

I a e E a e T e

STRATEGIC PLAN  
2023 - 2028

 Wellesley University



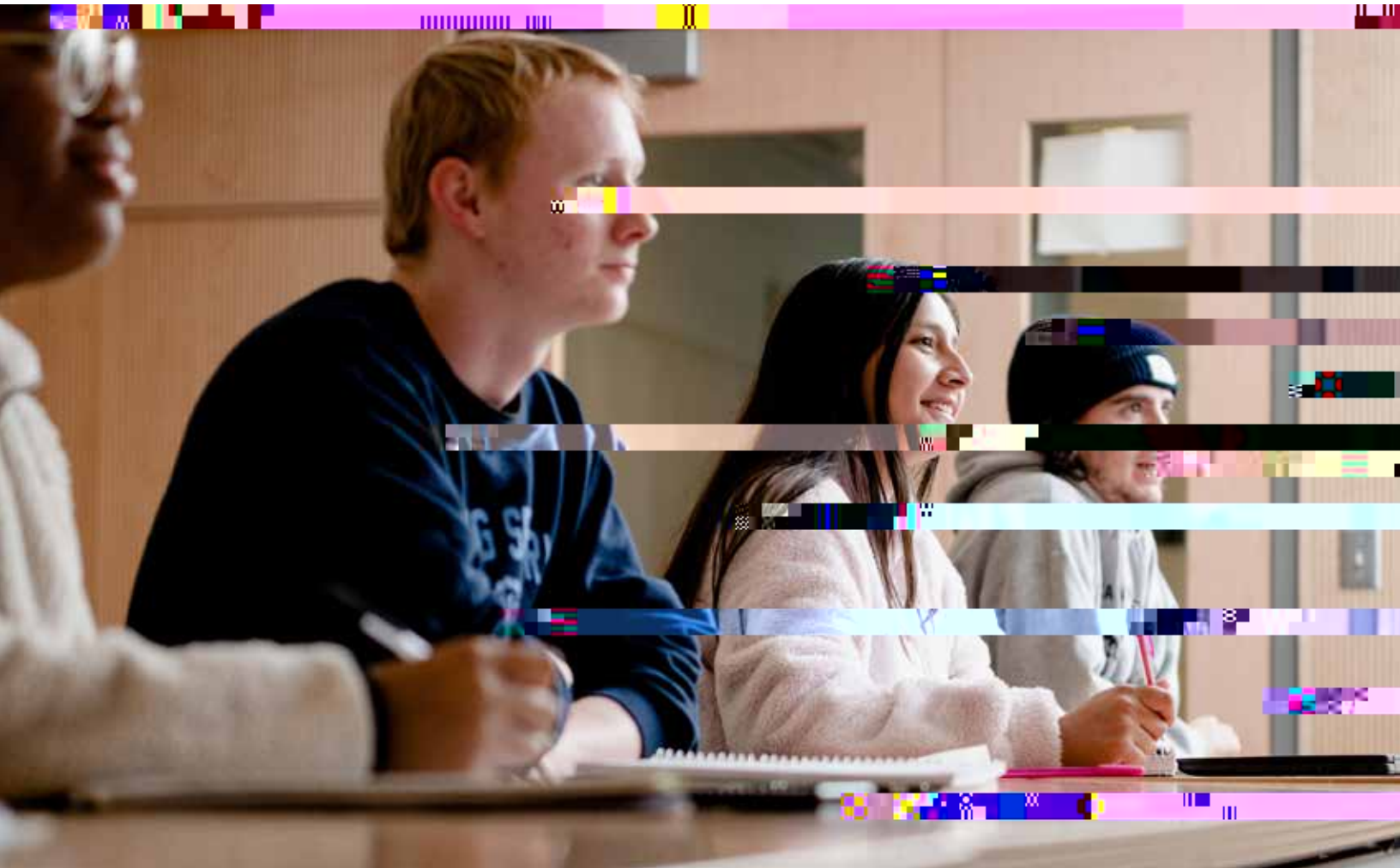


# Advance Academic Excellence

Academic excellence is the guiding, foundational principle that orients and directs all endeavors at the University. Rooted in the best practices of scholarship, it is a fundamentally collaborative process that merges faculty and staff expertise and mentorship with student autonomy and critical inquiry to inspire innovation within and beyond the classroom and to transform lives in measurable ways. Academic excellence at Wilkes is ultimately a regenerative promise, an ongoing commitment to supporting and sustaining the highest standards of faculty, staff and student achievement across a diverse range of agile and accessible academic programs that prepare our graduates to meet the complex, urgent imperatives of our rapidly changing world.

At the heart of the Wilkes academic experience are the mentoring relationships forged among our faculty, staff and students in their shared pursuit of new knowledge. To foster this environment of critical inquiry and discovery, Wilkes must generate the financial resources and support structures essential for collaborative research and professional development.

As an academic leader navigating the profound challenges facing higher education, Wilkes must continue to cultivate traditional programs and their fundamentally essential values while remaining agile and innovating curricular change and transformation that will emerge from those core foundations. Wilkes must also continue its commitment to cost-effective, accessible academic experiences that enable students to develop relevant, value-added competencies and that position our students to achieve success through transferable skills and outcomes.





TO ADVANCE ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE, WILKES WILL

### **Foster collaborative faculty-staff networks for investigating and advancing innovations in pedagogy and scholarship**

- Establish a Center for Teaching, Learning and Research Excellence.
- Enhance opportunities for faculty scholarship by creating more flexible structures for academic units and programs to adaptively assign and balance research and teaching responsibilities.
- Leverage the academic structure to explore high-impact cross-disciplinary grant opportunities.

### **Equip students for transformative growth and success in their curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular pursuits**

- Increase the mentoring fund to ensure that undergraduate and graduate students have legible, economically viable pathways to pursue collaborative research and scholarship with faculty and staff.
- Strengthen and expand high-impact leadership opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students across academic, service and outreach programs.
- Ensure all undergraduate students expand their academic and pre-professional portfolios by carrying a minor, completing an internship, engaging in collaborative research with faculty or staff, completing a study away experience or by establishing a formal mentoring relationship with one of our Wilkes alumni.

### **Affirm the value and relevance of the traditional liberal arts and sciences while championing new academic programs and delivery models**

- Invest the required resources to revise and reinvigorate the general education curriculum in ways that affirm the value and relevance of the core requirements and establish a clearer, more flexible integration of courses within and beyond the general education structure.
- Encourage and support new programs that leverage existing faculty resources and foster cross-disciplinary curricular development, collaboration and delivery.
- Develop, sustain and assess diverse, innovative degree, certificate and badge offerings across the full range of University programs.



At Wilkes we honor our partnership with students by providing exemplary student support through flexibility and an



## **Prioritize a holistic and inclusive student experience**

- Establish a network of care to address the evolving and interconnected academic, social and wellness needs of our students.
- Invigorate the student-athlete experience by optimizing the shift to the Landmark Athletic Conference.
- Promote school spirit and a sense of belonging by providing full-campus social and civic events.

## **Invest and empower all members of the campus community in student retention efforts**

- Develop and formalize improved communication networks, data sharing and processes across departments and divisions.
- Institute a new student support services structure to develop more intentional collaborative pathways for student success and engagement.
- Routinely establish, communicate and assess student retention and graduation metrics and measure success against annual goals.

# Prioritize Community, Enrichment and Service

The members of the Wilkes community are our greatest strength and our most valuable resource. Recognizing the profound ways our students, faculty, staff and alumni serve the University mission, Wilkes must in turn cultivate a diverse, inclusive and empowering environment for professional development, personal growth and community engagement for all campus constituents. Supporting our people will require investing dedicated resources to ensure competitive compensation and benefits, to promote enriching career and alumni experiences and to foster student opportunities for leadership and mentorship.

Creating and sustaining a diverse, inclusive campus climate requires an intentional reimagining of student recruitment efforts coupled with a clear commitment to recruiting, retaining and supporting faculty and staff who directly reflect and embody the values of diversity, equity and inclusiveness. For a culture of diversity and inclusion to thrive among students, faculty and staff, it must also be reflected at the highest levels of leadership at the University.

Reinvigorating a culture of Wilkes pride is achieved through collaborative work toward common goals, the celebration of individual and group successes and a recommitment to our defining values. Affirming our collective responsibility to and investment in shared governance and collaborative decision making in service of our University mission unites and invigorates our community.





TO PRIORITIZE COMMUNITY,  
ENRICHMENT AND SERVICE, WILKES WILL

**Strengthen and formalize our commitment to an inclusive and equitable campus climate**

- Hire a Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer.
- Develop intentional recruitment efforts that draw students from historically marginalized and underrepresented populations to our campus.
- Employ hiring practices that attract applicants from historically marginalized and underrepresented populations to our campus.
- Support and resource retention efforts that focus on an inclusive and equitable campus culture.
- Provide comprehensive campus and regional orientation programs to promote successful and sustained transition and inclusion into the community.
- Practice transparency in reporting up-to-date demographic data and metrics related to student, faculty and staff recruitment and retention.

**Enhance professional and career development for faculty and staff**

# Promote Innovation and Partnerships

Wilkes is committed to fostering a culture of innovation and creativity while strengthening and developing partnerships that support the University's mission. Institutional innovation thrives through nimble thinking, creativity and calculated risk taking. Short-term and long-term achievements must be grounded in program relevancy, campus vibrancy and resource availability. Wilkes's continued success as a leading educational institution will be increasingly linked to complex, interdependent partnerships with the local, regional and global community—and across a range of industries. We will highlight our academic achievements and establish ourselves as an intellectual capital in northeast Pennsylvania.

Wilkes's success is due in part to purposeful partnerships that benefit both the University and the community. The University values its partnerships with downtown Wilkes-Barre and King's College and is committed to cultivating those partnerships to improve the city and the University. The University should also strengthen its relationships with partners in the region and maximize development opportunities. New opportunities and academic programs should be evaluated through an accelerated process that allocates resources, establishes a clear timeframe for measured success and recognizes when an idea has failed in order to redirect resources as necessary. As enrollment demographics shift, Wilkes must explore alternative revenue opportunities that are both grounded in the University's mission and supportive of the University's growth.

## TO PROMOTE INNOVATION AND PARTNERSHIPS, WILKES WILL

### **Improve access to partnerships**

- Leverage current personnel and offices to develop a clear pathway for internal and external parties to explore new partnerships and fully utilize current collaborations.
- Utilize existing advisory boards to establish corporate and industry projects that both support new research and allow prototype testing of emerging University innovations.

### **Expand alternative educational opportunities and programs**

- Engage and establish programs for retirees including classes, lectures and exhibits and opportunities to participate in campus events.
- Grow accelerated degree completion programs.
- Pilot competency-based programs as well as modular and alternative-semester delivery.
- Develop and invest in international partnerships that provide study away experiences for students, faculty and staff.

## **Bolster current enrollment partnerships**

- Enrich the Upward Bound experience by providing students quality career and research exploration

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TO STRENGTHEN FINANCIAL RESILIENCE, WILKES WILL

**Create flexible recruitment and retention goals that stabilize and ultimately grow enrollment and that are responsive to emerging demographic challenges**

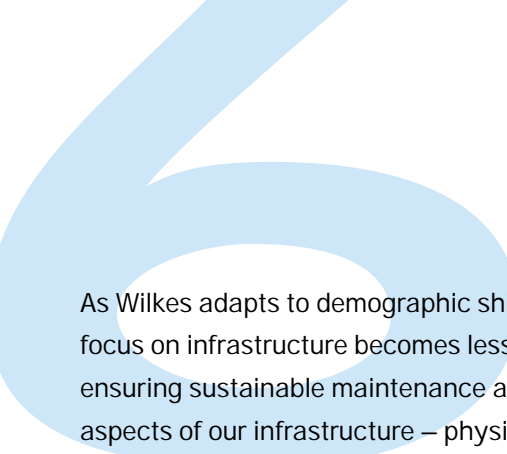
- Develop an agile enrollment management plan for both domestic and international students.
- Increase matriculation of Upward Bound students by offering competitive scholarship opportunities.
- Improve the matriculation rate of students from the Young Scholars program.
- Reevaluate athletic recruitment plans to leverage membership in the Landmark Athletic Conference.
- Explore new undergraduate and graduate programs.
- Enhance recruitment to include adult learners and degree-completion students.
- Restore first-year student retention to 77% by the end of the plan.
- Increase six-year graduation rate to 63% by the end of the plan.

**Prioritize responsiveness to changing student needs**

- Invest in student support resources to provide enhanced services to meet the needs of both domestic and international students.
- Evaluate residency requirements and meal plan options that better align with student expectations while maintaining the same level of revenue for the University.
- Manage the student financial burden of tuition increases to confirm annual comparability to the marketplace.

**Strengthen financial position**

- Improve net tuition revenue by not exceeding 10% of budgeted resources toward the first-year discount rate.
- Increase non-tuition revenue and reduce tuition dependency to 81%.
- Prioritize an innovative comprehensive campaign to generate increases in donor funds.



As Wilkes adapts to demographic shifts in traditional undergraduate enrollment and changes in campus utilization, the focus on infrastructure becomes less about building new facilities and more about making strategic investments in and ensuring sustainable maintenance and optimal utilization of our buildings, technology, systems and other assets. All aspects of our infrastructure – physical, technological and networked – should support and improve how our students learn and how our faculty and staff teach and work to achieve this central goal Wilkes must ensure that our campus spaces, systems and processes are adaptive, efficient, effective and accessible for all.

Wilkes is committed to maintaining and improving its physical infrastructure through enhancement projects that enable us to fully realize the value of our distinctive buildings while improving our campus and the surrounding community. Wilkes must ensure that campus systems and processes are appropriately resourced, dynamically integrated and effectively operationalized to best serve the changing needs of students, faculty and staff. Understanding that the strength of our infrastructure is fundamentally connected to our city, Wilkes must establish sustainable master planning practices that align with the development plans of downtown Wilkes-Barre. To reaffirm

## **Leverage and integrate shared technologies and systems across campus**

- Identify opportunities to centralize, consolidate, and better utilize existing systems.
- Prioritize resources for the maintenance and strategic upgrading of all hardware, software, subscription services, networks and systems that are central to fulfilling the University mission.
- Provide training to campus units on accessibility and cybersecurity to ensure our forward-thinking approach is both secure and accessible for all.

## **Establish sustainable master planning practices that advance the University mission and align with the development plans of downtown Wilkes-Barre**

- Improve our master planning process and committee structure to maximize participation and representation across our organizational structure and across the community of downtown Wilkes-Barre.
- Formalize a collaborative communication structure with King's College, the Diamond City Partnership, the City of Wilkes-Barre and other community partners that establishes ongoing dialogue on planning for individual projects and prioritizes partnership opportunities for achieving mutually beneficial goals.
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