STRATEGIC PLAN

Experiencing Academic Distinction: Transforming Learning for the 21st Century

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHANCELLOR

For more than 120 years, Winston-Salem State University has provided a high-quality education for exceptionally promising students who may have otherwise been denied that opportunity. Historically Black colleges and universities like ours play a significant role in improving the social and economic mobility of generations of our graduates. This is a legacy for which we should all be proud.

But we cannot rest on our laurels. We must continue to evolve and transform to address the rapidly changing world in which we live. We must embrace a new model for higher education that prepares every student for a career and industries that may not yet exist. We must think differently about how all of us – academic leaders, faculty and staff – do our jobs.

This strategic plan is designed to set a new trajectory for WSSU that is built upon the foundation of our long history and one that is rooted in equity. In this plan, WSSU will work to ensure that our students are allocated the resources they need to bridge the gaps between them and their ability to engage their education.

This plan reflects our commitment to producing graduates who are critical thinkers, analytical problem solvers, effective communicators, and innovative and creative collaborators who will eventually become the leaders of the future.

As we implement this plan over the next five years, we will build upon our legacy to create a bright future for WSSU and its students. There will be tremendous effort needed to fulfill our goals; however, the outcomes will be worth it. Our work is truly transforming lives, not only for our students but for generations to come. In this plan, we are designing the future of learning. We hope you will support us as we work together to strengthen Winston-Salem State University.

Elwood L. Robinson, Ph.D.
Chancellor
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Strategic Plan for Winston-Salem State University (WSSU) has two broad purposes. First, the plan is designed to advance the recent focus on the liberal arts to a more comprehensive liberal education approach. Liberal education is characterized by using curricular and co-curricular activities to build knowledge and strengthen intellectual and interpersonal skills. The plan argues that these skills are essential for success in the 21st century global marketplace. Second, the plan endeavors to build upon the success of our graduate and professional programs through key investments in signature areas. Among the focus will be the pervasive integration of technology throughout graduate and professional programs, advantaging the historical focus on health equity, and infusing community projects across the curriculum.

This Strategic Plan is rooted in the principle of equity because WSSU serves a disproportionately high number of minority and low income students. The plan recognizes that the cumulative disadvantages resulting from historical race and class inequities converge to limit not only access to higher education but also to the opportunities afforded and to the ability to persist once in college. Embracing equity means allocating the resources to students that are needed to bridge gaps between them and their ability to engage their education. This Strategic Plan promotes equity intentionally and comprehensively.

The first of the five goals in the Strategic Plan is designed around the imperative to provide all WSSU students with opportunities to build a strong knowledge base and to cultivate and develop intellectual and interpersonal skills. Investments in faculty, curriculum and research are the focus of this goal.

The focus of Goal 2 is to enhance the quality of WSSU’s graduate and professional programs by creating new models for interdisciplinary collaboration in graduate programs in health sciences and in business and computer sciences to prepare graduates for careers that span disciplines, such as health informatics and other dual degree programs. In addition, strategies will be implemented to increase ethnic diversity in our signature health sciences graduate programs and to address the issue of health equity throughout the curricula and in practice by way of greater community engagement.

Winston-Salem State University was founded on principles of social justice. Goal 3 calls for faculty, staff and students to demonstrate principles of social justice by working collaboratively with community partners to enhance and empower communities with both knowledge resources and through their actions of challenging injustice where it is evident.

Delivering a quality education requires significant resources and careful stewardship of those resources. Goal 4 involves identifying additional revenue streams and opportunities to reallocate resources where there is the greatest need.

Finally, realizing the Vision and Mission requires not only significant resources, but also an infrastructure of state-of-art facilities, technology, and a committed and highly trained staff. Initiatives in Goal 5 are designed to ensure successful implementation of the Strategic Plan by investing in infrastructure, staff training and development; and by improving work processes and enhancing accountability.
ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND LIBERAL EDUCATION

The dynamic global nature of the 21st century has higher education experts focused on best practices for preparing graduates to thrive in today’s economy and to become informed citizens. Rapid changes fueled by science and technology, coupled with demographic shifts and an international marketplace, have created unprecedented levels of global competition and market disruptions. The emerging consensus is that developing intellectual skills, such as thinking, writing and problem-solving along with interpersonal skills such as leadership, ethics and teamwork, will arm graduates with the flexible repertoires needed to thrive in an uncertain world. These skills, which were once relegated to “soft-skills,” have been elevated to the status of “essential skills.” Many believe that the process of liberal education provides the best context for developing these competencies.

Liberal education uses curricular and co-curricular activities as vehicles for honing essential skills. Course materials in general education and in the major provide contexts for students to master critical reading; to practice problem solving and writing; and to apply critical analytic skills. Co-curricular activities such as community service, internships, study abroad, and living-learning communities offer further opportunities to develop such competencies. Liberal education environments often use engaged pedagogies such as research and applied learning, which allow students to practice and develop intellectual as well as interpersonal skills. Liberal education environments challenge students to become engaged citizens by offering opportunities to confront big issues like diversity, globalization and sustainability through coursework, lectures, and other events.

EXPANDING LIBERAL EDUCATION TO ALL: A CALL FOR EQUITY PRACTICES

Liberal education is synonymous with high-quality education. It is the approach to education often found at our nation’s most elite institutions. Colleges and universities that serve the majority of our citizens have tended to focus more on building subject-matter knowledge, often at the expense of developing essential skills. Some argue that this bifurcated educational system has produced two types of college graduates: those who are trained to think and those who are trained to do. While this may have served us well during industrial times, college graduates today who are doers and not thinkers will have a hard time keeping pace with a rapidly changing world. The need to retool as new industries emerge has become the reality of today’s marketplace. Strong essential skills will arm graduates with the intellectual flexibility needed to respond to these changes and opportunities. Hence the higher education community is moving toward broadening access to liberal education.
Minorities and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds have had the least access to high-quality education. The cumulative disadvantages resulting from historical race and class inequities converge to limit not only access to higher education but also to the opportunities afforded and the ability to persist once in college. Poor and minority students attend college in lower proportions than their white middle-class counterparts, and those fortunate enough to enter college experience high-quality pedagogies, such as undergraduate research and honors programs, at significantly lower rates. Additionally, low-income and students of color are less likely to complete college than are white middle-class students. The call to expand liberal education experiences to more students, therefore, also challenges institutions to be more equitable in their practices so that there is greater college success among disparate racial and socio-economic groups.

Equitable practices are those proactive steps that assist underserved students in achieving a high-quality education. Institutions practicing equity start with the belief that race and socioeconomic status are not barriers to academic excellence, but that circumstances related to being poor and minority may affect the level of knowledge and skill students have about how to navigate the higher education arena. Equitable practices occur when an institution allocates to students the resources needed to bridge gaps between them and their ability to engage their education. Proactive advising, where faculty mentors and others deliberately guide students through educational options, and financial aid fairs, designed to lead students and families through the financial aid process, are examples of equitable practices.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have a special place in this conversation. Studies show that HBCUs continue to serve a large proportion of Blacks who pursue higher education. Many of these students are the first in their families to go to college. Moreover, as these institutions are generally more affordable than their predominantly white sister institutions, many low-income students from other racial and ethnic groups constitute the second-largest population served by HBCUs. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that HBCUs remain mindful of the impact history has had on many of the students that they serve and to act on this knowledge by embedding the idea of equity into everything that they do.
Winston-Salem State University’s aspirations are twofold: to be a recognized leader in educating students who thrive in a dynamic society, and to make signature contributions to the commonwealth of human knowledge and understanding. At Winston-Salem State University, achieving excellence in learning, research, and public service are the top priorities.

Winston-Salem State University is grounded in an unwavering commitment to equity. This commitment means assuming institutional responsibility for ensuring that all policies, practices, and programs enable diverse students, faculty, and staff to achieve excellence and success.

Winston-Salem State University’s vision, mission, and values reflect our historic and ongoing commitment to academic excellence and equity. We embrace these values in all that we do to ensure that we will meet and exceed our highest aspirations.
VISION

Winston-Salem State University develops graduates who thrive in a dynamic and global society. Committed to the transformative power of liberal education, Winston-Salem State University integrates diverse learning environments, student development opportunities, and campus and community life to build knowledge, cultivate talent, and mold character. Guided by the motto “Enter to Learn. Depart to Serve,” Winston-Salem State University develops leaders who advance social justice by serving the world with compassion and commitment.

MISSION

Winston-Salem State University is a comprehensive, historically Black university offering innovative undergraduate programs and exceptional graduate programs grounded in the tradition of liberal education. Students engage in active and experiential learning offered through flexible delivery modes. The university is dedicated to the holistic development of students by faculty dedicated to excellence in teaching, research, and service. As a constituent institution of the University of North Carolina, Winston-Salem State University contributes to the social, cultural, intellectual, and economic growth of North Carolina, the region, and beyond.
STUDENT-CENTEREDNESS

Winston-Salem State University is committed to ensuring that all students achieve academic, personal, and professional development through their education. The university takes responsibility for creating and sustaining an environment that values students’ unique backgrounds and learning abilities, providing a nurturing culture that supports student success.

EXCELLENCE

Winston-Salem State University is committed to an uncompromised standard of quality and distinction in teaching, learning, scholarship, service, and operations. The university advances a dynamic, responsive, and accountable academic community where a desire to achieve the highest standards is evident both among individuals and across the institution.

STEWARDSHIP

To ensure the highest levels of public trust and confidence, the university is committed to structuring institutional policies, processes, and incentives to ensure highly efficient and reliable operations; professional competence and knowledge; and careful management of resources.

INTEGRITY

Winston-Salem State University holds a deep commitment to personal and institutional fairness and honesty to ensure that the welfare of students and the university is placed foremost in all affairs and transactions.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Winston-Salem State University believes in a deep individual and institutional responsibility to creatively respond to injustices and to work toward the establishment of just, equitable, and sustainable cultural, economic, political and social principles and practices that affirm the worth, value, and dignity of all people.

TRUST

Winston-Salem State University is committed to building and reinforcing enduring bonds of goodwill among all members of our community based on an ethic of accountability, fairness, openness, and transparency.
GOAL 1. STRENGTHEN LIBERAL EDUCATION

OBJECTIVE 1.1: The university will recruit and retain exceptional faculty members committed to the principles of liberal education and equity.

OBJECTIVE 1.2: Institutional Learning Outcomes (Essential Skills) will be evident across all courses in both general education and majors.

OBJECTIVE 1.3: Engaged and high impact practices will be evident across the undergraduate curriculum.

OBJECTIVE 1.4: The university will cultivate a stimulating intellectual community that fosters and supports scholarship, including sponsored research and creative work.

OBJECTIVE 1.5: The curriculum will be relevant, coherent, and diverse and will offer students a broad exposure to academia and the ways knowledge is produced.

OBJECTIVE 1.6: Opportunities to become global citizens will be integrated throughout the learning experience.

OBJECTIVE 1.7: Advisory and academic services will be ubiquitous, proactive, and collaborative to empower students to achieve success through liberal education.

OBJECTIVE 1.8: Opportunities for co-curricular engagement focused on developing essential skills will be developed and supported across the educational experience and for all populations.

OBJECTIVE 1.9: The Educator Preparation Program at Winston-Salem State University (undergraduate and graduate) will be strengthened to accomplish social justice, equity, and urban education goals.

GOAL 2. ENHANCE QUALITY OF GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS

OBJECTIVE 2.1: Transformative academic experiences for all graduate and professional programs will be offered.

OBJECTIVE 2.2: The health equity theme will be evident throughout the health sciences programs.

OBJECTIVE 2.3: Community engagement will be a signature aspect of graduate and professional programs.

OBJECTIVE 2.4: Joint disciplinary programs within the School of Health Sciences and between the School and the College of Arts, Sciences, Business and Education will allow students to pursue novel learning opportunities.

OBJECTIVE 2.5: A diverse population of graduate students will be recruited, retained, and graduated.

OBJECTIVE 2.6: Graduate international programs or program components will be expanded.
GOAL 3. BUILD COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH ENHANCED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OBJECTIVE 3.1: Institutional centers will provide opportunities for research and service that impact student learning and communities in ways that enhance social justice.

OBJECTIVE 3.2: The curriculum will provide opportunities to promote social justice learning.

OBJECTIVE 3.3: Issues of social justice will be advanced through the work of faculty, students, and staff.

GOAL 4. ENHANCE REVENUE AND STEWARSHIP OF RESOURCES

OBJECTIVE 4.1: All plans, policies, practices, and reward structures will reflect a commitment to stewardship of resources.

OBJECTIVE 4.2: Increased funds will be available to support university priorities.

OBJECTIVE 4.3: Scholarships and grants will be provided to offset educational costs, especially for those with financial hardship.

OBJECTIVE 4.4: Processes and procedures for the strategic application of resources will be evident.

OBJECTIVE 4.5: The university brand will enhance the reputation of the university among key audiences and support revenue generation opportunities in support of strategic priorities.

GOAL 5. ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF PHYSICAL AND OPERATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

OBJECTIVE 5.1: Information and learning technologies will be current, ubiquitous, mobile, and adequate to support learning and business operations across the campus.

OBJECTIVE 5.2: Technology will be used to manage transactional processes efficiently, freeing staff to focus on customer service with an equity-minded approach.

OBJECTIVE 5.3: Academic facilities and learning environments will support high-impact teaching practices and student learning.

OBJECTIVE 5.4: Living and learning environments within the residence halls will have facilities available for students to support and enhance learning opportunities.

OBJECTIVE 5.5: Staff will be highly trained and committed to excellence.

OBJECTIVE 5.6: Operational excellence will be evidenced by results-oriented goals, policies, procedures, and assessments.

OBJECTIVE 5.7: Organizational structures will be aligned to foster and sustain strategic goals.
Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) continue to play a significant role in higher education and in our nation. HBCUs provide opportunities for a large proportion of African Americans, many of whom are the first in their family to attend college, to earn a college degree. Moreover, with an emphasis on accessibility and affordability, HBCUs have served and continue to serve an ethnically and racially diverse student population, particularly those from under-resourced backgrounds. It is important to remain mindful of the rich legacy of HBCUs while ensuring these institutions provide a high quality and affordable college education for new generations of African Americans and other students who seek to attain a college degree and meaningfully contribute to our society and world. WSSU’s Strategic Plan for 2016-2021 is our commitment to ensuring that the unique HBCU experience is available to future generations of students as we continue to fulfill our motto “Enter to Learn. Depart to Serve.”