

Big Plan Hashed Out in December Meetings

WCU has big plans for the future and a blueprint to get there. The University's strategic plan, *Building on Excellence*, is now updated, and "Big Plan on Campus" meetings were held Dec. 8-9 to share details about these updates and to solicit feedback from the University community.

The Strategic Planning Assessment and Advocacy Committee (SPAAC) coordinates campus assessment, review, and implementation of the strategic plan, which is now in Year 3, Phase 1. Periodic reviews and updates will be conducted throughout the plan's life cycle.

Peter Loedel, who is co-chair of SPAAC, says that the meetings helped him realize that collaboration must be enhanced.

"There is a need to coordinate across themes and objectives so that we do not become 'siloed' working in our own areas and specific objectives. I would like to see SPAAC work to identify areas of cross collaboration in terms of moving objectives forward," notes Loedel.

Mark Mixner, vice president of administration and finance, says that he heard many of the attendees at the early December meetings speak to the importance of WCU's continued commitment to environmental sustainability.

He can point with pride to high-profile successes in this area, such as WCU's transition to non-polluting energy sources. The University heats and cools 50 percent of its buildings with geothermal energy and 50 percent by high-efficiency natural gas boilers. By transitioning to these energy sources, WCU is reducing its annual carbon foot print by 7,500 tons of CO₂.

Beyond the geothermal initiative, smaller changes also add up and make an impact. For example, Mixner says that since the new strategic plan was rolled out, a shuttle to the Exton train station was started, ZIPCAR short-term car rental was brought to campus, and a bike-share program is about to be implemented.

Jim Capolupo, who joined WCU as associate dean of the College of Education earlier this year, says that he believes that the WCU strategic plan is "extremely well thought out and involves key stakeholders from all areas of the University."

"Although some goals have been completed, there are plenty of 'stretch' goals that will push us forward into the future," he adds.

Here's an overview of some recent accomplishments that were discussed:

Academic Theme

-Highest graduate student enrollment in West Chester University's history. Several new graduate professional doctorate programs were approved, including the Doctorate in Public Administration and Ed.D.

-Increased numbers of WCU students studying abroad as well as increases in international students on WCU's campus.

-Advising Task Force is collecting data with the goal of preparing recommendations during summer 2016 to best support faculty in meeting the standard of advising.

Diversity Theme

-Campus Climate Survey conducted in fall 2015.

-African American and Latino/a enrollment has increased significantly over the last year.

-Admissions has hired a new assistant director of multicultural recruitment and community outreach.

Engagement Theme

-The Office of Service-Learning and Volunteer Programs increased course selections, resulting in 800,000-plus hours of service, earning WCU the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll.

-The University's social media networks connect with more than 300,000 people each week.

-One hundred alumni events were held this past academic year.

Enrichment Theme

-The Office of Student Leadership and Involvement increased participation in academic and professional clubs and academic musical organizations by almost 20 percent.

-The leadership minor is now open for student enrollment.

-The Athletic Mentoring program is contributing to improved student-athlete academic performance.

Sustainability Theme

-Geothermal project nearing completion. In October 2014, WCU formally decommissioned its 50-year-old, coal-fired power plant.

- Surpassed 60 percent of the Becoming More Campaign target.

-WCU faculty received \$2.2 million in externally sponsored awards for research.

Learn more about strategic plan accomplishments and updates by going to <http://www.wcupa.edu/StrategicPlanning/>.

