

Climbing to

# Greater Heights

Strategic Plan

Proposed Language Revisions



**WKU Strategic Plan**  
**Extension to 2031**

**OUR STUDENTS**

# Section Introduction

## CURRENT LANGUAGE

We embrace our responsibility as a public university in Kentucky to provide access to an affordable postsecondary education of exceptional quality, but we also recognize that access without success is access to nothing at all. This plan outlines aggressive steps to ensure that students can graduate in four years fully prepared to enter the workplace or pursue a graduate degree. WKU students will begin their climb confident they have support from faculty, staff, and the community. And when our graduates leave WKU, they will depart with the skills to make a good living and, more importantly, with the capacity to make a good life for themselves and for those around them.



## Committee Identified Goals

- Keep things AFFORDABLE
- Focused on upcoming opportunities that have the potential to hinder affordability (HRL/new resident halls, meal plans, additional student fees. -have financial options & meal plans
- Provide the experience with different price points to provide accessibility

# Affordability & Accessibility

## CURRENT LANGUAGE

Ensure the WKU Experience remains affordable and accessible to every qualified student.

Incorporate student need and other factors into financial aid decision-making, and shift to a net tuition revenue posture.

Create the WKU Opportunity Fund through private philanthropy and giving



## Current Committee Considerations

Define accessibility as financial, academic, physical, digital, and psychological access.

Ensure that the true cost of a WKU education is transparent, predictable, and competitive within Kentucky and the region.

Maintain a varied portfolio of housing options and meal plans to accommodate different budgets.

Promote a culture of financial literacy and awareness which serves to prepare students with the skills necessary to manage their financial well-being while at WKU, and as WKU Alumni.

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## Current Committee Considerations

Promote awareness of the WKU Opportunity Fund by clearly communicating its accessibility to eligible students experiencing unexpected financial hardships, as well as educating faculty and staff so they can confidently refer students in need.

Help students fully understand the long-term value of earning a college degree, while also recognizing the affordability of Western Kentucky University

# Completion & Success

## CURRENT LANGUAGE

Ensure WKU student completion and success.

Create a Comprehensive Advising Program (CAP) involving generalist and specialist advisors, trained faculty, and other support staff to assist each student with creation of an individualized Personal and Professional Development Plan that will serve as a guide for the pursuit and completion of a four-year degree that leads to a successful career or entrance into graduate school.

Develop a peer mentoring system.



## Current Committee Considerations

Student success requires disciplined alignment between enrollment, instructional capacity, and degree of design. WKU will intentionally structure academic pathways and resource deployment to ensure students can progress efficiently to completion without avoidable delays or unnecessary credit accumulation.

Use structured advising systems, faculty mentorship, and scalable technology to ensure students make informed decisions.

Establish a "Career-Plus" framework as a structured, institution-wide approach to embedding career-connected value within every degree program.

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 Current Committee Considerations

Strategic Academic Portfolio and Workforce Alignment: WKU will maintain a vibrant and flexible academic portfolio that prepares students for emerging professional demands while stewarding limited institutional resources responsibly. Academic offerings must be responsive to labor market trends, technological shifts, and regional economic development.

# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion/Diverse Body of Students

## CURRENT LANGUAGE

Enroll a diverse body of regional and global undergraduate, graduate, and nontraditional students who are fully prepared for a rigorous, fulfilling college experience at WKU.

Enact and practice all aspects of WKU's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion plan.



## Current Committee Considerations

### **Crafting Meaningful Traditions**

WKU will enroll and support a broad and representative body of undergraduate, graduate, transfer, online, and nontraditional students who are prepared to succeed in a rigorous academic environment and who reflect the **geographic, economic, and experiential breadth of the Commonwealth** and beyond.

WKU is committed to fostering a vibrant **campus-wide** community that promotes a sense of tradition among all students, faculty, staff, and local residents. Our mission is to provide enrichment through connections with peers, mentors, experiences, student-driven support systems, and opportunities for growth.

# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion/Diverse Body of Students

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## Current Committee Considerations

### **Crafting Meaningful Traditions**

Leverage the Elevate WKU housing transformation to advance student belonging and community integration by intentionally designing new residential communities as platforms for engagement, not just accommodation. WKU will align residential life programming, Living-Learning Community placement, first-year experience initiatives, and student support services with the phased development of new residential facilities.

Integrate counseling services, advocacy resources, health services, and academic support programs into a coordinated student support network that promotes mental health, resilience, and overall well-being.

# Preparation for the Global Stage

 CURRENT LANGUAGE

Prepare students for career and life in a global context.

Through the Colonnade Program, a student's degree program, and the Personal and Professional Development Plan, provide common intellectual experiences and high-impact practices to develop hard and soft skills as well as to cultivate good, productive citizens.

Create and maintain the physical and virtual structures that contribute to completion and success for all WKU students.



 PROPOSED REVISION

## **Career Readiness for a Global Stage**

Prepare students to collaborate effectively across cultures, disciplines, and global contexts by embedding cross-cultural communication, teamwork, and professional adaptability skills throughout the academic experience.

WKU will prepare students from every background to elevate their life trajectory through career-connected learning, digital fluency, and AI-enabled competence in a changing global economy.

**OUR HILL**

# Policies & Practices

## CURRENT LANGUAGE

Establish policies and practices that promote a collegial work environment, overall employee wellness, stewardship of place, and an appreciation for WKU's history and traditions:

Conduct a comprehensive market analysis of employee salaries and benefits, and implement necessary changes to merit increases, personnel training, and support infrastructure.

Provide employee services for financial and life planning, mental and physical fitness, and professional development.



## PROPOSED REVISION

### **New Section: Commitment to Care and Excellence for Our Employees**

Establish and sustain a culture that actively supports employee well-being, promotes excellence and accountability, and enables professional growth:

- Maintain an ongoing analysis of market conditions for employee salaries and benefits.
- Strengthen annual review processes.
- Enhance employee wellness by providing overall quality of life.

# Policies & Practices

## CURRENT LANGUAGE

Establish policies and practices that promote a collegial work environment, overall employee wellness, stewardship of place, and an appreciation for WKU's history and traditions:

Adopt measures that promote sustainable practices and efficient use of campus resources.

Embrace and promote the rich history, symbols, and traditions that have served as the foundation of the University since its establishment in 1906 among students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community.



## PROPOSED REVISION

### **New Section: Stewardship of Place, Facilities, & Infrastructure**

Steward WKU's physical and virtual environments across all campus to foster community, promote academic excellence, advance sustainability, and ensure long-term institutional success:

- Advance a comprehensive, phased redesign of campus housing.
- Optimize academic program scheduling and space utilization.
- Adopt and expand sustainable practices that promote efficient use of campus resources.
- Invest and enhance WKU's digital infrastructure and virtual environments.

# Sustainable Budget Model

 CURRENT LANGUAGE

Implement a budget model that is sustainable, supports institutional priorities that ensure student success, and rewards strategic performance across the enterprise:



 PROPOSED REVISION

## **Continue to Strengthen Our Financial Foundation**

Ensure long-term financial sustainability through responsible stewardship, alignment with strategic priorities, data-informed decision-making, and continuous improvement:

- Continue implementing performance-based financial approach through RAMP.
- Identify and implement opportunities to improve operational efficiency by leveraging technology.
- Strengthen financial decision-making through shared data.
- Prioritize investments that directly foster student success, support employee performance.

# A Culture of Innovation

## CURRENT LANGUAGE

Increase faculty participation in programs offered through the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning to build a culture of innovation through the use of current and emerging instructional technologies, and create specific programming to enhance teaching and active learning:



## PROPOSED REVISION

### **Fostering a Culture of Innovation**

Encourage innovation in teaching, learning, research, and creative activity to meet the needs of a changing higher education landscape:

- Facilitate development through promotion of emerging pedagogical practices, evidence-based training, and adopting new learning technologies.
- Expand & best high-impact practices.
- Support responsible and intentional integration of AI.

# Research & Creative Activities

 CURRENT LANGUAGE

Incentivize and support research and creative activities that promote student learning, expand university outreach and service, and bolster the regional economy:



 PROPOSED REVISION

## Engaged Research and Discovery

Strengthen WKU's identity as a student-centered, applied research institution and continue advancement toward R2 status:

- Expand and modernize research infrastructure.
- Develop new doctoral programs, aligning with institutional priorities, workforce demand, and regional needs.
- Integrate as a hallmark of the WKU Experience.

## NEW GOAL AREA: Recruitment as a Shared Responsibility

 FIRST DRAFT LANGUAGE

Embed recruitment and enrollment initiatives as a shared institutional priority that reflects WKU's distinctive quality, highly engaged faculty, and commitment to student success.



 PROPOSED REVISION

- Cultivate a culture of hospitality and service.
- Ensure recruitment and yield considerations are widely integrated in all aspects of campus.
- Equip faculty and staff as ambassadors for the university.
- Reinforce shared responsibility for enrollments outcomes.
- Present and affirm WKU's academic quality and opportunities available to Hilltoppers.

**OUR COMMUNITY & BEYOND**

# A Regional Lighthouse

 CURRENT LANGUAGE

Establish WKU as a regional lighthouse to provide resources, attract talent, and nurture intellectual capital in the communities we serve:



 PROPOSED REVISION

## **Community Catalyst**

The group reached consensus to recommend renaming the goal area: Community Catalyst.

This phrasing was viewed as better reflecting WKU's role in initiating and accelerating community progress through partnership and collaboration.

# A Regional Lighthouse

## CURRENT LANGUAGE

Engage with the communities we serve to be a resource and partner in finding innovative solutions to social, economic, and other challenges.



## PROPOSED REVISION

### **Community Catalyst**

Additional revisions included:

- Replacing language suggesting alignment with business priorities with partnership-focused language.
- Emphasizing collaboration with business, industry, educational institutions, and civic organizations.
- Removing the word “regional” in certain contexts to better reflect WKU’s broader reach.

# Global Learning & Continuing Education

## CURRENT LANGUAGE

Leverage WKU's international reach to create a dynamic and diverse university community with robust global learning for every student.

Facilitate continuing education, retraining, and degree completion, leveraging online resources and WKU's regional campuses.



## PROPOSED REVISION

### **Workforce & Lifelong Learning**

- Revised language for broad, future-oriented, and inclusion of multiple program types.
- Removing specific references to degree levels and formats (associate, undergraduate, hybrid, evening programs) to avoid limiting future offerings.
- Reframing the objective to emphasize streamlined pathways for completing degrees and credentials.
- Revising graduate program language to emphasize alignment with workforce demands and economic priorities.

# Quality of Life, Athletic Excellence, Community Engagement

## CURRENT LANGUAGE

Improve the quality of life regionally and support regional economic diversification.

Support athletic excellence and the success of WKU student-athletes.

Engage alumni as global ambassadors and cultivate ongoing relationships that last a lifetime.



## PROPOSED REVISION

### **Our Shared Community**

Discussion focused on ensuring the goal articulates WKU's contribution to:

- Cultural and civic life
- Regional identity
- Economic and community vitality

Key revisions included:

Replace WKU–City transit system merger with language emphasizing mobility, access, and community connectivity.

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## PROPOSED REVISION

### **Our Shared Community**

Facilities & Community Resources

Language was expanded to recognize WKU's physical resources and venues as community assets that:

- Host regional events
- Enhance quality of life
- Contribute to economic impact

# Alumni Ambassadors & Investing in the Future

## CURRENT LANGUAGE

Engage alumni as global ambassadors and cultivate ongoing relationships that last a lifetime.

Energize and inspire individuals, foundations, and corporations to invest in the future of WKU and enable our climb to greater heights.



## PROPOSED REVISION

### **Investing in Relationships**

This goal area focuses on strengthening relationships with external stakeholders, including:

- Alumni
- Parents and families
- Corporate partners
- Community leaders
- Donors and philanthropic partners

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## PROPOSED REVISION

### **Investing in Relationships**

The committee broadened the language from a traditional alumni-only focus to emphasize engagement with external stakeholders.

Two related objectives regarding alumni connection and engagement will be reviewed to consolidate or streamline their purpose, with both to be stated by the co-chairs.

The committee supported language emphasizing the need to expand and diversify corporate and philanthropic prospects.

# NEW GOAL AREA: Unified Engagement & Voice

## FIRST DRAFT LANGUAGE

This newly proposed goal emphasizes the importance of coordinated engagement, messaging, and stakeholder communication across the institution.



## PROPOSED REVISION

Discussion highlighted the need to:

- Provide clear entry points for external stakeholders seeking to engage with WKU
- Coordinate engagement efforts across units to avoid fragmentation
- Communicate WKU's impact in clear, community-centered language

The group refined language to emphasize:

- Consistent communication of WKU's research, innovation, workforce, and economic contributions
- Demonstrating the value and impact of higher education through measurable outcomes.

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## PROPOSED REVISION

### Cross-Cutting Themes

- Clarity for External Audiences: Language should be accessible to community partners rather than relying on internal higher education terminology.
- Flexibility for Future Innovation: Objectives should be written broadly enough to accommodate:
  - Evolving workforce needs
  - New academic programs
  - Changing engagement strategies

# Next Steps & Discussion

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We welcome your feedback on the proposed revisions to the WKU Strategic Plan.

**Go Tops!** 