



LEAD WITH PURPOSE

The Strategic Plan for WPI

May 2022 Report Card

WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

OUR MISSION

WPI transforms lives, turns knowledge into action to confront global challenges, and revolutionizes STEM through distinctive and inclusive education, projects, and research.

OUR CORE VALUES

Respect | Community | Inclusion | Innovation | Achievement

To Lead With Purpose...

“To lead with purpose, we must boldly and creatively address critical external trends and issues—many identified before and heightened by the pandemic—that impact our students, our academic and research enterprises, and our community.”

—Laurie Leshin, WPI President,
2014–2022

In the spring of 2019, President Laurie Leshin challenged the WPI community to create a shared vision for the university over the next five years, one that determined success based on defining and living our values, while focusing on our cultural impact locally and globally.

Groundwork was laid engaging students, faculty, staff, trustees, and alumni in feedback gatherings, a 120+ attendees Board of Trustees plenary session, and a survey sent to the WPI community focused on crafting a new university mission, setting the tone for the plan.

Though planning was put on hold in spring 2020 due to COVID-19, efforts resumed in the fall with a working group that included representation

from faculty governance, the four schools, and all divisions, before the plan was ultimately approved by the Board of Trustees in October 2021.

Its framework emerged following a comprehensive and inclusive planning process and is focused on three broad areas: Student Well-Being, Access, and Affordability; Purpose-Driven Education and Research; and Our Inclusive Community.

Cross-functional implementation teams are now working toward a defined set of goals and will track and regularly share key metrics with the broader community. All faculty and staff were invited to bring their passion and skills to the team to assure new perspectives and voices, as together we **LEAD WITH PURPOSE.**



To **LEAD WITH PURPOSE** we must directly address issues of student well-being, access, and affordability, and commit to building a thriving community of diverse learners and doers.

To **LEAD WITH PURPOSE** we must revolutionize what it means to be successful STEM professionals, enhance our project-based, interdisciplinary approach to their development, and build a strong infrastructure to support their success.

To **LEAD WITH PURPOSE** we must look inward to create a culture of inclusion, belonging, well-being, and respect, that draws diverse minds and provides the support necessary for all to thrive.

These goals are at the heart of this strategic plan.

Student Well-Being, Access, and Affordability



Take a **HOLISTIC AND INCLUSIVE APPROACH** to elevate student well-being across academic and co-curricular experiences, including launching the **WPI CENTER FOR WELL-BEING**.

Student Well-Being

WPI has invested across the community to enhance student well-being:

- ▶ adding three counselors at the Student Development and Counseling Center to increase capacity and decrease wait times for appointments
- ▶ increasing access to off-hours counseling
- ▶ modifying the academic calendar to allow for days focused on wellness and community building activities
- ▶ increasing staffing in Student Affairs to provide more holistic support for students

New Center for Well-Being



As part of a holistic approach to wellness, spanning academic and non-academic aspects of the student experience and aspects of work/life balance, the Center for Well-Being will apply evidence-based practices to promote well-being for students and the broader WPI campus community, recognizing the importance of faculty and staff in creating, maintaining, and modeling a healthier environment for all.

30+

Community members—including students, faculty, and staff—comprised the Mental Health and Well-Being Task Force.

1,100+

Students, faculty, and staff responded to surveys and provided input to help us better understand mental health and well-being challenges faced by our community.



Increase the number of **BLACK, INDIGENOUS, PEOPLE OF COLOR (BIPOC) STUDENTS** and students from **LOW-INCOME FAMILIES** who attend WPI.

A Diverse Class of Learners and Doers

At WPI we are leading the way among our peers to bring women into STEM by increasing the percentage of women in our undergraduate population to approximately 40 percent.

We continue to increase our efforts in diversifying our student population, focusing specifically on minoritized groups that are underrepresented on our campus.

We know that WPI has a track record for increasing social mobility, and our efforts are focused on continuing to provide greater access to these populations.

Enhancements to Recruitment Strategy



Increase prospective student leads outside of our typical applicant pool



Increase digital marketing to target students from more diverse regions



Partner with community-based organizations to increase our access within pipelines, focusing initially on three specific entities



Continue to create specific events focused on these targeted students, addressing both recruitment and yield

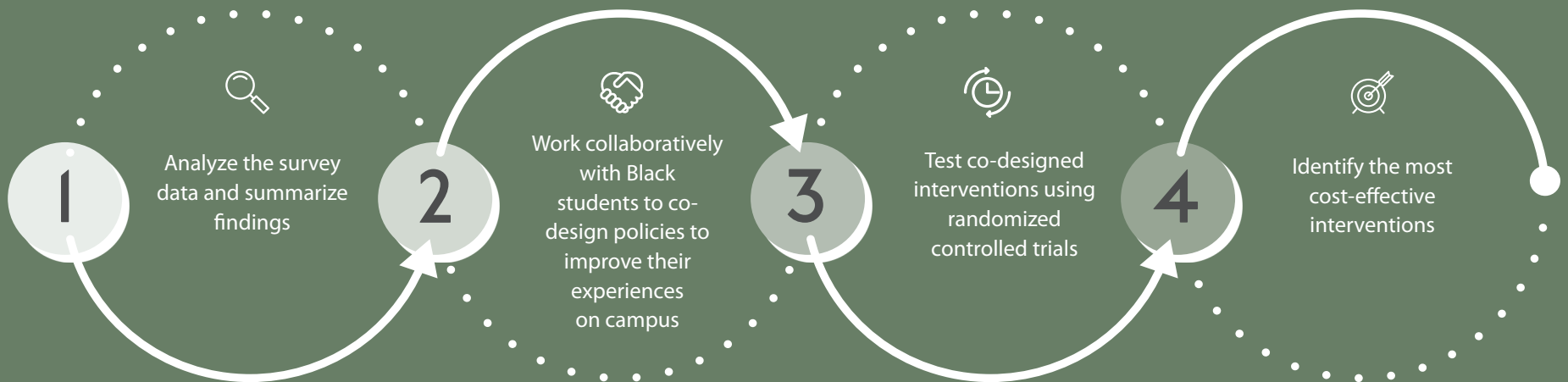


ENHANCE THE OUTCOMES and experience of minoritized and **UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENT POPULATIONS** at WPI.

Understanding the Black Student Experience

WPI invested in an internal study to better understand and improve the Black student experience. This ongoing study began with in-depth interviews with 24 alumni and current students to understand the unique challenges faced by these community members. Phase two of this study is to develop and execute a survey to collect data on the experience of current Black students.

Next Steps for the Study



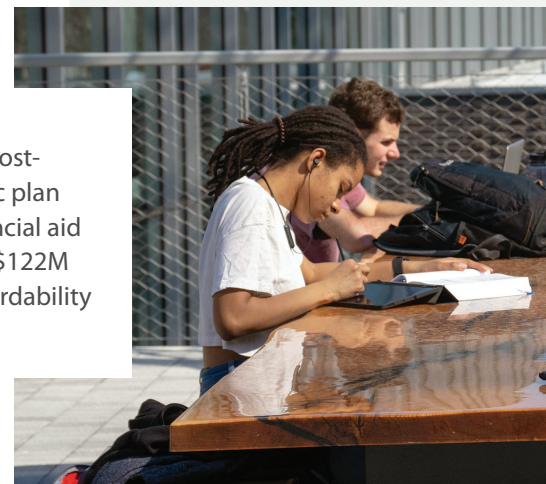
An analysis of data of the BIPOC student experience, including systems, orientation, extracurricular activities, projects, and graduate students has identified recommendations for additional dedicated space on the main campus for BIPOC students, increases to staff support for underrepresented students, and further research into trends in admissions and graduation rates of specific student populations.



REDUCE FINANCIAL BARRIERS to an undergraduate education at WPI.

Strategic Changes to Increase Investment in Aid

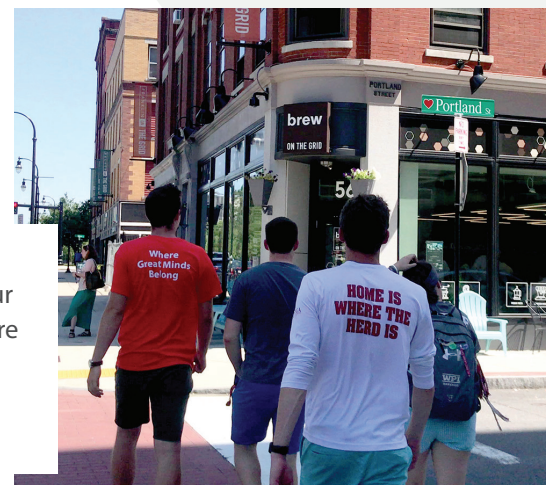
WPI has been actively working to address affordability for our students through our cost-savings initiative leading up to the strategic plan launch. WPI's investment in additional financial aid for students has grown by over \$20M, to a \$122M annual aid budget, in order to increase affordability and decrease student debt.



New financial aid practices were deployed to better align our aid funding with our strategic values by identifying applicants with correlating attributes. This will align recruitment and financial aid strategies to build a student body that embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion, in addition to academic excellence.



WPI is piloting an initiative in AY 22–23 to increase support for students with the most financial need. Our Goat Bucks pilot will provide funds to students that are linked to their student IDs and can be used for dining or bookstore purchases on campus and at some local establishments.



Purpose-Driven Education and Research



Increase our global impact by incorporating **ONLINE AND TECH-ENABLED LEARNING OPTIONS** into WPI's already distinctive, project-based curriculum at the undergraduate level, including cohort models, blended and fully remote options, and online experiential learning.

Understanding Current Technology and Its Effectiveness

Initial work is focused on establishing a baseline for our objectives by gaining a better understanding of what technology is currently in use and how widespread the usage is. We are also working to understand how we are meeting the technology needs of our faculty, and how we are providing our students with the skills they need to get the most out of their educational experience, so they are prepared fully for their future careers.





Revolutionize what it means to be **A SUCCESSFUL STEM PROFESSIONAL**, enhance our project-based, interdisciplinary approach to their development, and build an integrated research **INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT THEIR SUCCESS.**

Amplifying Work Through Increased Value

WPI is focused on continuing to raise the bar for teaching and learning. Our goal is to infuse value creation and innovation into what we do and who we are at WPI. We can create and deliver increased value to all stakeholders by solving unmet needs with solutions that add sustainable value. This work is currently occurring in smaller groups across campus regularly. This effort seeks to amplify that work, ingrain it into our culture, and further increase the differentiated value of a WPI education.





Strengthen and grow new **DEMAND-DRIVEN GRADUATE PROGRAMS** through differentiated pricing, strategic partnerships, and innovation, including practice-based MS/PhD, graduate programs from The Global School, stackable credentialing, and workforce development.



Graduate Programs

WPI leveraged work begun by the academic school deans in 2020 to develop an initial framework for evaluating and implementing new graduate programs, which is being reviewed by community stakeholders and will be implemented in the coming academic year.



Partnerships

A new process has been established for MOUs to centralize the management of global institutional partnerships with the goals of increasing awareness and increasing alignment.



Workforce

Workforce development efforts at WPI are well-established—we have focused on workforce training since our founding in 1865. The efforts for this implementation year concentrated on better defining the target audience and defining criteria that will be used to determine where our efforts will continue to be focused.



Stackable Credentials

WPI is piloting a initiative in stackable credentials: short courses that are focused on skill building in areas of demand. This is a way for WPI to focus on helping members of the workforce stay prepared as the future of work continues to evolve, allowing them to obtain the skills they need when they need them.



Expand scholarly work at **WPI: GROW INTERDISCIPLINARY DISCOVERY** and address global challenges such as sustainability, climate change, human health, and socially just technologies, through increased funding, better proposal win rates, and greater student engagement in transformational research for **IMPACT ON SOCIETAL PROBLEMS**.

To stimulate additional research, WPI is focused on continuing the following:

Crosscutting interdisciplinary
group exploration

Seed grants and partnerships with
other leading universities

Growing funding opportunities with
corporate and foundation partners

Reinforcing an Infrastructure That Supports Growth

It's imperative that our infrastructure can support current and future needs. We are focused on identifying pressure points in research support, mitigation plans, and resource needs by conducting internal and external evaluations. This work will help determine how we can best position the university for continued research growth in a sustainable way. It will also align our tech transfer goals and strategies with processes and procedures to support our work.



The newly created **Office of Research Integrity and Compliance (ORIC)** will work to support the university's commitment to scientific and ethical integrity.



The creation of **Research Service Centers** on campus such as LEAP, Practice-Point, CERES, MPI, and Material Characterization have established state-of-the-art research facilities that leverage strategic partnerships within higher education and industry.

Our Inclusive Community



Drive more explicit engagement with WPI's mission and values to **ADVANCE OUR CAMPUS CULTURE**; regularly take the pulse of our employees on how well we are **LIVING OUR VALUES**.

Highlighting Our Core Values

WPI's Division of Talent & Inclusion is actively leading efforts to bring our values to the forefront—and we recognize that this is the collective work of all members of the WPI community. It is revamping its website and the onboarding process for new employees to emphasize the importance of our core values as we recruit new talent to the university. We are also in the process of hiring our first religious education content expert in the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education (ODIME) and recruiting for our newly restructured role of Assistant Vice President for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.



To further our SIE goals of STEM Access and Retention, Enrollment Management has revamped WPI enrollment deposit and initial fee practices, and created on-demand video tutorials to help students navigate FAFSA.



Our Values at Work

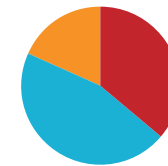
Plans are underway for several enhancements in the next year that will allow us to better assess and understand how we continue to better live our values through our work. We have modified the competencies for evaluating performance to incorporate more direct references to our values and expectations of the community to behave in ways that are aligned with them. Workplace development will also see an increased focus on providing the community with tools for fostering a culture of respect and inclusion. This will be provided to employees and student groups/leaders, with additional development for supervisory leadership. In addition, we will create and scale support networks for community affinity groups.



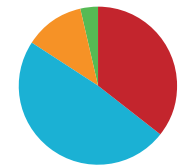
Build an **INCLUSIVE CAMPUS CULTURE** through the implementation of our divisional Inclusive Excellence plans, equitable practices, and inclusive policies.

Policies and Programs for an Inclusive Campus Culture

- ▶ A university-wide Sustainable Inclusive Excellence (SIE) Action Plan was launched to advance goals around diversity, equity, inclusion, and racial justice at WPI and within STEM. Through this effort, every division has made public commitments to help advance our inclusivity goals, which can be viewed at: <https://hub.wpi.edu/SIE>.
- ▶ Talent and Inclusion is working to increase transparency and better communicate existing programs for the community. Areas of focus include health and well-being and training programs.
- ▶ A thorough review of policies and benefits for equity and inclusion will be conducted over the next year, as well as a comprehensive review of space accessibility across campus.



Actions



Strategies



Pre-Launch

28

105



Launched

35

144



In-Progress

14

36



Complete

0

10

77

295

Sustainable Inclusive Excellence Plan - Progress Towards Goals



Recruit faculty and staff that **INCREASE THE DIVERSITY OF WPI** and evolve structures and systems to ensure an inclusive campus community.

Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

- ▶ WPI has increased our visible commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in recruitment by better leveraging our LinkedIn career page, adding visual branding and DEI content.
- ▶ A comprehensive database is in development of associations that target diverse applicants for hiring, including conferences, networking, and job fairs. Inclusive search/hiring training and implementation is becoming a common practice in hiring for faculty and staff.
- ▶ Systems are being evolved with more inclusive features including adding gender identity options in the Workday mobile app for the full campus community.
- ▶ Data will drive our efforts, creating a better understanding of workforce availability, demographics of our applicant pools, and new hires and attrition to develop the right targeted strategies for recruitment and retention.





Investment in advancing the **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, WELL-BEING, AND JOB SATISFACTION** of faculty and staff will create stronger, more inclusive shared governance, including the creation of a Staff Council to expand the voice of the staff in steering the university.

Key Priorities

The measurement and assessment of staff satisfaction is a critical component of this area within the strategic plan.

- **COACHE survey results 2017–2021**
Faculty satisfaction with working at WPI and in their respective departments increased between 2017 and 2021.
- A new permanent remote/flexible work policy was established.
- A Staff Council was formed to give staff a stronger voice in steering the university.
- A comprehensive staff classification/compensation study will be performed over FY23.
- Training and professional development will be enhanced in FY23 to develop skills and promote behaviors that foster mental health and well-being.





WPI

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