Goal 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. One size does not fit all, and our offerings should recognize that. The steps outlined below are meant to improve retention and graduation rates, and increase enrollment in degree completion and graduate degree programs.

1.1. Strategy 1: Develop support services that address both cognitive and non-cognitive areas for all students, including first-generation and/or under-prepared students.

1.1.1. Create First Year Program (FYPlus) to support Educational Achievement and Access Programs (EAP) and other at-risk first year students.

1.1.2. Establish a university-wide peer mentoring program to support all students, including first-generation/under-prepared.

1.2. Strategy 2: Develop academic programs and supports for adult learners to expand our recruiting options and better serve the regional needs for continuing and advanced education.

1.2.1. Establish a University College* (programs for graduate and continuing studies), with a separate admissions process for both graduate and bachelor’s degree-seeking adults that recognizes acculturation barriers, work/family constraints, and expectations, and values prior learning where appropriate.  
*University College refers to a college experience designed for adult learners, often with specially designed degree structures and offerings.

1.2.2. Offer degrees that meet the current demands, interests, and opportunities for returning adults and graduate education.

1.2.3. Design specialized schedules for continuing education and graduate students that include evenings, weekends, online, hybrid, and accelerated formats including fifth-year and full-time graduate programs.

1.3. Strategy 3: Develop student-centered scheduling practices to insure timely degree completion and an efficient use of resources.

1.3.1. Publish and follow course rotations for all undergraduate and graduate degrees in the catalog, on department websites, and in a print format available to
students. Be sure that there is a two-year schedule of planned course rotations available at all times. As part of this effort, a new centralized electronic platform should be adopted so that edits occur in one place and are deployed to all relevant electronic locations.

1.3.2. Determine the feasibility of offering key major requirements both fall and spring. Implement wherever financially possible.

1.3.3. Adopt a data-driven scheduling model to maximize degree completion opportunities and eliminate scheduling conflicts for essential major requirements. Include a plan for degrees to be completed during the day and at night, where possible.

1.3.4. Develop 3-, 4-, and 5-year plans with summer courses and intersession courses included to support different paces for different types of students. Discount tuition in summer and reconfigure financial aid packages where possible.

1.4. Strategy 4: Increase participation in international exchange programs to support both WCSU’s commitment to intercultural competence and a widely recognized high-impact practice.

1.4.1. Identify and promote best abroad locations for each major and create a list of approved major courses at those locations, wherever possible.

1.4.2. Include best semesters for travel on program sheets.

1.4.3. Double the number of faculty-led study-abroad experiences over the next three years, with a published rotation to insure a wide variety of opportunities. Currently we offer Italy (intersession), Spain/Morocco (summer), Barbados (summer), Costa Rica (spring break alternate years), Paris (starting spring 2018).

1.4.4. Require all students who study abroad to present information about their experiences at a welcome-back event each fall and spring.

1.4.5. Determine the current level of scholarship funding available for students with high financial need who wish to study abroad, promote the availability of those funds, and work to grow the dollars available annually.

1.5. Strategy 5: Support applied learning opportunities including research, innovation, performance, and service to support connections between curriculum, community, and careers.

1.5.1. Dedicate funds to support student participation in professional conferences and performances and simplify the process for acquiring those funds.
1.5.2. Establish a WCSU organization/infrastructure that allows students and faculty to collaborate with local organizations to invent, innovate, problem-solve, and accept fees for services where appropriate.

1.5.3. Expand community partnerships to support service learning and applied research and innovation projects.

1.5.4. Acknowledge students, faculty, and staff who support these opportunities through awards, ceremonies, and an up-to-date list maintained on the WCSU website, and on the academic transcript.

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

**Rationale:** WCSU serves students from a wide variety of backgrounds, preparation, and responsibilities. Students are full-time, part-time, commuter and residential, traditional undergraduates, returning adults, veterans, and graduate students managing school and careers in progress. In addition, all of society has shifted to on-demand, on-line processes, access to learning materials from a keypad, and instant responses. As such it is imperative that we work to meet the expectations of access and responsiveness that go beyond an 8:00-4:30 time frame. In addition, WCSU should provide faculty with adequate resources and support so that they can engage in the research necessary to be productive scholars, remain current in their disciplines, continually update their courses, and attain tenure and rank.

2.1. **Strategy 1: Develop administrative and support processes that are effective and efficient and available at times and in places that students are likely to access them.**

2.1.1. Continue efforts to convert all admissions, financial aid, bursar, and registrar processes to fully online formats, to support ease of access for students. This will include review of academic policies that impact signature approval paths, and a cost/benefit analysis of not accepting VISA. This will not include the elimination of face-to-face services when they are most appropriate.

2.1.2. Review schedules of tutoring, library hours, media services, IT&I help desk, and other academic support functions to meet the needs of day and evening students. Expand where possible. Revisions will include new scheduling models and the potential for online/interactive support systems.

2.1.3. Develop and implement a plan to ensure classroom and faculty technology replacement and expansion to support a 21st century institution.

2.1.4. Ensure all faculty and staff serving student support functions have adequate training to provide accurate and helpful information.
2.1.5. Develop a means of gathering real-time and annual feedback on processes and operations, and integrate feedback into operational plans.

2.2. Strategy 2: Advance advising practices that are student-centered and specific to the needs of a diverse student population.

2.2.1. Provide training for faculty and staff in the different needs and expectations of traditional undergraduates, under-prepared students, first-generation students, adult degree-completers, veterans, and graduate students.

2.2.2. Develop online advising strategies/protocols that meet the needs of the busy schedules of all student types.

2.2.3. Adopt a co-advising strategy that partners faculty advisors* and the academic advisement center to ensure accuracy of information and maximum availability of support.

*This is the re-establishment of a faculty advising representative. It will involve some reassigned time.

2.2.4. Include advising tutorials about process, accessing information, and deadlines in the First Year courses.

2.2.5. Monitor the tools available to advisors to ensure they are effective, accurate, and up to date.

2.3. Strategy 3: Support career development from admission to post-graduate placements.

2.3.1. Develop and require an employment practicum course (career explorations, resume writing, cover letters) as part of a second year program.

2.3.2. Add internships to four-year plans to highlight their importance and drive students to advisors and/or career services.

2.3.3. Work with each major to identify and promote internal (WCSU) and external internship placements for their students.

2.3.4. Host career panels featuring alumni in every department at least once a year.

2.3.5. Expand and incentivize participation in leadership opportunities (HSLP, LCCC) and student organizations.

2.4. Strategy 4: Develop a student-centered plan for facilities and food service that meets the needs of a diverse community of learners.
2.4.1. Create informal spaces in all buildings that support student collaboration and meet the needs of a commuter environment.

2.4.2. Develop formal learning spaces that support diverse pedagogies.

2.4.3. Ensure easy to follow signage everywhere (doors, digital, apps) to assist with campus navigation.

2.4.4. Develop a plan for recreational spaces, including clubs, athletics, and other co-curricular activities based on student input and expectations.

2.4.5. Align food services with student time constraints and dietary preferences.

2.5. Strategy 5: Support faculty scholarly activity by strengthening and streamlining access to university-based resources and providing administrative assistance to apply for and manage external grants.

Goal 3: Create a sense of campus community and pride.

Through a greater focus on communication and collaboration, and engagement among students, faculty, and staff, foster a sense of community both on campus and in the greater Danbury region.

3.1. Strategy 1: Strengthen online and on ground student engagement.

3.1.1. Measure current student engagement in campus and community activities and with faculty/staff to establish a baseline and assess annually thereafter.

3.1.2. Utilizing the above data, develop and implement plan for community-building that begins with enrollment and endures past graduation to alumni status.

3.1.3. Continue to assess summer orientation to ensure we use best practices so that it helps students feel connected and builds meaningful connections among students/faculty within major and school.

3.1.4. Evaluate freshmen welcome week and establish strategies for integrating academics and social activities for students with or without declared majors.

3.1.5. Initiate welcome back week for entire community.

3.1.6. Develop plan for increasing attendance at university and community events (including expanding opportunities for using WestConnect cards in the community).
3.2. **Strategy 2: Create a vibrant co-curricular environment with events and activities that are attractive to the varied disciplines and goals of our student population and surrounding community.**

3.2.1. Develop a master calendar that is easily accessed by the WCSU community (including Ives Concert Park) and an event planning process so that events are spread out in time and location.

3.2.2. Increase the number of co-curricular events on weekends for residential students and commuters.

3.2.3. Create events that acknowledge the presence of and/or are specifically geared toward adult learners and graduate students at WCSU.

3.2.4. Improve communication with internal and external audiences in support of programming of events and activities.

3.2.5. Cultivate relationships with area providers of daycare for children and animals to be able to provide existing options for students, faculty, and staff.

3.3. **Strategy 3: Improve opportunities for engagement among faculty and staff.**

3.3.1. Measure and improve current faculty/staff engagement and sense of community by assessing annually.

3.3.2. Schedule more frequent all-faculty and faculty/staff meetings (e.g., once per semester) to facilitate communication and engagement.

3.3.3. Establish all-faculty development days once per semester.

3.3.4. Establish faculty/staff social gatherings (at least once per semester).

3.3.5. Provide a physical space for faculty interaction (e.g., a lounge or coffee bar for faculty).

3.3.6. Institute community/common experience like “One Book, One Community.”

3.4. **Strategy 4: Strengthen sense of community via multi-platform communications.**

3.4.1. Obtain/improve WCSU’s app/platforms for communication to students/faculty/staff that will: allow for message targeting to specific groups; allow recipients to select what messages to receive; be easy to use; constantly updatable.
3.4.2. Create or purchase scheduling software for faculty for scheduling student appointments and offer training.

3.4.3. Create overall online strategy (such as replacing traditional department web pages with Facebook pages, integrating Twitter/Instagram, etc.).

3.4.4. Evaluate purpose and effectiveness of WestConnduit and revamp/replace.

3.5. Strategy 5: Increase/strengthen pride.

3.5.1. Establish a “What is a Colonial? A Colonial is someone who...” campaign. Define Colonial in a way that exemplifies what is unique about WCSU. Connect with new first year initiative #ichosewcsu. Include participation in campus traditions as a way to be defined as a Colonial. Supplement with posters, banners, etc. around campus.

3.5.2. Add a feed to the WCSU home page that regularly rotates stories that highlight the accomplishments and activities of our students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

3.5.3. Establish one or more unifying themes/shared purpose and instantiate in a new motto.

3.5.4. Promote the school colors and mascot with highly visible flags and signage on campus.

Goal 4: Create a distinct identity.

Through our branding, program offerings, and focus on student success, WCSU will differentiate itself from regional universities and colleges.

4.1. Strategy 1: Celebrate and promote the importance of faculty scholarly activities as part of the WCSU brand.

4.2. Strategy 2: Examine the viability and purpose of designating individual programs as Signature Programs.

4.2.1. In conjunction with the University Senate, create an ad hoc committee to review the concept of “Signature Status” and report recommendations to the University regarding whether this designation should be retained.

4.2.2. If WCSU decides to retain the “Signature Program” designation, define criteria for gaining signature status, clarify what it means to be a signature program, and post to the website.
4.2.3. If WCSU decides to retain the “Signature Program” designation, for each existing Signature Program identify what sets it apart from competitor programs in Connecticut and regionally, and post to the website.

4.2.4. If WCSU decides to retain the “Signature Program” designation, incorporate signature status into department brochures, marketing and admissions materials.

4.3. Strategy 3: Develop the WCSU brand and publicize through sustained marketing efforts.

4.3.1. Decide on “WestConn vs. Western” as branded name and reflect this in all WCSU materials, web pages, departments, athletic teams, etc.

4.3.2. Promote updated Colonial image and include in new “WestConn/Western” brand name.

4.3.3. Create a new slogan for the university as a whole and tie new logo into “WestConn/Western” name adoption.

4.3.4. Leverage WCSU as the “best of both worlds” (rural/urban; New England/NYC, etc.).

4.3.5. Incorporate “success for a diverse community of learners” into our identity and marketing.

4.3.6. Evaluate whether WCSU has “kept the promises” marketed to incoming students.

Goal 5: Create a self-sustaining financial model.

The goal is informed by planning, budgeting, and accountability, and will include a monitoring role for an ongoing Strategic Plan Committee to play, particularly with regard to viability and evaluation of programs. A paper about the process to achieve this goal is included.

5.1. Strategy 1: Create a plan to evaluate academic, support, outreach, and administrative programs.

5.1.1. Establish an Evaluation of Programs Committee constituted by the University Senate and the Office of Academic Affairs to develop a systematic process, informed by the Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services: Reallocating Resources to Achieve Strategic Balance by Robert C. Dickeson, published by Jossey-Bass, 2010.
5.1.2. Each of the goals related to determining priorities of programs or viability would be informed by the following steps:
- Preparation: Define programs
- Information-Gathering: Institutional Research, Environmental Scan Report, Accreditation Reports
- First Stage Analysis—Deans and Directors
- Second Stage Analysis—Provost and Vice Presidents
- Final Stage Analysis—President and Strategic Plan Implementation Committee
- Integration and Synthesis—Campus Community
- Final Decision Stage—President
- Implementation
- Renewal Stage—Evaluation of Programs Committee and Strategic Plan Implementation Committee

5.2. Strategy 2: Create greater efficiencies and affinities in Institutional Advancement.

5.2.1. Increase the percentage of valid email addresses for alumni and other constituents to promote student success stories and build affinity.

5.2.2. Increase total number of donors.

5.2.3. Develop a strategy to increase participation of community members and partners in the life of the campus.

5.2.4. Systematize community member contact and critical background information in the fund raising database.

5.3. Strategy 3: Redesign the functions of Alumni Relations to have alumni interacting with current students and working to enhance the mission of the university.

5.3.1. Partner with Career Services.

5.3.2. Focus contributions to be on the success of the university rather than on being a member of an alumni association.

5.4. Strategy 4: Align the efforts of the University Planning and Budget Committee (UPBC) with the plan to evaluate programs.

5.4.1. New programs, after a designated amount of time, will be required to present at UPBC their achievements in terms of hitting projected enrollment numbers.