



Affordability



Transitions



Success



Equity



Talent



Value

HIGHER EDUCATION *Matters*

A Campus Action Plan for
Western Kentucky University

2022-2024



AFFORDABILITY

Objectives, Strategies & Targets

1. Reduce financial barriers to college enrollment and completion.

1a. Incorporate student need & other factors in financial aid decision-making that include assistance provided but not limited to the following:

- Continue The Hilltopper Guarantee, which provides 100% tuition coverage for any first-time, first-year student from KY who receives Pell Grant assistance and has at least a 3.0 cumulative high school GPA.
- Utilize the WKU Opportunity Fund for short-term financial assistance for students in the form of Emergency Aid Grants, Completion Grants, etc. to promote retention and persistence to graduation.
- Maintain support for the expanded WKU Academic Merit, Transfer, WKU Family, Military, TIP, Border State, and Hilltopper Guarantee programs to maintain affordable access to higher education.
- Provide WKU Educator Discount to assist KY teachers in graduate learning by providing in-state tuition rates for educators from states with reciprocal teaching qualifications with KY.

1b. Moderate tuition and fees increases:

- Institute a 2% increase in FY 22.
- Hold tuition and fee increases to less than 1% in FY23.
- Petition CPE for tuition increase approval processes to be structured so that rates are approved earlier than current practice, allowing students to make informed financial decisions regarding attendance and choice of institution.

1c. Reduce campus expenses and cost increases:

- Allow flexibility in choosing which mode of delivery/location students prefer at WKU that best fits their needs and schedules without concern of additional expense.
- Eliminate distance learning fees.
- Continue to explore means to support promotion of retention and persistence.
- Provide fee waivers and/or reduced fees for WKU admissions applications and assist with FAFSA completion and course selection.



AFFORDABILITY

Objectives, Strategies & Targets

2. Improve the public's understanding of how to pay for college.

2a. Provide informational resources and advising including but not limited to the following:

- Counsel students and their families on financial planning via workshops, one-on-one appointments and other timely interventions (rate of participation among WKU students to exceed 90%).
- Train faculty and staff to assist with providing basic financial assistance to students.
- Provide Spanish versions of basic FAFSA information on the online resource center.

2b. Enhance FAFSA completion:

- Continue WKU SFA staff partnership with KHEAA to provide staff support for 22+ FAFSA completion events in the regional service area.
- Educate the campus community and promote the one-on-one FAFSA completion assistance provided by WKU Educational Opportunity Center (EOC), a TRIO Program.
- Expand outreach regarding the necessity of FAFSA completion for both incoming and returning WKU students.

2c. Improve information flow and quality with college access professionals:

- Enhance relationship with KHEAA, KASFAA, and High School-WKU TRIO programs (Educational Talent Search 1-2-3- and Upward Bound) to bring guidance counselors to campus for 2 events or more per year for training workshops and/or informational luncheons.
- Connect regional recruiters to their area's high schools for in-school workshops there.



TRANSITIONS

Objectives, Strategies & Targets

3. Increase students' readiness to enter postsecondary education.

3a. Afford opportunities for high school and high school graduate to prepare for college at WKU:

- Offer high-quality dual credit opportunities.
- Promote the Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science.
- Operate a Summer Scholars' Bridge Program through CPE Grant support.
- Explore additional means to advance campus and e-learning opportunities.

3b. Facilitate virtual access to WKU for college and career exploration:

- Maintain webpages accessible on a variety of electronic devices.
- Use digital communications for transmitting admission processes and requirements.
- Aided by the Handshake Program, offer online access to career services for students associated with WKU, including dual credit and summer scholars, which incorporates mentoring/tutoring.

3c. Provide regular contact mechanisms with high schools and community colleges:

- Hold information fairs at WKU and in high schools.
- Continue college and university open house events.
- Establish/maintain/expand e-communication pathways.



TRANSITIONS

Objectives, Strategies & Targets

4. Increase enrollment in postsecondary education.

4a. Create targeted recruitment strategies for type of student and enlist assistance of alumni:

- Develop high school academies.
- Develop second- and third-year holistic experiences akin to the first-year village and LLCs, but tailored for the transfer student.
- Serve adult learners in 10 South Central Kentucky counties through our continued collaboration with the WKU TRIO project-Educational Opportunity Centers.
- Provide adults with orientation to college.
- Strengthen existing and develop new partnerships with businesses and the military to help adults initiate or complete a postsecondary degree.
- Evaluate barriers to higher education for low-income students, in addition to providing financial training and assistance.
- Continue the activities of ISEC, which works with the society of African American Alumni, Divine 9 (historically Black sorority/fraternity alumni associations) the NAACP, churches, and civic groups with an alumni presence to assist with recruitment.

4b. Streamline and simplify admission procedures:

- Explore further conditional acceptance practices during recruitment events.
- Implement Degree Works to improve degree and certificate program planning (DW is software used to facilitate academic advising and degree audits, and it empowers students by providing easy access to their path to graduation and career goals).
- Continue and, as possible, expand WKU TRIO projects that have a large alumni association to assist with PSE, transition and success.
- Pursue “stop out” and re-engagement strategies for students who abandoned their degree program prior to completion.
- Work with the accepted but non-matriculated population to determine why they are not pursuing a college education, and for their next year honor admission and scholarship awards.



SUCCESS

Objectives, Strategies & Targets

5. Increase persistence in and timely completion of postsecondary programs.

5a. Enhance and initiate practices to improve retention and graduation:

- Create a Comprehensive Advising Program for all years of college aided by our degree audit system, Degree Works, to provide 1) academic coaching to improve understanding and use of success resources, 2) career counseling for life after graduation and 3) 4-year financial plans to promote “4 to Finish” and overall understanding of long-term educational finances.
- Complement general and faculty advisor activities by continuing faculty advisor training and possibly expanding to a certified advisor program.
- Evaluate barrier courses to college readiness & completion and take progressive action.
- Improve degree and certification program planning, aided by Degree Works, and offer global and common learning experiences to 1) continue our Living and Learning Communities (LLCs), 2) develop opportunities beyond the first year, be they academic, recreational, social, and otherwise, and 3) facilitate global learning including study abroad especially in first two years.

5b. Create procedures to facilitate on-time graduation:

- Establish a comprehensive advising program to enable students to complete college in no more than 8 semesters (depending on the credits with which undergraduate students enter).
- Incorporate winter and summer courses into degree programs as needed to maintain on-time graduation.
- Schedule classes and institute class rotation schedules to facilitate degree progression and on-time graduation.
- Tailor High-Impact Practices (HIPs) to underserved and minoritized students to close opportunity gaps.

5c. Create programs focused on the success of URM and low-income students:

- Establish living and learning communities with a special focus on: 1) supporting and extending the Intercultural Student Engagement Center (ISEC), 2) implementing a first-generation student program to address their unique issues, 3) continuing the ISEC Black Male Initiative (WHY KNOT US), Black Female Initiative (WHY KNOT US TOO) and Hispanic/Latin initiative, each specifically focused on the postsecondary success of targeted populations (academic, social, emotional, financial) and 4) expanding the newly created ISEC Graduate Academy for URM graduate students.
- Grow TRIO programs.
- Explore the expansion of viable work options on campus, targeted scholarships, additional tutoring and supplemental instruction.

5d. Initiate procedures to facilitate the success of adult learners, including active duty and retired military personnel:

- Create appropriate online offerings for degrees/certificates/micro-credentials to fit the needs of adults currently in or planning to enter the workforce.
- Tailor communications and services specific to adults, and differentiate between undergraduate and graduate adult learners.
- Investigate the development of an Adult Learner Outreach & Orientation Multimodal Center.

6. Maximize transfer of academic and experiential credit.

6a. Facilitate transfer of dual credit courses, community college credit, and credit at other universities:

- Stay current with course transfer acceptability within the state.
- Work with community college advisors for 4-year programming.
- Request involvement in community college curriculum development that will affect transferability to WKU in order to articulate better transfer agreements.
- Evaluate credit for prior learning and experience.



SUCCESS

Objectives, Strategies & Targets

6b. Institute advising and fiscal procedures focused on transfer students:

- Update transfer marketing and communication plans.
- Clarify and enhance academic pathways.
- Conduct timely transfer audits.
- Work with departments on transfer credit facilitation by creating academic pathways with KCTCS and community colleges in the surrounding region and extending 2+2 programs.
- Continue to work with advisors at community colleges.
- Reimagine transfer orientation virtually and in-person.
- Reimagine transfer scholarships including GPA requirement level and competitiveness.

6c. Determine means for individuals to complete unfinished degrees through advancing the Degrees When Due project, among others.

7. Ensure academic offerings are high-quality, relevant and inclusive.

7a. Ensure academic program standards are maintained:

- Conduct academic program reviews to facilitate continuous improvement of all academic programs.
 - Perform 5-year and annual program sustainability reviews.
 - Continue appropriate assessment of classes and programs.
 - Obtain regular, valid and reliable feedback from stakeholders.
 - Assess practices against aspirational higher education providers.
- Maintain accreditation standards for accredited programs and increase their numbers.
- Review and assess the Colonnade Program (WKU's General Education program), coupled with major degree programs that address the ten essential skills of the Kentucky Graduate Profile.
 - Review teaching methodologies and infrastructure to integrate best practices and incorporate, where possible, high-impact practices (HIPs), immersive learning in diverse cultures, process-learning, collaborative learning and others.
 - Provide training in pedagogy for all those who instruct students.
 - Maintain infrastructure and technology to support instruction.

7b. Establish and promote equity in academic and co-curricular activities:

- Support and enhance the Colonnade Program to:
 - Transform high enrollment courses into more active & inclusive environments.
 - Inspire greater student responsibility for learning.
 - Reimagine courses to expand new pedagogical ideas.
- Integrate best practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion into teaching methods.
 - Provide training for faculty and staff to support equity in learning.
 - Develop our continued commitment to inclusive teaching.
 - Make pedagogy and assessment more equitable.
- Expand the Holistic Student Approach
- Create means to address unmet financial needs



TALENT

Objectives, Strategies & Targets

8. Improve the career outcomes of postsecondary graduates.

8a. Establish experiential learning opportunities related to the student's prospective career path:

- Assist students with their individualized personal and professional development plan (an aspect of the Comprehensive Advising Program and thereby our Student Success Plan) that will serve as a guide for the pursuit and completion of a four-year degree in preparation for a successful career or entrance into further schooling/training.
- Develop hard and soft skills as well as cultivating global citizens through the Colonnade Program, a student's degree program and the Student Success Plan that will provide common intellectual experiences and high-impact practices.
- Facilitate internships, shadowing, part-time employment and the like in conjunction with the Academic Advising and Career Development Center (ACDC), the Innovation Campus at WKU, Global Learning and International Affairs, creative learning and research conducted by faculty and federal, state, and other public and private establishments.
- Consider the best means to centralize knowledge about and access to these experiential opportunities, such as expanding/developing experts or alumni in residence programs in the colleges.
- Create a modernized, flexible curriculum to allow for experiential learning hours to count toward degree programs.

8b. Continue to develop career-based activities:

- Support real-time and virtual advising and activities of ACDC related to career planning.
- Hold career fairs at the college and University levels involving prospective employers.
- Offer training opportunities through certificates, new market-relevant undergraduate degrees, graduate programs and other avenues.
- Involve the alumni association in enhancing career preparation.
- Provide career counseling in multiple modalities to prepare students for life beyond graduation.

8c. Facilitate business and other community partnerships:

- Develop connections via the Innovation Campus at WKU to facilitate business/faculty/staff/student partnerships.
- Involve the alumni association network to facilitate career connections.
- Use the Small Business Accelerator to aid in business development emanating from WKU research and/or community members.
- Provide continuing education opportunities for community members to enhance their employability and/or business development, including the current program of webinars and presentations by the alumni association and ACDC.



TALENT

Objectives, Strategies & Targets

9. Increase research and service to support strong communities and economies.

9a. Align relevant academic programs with employment needs:

- Identify programs that specifically address these needs and create new ones to supplement ongoing ones where warranted.
- Create an Office of Undergraduate Research to facilitate experiential learning and coordinate activities with ACDC for internships and other outside WKU experiential learning opportunities.
- Enhance employment preparedness for graduates by strengthening the programs and career-focused opportunities in WKU's Graduate School.
- Support faculty scholarly and creative activities that address these high-need areas.
- Provide continuing education in these high-growth/demand/wage areas.

9b. Expand community engagement, especially in Kentucky's high-need areas:

- Develop/expand signature programs, degrees and credentials to address these areas.
- Align university priorities with communities, business and industry, educational institutions and others to create mutually beneficial cultural, environmental, scientific and social opportunities.
- Transform the WKU Center for Research and Development into a true Innovation Campus that engages corporations in collaborative research; incubates faculty, staff, and student ideas; cultivates and grows local businesses; and provides a hub for entrepreneurial growth and investment (see also 8a & 8c).



VALUE

Objectives, Strategies & Targets

10. Increase public belief in the power of postsecondary education.

10a. Promote WKU as an institution of excellence for higher education and career advancement:

- Develop a comprehensive communication plan.
- Foster and advocate for the WKU Experience.
- Use WKU campuses, colleges and departments for in-person and virtual forums as locations for said promotions.
- Engage alumni and highlight alumni successes, as well as promoting current student, faculty, and staff activities and successes.
- Associate WKU with opportunities for people of the region to be educated, entertained, assisted and inspired outside the classroom.

11. Build support for greater investment in postsecondary education.

11a. Communicate the return on investment of a WKU degree:

- Incorporate ROI information into the comprehensive communication plan.
- Provide summaries of the cost of attendance and benefits of a degree to students.

11b. Invest in the future:

- Examine university-related foundations' structures to determine if there are opportunities for efficiency or simplification that will enhance our ability to attract voluntary support and eliminate confusion.
- Assemble the necessary volunteer structure and involve deans and other senior leadership in support of a comprehensive fundraising campaign to support the University's Strategic Plan "Climbing to Greater Heights."



TARGETS

Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target
Time to Degree	4.14	4.1
Undergraduate Enrollment	15,287	15,746
Undergraduate Degrees/Credentials	2,843	3,000
Graduate Degrees	796	825
Retention Rate	72.8%	76.0%
Graduation Rate	57.4%	59.0%

This document is Western Kentucky University's Campus Action Plan, which details how the institution will carry out the objectives of the statewide strategic agenda, "Higher Education Matters." This plan also includes campus targets for key performance indicators.

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