

A bronze statue of a horse's head and neck, shown in profile facing left. The statue is highly detailed, capturing the texture of the horse's coat and the shape of its ears and mane. It is positioned in the upper right portion of the frame. The background is a soft-focus landscape of trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and red. Sunlight filters through the leaves, creating a warm, bokeh effect. In the lower right, the lower legs and hooves of the horse are visible, suggesting it is in a dynamic, possibly running or galloping pose.

Strategic Plan

2022-32



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Land Acknowledgment Statement

Land acknowledgment is a process by which individuals are prompted to consider the history of the space they currently inhabit.

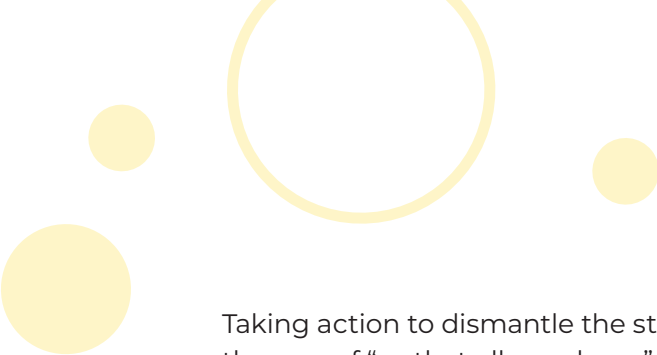
We would like to recognize that Western Michigan University is located on lands historically occupied by the Ojibwe, Odawa and Bodewadmi nations. Please take a moment to acknowledge and honor this ancestral land of the Three Fires Confederacy, the sacred lands of all Indigenous peoples and their continued presence.





Preamble

As a premier, comprehensive, doctoral high-research university that is driven by our core principle, “so that all may learn,” Western Michigan University guides our students to pursue their purpose, thrive in a life well-lived and prosper in a meaningful career. Our top-tier faculty and dynamic, committed staff are the foundations that support our high-quality University. Western’s holistic educational environments, along with exceptional learning and experience-based opportunities, empower our graduates to become leaders in an ever-changing world.



Taking action to dismantle the structural and cultural barriers that stand in the way of “so that all may learn” requires us to be a responsive university that actively prepares for the future ahead. WMU is committed to improving access to learning opportunities by fostering a supportive University environment and culture while providing a relevant education with a robust return on investment. This means cultivating a student-centered growth mindset that is focused on developing 21st-century transferable knowledge, skills and aspirations. In turn, our students are equipped to make a positive impact on the world as well-rounded, global citizens.

Reaffirming Western’s commitment to our most important asset—our community—led to updating our vision and mission and re-evaluating our shared values, which helped create a solid foundation for our future goals to flourish. We will invest in and remain steadfast to our responsibility to embed diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice into every aspect of our institution; in addition to:

- achieving academic excellence through the collaboration of students, faculty and staff.
- strengthening our relationships with the communities that we serve as a Carnegie Community Engaged institution.
- challenging ourselves to create a transformed, just community that consistently invests in building an inclusive and equitable environment.
- continuing to develop a diverse portfolio of research and creative scholarship that benefits people and the planet.
- becoming a leader in sustainability efforts and upholding our commitment to responsible environmental stewardship in our decision making.
- prioritizing the multi-faceted pursuit of the individual and collective well-being of our campus community.
- ensuring that global learning opportunities are accessible to all learners.

Western’s new Strategic Plan will cover a span of 10 years and is developed in a way that will allow us to deliver on our commitment to continuous improvement. A 3-4-3-year plan evaluation structure enables us to respond to changes in our environment and to evolve our process as milestones are reached.

University leadership will be responsible for using this Strategic Plan as a roadmap for implementing strategic initiatives to achieve these institutional goals within their own areas of influence. The future of WMU depends on the collaboration of our entire community and the shared commitment to build upon our strengths, seize our opportunities and pursue our aspirations as we chart the course of Western’s future—together.



Strategic Planning Process

After the Gold Standard 2020 sunset in December 2020, Western Michigan University began the process of developing a new Strategic Plan at the start of the fall 2021 semester. Building on the success of prior strategic initiatives, inspired by our strengths and opportunities, and motivated by the mission and values of our institutional identity, we followed a data-informed process driven by continuous improvement and anchored in an equity-mindedness framework to develop a shared strategy for the next decade.



In fall 2021, under the leadership of the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and with guidance from the Strategic Planning Core Team, a seventeen-member, cross-campus Strategic Plan Steering Committee was established and charged to develop a 10-year Strategic Plan with a 3-4-3-year evaluation framework that:

- embeds a diversity, equity and inclusion lens within its structure;
- demonstrates continuous improvement;
- involves campus-wide collaborations;
- builds upon strategic initiatives and brand identity;
- results in the development and alignment of action plans that are achievable and aspirational;
- encompasses aligned, unit-level planning;
- motivates and incentivizes our campus community, and;
- communicates to external agents.

Several campus-wide initiatives grounded the University as we established and identified the seven institutional key priorities that will set the focus for our future. These

initiatives included the 2013 and 2020 Campus Climate Studies, the 2019 Employee Engagement Survey, the Racial Justice Advisory Committee and the results of the identity-focused Think Big activities that helped form the creation of Rethink Smart.

Seven cross-campus working groups composed of faculty, staff, students and community members were formed during fall 2021 to address our institutional key priorities—Academic Excellence, Community Building, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), Research and Creative Scholarship, Sustainability, Internationalization and Well-being.

The actions taken by these working groups in spring 2022 included priority area SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results) analyses, a targeted student survey, and priority-themed listening townhalls (virtual and in-person). Throughout this process, working groups analyzed data and incorporated community feedback as they focused on identifying, developing and recommending achievable, metric-based goal and objective recommendations that centered around these seven key priorities.

Over the course of the 2021-2022 academic year, the Strategic Plan Core Team shared information with and welcomed input from our internal and external community members through campus communication channels and the social media platforms of Facebook and Instagram. We also facilitated numerous engagement opportunities across all stakeholder groups, which included both six in-person and virtual vision and mission town hall events (with 400+ registrations), 18 themed key priority listening sessions (with 450+ registrations), a focused student survey (with 350+ responses) and three values identification workshops (with 30+ registrations). In addition, feedback was gathered through physical and virtual graffiti boards, digital Qualtrics surveys and “suggestion box” submissions on our website. These engagement activities were open to all members of our campus community, and we received over 1,000 responses in total. Further details on the engagement feedback can be found at wmich.edu/strategic.

The data and feedback collected through engagement sessions was consistently utilized throughout the Strategic Planning process as we re-examined our mission and vision and identified institutional strengths, opportunities and aspirations. Through this process, the Strategic Plan steering committee approved drafts of Western’s new vision, mission and value statements in spring 2022. At the same time, the working

groups submitted their first drafts of their recommendations, which included a key priority goal, objectives and sample strategies and metrics. All key priorities, goals, and objectives are considered equally important, with none outranking the other.

Throughout summer 2022, these first drafts were reviewed by the Provost and Core Team, as well as by the University Diversity Committee through the lens of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The working group chairs then presented their first drafts to the Strategic Plan Steering Committee for further review, discussion and suggested edits. Working group chairs integrated committee feedback, made changes and submitted their completed recommendation drafts. These drafts were refined by the Core Team and returned to working groups for their confirmation to move forward for a final review process undertaken by the University’s Diversity Committee, Strategic Planning Steering Committee, and the Provost and the Strategic Planning Core Team during fall 2022.

The finalized version of the Strategic Plan was reviewed for feedback and endorsement by the President’s Cabinet, and the WMU’s Board of Trustees in fall 2022. After plan approval, our community will begin to develop collaborative action plans that refine our strategies and metrics of success as we implement this new Strategic Plan.





Vision

We empower every person to grow, thrive and belong. We contribute to making the world a better place through creativity, research, innovation and compassion.

Mission

We are an access-oriented institution that provides an impactful and inclusive education that integrates discovery and fosters holistic growth and well-being so that all may learn.





WMU makes decisions based on these five core values

Community-Engaged

We collaborate with local and global partners with an emphasis on trust, respect, reciprocity and cultural humility.

Discovery-Driven

We pursue inquiry, disseminate knowledge and foster critical thinking that encourages life-long learning.

Equity-Centered

We transform systems and remove barriers to ensure we represent, serve, include and empower every member of our community.

Learner-Focused

We challenge every member of our community to be responsive to and responsible for the education of our students by intentionally cultivating an engaging university experience that creates skilled, life-long learners.

Sustainability-Guided

We serve our communities by discovering transformational, multidisciplinary solutions, being environmentally, socially and financially responsible; and improving the quality of life for current and future generations



Academic Excellence

Goal: We empower one another to develop the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in life and make a positive difference in the world by leveraging our institution's academic strengths.

Objectives

Objective 1: Ensure the academic success of all learners by actively responding to student demographic shifts and cultivating holistic support systems that meet their contemporary needs.

Objective 2: Engage every student in experiential education to foster lifelong learning, deepen their understanding through application, increase connections between WMU and the broader community, and prepare for meaningful, long-lasting careers.

Objective 3: Cultivate creative, interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches to develop and disseminate new knowledge that positively impacts current and future generations.

Objective 4: Recruit, retain and support the success of diverse faculty and staff, empowering them to inspire and prepare the next generation of learners and disseminate knowledge that positively impacts our communities, from local to global.

Key metrics

1. 6-year graduation rate
2. 2nd-year retention rate and 3rd and 4th year persistence rates

¹The intentional engagement of our students in research and creative scholarship, our national and international reputation as a first-choice research institution, and the social mobility of our graduates are measures of inclusive academic excellence. Academic excellence is achieved by WMU students, staff, and faculty working together to create inclusive learning environments that produce exceptional public impact scholarship and inspire outstanding academic achievement for all students.



Community Building

Goal: As a Carnegie Community Engagement Classification institution, we strengthen our relationships with those we serve by cultivating a campus culture grounded in communication, collaboration and engagement that fosters a sense of belonging, safety and support for all.

Objectives

Objective 1: Provide robust, accessible opportunities across campus and at all levels that cultivate a collaborative campus culture and advance our reputation as an institution of choice.

Objective 2: Facilitate consistent, transparent and accessible communication between WMU and those we serve to strengthen our local, regional and global partnerships.

Objective 3: Pursue mutually beneficial, collaborative partnership opportunities in the places where we live and thrive that bolster our ability to be a responsive, community-engaged leader

Key metrics

1. Student participation in experiential learning (service learning, co-curricular learning, volunteerism)
2. Increase in positive responses across all themes outlined in the Employee Engagement Survey

²**Carnegie Foundation's Elective Classification for Community Engagement:** "The Carnegie Foundation's Elective Classification for Community Engagement is a way for Colleges and Universities in the US to gain recognition for institutionalizing community engagement." Carnegie Elective Classifications - American Council on Education. Retrieved from <https://carnegieelectiveclassifications.org/>



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Goal: We actively create and continuously invest in building an inclusive and equitable environment where every member of our community feels like they belong and has access to the resources they need to thrive.

Objectives

Objective 1: University leadership shall adopt policies, delegate authority to lead, prioritize issues and provide economic support related to diversity, inclusion, equity and justice that are proportional to campus demographics.

Objective 2: Retain and graduate a diverse student body while steadily eliminating disparities in graduation rates.

Objective 3: Hire and retain faculty, staff and administrators that better reflect and support the changing identities of the student population in the United States.

Objective 4: Diversity curriculum and co-curricular touchpoints are widespread and easily accessible for all students throughout their years at WMU.

Objective 5: Empower and provide resources for the VP of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to address structural systemic barriers to advance diversity, equity, inclusion and justice across campus.

Key metrics

1. 2nd-year retention rate, 3rd and 4th-year persistence rates and 6-year graduation rates of historically under-represented minority and first-generation students
2. Percentage of faculty, staff and administrators from historically under-represented minority populations

Diversity: "Diversity is a fact of our community, and asks us to consider the number and composition of membership in our community according to the representation of the aspects and attributes that differentiate groups and individuals according to some of (but not only) the following: race, ethnicity, age, sex, gender, gender expression, religious belief, worldview, physical and intellectual ability, sexuality, national origin, citizenship status, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, or level of education. We define diversity as an essential fact of this community, and an ongoing goal to support and enhance." Retrieved from <https://wmich.edu/diversity/deivocabulary-1>

Equity: "Equity is our commitment to continuously evaluate systems and structures to identify and remove biases in the allocation of opportunities and resources to ensure everyone is provided with what is needed for them to achieve equal outcomes." Retrieved from <https://wmich.edu/diversity/deivocabulary-1>

Inclusion: "Inclusion means intentional actions that enable people of all different characteristics to take part in our community actively and fully. This comprises being intentional in the policy and practice of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people, and ensures they are culturally and socially accepted, welcomed, and equally engaged in the functioning of the institution. Belonging is the emotional outcome of inclusion work: the resulting sense of being a valued member of that group." Retrieved from <https://wmich.edu/diversity/deivocabulary-1>

Social Justice: "Social justice is the belief that everyone deserves equal access to and participation in our community as well as equal economic, political, and social rights. This is the result of actions that broadly aim to share society's burdens and benefits equally among all people." Retrieved from <https://wmich.edu/diversity/deivocabulary-1>



Internationalization

Goal: We provide extensive, renowned global learning opportunities to all community members that develop cross-cultural competence and enhance understanding of and contribution to a more peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

Objectives

Objective 1: Advance an institutional culture of internationalization and global engagement by removing barriers through policies, strategy and programming.

Objective 2: Strengthen faculty, staff and student opportunities to engage in collaborative global learning experiences.

Objective 3: Increase our international mobility competitiveness by enhancing the cross-border experiences of students, faculty and staff to and from WMU.

Objective 4: Develop and refine faculty and staff global engagement programs and opportunities that bolster participation in international activities.

Objective 5: Integrate and prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion strategies into all international initiatives.

Key metrics

1. Students participating in study abroad
2. Percentage of faculty that are international

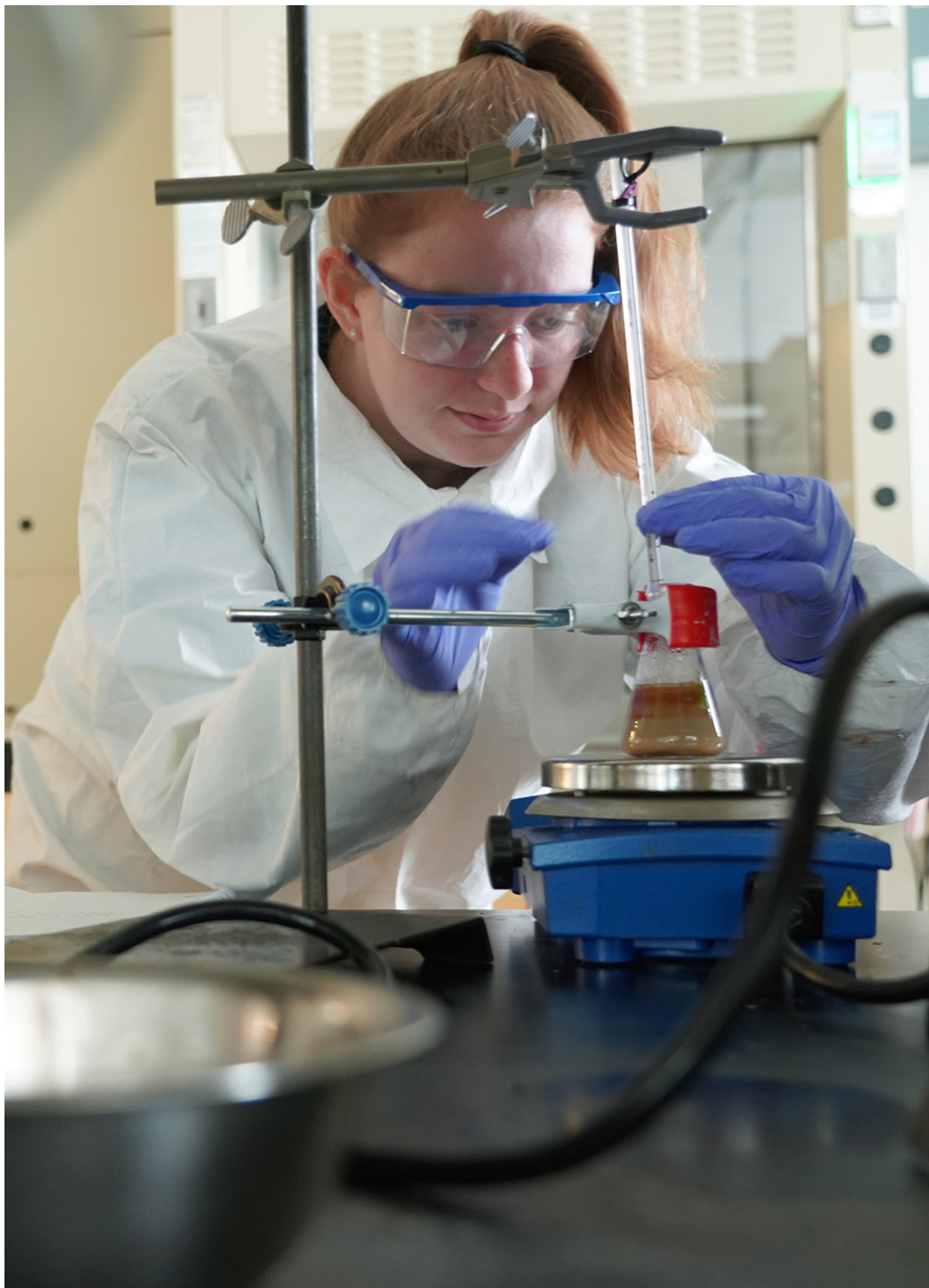
⁷**Institutional Commitment and Structure:** "Internationalization requires priority in an institution's strategic plan. This is an explicit commitment by institutional leaders ... The involvement of senior leaders and appropriate administrative and reporting structures form an essential framework for internationalization and institutional transformation. These include the president and chief academic leaders; offices that are designated to coordinate campus-wide global engagement, international student services, and off-campus learning experiences; and units that are responsible for research, institutional research, faculty development, student support services (e.g., academic advising, counseling, career exploration), enrollment management, finance, community and alumni relations, and advancement." American Council on Education. Retrieved from <https://www.acenet.edu/Research-Insights/Pages/Internationalization/CIGE-Model-for-Comprehensive-Internationalization.aspx>

⁸**Faculty and Staff Support:** "As the primary drivers of teaching and knowledge production, faculty play a pivotal role in learning, research, and service (to varying degrees depending on an institution's unique mission). Their commitment is imperative to the success of internationalization. Institutional policies and support mechanisms ensure that faculty have opportunities to develop intercultural competence themselves and are able to maximize the impact of these experiences on student learning, research, and service." American Council on Education. Retrieved from <https://www.acenet.edu/Research-Insights/Pages/Internationalization/CIGE-Model-for-Comprehensive-Internationalization.aspx>

⁹**Mobility:** "Mobility refers both to the outward and inward physical movement of people (students, faculty, and staff), programs, projects, and policies to off-campus communities and other countries to engage in learning, research and collaboration ... This might be accomplished through collaborative online international learning (COIL) or virtual exchange; research cooperation; faculty and staff exchanges; or expertise shared virtually; internship and service experiences; and virtual partnerships." American Council on Education. Retrieved from <https://www.acenet.edu/Research-Insights/Pages/Internationalization/CIGE-Model-for-Comprehensive-Internationalization.aspx>

¹⁰**Global Learning:** "Global learning is a critical analysis of and an engagement with complex, interdependent global systems and legacies (such as natural, physical, social, cultural, economic, and political) and their implications for people's lives and the earth's sustainability. Through global learning, students should 1) become informed, open-minded, and responsible people who are attentive to diversity across the spectrum of differences, 2) seek to understand how their actions affect both local and global communities, and 3) address the world's most pressing and enduring issues collaboratively and equitably." American Association of Colleges and Universities. Retrieved from <https://www.aacu.org/initiatives/value-initiative/value-rubrics/value-rubrics-global-learning>

¹¹**Comprehensive Internationalization:** Comprehensive internationalization is a "strategic, coordinated framework that integrates policies, programs, initiatives, and individuals to make colleges and universities more globally oriented and internationally connected ... it recognizes that all constituents at a college or university—students, faculty, and staff—are learners and central to the institution's equitable, intercultural transformation ... In short, effective internationalization cannot happen in a few siloed offices, confined to certain disciplines, or reserved for a limited number of students. Internationalization is a collaborative, integrated ethos, the meaning of which must be discerned by each institution in the context of its unique mission and culture." American Council on Education. Retrieved from <https://www.acenet.edu/Research-Insights/Pages/Internationalization/CIGE-Model-for-Comprehensive-Internationalization.aspx>



Research and Creative Scholarship

Goal: As a doctoral university with high research activity (R2) , and growing recognition of our high-caliber research and creative scholarship, we advance our institution by having a diverse portfolio of research and creative scholarship that engages students, benefits the planet, expands the frontiers of knowledge and elevates the human condition.

Objectives

Objective 1: Increase the engagement of all students in research and creative scholarship to help them gain knowledge, experience and practical skills that will serve their futures as lifelong learners and global citizens.

Objective 2: Increase research and creative scholarship activity by cultivating a supportive environment that ensures faculty, staff and students have equitable access to resources needed to participate in state-of-the-art inquiry, analysis and creativity.

Objective 3: Strengthen community-engaged, public impact research and creative scholarship by leveraging existing partnerships and developing new ones with industries, businesses and nonprofit organizations in southwest Michigan and beyond.

Objective 4: Create and celebrate the compelling narrative about our research and creative achievements and expertise by improving and better coordinating communication with all stakeholders.

Key metrics

1. Annual research expenditures
2. Creative performances or exhibitions, publications, and presentations directed and curated by faculty, and undergraduate and graduate students

¹²**Carnegie Classification High Research (R2):** "Institutions that awarded at least 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees and had at least \$5 million in total research expenditures during the update year (as reported through the National Science Foundation (NSF) Higher Education Research and Development Survey (HERD)." Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. Retrieved from https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/classification_descriptions/basic.php



Sustainability

Goal: We integrate sustainability into all aspects of university functions and invest in this commitment at the highest level of institutional decision-making.

Objectives

Objective 1: Build a campus-wide culture of prioritizing sustainability that is consistently communicated by University leadership.

Objective 2: Every member of our WMU community develops climate change literacy—understanding systemic sustainability challenges, inequities and practices—via curricular, co-curricular and employment experiences.

Objective 3: Achieve carbon neutrality in alignment with the timeline set forth by the state of Michigan.

Objective 4: Invest in continuous improvement of facilities, infrastructure and practices to achieve a more sustainable campus and healthier community.

Key metrics

1. Carbon emissions

¹⁹**Carbon Neutrality:** “a state in which the GHG emissions released to the atmosphere by a stakeholder (individual, organization, company, country, etc.) have been reduced or avoided and the remaining ones are compensated with carbon credits. To achieve carbon neutrality, carbon credits from projects that reduce, avoid, or temporarily capture GHGs are accepted. Note that carbon neutrality is possible at stakeholder level, not at global/planetary level, where use of carbon credits (offsetting/compensation) is not possible.” United Nations Climate Change. Retrieved from <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/CNN%20Guidelines.pdf>



Well-being

Goal: We safeguard the overall health of our community by embedding well-being into all aspects of WMU's culture, administration, operations and academics by utilizing the social determinants of health and eight dimensions of wellness—physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, social, environmental, financial and occupational.

Objectives

Objective 1: Make systemic changes in the written and unwritten rules and processes throughout the institution to better empower all people at WMU to flourish and thrive, especially historically marginalized communities.

Objective 2: Scan the built environments at WMU and enhance the spaces where we learn, work, live and connect so they are more inclusive and conducive to holistic health, safety and accessibility for diverse communities.

Objective 3: Adopt the Okanagan International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges and mobilize an institution-wide, multi-disciplinary coalition of students, faculty, staff and alumni to take collective action for a culture of well-being.

Objective 4: Provide effective, equitable opportunities for students, faculty and staff to build the personal capacity, health information fluency and life-enhancing skills they need to thrive in all aspects of the WMU Well-being Wheel, including social, financial, spiritual, environmental, physical, emotional, intellectual and occupational wellness.

Objective 5: Create or re-orient WMU services to provide equitable access to and distribution of resources for prevention, support and treatment.

Key metrics

1. Increase in sense of well-being and safety among faculty, staff, and students as measured through the American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment (ACHA-NCHA) and National Faculty and Staff Health Assessment (ACHA-NFSHA).

¹⁴**Social Determinants of Health:** "Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks." Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Retrieved from <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>.

¹⁵**Okanagan Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges:** "The charter has two calls to action for higher education institutions: (a) Embed health into all aspects of campus culture, across the administration, operations and academic mandates. (b) Lead health promotion action and collaboration locally and globally." Okanagan Charter: An International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges (2015).

¹⁶**WMU Well-being Wheel:** The WMU Well-being Wheel is composed of eight internal dimensions (social, financial, spiritual, environmental, physical, emotional, intellectual, and occupational) and six external influences (equity, community/cultural norms, public/organizational policy, living/working environment, sustainability and socioeconomic conditions/access). Retrieved from <https://wmich.edu/wellness/wheel>.



wmich.edu/strategic