transcription factor and vacuolar-type ATPase pathway.” *PLoS Pathogens*.

Dr. Nabin Malakar (Earth, Environment & Physics). “Can AI solve physics problems? Evaluating efficacy of AI models in solving higher secondary physics exam problems: A comparative study.” *Journal of Nepal Physical Society*.

Kristine A Camacho (Education). “Rethinking School Psychologist Ratios through a Practice Model Lens in One Northeast State.” *Contemporary School Psychology*.

Dr. Alison Okuda (History & Political Science). “The World of Funky Wanky Folks.” *Ghana Studies*.

Dr. Nafisa Nipun Tanjeem (Interdisciplinary Studies). “The Agricultural Sector and Women’s Work in Asia.” *New Frontiers in Regional Science: Asian Perspectives*.

Dr. William Deane (Nursing). “The use of ChatGPT in nursing education: A novel approach to developing case studies.” *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*.

Discovery & Dialogues

Worcester State provides opportunities for students to explore and discuss new topics through lectures, panels, and events.

Alumnus Brian Skerry, National Geographic photographer and filmmaker, presented a special compilation of his latest work, a three-part PBS documentary series: **Sea Change: The Gulf of Maine**, which investigates extreme warming of this body of water compared to the rest of the ocean.



Julieta Gleiser, Emmy-nominated VFX producer and founder of Alchemy CGI, presented: **AI in Animation & Imaging: The Future is Here**, exploring the evolving role of artificial intelligence in creative industries.

Adam Strom, Executive Director of Re-Imagining Migration presented: **Understanding Immigration: Debunking Myths, Fighting Misinformation, and Tackling Xenophobia** for an audience of 100 students, staff, and faculty.

Christian deRezendes, director of the Emmy-winning documentary series, **Slatersville: America's First Mill Village**, shared insights into his process and the making of his ongoing PBS-broadcast docuseries.

Ian Wong, former Deputy Director of Worcester Department of Public Health gave a lecture to students at WSU during National Public Health Week.

Urban Studies and the School of Humanities and Social Sciences sponsored a film screening for the 10 finalists of the **Manhattan Short Film Festival**.



The **Free Speech: Myth and Reality** round table featured WSU faculty:

Dr. Matt Ortoleva (English)
Dr. Charlotte Haller (History)
Dr. Erika Briesacher (History)
Dr. Cleve Wiese (English)
Dr. Jamie Remillard (English)
Dr. Nathan Angelo (Political Science)
Dr. Carter Hardy (Philosophy)

Academic Connection & Success

Worcester State's academic departments strengthen student connection and retention by offering informal opportunities to connect with faculty and staff.

The **Biology Department** offered a Giant Microbe give-away for students who met with their advisor during preregistration and provided snacks while students were waiting.

The **Department of Earth, Environment & Physics** hosted a Fall Welcome Event and End of Year Celebration.

The **Mathematics Department** hosted five potluck lunches for students and Math Club tutors and a pizza party on Reading Day in both the Fall and Spring semester.

The **Business Administration & Economics Department** offered informal advising opportunities with “Grab a Slice and Get Some Advice.”

The **Chemistry Department** hosted two student retention events: “Elemental Connections”, which provided students the opportunity to eat pizza, meet faculty, and discuss career pathways and “Taco Tuesday (on a Monday)”.

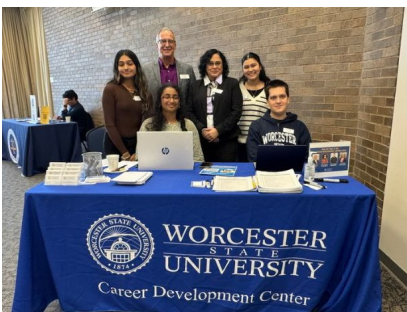


Career Exploration & Preparation

Worcester State prepares students to succeed in a constantly changing workforce by providing comprehensive support for career exploration and planning.

The First Destinations Survey showed **81% employment** within 6 months of graduation with a median salary of **\$65,103**. In addition, 20% of 2025 graduates are continuing their education.

The Career Development Center engaged **769 students** across career coaching, workshops, career fairs, and employer-hosted events.



The Future Forum, a three-day career event, provided students with a variety of opportunities to explore potential career paths and connect with alumni. The event included a Young Alumni Panel, the opportunity to take professional headshots, a networking event, and a series of practical workshops including Beyond the Résumé, Taking Responsibility and Supporting Accountability, and Practice Interviews.

The **Green Careers Fair** and **Green Careers Panel** were hosted by the Department of Earth, Environment & Physics.

The **Criminal Justice Career Fair** was hosted by the Criminal Justice Department.

The Psychology Department offered two specialized information sessions offering students insights into professional pathways and graduate study opportunities: **Graduate School and Career Information Session** and **Careers in Behavioral Health Information Session**.

The Urban Studies Department offered two **Career Conversation** events, one in each semester.

The Speech Language Hearing Sciences Department hosted two Afternoon Bites and Insights on the topics of **Preparing For Grad School** and **Working With Diverse Populations**.

Holistic Student Support

Worcester State provides comprehensive support to ensure the wellbeing and success of all our students.

9th Annual Fresh Check Day

More than 400 students participated in the emotional well-being fair that spotlights mental health and wellness support services available on campus. The event includes over 18 student groups and Worcester State departments.

Sexual Assault & Violence Prevention

Multiple programs equip students with the tools to stay safe on campus with Rape Aggression Defense (RAD) program, workshops by Worcester State's Sexual Assault and Violence Education (SAVE) program, and a 5K race to support the One Love Foundation, an organization that empowers young people with the knowledge to identify and avoid abusive relationships.

ValuePlus Launched

Worcester State ValuePlus brings together a range of financial resources and academic supports that reduce or eliminate obstacles so that every student can earn a bachelor's degree. Students can attend Worcester State for free if they are MA residents, planning to commute, and are Pell eligible.

Counseling Services

The office highlights no waitlists and the wait time for intake remains below 5 business days. The walk-in/crisis appointments continue to be well-utilized at slightly over 300 individual contacts.

Veterans' Benefits Exploration Event

Military and Veteran Services hosted an event that provided critical resources and personalized guidance to students navigating their educational benefits.

Thea's Pantry

Thea's pantry was relocated to the first floor of the Student Center, providing increased awareness and visibility for students. There were 927 visits to the pantry and 1015 meal passes given out during the year. 6828 lbs. of food was contributed to the pantry through donations, Worcester County Food Bank and grant purchases.



Worcester State University received the **2025-26 Silver Military Friendly® School** and **Military Friendly® Spouse** designations for the second year in a row for its commitment to military-affiliated students.

Visibility & Recognition

Worcester State faculty and staff continue to gain recognition for their excellence, increasing regional, national, and international visibility.

President Barry Maloney was awarded the **Worcester Business Journal's Large Business Leader of the Year Award**.

Laxmi Bissoondial, Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, was awarded the **Katharine F. Erskine Award by the YWCA of Central Massachusetts** for demonstrating leadership and reaching exemplary levels of achievement in their professions and communities.

Mary Jo Marion, Associate Vice President of University and Community Engagement, was appointed by The Healey-Driscoll Administration to the new **Commission on Higher Education Quality and Affordability**.

Dr. Heather Treseler, Professor of English, won the prestigious **Pushcart Prize**, one of America's most prestigious literary awards, for her poem "Purpura."

Dr. Jamie Remillard, Associate Professor of English, was named a **University of Vermont Center for Community News Champion** for her work in building and sustaining partnerships between academic institutions and community news organizations.

Dr. Susan Monaghan, Associate Professor of Education, was awarded a **Fulbright Specialist Award** to collaborate with Estonia's Ministry of Education and Research on improving their STEM standards and integrating new technologies like AI into the classroom.

Dr. Alison Okuda, Associate Professor of History & Political Science, was awarded the **Outstanding Article Prize from the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora** for her article, "Black Power, Raw Soul, and Race in Ghana" published in African Studies Review.

Dr. Nafisa Nipun Tanjeem, Associate Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies, was selected as a **Civic Engagement & Voting Rights Teacher Scholar** fellow at Clemson University, funded through a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Community Partnerships

Worcester State connects with the community through partnerships, civic engagement, and public services.

The **11th Annual National African American Read In and ALANA Preview Day** was attended by more than 100 area high school students.

Pen Pals Field Day celebrated the end of the student-athlete correspondence program with May Street School's fourth-grade class for a morning filled with fun games.

The **Call to Education Conference**, in partnership with Worcester Public Schools brought more than 100 high school students to campus to learn about education careers through a teacher-led panel.

The **3rd Annual Brotherhood and Sisterhood Leadership Conference** was attended by nearly 300 high school and university students from across Massachusetts to learn from distinguished speakers and panelists.

The **15th Annual Math Madness Event** provided more than 500 students from local elementary schools the opportunity to enhance their math skills by applying math concepts in the real-world setting of a basketball game.

Through the **IRS-sponsored VITA program**, Worcester State University accounting students contributed over 400 hours of service and assisted more than 430 individuals and families, helping secure over \$660,000 in tax refunds and saving clients thousands in preparation fees.

The Criminal Justice Department hosted a **college visit for court-involved juveniles** in partnership with the Worcester County Juvenile Court (WCJC). As part of this program, Professor Sean Keefe gave an overview of the criminal justice system, and a current WSU student speaker shared his personal college experience to encourage and inspire the visiting youth.

Students Delaina McDaniel (Public Health), Fiona Hatton (Computer Science), Wyatt Friedlander (Business Administration) and Christian Phinney (Chemistry) traveled to Washington, D.C., to **advocate for federal student financial aid programs** with members of Congress as part of a multi-university trip organized by the Higher Education Consortium of Central MA (HECCMA).



Grants and Donations

Worcester State benefits from external support through grants, gifts, and donations.

**\$1.24
million**

Gift from Becker College to establish the Becker Legacy Endowed Scholarship for Nursing Leadership, the Becker Legacy Endowment for Nursing Faculty Development, and the Becker Legacy Study Abroad Program for Healthcare Leadership.

\$760,000

Anonymous donation to support Enrollment Management, Career Services and Financial Aid.

\$270,725

MA Department of Higher Education grant to support students mental and behavioral health.

\$250,000

Endowment for the Robert K. O'Brien Next Big Idea Contest, funded by Bob O'Brien's son, Brendan O'Brien, and his wife, Julie Grasso, providing \$10,000 annually to be used for prize money and program expenses.

\$100,000

Barr Foundation grant to support the Latino Education Institute's Youth Civics Union and Familias Latinas Activas en Misión de Aprendizaje.

\$100,000

Support from Santander Bank for educational, entrepreneurial, and experiential learning programming (\$75,000) and to provide scholarships for study abroad students (\$25,000).

\$37,270

Raised during the WooGives campaign.



Inclusive Excellence & Belonging

Worcester State is committed to maintaining an environment in which all members are valued, respected, and supported.

At the **3rd Annual Unity Day**, more than 150 students, staff, and faculty gathered on the Common Ground outside the Student Center to celebrate unity and growing diversity with speeches and the raising of the HACU flag.

The LGBTQIA+ Resource Center offered two workshops to help faculty and staff support LGBTQIA+ students: **Allyship Training**, which covered basic terminology, key concepts, and resources for LGBTQIA+ allies to support the community and **Beyond the Binary**, which explored the topics covered in the Allyship Training in greater detail.

The **Inclusive Excellence and Belonging Strategic Plan** was finalized and presented to the Board of Trustees.

Shamarah Ramirez, a computer science major, was awarded the **Hack.Diversity Fellowship**, which supports individuals from marginalized communities who are interested in technology,

Continuous Improvement

Worcester State promotes a culture of continuous improvement and operational excellence through consistent assessment, data-informed decision-making and incremental change.

Implemented **Dynamic Forms**, a cloud-based, secure electronic form management system designed for higher education institutions to digitize, manage, and automate paper-based workflows. Multiple trainings have been offered, and 10 new forms were launched, with at least 20 more in the pipeline.

Process improvements for the CORI Policy, field trips and student travel, gift cards, and Cleary training.

A **University-Wide Risk Assessment** (URIP) to strengthen how the University identifies and manages risks while aligning departmental priorities with broader institutional goals was initiated and is ongoing.

The Sexual Misconduct Response Team (SMRT) completed the University's first **Sexual Misconduct Campus Climate Survey**. The results provided valuable insights into how sexual misconduct impacts our student population, and informed future efforts to strengthen safety, support, and educational programming.

An **upgraded virtual campus tour** experience allows users to explore the Worcester State campus through a variety of media, such as 360-degree photos, video content and text call outs.

Analysis

Overall Progress

Five years into the Strategic Plan, we have made significant progress in realizing our goals. More than 90% of metrics are currently at or above 75% of their established targets, with more than half having already met or exceeded their targets. In addition, 90% of initiatives have been fully implemented and 63% have been completed or established as ongoing practices.

We also demonstrated advancement in Inclusive Excellence & Belonging and Continuous Improvement metrics and initiatives, reflecting ongoing institutional efforts to strengthen equity, operational effectiveness, and data-informed decision-making.

Collectively, these outcomes demonstrate consistent institutional progress despite the broader challenges facing higher education, including demographic shifts, enrollment pressures, workforce challenges, and increasing student support needs.

Areas of Significant Achievement

Several areas demonstrated notable progress during this year. We expanded experiential learning opportunities, community partnerships, and career preparation initiatives that connect academic learning with workforce readiness and civic engagement.

We also strengthened holistic student support services, including mental health resources, food security initiatives, financial support programs, and services for military-affiliated students.

Faculty scholarship, grants, and external recognition continued to enhance Worcester State's regional and national visibility, while partnerships with community organizations, schools, and public agencies strengthened the University's role as an anchor institution within the region.

Operationally, we initiated several continuous improvement efforts designed to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and financial sustainability.

Emerging Challenges & Opportunities

While significant progress has been made, several metrics remain below their targets and reflect ongoing challenges facing higher education nationally.

Areas related to enrollment, retention, graduation, and long-term financial sustainability continue to require focused attention and sustained investment. In addition, changing student demographics, increasing mental health and support needs, workforce pressures, and the rapidly evolving technological landscape will continue to shape institutional priorities moving forward.

At the same time, these challenges present opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and strategic alignment. Many initiatives established through the current Strategic Plan provide a strong foundation for future efforts related to student success, operational effectiveness, inclusive excellence, and institutional resilience.

Looking Ahead

As we prepare for the development of our next Strategic Plan, the fifth-year review provides an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned throughout the implementation process.

The current Strategic Plan established an ambitious and comprehensive framework that guided institutional priorities across a broad range of areas. Moving forward, we will have the opportunity to build upon this progress while identifying strategic priorities that are increasingly focused, measurable, and responsive to emerging institutional and external needs.

The work completed over the past five years has created strong momentum for the future and reinforced Worcester State's commitment to student success, academic excellence, community engagement, and continuous improvement.



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