In the report that followed our 10-Year NEASC Reaccreditation visit in September 2013, the evaluating team encouraged the university to begin a new strategic planning process. In response to this recommendation and after we received the notification that we would be reaccredited, then President James Schmotter constituted a 20-member Strategic Planning Steering Committee with co-chairs, Dan Barrett, representing the faculty and Ann Atkinson, representing administration. In July 2015, President John Clark met with the co-chairs to say that he supported the spirit of the effort and that, under his leadership, the strategic planning process would continue as planned. Committee membership changed slightly during the process, reflecting changing responsibilities. During spring 2016, a third student was added, bringing the membership to 21.

As a preview to this section of the report, the discussion focuses on how we navigated the strategic planning process, what has been accomplished with the previous planning process serving as a point of departure, and recommendations for next steps.

Strategic Planning Steering Committee
Autumn Aaronsohn, Undergraduate Student, Psychology
Missy Alexander, Academic Affairs (served from 2014-2016 as Dean of Arts and Sciences)
Ann Atkinson, Academic Affairs
Dan Barrett, Psychology
Maranda Cox, Student Affairs (served initially as Undergraduate Student)
Terry Dwyer, Justice and Law Administration
Josie Hamer, Macricostas School of Arts and Sciences
Russell Hirshfield, Music
Veronica Kenausis, Library Services
Joe Loth, Football Program
Angela Maggi, Buildings Supervisor
Pamela McDaniel, Theatre Arts
Jay Murray, Enrollment Services
Katie O’Callaghan, Education and Educational Psychology
Mario Oliveira, Undergraduate Student, Veterans’ Organization
Patricia O’Neill, Psychology
Joan Palladino, Nursing
Birte Pfitzner, Student Affairs
Gary Skiba, Accounting
DL Stephenson, Communication
Peter Visentin, Planning and Engineering
Rebecca Woodward, Media Services
As part of this strategic planning process, the co-chairs provided updates and committee members sought participation of the campus community and external stakeholders through the following channels:

- Soliciting input at School Meetings during the opening of the school year
- Providing updates at Opening Meetings, University Senate Meetings, and Student Government Association Meetings
- Meeting with the campus community and external stakeholders to hear about hopes and challenges and to receive feedback about drafts of statements and reports
- Providing open forums
- Hosting a Strategic Planning Stakeholders Conference
- Creating a web page which included the opportunity to ask questions
- Providing a Mid-Year Report in January 2016, outlining progress since December 2014

The co-chairs began the strategic planning process by identifying the five most important tasks at the beginning of the process and then organizing the larger group into five subcommittees to complete those tasks and to produce reports for the campus. A list of the five subcommittees with their charges and the membership of each follows. Details of their activities and reports are provided later in this document, and their final reports may be found on the Strategic Planning web page.

**Strategic Plan 2007**: Review the most recent plan to determine what has been achieved, what is no longer relevant, and what remains to be organized and implemented.
Members: Pamela McDaniel, Chair; Dan Barrett; Terry Dwyer and Patricia O’Neill

**Mission, Vision and Values**: Assess the utility and appropriateness of our existing statements by comparing these with current realities and soliciting feedback from the campus community.
Members: Joan Palladino, Chair; Missy Alexander; Dan Barrett; Mario Oliveira and Birte Selvaraj

**Environmental Scan**: Examine our internal and external environments—including relevant economic, social, and political trends—to identify our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges.
Members: Veronica Kenausis, Chair; Ann Atkinson; Dan Barrett; Maranda Cox; Russell Hirshfield; Katie O’Callaghan and Gary Skiba

**Physical Plant**: Examine our existing facilities and space to compare what we have with what we need. This work will also contribute to the CSCU system Master Planning process.
Members: Peter Visentin, Chair; Ann Atkinson; Angela Maggi and Rebecca Woodward

**Branding**: Identify how the community perceives WCSU to determine if the image we project is consistent with those views.
Members: Jay Murray, Chair; Ann Atkinson; Jason Davis, Contributor; Ronald Drozdenko, Contributor; Joe Loth and DL Stephenson
Reports of the Subcommittees

Once the groups were constituted and charged, Dan Barrett, co-chair, worked to create a web page which includes the membership of the Steering Committee and subcommittees, timelines, a list of ways to participate in the strategic planning process, and an invitation to contact the co-chairs with questions. The completed subcommittee reports were added to the web page.

Strategic Plan 2007

The charge of this subcommittee was to evaluate Western’s progress in meeting the goals of its 2007 Strategic Plan. More specifically, the subcommittee was asked to review the most recent plan to determine what has been achieved, what is no longer relevant, and what remains to be organized and implemented. The six goals from that plan were:

Goal 1: Outstanding Faculty. Retain and attract outstanding faculty who excel in their subject area and discipline and are committed to excellence in teaching, ensuring student success, and fostering a diverse academic community.

Goal 2: Location. Create opportunities for students and faculty by capitalizing on Western Connecticut State University’s location in Danbury, Connecticut, a New England city characterized by its economic vibrancy and its diverse citizenry, as well as our proximity to the educational and cultural riches of New York City.

Goal 3: Diverse University Community. Further develop an environment that values and affirms the unique contributions of Western’s many constituent populations, recognizes the learning opportunities that differences can create, and strengthens connections among our various community members.

Goal 4: Range of Quality Academic Programs. Offer a range of quality academic programs, including featured Signature Programs that together educate a diverse student population and meet the needs of the state and region within the context of a global environment.

Goal 5: Student-focused Environment. Foster a holistic approach to intellectual and social growth and development that prepares students to be productive citizens of the state of Connecticut and the world by developing their knowledge, experience, and critical thinking and by fostering life-long learning characterized by intellectual curiosity, imagination, and creativity.

Goal 6: Affordability. Deliver outstanding value to students through effective management of the university and the provision of student financial assistance, thereby maintaining the affordability and access of a mid-sized public university while creating the quality experience of the best private institutions.
Each goal and subgoal was systematically reviewed and evidence sought for achievement of and/or progress toward achievement. The committee examined historical data and obtained relevant information from a number of individuals, divisions, and departments across the university. They drew four overall conclusions from their analysis:

- Western has achieved a number of important goals established in the 2007 plan.
- For a variety of reasons, many goals have not been met. For instance, two large-scale trends—the 2008 economic downturn and the decrease in high school enrollment—have negatively affected Western’s allocation of state funds as well as its enrollment. These factors, in turn, affected our ability to reach several specific goals. Moreover, changes in our student population and in resource distribution have led to a realignment of some goals.
- Unfortunately, we were unable to assess progress toward many goals. First, some goals were vaguely worded and/or simply not measurable. Second, since no particular position, department, or division was assigned responsibility for implementing some goals, it was difficult to determine where in the university relevant data might be located. Third, no target date for completion was established for most goals, making it challenging to decide when/if they were met. Fourth, Western did not collect data that may have allowed us to evaluate our progress toward some goals that were, in theory, measurable. Finally, some action elements were so specific that they may actually have created obstacles to meeting overall goals. That is, as conditions at the university changed, these specific elements were no longer necessary or relevant, or in some cases superseded by other actions, and consequently were not acted on.
- We strongly recommend that, in its new Strategic Planning Process, Western heeds the lessons of the past and 1) creates measurable goals, 2) assigns clear responsibility for achieving those goals, 3) specifies how they will be measured, and 4) sets target dates for their completion.

Below are the key findings pertaining to each of the goals. Full details—including the subgoals and corresponding evaluation—are available in the Strategic Plan 2007 Review: Final Report, completed in September 2015 and located in the appendices.

**Goal 1: Outstanding Faculty.** There are clear procedures for hiring practices, including publicizing a position, articulating selection criteria, and institutionalizing efforts to assure a diverse applicant pool. However, the cost of living in the greater Danbury area makes relocation a difficult choice for candidates and limits the ability to recruit and hire candidates from outside of the region, especially minority candidates. Though there is anecdotal evidence of the development and maintenance of an enriching academic environment in select programs consistent with WCSU’s mission and vision, there is not an articulated plan that is consistently applied across the university. A more uniform and transparent faculty evaluation process needs to be developed: more specific bylaws for each department to assist clear assessment by the Department Evaluation Committee (DEC) and the Promotion and Tenure Committee (P and T) have been created by approximately 1/3 of the departments’ committees, but the remainder
have not addressed this need. Furthermore, there are currently no systematic criteria in the evaluation process that address the quality of academic advising.

**Goal 2: Location.** In many key areas, the Strategic Plan 2007 goals relating to the university’s location in western Connecticut have been met. These include the development of university-community partnerships, career fairs that bring regional employers to campus, and the influx of recent substantial donor gifts that have positioned the university to use these local donations to encourage other individual and corporate donors. However, a student survey conducted as recently as March 2012 indicated location was not a primary reason for a student coming to WCSU, suggesting that students do not understand the benefits of location and/or they do not agree with Western’s characterization as such. A key performance metric to consider in how the university is doing in attracting students is to look at 1st year retention rates and 6-year graduation rates. In these two areas WCSU is not performing up to standards. The 1st year retention rate has fallen by 3.4% since 2011-2012 and the 6-year graduation rate has increased by only .3% in that same time span. However, since 2009-10 the percentage of in-state students has increased by 1.4%, suggesting that proximity to home and work and in-state tuition affordability are key attractors of students. More significantly, the percentage of underrepresented minority students has increased since 2009-2010 by 5.4% and is a welcome location variable since many scholarship funding opportunities are tied to local programs that encourage underrepresented groups to become involved in the sciences and the arts. A plan is underway through the Division of Enrollment Services to attract additional students from New York and New Jersey, two states which consistently lead nationwide in the number of high school graduating students who attend college outside of the state. Several initiatives are being considered to attract these students.

**Goal 3: Diverse University Community.** As noted above, progress has been made in expanding our outreach to potential minority students. Regular offerings of campus tours, shadow days, open houses, counselors’ fairs, orientation programs, and dissemination of information on applicant pools to academic departments have increased. However, past recruitment efforts have not been systematic and have not been data driven. During the past year we have begun to tap into data collection agencies such as “College Clearing House” to evaluate “how” students select a university. There is evidence that up through 2010 there were special efforts to enhance and attract diverse student and faculty populations and many of those programs remain in effect. Recent changes with the development of the Division of Enrollment Services have significantly increased the vision and scope of our recruitment efforts. Western celebrates Affinity Months (e.g. Women’s History, Black History, etc.), participates in the Danbury Teaching Fellows Program, and demonstrates other evidence of cultural exchanges with the community. The Alumni Association sponsors a full range of events to engage the community. We are in the formative stages of creating international partnerships with universities in other countries. Some early attempts were made to build on the diverse student body, faculty, staff, administration and community, and efforts were made to have bilingual support staff in the office of the registrar, admissions and financial aid; however, more needs to be done in this area. Only a few degree programs include diversity within their curricula (such as the Departments of Education/Educational Psychology and of Social Work); again, with the
changing demographics, more should to be done to meet the needs within our diverse populations.

**Goal 4: Range and Quality of Academic Programs.** Since 2007, several Signature Programs have been identified, significant improvements have been made in our facilities, substantial movement toward competency-based curricula has occurred and, since the NEASC visit of 2013, departments have been charged with updating course outlines to include learning outcomes. The process for Academic Program Review has been updated, multiple units have already achieved accreditation and/or undergone program review, and multiple units are applying for accreditation. Updatable program sheets have been devised to enhance advisement. The University has implemented a new competency-based General Education curriculum and will be addressing assessment of learning outcomes in 2016-2017. However, many of the goals that have to do with balance and range of academic programs are difficult to assess. While the number of full-time, tenure-track faculty has declined since 2007, so too has enrollment. Resources for faculty development have remained unchanged, in part because such resources tend to be contractually determined, and there has been no change in the Collective Bargaining Agreement with respect to these resources. Additional resources and support for faculty and staff to meet student and program needs have been provided in isolated incidents, and have taken the form of an advisement center on the Westside campus, a Learning Commons on the Westside campus, the expansion of the Writing Center on the Midtown campus, and a Math Emporium on the Midtown campus. The goal of communicating effectively to targeted audiences about the range and quality of academic programs remains unmet, and currently, there is no funding to highlight specific programs to appropriate audiences.

**Goal 5: Student-focused Environment.** This goal has the longest list of action statements. The items are often very specific and some apply to just one program or department. Items range from expanded support services for students, improved advisement and scheduling, and enrichment of the culture of the university. Many of these specific goals have been tackled, some have had a great deal of progress made toward meeting them, some may have been met, others have fallen by the wayside, and many are not assessable. Partnerships in the academic arena between faculty and students have been made on a departmental and individual faculty basis. Anecdotal evidence has been gathered; however, the overall success of this goal is difficult to assess across the campus. Learning opportunities within the global arena are being explored through an active program of student application for Fulbright scholarships, our Bridge and Diversity programs and through study abroad experiences. The expansion of VISA application is being explored and we are just beginning to advance global exchange to faculty. Expanded support services have been developed for students with learning challenges. We have strengthened counseling and academic advisement, and the latter may be where we have made the greatest strides in student services. Overall, the extent to which we have developed an enriching university culture is difficult to assess. This is the area of the action plan that seems to be most scattered and unfocused.

Although there is anecdotal evidence of activities that may loosely enrich the university culture, there are no clear metrics to assess this. A good deal of focus has been placed on improving
student advisement: the Advisement Center has actively worked with departments, particularly for specialized degrees such as nursing and in the SVPA, to ensure proper scheduling and sequencing of courses. Although faculty members had been hired to provide summer advisement for freshmen and transfer students, this was discontinued in 2015. The Advisement Center staff has formed liaisons with some of the specialized degrees to allow departments to take leadership in enrolling students. Efforts have been made within the last two years to improve scheduling, allowing for better coordination of class start and end times and more efficient selection of courses. By having set time slots, students are better able to choose classes and create a cohesive schedule. The university continues to struggle with the challenges of coordinating schedules and transportation for students simultaneously taking classes at both campuses. To meet these challenges, we need to think more broadly and develop an action plan that can be accomplished and adequately assessed.

**Goal 6: Affordability.** The goals created by the WCSU Strategic Plan in 2007 were in place prior to the devastating economic downturn in 2008 followed by the mortgage and housing crisis in 2010. These events have necessitated a re-assessment of the university’s goal of providing affordable education for students. A 2012 report by the Rebalancing Committee included the following assessment: “Western Connecticut State University’s (WCSU’s) strategic plan from 2007 rested, at times implicitly, on a number of assumptions about enrollment, student preference, state support, and other factors, that no longer hold true. Using a newly developed five-year modeling tool for WCSU’s finances, the Rebalancing Committee determined that if recent enrollment, state support and other trends continue, WCSU will experience serious financial challenges.” The report went on to evaluate the key economic drivers which impacted the effectiveness of this strategic goal. In sum, the report indicated that declining enrollment levels along with fewer residential students and decreasing state aid with only modest tuition and fee rate increases have left WCSU financially vulnerable. The Rebalancing Committee’s solution was a “radical change model” which included raising the tuition and fee rates beyond the Consumer Price Index (CPI). WCSU has raised student tuition 12% since 2012 in an effort to meet financial demands. There needs to be a re-assessment of current financial goals in light of the past, present and future economic realities. While the recent influx of substantial donor gifts to the university and the commitment of the university advancement office to meeting endowment and scholarship goals are encouraging, the drastically trimmed state budget invariably increases the financial burden on Western and its students.

**Mission, Vision and Values**

The Mission, Vision and Values Subcommittee began its work by seeking feedback on the existing Mission from students, faculty, and staff as well as from the greater community. It held approximately 20 campus meetings with over 350 individuals and solicited additional feedback via paper and electronic surveys.

The mission statement that guided the institution prior to and throughout the last strategic plan and which served as a focus of discussion and the springboard for change follows:
Western Connecticut State University serves as an accessible, responsive and creative intellectual resource for the people and institutions of Connecticut. The university strives to meet the educational needs of a diversified student body through instruction, scholarship and public service. Western aspires to be a public university of choice for programs of excellence in the liberal arts and the professions by providing full-time and part-time students with the necessary background to be successful in their chosen careers and to be productive members of society. It accomplishes this by emphasizing:

- A strong liberal arts foundation
- Strong skills in communication, problem solving and critical thinking
- Opportunities for experiential, cooperative and internship experiences
- A strong background in information technologies
- Interdisciplinary programs
- A strong sense of commitment to public service
- A personalized learning environment

Using this information, the subcommittee crafted the first of many drafts of the new mission statement. The initial draft was presented to the Steering Committee, which provided valuable feedback. The Steering Committee structured the details for the Stakeholders Conference that would serve to publicize the strategic planning effort to the wider community and to solicit reactions to the draft of the mission statement. This conference, held in December 2014, drew 87 participants, including faculty, staff, alumni, members of the University Foundation, and community partners and leaders. The conversations were lively with helpful feedback about the mission statement. The community partners from area schools, in particular, appreciated the opportunity to weigh in on decisions that will shape Western’s future for the next five to seven years.

Following this conference, the Mission, Vision and Values Subcommittee met to prepare the final draft of the mission statement that was presented to the University Senate for review and comment. The statement was approved by this body on March 11, 2015 and by the University President on March 24, 2015.

This new mission statement follows:

*Western Connecticut State University changes lives by providing all students with a high quality education that fosters their growth as individuals, scholars, professionals, and leaders in a global society.*

*To achieve this, we*

1. Offer undergraduate and graduate programs that weave together liberal arts and professional education and instill a desire for life-long learning.
2. Sustain a vibrant, inclusive campus that connects individuals through co-curricular programs, cultural events, and service to the community.
3. Attract student-centered faculty who are passionate teachers and accomplished scholars.
4. Establish partnerships that create opportunities for internships, research, and experiential learning.

As the mission statement was being considered by the campus community, our alumni, and our community partners and leaders, the chairs of the other subcommittees were conducting their work to examine the 2007 Strategic Plan and the Master Plan, to provide an environmental scan and research branding campaigns.

With the approval of the mission statement, the Mission, Vision and Values Subcommittee, began the work to engage the campus community in a review of the current values statement to assure that it continued to be appropriate for the university and was consistent with the new mission statement.

The values statements that guided the institution prior to and throughout the last strategic plan follow:

**Fulfilling the Mission Principles**

*The university’s mission as a public comprehensive university is given life through the principles and values that guide us:*

- Empowering students to attain the highest standards of academic achievement, public and professional services, personal development and ethical conduct is Western’s fundamental responsibility.
- Facilitating learning is a primary function. It requires that the faculty be active scholars with a lasting interest in enhancing instruction and that the curriculum be dynamic and include advanced instructional technologies.
- Preparing students for enlightened and productive participation in a global society is an obligation best fulfilled by developing top-quality academic programs and learning experiences.
- Promoting a rich and diverse cultural environment that allows freedom of expression within a spirit of civility and mutual respect is Western’s abiding commitment.
- Strengthening partnerships with the people and institutions of Connecticut is a benefit and endows teaching and scholarship with a vital connection to the community.

**Values**

*The university is committed to maintain quality in all that it offers and a commitment to continuous improvement, including:*

- Integrity in the process of teaching and learning.
- Respect for the dignity and rights of each member of the university community.
The draft of the new values statement was constructed after a careful review of campus feedback to determine points of agreement and a following formal discussion with the Steering Committee. It was presented to the University Senate in spring 2015 for review and comment. The statement was approved by this body on May 6 and by the University President on May 7, 2015. The new values statement follows:

**Excellence.** We value outstanding achievement realized through persistence, effort, honest feedback, and self-reflection.

**Curiosity.** We value the questions that drive learning, innovation, and creativity, which serve as the beginning and the desired outcome of education.

**Dialogue.** We value the conversations that explore diverse perspectives and encourage shared understanding.

**Engagement.** We value the interactions with ideas, peers, and community that are essential to a vibrant university environment.

**Opportunity.** We value the possibilities created by affordable, accessible educational environments in which students can grow into independent thinkers and confident leaders.

**Respect.** We value the right of all people to be treated with dignity and fairness and expect this in our policies, classrooms, and community.

This work would then lead to one of the final steps in the strategic planning process, the writing of the vision statement for Strategic Plan 2017.

The vision statement of Strategic Plan 2007 follows:

**Western Connecticut State University capitalizes on its outstanding faculty and its location in the greater New York metropolitan area to create a diverse university community that—in its range of quality academic programs and in its enriching and supportive student-focused environment—is characteristic of New England’s best small private universities, but with much more affordable costs.**

The Subcommittee completed the draft of a new vision statement based upon the feedback about the Strategic Plan, most specifically about the five goals, received during the forums held in September and October of 2016. The goals and the vision statement were presented to the University Senate on December 14, 2016. The five goals were approved with minor amendments and approved by the University President on January 3, 2017. The vision statement was returned to the Steering Committee with suggestions for revision to be discussed at the first University Senate meeting of the spring semester. The statement was approved by the University Senate on January 18, 2017 and by the University President on January 19, 2017. The new vision statement follows:

**Western Connecticut State University will be widely recognized as a premier public university with outstanding teachers and scholars who prepare students to contribute to the world in a meaningful way.**
The mission and vision statements were approved by the Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Regents on June 2, 2017 and by the Board of Regents on June 15, 2017. With these approvals, the full Strategic Plan moves to the implementation phase.

Environmental Scan

The final report of the Environmental Scan subcommittee, completed in April 2015, provides an overall analysis of Western’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOC) with respect to both external and internal factors, influences, and trends. This Scan makes it clear that Western needs to offer relevant, dynamic, and innovative curricular and co-curricular opportunities, in line with national trends, in order to attract and retain modern students of traditional and non-traditional ages. There is a significant need to address pedagogical, technology, and service infrastructure issues to provide the emerging student population with desired program and support options, and to bring the university up-to-date with trends in engagement practices.

The External Scan shows that the drawing pool for students of traditional college age – 18-24 year olds – will not change significantly over the next 10 years, especially given that most enrolled students are from Danbury and the immediate area. The population of non-traditional students is projected to grow over the same period, and they may bring with them new and diverse challenges for the university. Program offerings need to be updated and enhanced to respond to trends and projections for future career and job growth opportunities. State support of public higher education is predicted to continue to decline, and students will be required to absorb more of the cost burden.

The Internal Scan confirms that overall enrollment at Western has decreased by 9% over the last 6 years, and that graduate population has been the hardest hit, declining by nearly 30%. The undergraduate majors that have experienced the greatest declines are history, American studies, and education (primary and secondary). Programs that have seen moderate or significant growth include HPX, nursing, and computer science. There is only one graduate program that has demonstrated significant growth over the last 5 years – nursing. All others have shown marked declines in enrollment, the greatest in biology and education. Overall retention and graduation rates, while showing slight improvements, are cause for concern when measured against our comparator institutions.

Physical Plant

The Physical Plant Subcommittee interviewed vice presidents, deans, and directors to learn about and list the aspects of the Master Plan that had been achieved, the work that remained to be accomplished, the work that was no longer relevant to pursue, and projects that had become important to consider since the last Master Planning process.

During summer and fall 2014, the Physical Plant Subcommittee conducted hour-long interviews with several campus leaders to talk about the 2007 Master Plan and its implications for the next
Strategic and Master Planning processes. These notes of the interviews were then sent to each participant for their approval, and were supplemented and modified as needed. The participants were Dr. Missy Alexander, Dean of Arts and Sciences; Dr. Keith Betts, Vice President of Student Affairs; Tom DeChiaro, Chief Information Officer; Dr. Dan Goble, Dean of Visual and Performing Arts; Dr. Jess House, Dean of Professional Studies; Veronica Kenausis, Director of Library Services; Dr. Chris Kukk, Director of the Kathwari Honors Program; Luigi Marcone, Associate Vice President for Facilities; Dr. David Martin, Dean of the Ancell School of Business; Chuck Spiridon, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services; Robert Schlesinger, Vice President for Institutional Advancement; and Paul Steinmetz, Director of University and Community Relations.

The committee focused on the items appropriate to each of the individuals being interviewed that were identified as critical issues in the Master Planning process completed in February 2007. The committee culled the common themes and concerns and identified goals that were shared by two or more of the participants. Worthy of note is that some of those goals were identified in the last Master Planning process.

The overarching shared concerns that emerged from the conversations with these campus leaders were:

- A need for a recreation center that could provide opportunities for improved health and fitness and facilitate the delivery of curricular aspects of some of our academic programs.
- A need for a new school of business. The current building should not be repurposed; it should be razed.
- A need to renovate the cafeteria in the Student Center. (Note: renovation has since been completed.)

These goals are helping to inform latter stages of the Strategic Planning process.

**Branding Subcommittee**

The charge of the Branding Subcommittee was to take a fresh look at how the community perceives WCSU, what image we want to project, and how we can effectively do that. The Branding Subcommittee met to examine branding campaigns at other colleges and universities to determine if WCSU could learn from them. The Subcommittee recognized early on that its recommendations would depend on the work of the Mission, Vision and Values Subcommittee and the result of the Stakeholder’s Conference. Ultimately the University’s brand and marketing message must reflect who we are as an institution.

Following a market analysis by Media Associates, the University began actively recruiting students in one new market -- Long Island -- and widened the scope of its efforts in an existing market -- Hudson Valley Region. While it would have been preferable to survey prospective students from these regions to determine precisely their image of WCSU, that was not possible
because of time and budgetary constraints. The University will, hopefully, gather some information regarding WCSU’s image from the expanded marketing campaign that will assist us with our future marketing/branding strategy.

Finally, the committee enlisted the help of Dr. Ron Drozdenko, Professor of Marketing, in both reviewing the results of our different data gathering efforts and helping with the establishment of a brand and marketing campaign. However, given the dependence of branding and marketing on other aspects of the strategic planning process, the Subcommittee chose not to begin developing them.

The remainder of the charge of the Branding Subcommittee has been folded into the proposed goals of the Strategic Plan, especially Goal 4: Create a Distinct Identity.

**Strategic Goal Development**

In fall 2015, the Steering Committee was reconfigured into three new subcommittees that were formed to, once again, engage the campus community in conversations about strategic planning. This time the conversations were about potential university goals and aspirations. A list of the subcommittees and the membership of each follows:

**Academic Affairs:** Katie O’Callaghan, Chair; Missy Alexander; Ann Atkinson; Dan Barrett; Pamela McDaniell; Joan Palladino and Gary Skiba

**Administrative Services:** Veronica Kenausis, Chair; Ann Atkinson; Terry Dwyer; Angela Maggi; Jay Murray; Patty O’Neill and Peter Visentin

**Student Affairs and Students:** Rebecca Woodward, Chair; Dan Barrett; Maranda Cox; Russell Hirshfield; Joe Loth; Mario Oliveira; DL Stephenson and Birte Selvaraj

To focus the conversations each subcommittee collected information in response to three questions:

1. If you could make one or two major (realistically achievable) institutional changes at Western during the next 5-7 years, what would they be?
2. What do you see as the most important goals for Western over the next 5-7 years?
3. What should Western aspire to be as a university over the next 5-7 years?

The Academic Affairs subcommittee gathered responses through email, Survey Monkey, and meetings with academic departments. The total number of written responses from faculty was 90. The Administrative Services subcommittee conducted in-person meetings with representatives from Institutional Advancement, Human Resources, Finance, Information Technology and Innovation, Enrollment Management, Diversity Programs, Library Services, and Grants. Responses to the three questions were recorded and summarized by a member of the
subcommittee. The Students and Student Affairs subcommittee gathered responses via surveys distributed electronically and in classes. A total of 873 surveys were returned, 10 from Student Affairs and the rest from students.

Information gathering was completed in fall 2015. In January, 2016 each subcommittee met to analyze the results, identify themes, and examine them in relation to the 2005 Strategic Plan. Each subcommittee developed a full report on their findings to be shared with the full committee.

The conversations surrounding these questions produced three reports that served as the focus for a meeting of the Steering Committee to determine a minimum of five goals and a maximum of seven. Five themes emerged from a close reading of these three reports and the committee’s deliberation about the reports. The Steering Committee then framed the five themes as goal statements.

1. Improve/Enhance the student experience.
2. Create a sense of community/campus pride.
3. Create a distinct identity.
4. Create a self-sustaining financial model.
5. Focus on academic success for all students.

Three subcommittees were then formed to determine how the statements could be operationalized. A list of the subcommittees and the membership of each follows:

**Academic Programs and Support:** Missy Alexander, Chair; Maranda Cox; Russell Hirshfield; Katie O’Callaghan; Joan Palladino; Birte Selvaraj and Rebecca Woodward

**Community and Identity:** Dan Barrett, Chair; Autumn Aaronsohn; Terry Dwyer; Veronica Kenausis; Joe Loth; Pamela McDaniel; Patricia O’Neill and DL Stephenson

**Sustainable Financial Model:** Ann Atkinson, Chair; Sean Loughran, Contributor; Angela Maggi; Jay Murray; Mario Oliveira; Gary Skiba and Peter Visentin

In forming these subcommittees great care was given to keeping the visions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs aligned. Goals One and Five were put together to achieve that end. In addition, all groups were charged with identifying who would be responsible for oversight of each strategy in order to ensure that the goals are achieved. The subcommittees reached out to the people who would most likely be impacted by or have oversight of each strategy to be sure that the goals and timelines were reasonable.

The chairs of the three subcommittees, Missy Alexander, Ann Atkinson and Dan Barrett, met regularly to discuss how the goals were being operationalized to bring consistency to the process and to remedy duplications of effort by deciding which goal would be the best location for specific action steps.
In April, the full Steering Committee reviewed the goals and sub-goals/strategies developed by each subcommittee. The feedback from that meeting was incorporated into the final goal list. Ann Atkinson, Dan Barrett, and Missy Alexander were then tasked with developing the strategic plan and report that was reviewed by the Steering Committee in August 2016. The full university community was invited to react to the plan that was posted on the web page in a series of forums held in September and October of 2016.

Each goal statement includes a listing of responsible parties, deadlines, and ways the goals will be measured to ensure evidence of achievement. The following main goal statements were presented to the University Senate on December 14, 2016 and approved. The University President approved them on January 3, 2017.

1. Create, strengthen, and enhance programs and curricula that are responsive to the needs of a diverse community of learners.

   Rationale: As a public university committed to access, it is important to respond to the varied backgrounds and needs of our students. Western must differentiate services and curricula to meet the needs and interests of these varied audiences. Through research into pedagogy, andragogy, and emerging disciplines, this goal will support recruiting, retention, and degree completion for traditional and first-generation undergraduates, returning adults, and graduate students.

2. Develop and implement processes, facilities, and support services to meet the needs of a diverse campus community.

   Rationale: WCSU serves full-time, part-time, commuter and residential, traditional undergraduates, returning adults, veterans, and graduate students. Our faculty approach teaching in equally diverse ways, employing seminars, lectures, flipped classrooms, workshops, online and hybrid formats. Our spaces and processes need to meet the needs of all constituencies and the expectations of a society that has 24 hour access to nearly everything. Through master planning, technology planning, and a careful review of scheduling, registration, and advising practices, Western will become a 21st century university.
3. Create a sense of campus community and pride.

Rationale: The challenges of two campuses, a majority commuter population, and the lack of common meeting times make it difficult to foster a sense of community among students, faculty, staff and the local community. This feeling that community is lacking impacts retention, recruiting, and long-term donor potential. Through a greater focus on communication and collaboration, and engagement among students, faculty, and staff, Western will foster a sense of community both on campus and in the greater Danbury region.

4. Create a distinct identity.

Rationale: Western has not yet successfully created and communicated an identity that is distinct from our regional competitors. This lack of distinctiveness makes it difficult to recruit and to focus our website and other materials. Through our branding, program offerings, and focus on student success, Western will differentiate itself from regional universities and colleges.

5. Create a sustainable financial model.

Rationale: Too often WCSU is in crisis mode, struggling to address budget shortfalls at the last minute. This tendency causes us to focus on short-term problems in place of engaging more thoughtfully in long-term planning. This goal lays out a plan to reverse this trend by effecting a thorough review of all programs for the purpose of making decisions about which programs are the best fit for a more stable future. This review process will be informed by academic priorities, planning, budgeting, and accountability, and will include guidance from a proposed ad hoc Evaluation of Programs Committee and be monitored by a proposed ongoing Strategic Plan Implementation Committee.

The details of the goals, strategies, timelines, and responsible parties are included in a separate document on the Strategic Planning web page.

Next Steps

The following actions will be taken to move into the implementation phase of the Strategic Planning process:

1. Within 60 days of the approval of the final plan, The University President and the University Senate President will jointly create a standing committee to track the progress of the steps to operationalize the five goals to achieve the vision and to hear concerns about the plan that may arise as it is being rolled out. Annual reports will be delivered to the University Senate noting accomplishments and progress to completion of the plan. These reports should serve as a road map to the next process so that the campus will know when we are ready to begin planning anew. Membership will include
a representative from each of the following areas: Academic Affairs (Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs), Finance, Student Affairs, Faculty (one member from each school and a faculty representative from University Senate), Students. Terms should be staggered so that there are always returning members serving. The committee will have the authority to create addenda to the plan if substantial adjustments become warranted by changing circumstances and/or needs.

2. Write language into the guidelines for preparing the usual campus reports which would require a discussion about how the work of the individual or committee serves to advance the stated vision of the university. Activities should be identified by reporting groups at the beginning of each academic year to ensure that the plan becomes a driver rather than a template of sorts to make sense of what has already occurred.

3. Hold a campus-wide meeting in November 2018 to discuss progress on the goals and on the achievement of the vision.