

A photograph of a large, dark-colored sign on a building. The sign features the text 'PURDUE UNIVERSITY FORT WAYNE' in white and gold lettering. The background shows a multi-story brick building with windows under a clear sky.

PURDUE
UNIVERSITY
FORT WAYNE

STRATEGIC PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE
DISCOVERY REPORT

\\ DECEMBER 2018

STRATEGIC PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE DISCOVERY REPORT

DRIVERS OF CHANGE

With the dawn of a new institution comes immense responsibility to recognize our past, plan for our future, and build a strategy that will inform our collective influence, scope, and reach. It is a monumental and transformational time in our history that promotes a unified spirit, a shared vision, and a renewed drive for success. With the increased brand clarity of a world-class system, a growing institutional reach, and an expanding recruitment region, we are primed to redefine our vision and illustrate a bold strategy that will reposition the university for our next 50 years. Utilizing data from economic, demographic, technological, and socio-cultural trends and developments pertaining to our market, coupled with the immense knowledge, expertise and experience of our internal and external stakeholders, our organization's vision and success are in our hands.

A vital element of our strategy is our people. We are the drivers of our change and with students as our focus, our past as our guide, internal and external data as our foundation, benchmarks and aspirational excellence as our reference, and a commitment to a strong outlook as our motivation, we will define our future.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND RESULTS

At the start of the 2018 academic year, the University Leadership team met to determine the process for developing a university strategic plan. There were two fundamental assumptions that underpinned the conversation. First, the approach must result in high-involvement and high engagement. Second, the plan should be

“ *Let's create havoc by engaging in campus-wide strategic planning that will help us develop our roadmap to success. A comprehensive strategic plan will guide every aspect of how we move forward as Purdue Fort Wayne—from academic planning to budgeting to philanthropy to capital expansion. With a clarity of mission and purpose, this institution will become a force to be reckoned with.*”

CHANCELLOR RONALD EISENBAUMER

Fall Convocation Address, August 20, 2018

developed in phases with a Discovery phase coming first and culminating in a campus-wide meeting that would essentially define the university strategy. Decisions made in that meeting structured the project plan for the Discovery phase.

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In early October, 2018 a Strategic Plan Steering Committee was formed consisting of representation from students, staff, faculty, and university leadership. The Steering Committee was charged with governance, guidance, oversight, and active leadership of the strategy planning process. The committee was also given authority to charter working groups to assist with data collection as part of the Discovery process. The Steering Committee chartered four such working groups:

- » External Research
- » Campus Engagement
- » External Benchmarking (*with other universities*)
- » Internal Environmental Scan of Purdue Fort Wayne

In addition, a comprehensive effort was undertaken to conduct focus groups with students, staff, faculty, and external stakeholders.

Each of the working groups self-organized and planned their work independently. Each developed an approach suited to their assigned scope. Results of their work are posted [in the appendix](#) and each report contains the group's chartered purpose statements as well as a description of how they conducted their work.

These reports, and the discussion of key takeaways that follows, represent the starting point for the development of our new strategic plan. As we work together to create that plan, we will continue to collect data, gather feedback, and generate new ideas for achieving the future we all want to see.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Valuable qualitative and quantitative data can be found in the focus group and working group reports, and the Steering Committee encourages people to read and consider each report in full.

What follows is a discussion of the areas where the data from multiple reports converges to suggest important challenges and opportunities that should be considered in the university's new strategic plan.

Student Success

One of the most consistent answers to the focus group question of what the university has done really well and gotten really right was support for our students. Our people—faculty, staff, administrators, and students—greatly value the lengths that the university goes to support our students in a variety of ways, both in the classroom and outside of it. With that being said, we face many challenges in thinking about how we move forward.

Key among these challenges is improving the university's retention rates. Moving the needle on retention will require a variety of efforts, including rethinking support services, advising practices, and classroom pedagogy.

A related challenge is recognizing the changing needs of our students, both in terms of academic and mental health support services, but also in terms of their preparation and expectations. Students are enrolling with transfer credits in hand—primarily as a result of the growing emphasis on dual credit in Indiana high schools—and they expect these credits to meaningfully reduce their time-to-graduation. They also want to see more online course offerings and greater flexibility in course scheduling. The data suggests that balancing high standards for our academic programs with the creation of paths to success for all incoming students should be a priority moving forward.

We also need to balance our own understanding of what defines student success—understanding of disciplinary content, development of hard and

soft skills, broad exposure to the liberal arts, and civic and global learning—with the changing ways that students define success.

Community Engagement

Purdue Fort Wayne has long thought of itself as a university that is deeply engaged in its community, whether that be through industry partnerships, artistic and cultural programming, service and experiential learning activities, or the overall positive impact on quality of place that the university and its graduates have on Fort Wayne and Northeast Indiana. Historically, these relationships have largely been driven by the needs and desires of individual programs and faculty rather than as an intentional part of the university's mission. The result has been varying levels of institutional and community support for these activities.

If we are committed to maximizing Purdue Fort Wayne's status as a Metropolitan university and identifying its unique value to the Purdue System—and the data strongly suggests that faculty and staff are so committed—then we need to rethink community engagement from the ground up.

Research and Innovation

As a university, research and innovation are at the forefront of who we are and what we do. Faculty research, scholarship, and creative endeavor are at the heart of the traditional university. We also see innovation across the university in the ways we support students, interact with the community, and maximize our resources.

The data reveals that faculty are generally happy with the research environment of the university—with the support they receive and the resources they have available to them. The data also reveals that research and innovation—by faculty, staff, and students—are essential to

success in all of our endeavors. Engagement in research has a tangible impact on our students and increased collaboration is an expressed desire by our external stakeholders. Research and innovation benefit our faculty, our students, and our community, and should be emphasized as a public good.

A related opportunity in the area of research is a growing interest on campus in pursuing interdisciplinary collaborations, both in research and in academic programming. Bringing together faculty expertise from across traditional disciplinary boundaries to create new knowledge and broaden student learning and skills development has the potential to transform the university at relatively low cost.

Stewardship of the University

Stewardship takes a variety of forms, all of which are essential to the future well-being of the university. One critically important version of stewardship is in the valuing of our people, including students, staff, faculty, and alumni. Salary compression has hit our workforce incredibly hard in recent years, and it is essential that steps be taken to address this concern. It negatively impacts employee morale and retention, and affects our ability to recruit and retain highly-qualified faculty and staff. Providing greater opportunities for leadership and professional development is also important in terms of the investment we make in our employees.

The data also suggests that we must continue to open the lines of communication. Our people feel invested in the university, but that investment is challenged when they feel helpless to impact its future. Students are an important voice that we too often fail to engage. We must also do more to value our alumni. We should take pride in their accomplishments, and they should take pride in their association with the university.

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Another version of stewardship is responsibly leveraging our resources (money, people, infrastructure, and time). For many years, we have had to do more with less, to stretch every dollar as far as we can, to ask people to take on more work with little to no extra compensation. We have done so largely without any robust measures of accountability in place. We need to grow our revenues—new state support would obviously help, as would new community partnerships, but continued enrollment growth and increased development activity are the surest path to consistent growth—but we also need to responsibly manage the resources we have. The data points to a critical tension in the coming years between investing in the university as it currently exists—addressing salary compression, replacing faculty and staff, beefing up existing student support services—and investing in our strategy.

Mission and Vision Statements

In light of these key takeaways, the Strategic Plan Steering Committee strongly recommends revising the current university Mission and Vision Statements to better reflect who we are and what we want to become.

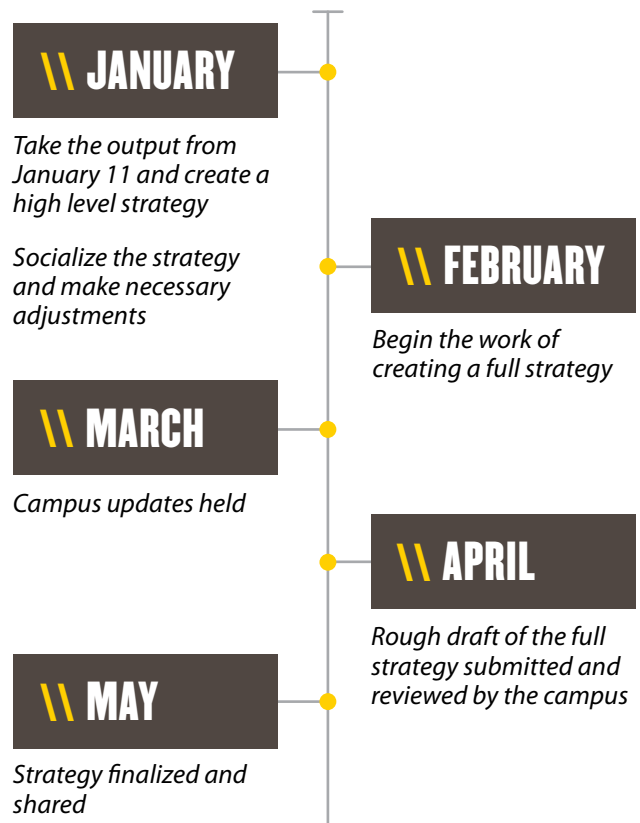
NEXT STEPS

As we move forward, what do you think our future impact as a university should be? Thinking carefully about the change drivers, our opportunities and challenges, what do we need to consider for the future? Even futurists have difficulty answering this question—and what we know about strategic planning is that it is less about getting the vision exactly right, and more about aligning the whole university (faculty, staff, students, etc.) around a single mission and vision. Bill Shore (CEO of Share Our Strength) writes, “One of the boldest ideas is the eradication of malaria, which for thousands of years has killed

millions of children. Recent advances offer powerful leadership lessons applicable to a wide range of institutions and underscores the degree to which we are all held back not just by failures of financing or strategy but by failures of imagination.”

We are hoping that you will all bring your best imaginations to our university wide retreat on January 11, 2019. Faculty, staff, and students will come together as a university community to reassess our mission and vision and to map our strategy in an interactive meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to define the path towards the future we prefer as a university. We will only be successful if we all come together and use our imaginations!

And if you are wondering about what might happen after the January 11 meeting, we have the spring timeline laid out in high-level steps:



APPENDIX

This appendix contains the full focus groups and working group reports (all findings in the discovery report came directly from these reports). Please see below for brief descriptions of each report, with links to the report:

- » **Focus Group** - Between October 15 and November 30, Strategic Focus Associates conducted 23 focus groups on the Purdue Fort Wayne campus with students, staff, faculty, administrators, and external stakeholders including local elected officials, members of the legislative delegation from Northeast Indiana, and leaders of regional businesses. In total, 261 people were interviewed. A summary report from Strategic Focus Associates can be found [here](#).
- » **The Internal Environmental Scan Working Group** identified recent university, college, school, department, and unit strategic and master plans and ongoing planning efforts, and identified other recent university-level data- and information-gathering efforts that might inform the strategic planning process. A summary report from this group can be found [here](#).
- » **The Campus Engagement Working Group** developed and executed approaches and methods for engaging students, staff, and faculty across campus to solicit input and feedback to the Discovery phase of the strategic planning process. The group collected and documented data through campus engagement boards and a student survey. A summary report from this group can be found [here](#).
- » **The Benchmarking Working Group** identified “stretch” peer institutions and benchmarked their strategic choices, competitive patterns, and organizational positioning with the intent of informing and improving PFW’s strategic planning. A summary report from this group can be found [here](#).
- » **The External Research Working Group** identified, examined, and summarized for consideration existing sources of data on the environment in which Purdue Fort Wayne operates. An overarching finding centers on the importance of community partnerships as a means of enhancing our enrollment to graduation pathway, philanthropy, alternative resources, marketing, and capital development. A copy of their summary report from this group can be found [here](#).

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