President’s Update
September 2015

From the President’s Office

President’s Message

In this first Update of the academic year, you will gain a sense of where the University is headed by seeing each division head’s plans for the coming year. With goals that are closely aligned with our strategic plan, we can ensure we will make progress toward meeting the Department of Higher Education’s Vision Project goals, and, in turn, capture performance funding from the Commonwealth.

Newsworthy

Worcester State University continued to garner media coverage over the summer. Some highlights follow, and view more stories here.

Our green chemistry summer program for high school students and teachers and Chemistry Department faculty member Kathleen C. Murphy were highlighted in two Telegram and Gazette stories.

A Worcester Magazine preview of what’s new at area colleges highlights our new Provost, Lois Wims, new green transportation options, and three new research and community outreach centers.

For the twelfth year in a row, we have been recognized by The Princeton Review as a “Best in the Northeast” college, based on student surveys – an accolade that was noted in the Telegram and Gazette’s “College Town.” We are the only one of the nine state universities to make the list.

In July and August, our faculty and staff were contacted to offer their expert opinions about:

1. the college admissions phenomenon of summer melt (Admissions Director Joseph DiCarlo);
2. effective summer reading lists (Education Department Chair Carol Donnelly);
3. the pros and cons of remedial math, in the Boston Globe (Mathematics Department Prof. Richard Bisk).

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This marks the fourth year of the Presidential Student Ambassadors Program, with the selection of 15 PSAs for the coming academic year. A competitive program for interested students who exemplify strong leadership skills, demonstrate dedication to WSU, and have a strong academic record, the PSAs work on projects they initiate to advance the campus’s quality of life and respond to the needs of the President’s Office in providing services that promote the University and its community. This year’s group of students includes seven returnees and eight new ambassadors.

**Community and Government Relations**

WSU, together with the Higher Education Consortium of Central Massachusetts (HECCMA), the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA), Assumption College, and the College of the Holy Cross, has just announced a new college route bus service designed to support cross-registration services through the local college consortium. The agreement creates a new Route #10 that will run from Assumption, via WSU and the WRTA Hub, to Holy Cross and back. Running weekdays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. during the academic year, the service should aid not only cross-registration participation, but also provide alternatives for students and employees to use public transportation. The service is to start on August 31st.

Worcester State successfully collaborated with city park officials and local organizers of summer baseball and softball playoffs to address parking related issues for attendees at games hosted at Rockwood Park adjacent to University’s North Parking Lot. Available parking on that lot was reduced to less than 100 spots this summer because of the Wellness Center construction project. A similar level of collaboration will be necessary next summer as parking will be temporarily reduced as the construction project is completed. For this upcoming academic year and post-construction, the North Lot will accommodate the usual 500-plus parking spots.

In his role as the two-year chair of the Massachusetts State Universities Council of Presidents (COP), President Maloney spoke on behalf of the nine state universities before the Board of Higher Education in mid-June. The update he provided included a summary of the universities’ actions on fee increases, changes in the leadership at seven of the nine institutions, and a COP perspective on the evolving funding formula.

Finally, Worcester State continues to promote its international engagement.

- The university has continued to support (with Foundation resources) participation by faculty in summer international professional development travel. We again funded five faculty across both schools, who traveled to Belgium, Brazil, Netherlands, and Spain. Ten faculty over the past two years have benefited from this initiative, involving travel to five continents (all except North America and Antarctica).
Five faculty members, led by Prof. Carlos Fontes and Katey Palumbo, director of the International Programs Office, traveled in August to the Amazon region of Ecuador using outside funding matched by funds from University Advancement. The purpose of the travel is to explore a potential partnership with an indigenous peoples group, with an expectation of engaging a range of academic disciplines in research topics all parties may collaboratively pursue. If WSU and the local tribal organization agree to formalize their collaboration, it would represent a unique and new type of partnership for the University.

Organizational Updates

- Our new Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Lois Wims joined us in July, replacing Interim Provost David Caruso.

- Dr. Jane O’Brien Friederichs joined us in late August as interim Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, as Dr. Lisa Boehm left in July for a position at Manhattanville College. The search for a permanent dean will begin soon.

- In Administration and Finance (A&F), Stacey Luster joined us in July as our new Assistant Vice President for Human Resources, Payroll, and Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, while Interim Human Resources Director Jack Giarusso finished up that same month. Ms. Luster will oversee the hiring of a Director of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity – which will continue to address diversity issues more broadly – and a Human Resources Director.

- Also in A&F, Anisa Hoxha was named Director of Budgeting, Planning, and Policy Development, after serving in that role on an interim basis for the past several months, while Heather LaMarche was appointed as financial analyst after having served in a temporary capacity in that position.
President’s Update

Academic Affairs

- Design systems to support interdisciplinary teaching and learning.
- Create new living and learning communities, particularly in liberal learning.
- Increase study abroad participation, create new student and faculty exchange opportunities, and expand international recruitment efforts.
- Develop a plan to launch new undergraduate majors, certificate programs, and graduate programs.
- Strengthen the University’s research infrastructure to pursue sponsored grant opportunities.
- Expand online course offerings, launch two online programs, and establish infrastructure, training, and support services for distance and distributed learning students.
- Use the results of surveys and focus groups to enhance the library's learning resources and services.
- Increase community partnerships and advisory boards within the greater Worcester community.
- Increase student retention and graduation rates through the use of high impact practices such as experiential learning, first year experience, collaborative learning and the reward of excellence in advising.
Administration and Finance

• Implement improvements to business processes and practices by expanding the use of existing technologies and providing refresher training to users.

• Identify ways to support expanded DGCE programs by extending the use of existing information technologies and identifying new technology resources as necessary.

• Leverage the use of information technologies to develop more efficient business models across the university.

• Revise business processes in Procurement and Accounts Payable based on the recommendations of an outside reviewer.

• Fill the vacant positions within HR and AA/Diversity/EEO and assist the new Assistant Vice President in developing goals for HR/PR/ AA, EEO, and Diversity for the coming year.

• Analyze the Department of Higher Education’s new funding formula to better understand current funding awards and predict future funding.

• Complete the Wellness Center over the next twelve months.
Enrollment Management

- Leveraging the success of the Fall 2015 student enrollment goals, continue to develop specific recruiting strategies to ensure stable university enrollment in a declining demographic market, including development of an online virtual campus tour.

- Revise Admissions’ recruitment collateral, including developing a new guidance counselor brochure, a search piece, and a brochure for high school juniors.

- Develop new recruiting materials for the Graduate School.

- Continue to develop the University’s primary and secondary websites, optimizing them for mobile use and developing interactive content for external audiences.

- Develop policies and processes to optimize course enrollment and streamline course registration processes.

- Leverage University technologies to better optimize office workflow and increase customer service.

- Increase enrollment of out-of-state student and international student enrollment by 20%.

- Increase faculty use of online retention resources by 5%; expand the use of online retention resources in Academic Success and other areas of the university.
Student Affairs

- Develop a new wellness campaign for students in crisis.

- Expand partnerships with the greater Worcester community, including developing initiatives with the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA).

- Welcome the National Corporation for Community Service’s Jumpstart program to campus; Jumpstart’s mission is to help children enter kindergarten prepared for success.

- Implement fellowship opportunities for faculty to develop collaborative and innovative programming for the John J. Binienda Center for Civic Engagement.

- Create additional leadership opportunities for undergraduate students and develop online modules to support leadership skills.

- Develop a marketing plan to increase by 20% the use of the University’s online internship and job database, Lancerlink.
University Advancement

- Raise $2.5 - $3 million to continue progress toward realizing the $15 million goal of the University’s Change Lives capital campaign.

- Cultivate the development of additional challenge matches for donors, such as the $250,000 Gene J. DeFeudis Wellness Center Challenge and the $10,000 Wasylean Young Alumni Challenge.

- Launch the Worcester State Magazine, a redesign of the Statement based on the results of focus group studies and technical analyses. The Worcester State Magazine will feature a more contemporary look to better engage readers and coordinate with a more comprehensive approach to communicating with alumni.