



Western Connecticut State University

AY25-26 Accomplishments Report

May 2026

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Executive Summary

WestConn moved from stabilization toward sustainable momentum. Across the university, teams improved enrollment, student success, accreditation standing, fiscal discipline, infrastructure, public visibility, and community partnerships.

Western Connecticut State University has transitioned from a period of stabilization into a phase of measurable student, fiscal, and reputational momentum. During the 2025-2026 academic year, the university reversed a multi-year enrollment decline, achieving nearly 10% total enrollment growth year-over-year across first-year, transfer, graduate, and adult student populations. Correspondingly, first-year retention rose to 76%, exceeding state and national peer averages.

The institution completed the Fall 2025 NECHE Focused Evaluation and submitted a comprehensive institutional response in February 2026. Progress was formally recognized in the areas of leadership stability, governance, assessment infrastructure, and financial planning. Shared governance and transparency were enhanced through an expanded President's Council, a Budget Advisory Group with broad representation, and publicly available planning materials.

Fiscal sustainability advanced through routine budget variance reviews, tighter staffing governance, and an administrative reorganization package that yielded ~\$4.5 million in expense savings. Concurrent with this fiscal discipline, the university developed a Five-Year Capital Plan (FY26-FY31) and secured more than \$20 million to advance high-priority projects tied to safety, infrastructure, instructional continuity, and the student experience. These unified efforts have connected enrollment, academic excellence, budget discipline, and public narrative into a singular, forward-moving institutional direction.

Highlighted Metrics

~10%

TOTAL ENROLLMENT
GROWTH YOY

76%

FIRST-YEAR
RETENTION

\$4.5M

EXPENSE SAVINGS /
COST CONTAINMENT

\$20M+

CAPITAL FUNDING
SECURED

7,262

APPLICATIONS (+4%)

691

ACCEPTED STUDENTS
AT YIELD (+17%)

\$1.98M

YEAR-TO-DATE
FUNDRAISING

\$405k

WOLVES DAY OF
GIVING

~1,100¹

MEDIA MENTIONS
SINCE AUG 2025

702K

ACTIVE WEBSITE
USERS

661K

ATHLETICS UNIQUE
USERS (+226%)

30+

COMPLETED
FACILITIES PROJECTS

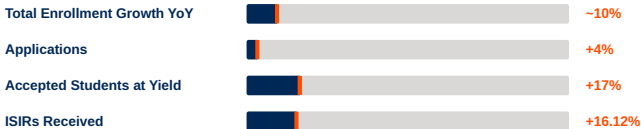
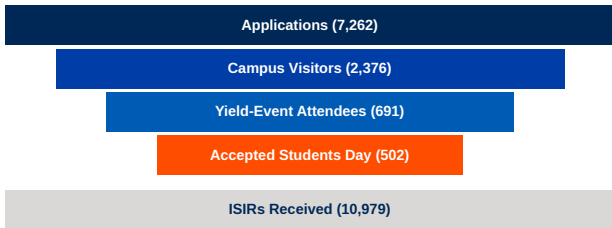
¹ Internal estimate; pending independent validation.

Part I — Student Impact

1. Enrollment Management and Financial Aid

Recruitment, yield, and financial aid are becoming a more data-informed enrollment engine.

The division, in partnership with many across the university, successfully increased application demand, campus engagement, and yield event participation. By expanding financial aid outreach, optimizing FAFSA processing, and launching new affordability and transparency tools, the university strengthened its ability to recruit and enroll the incoming class.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Application demand increased to 7,262 total applications, up 4% year-over-year.
- Campus engagement grew to 2,376 campus visitors since September 1, up 12% year-over-year, supported by 570 off-campus recruitment events.
- Yield-event participation rose to 691 accepted students across three on-campus events, up 17% year-over-year; Accepted Students Day reached record attendance with 502 accepted students.
- Expanded aid outreach and award support, including 3,677 freshman awards and 173 transfer awards.
- Improved FAFSA/ISIR momentum with 10,979 ISIRs received and 6,599 unduplicated ISIRs.
- Launched stronger affordability and transparency tools, including a new Net Price Calculator and personalized award-offer videos.

METRICS

- 7,262 applications (+4%).
- 2,376 campus visitors since September 1 (+12%).
- 570 off-campus recruitment events.
- 691 accepted students at yield events (+17%); 502 accepted students at Accepted Students Day.
- Freshman awards: 3,677 (+144 / +3.99%); transfer awards: 173 (+36 / +26.28%).
- ISIRs received: 10,979 (+1,524 / +16.12%); unduplicated ISIRs: 6,599 (+450 / +7.32%).
- Net Price Calculator: 811 unique users and 368 estimates since October 2025.
- Award-offer videos: 3,860 created; 1,613 unique views; 41.85% viewership; 56.74% call-to-action interaction.
- Loan default prevention: current cohort default rate 0.68%, with 7 students in default; 50% of borrowers paying toward principal.

CROSS-CAMPUS CONTRIBUTIONS

- Recruitment and yield efforts increasingly depend on coordinated work with academics, advising, housing, student support, financial aid, and communications.
- The Student Employment and Resource Fair connected students with 22 WestConn departments, three private loan lenders, and one outside community organization.

NEXT-YEAR PRIORITIES

- Grow campus visitors and improve visit hospitality, space, and flow.
- Prioritize out-of-state recruitment where analytics indicate opportunity.
- Use AI and Carnegie market analytics to improve speed, efficiency, application review, and geographic strategy.
- Strengthen pathways, applied learning, student employment, and financial resilience communications.

2. Academic Affairs

Academic Affairs expanded high-demand pathways, strengthened academic quality, and institutionalized applied learning.

The university launched and scaled high-impact academic programs, driving significant momentum across multiple disciplines. Exceptional student outcomes, highlighted by perfect licensure pass rates, and strengthened accreditation progress underscored the institution's commitment to rigorous academic excellence and scholarly reputation.

85%

SPORTS & WELLNESS MANAGEMENT
PROGRAM GROWTH

100%

NURSING LICENSURE PASS RATES

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Launched and scaled high-impact academic programs and pathways, including the accelerated nursing program, BBA/MBA pathway, and proposed MSW.
- Drove strong program momentum, including an 85% increase in Sports and Wellness Management and growth in the MBA.
- Achieved exceptional student outcomes, including 100% pass rates on the undergraduate NCLEX and MS acute care nurse practitioner exams.
- Strengthened accreditation and academic excellence, including major NECHE progress, AACSB Continuous Improvement Review response through a new Strategic Plan, and expanded assessment infrastructure.
- Advanced scholarly and public reputation through Sigma Xi and CSU Making History conferences, top-30 national Moot Court rankings, faculty scholarship, applied learning, and regional cultural/STEM/health initiatives.
- Established the Carol A. Hawkes Center of Excellence for Learning and Teaching to support faculty fellows, innovative teaching, and student applied-learning costs.

METRICS

- 85% increase in Sports and Wellness Management.
- 100% pass rates on undergraduate NCLEX and MS acute care nurse practitioner exams.
- 200+ arts educators served through professional development.
- Top-30 national Moot Court ranking.
- Teaching excellence highlights: Dr. Danielle King won the System Adjunct Teaching Award; campus teaching recognitions included Dr. April Moreira and Dr. Teresa Puckhaber.

CROSS-CAMPUS CONTRIBUTIONS

- Applied learning structures are now institutionalized, creating a bridge among academics, student success, workforce readiness, and fundraising.
- Partnerships with the City of Danbury, high schools, advisory councils, and regional organizations expanded the university's public impact.

NEXT-YEAR PRIORITIES

- Scale innovative, interdisciplinary, flexible, and degree-completion pathways, including 2+2+1 concurrent enrollment pathways with CT State partners.
- Implement applied and experiential learning across all programs.
- Advance visibility and resources through the White Oak Film Festival, 2026 Global Standards alignment, ASB Strategic Plan implementation, fundraising, seed grants, and research/creativity workshops.
- Build new for-credit, industry-aligned certificate pathways that remix program portfolio around distinctive strengths, evolving learner needs, and regional workforce demand.

3. Student Affairs

Student Affairs strengthened belonging, early support, wellbeing, and engagement.

The division expanded peer mentorship and early intervention programs, resulting in significant academic improvements for participating students. Robust care coordination, proactive food security initiatives, and a steady rebound in campus engagement traditions fostered a healthier and more connected student community.

First-Year Retention



92%

JUMP START ACADEMIC
IMPROVEMENT

850+

FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS SUPPORTED

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Expanded the peer mentor program from 15 to 25 mentors, embedded across 30 UNI 101 sections and supporting 850+ first-year students.
- Judicial Affairs managed 400+ student conduct matters with the lowest appeal rate in more than 25 years, reflecting strong due process, student education, and trust in outcomes.
- The JUMP Start academic intervention for first-year students with conduct outcomes and GPAs at or below 2.0 resulted in 92% of participants improving academically.
- Care coordination and wellbeing work expanded, including Student Care Team support for 121 referred students and strengthened counseling visibility through Orientation and UNI 101.
- Wally's Cupboard distributed more than 7,200 pounds of food to more than 220 students, supported by more than \$10,000 in donations from various agencies.
- Student engagement rebounded through intramurals, housing programming, SGA participation, and signature traditions such as Welcome Weekend, Day of Service, Fresh Check Day, Homecoming, Tree Lighting, and the Health, Fitness and Wellness Fair.

METRICS

- 25 peer mentors, up from 15.
- 30 UNI 101 sections and 850+ first-year students supported.
- 400+ conduct matters; lowest appeal rate in 25+ years.
- 92% academic improvement among JUMP Start participants.
- 121 Student Care Team referrals supported.
- 7,200+ pounds of food distributed to 220+ students; \$10,000+ in donations.
- Intramurals: 6 leagues, 142 games, 40 teams, 218 participants.
- Housing: 35% increase in residential programming and 13% overall growth to approximately 1,100 residents.

CROSS-CAMPUS CONTRIBUTIONS

- Student Affairs supported admissions, yield, orientation, early alert, digital accessibility compliance, UNI 101, university advising, mental health initiatives, and campus climate work.
- Housing deposits exceeded totals from the prior six years, supported by cross-campus enrollment and student-experience collaboration.

NEXT-YEAR PRIORITIES

- Continue assessing student needs and feedback to improve services across Student Affairs.
- Evaluate underutilized student spaces to strengthen engagement and campus pride.
- Contribute to a 1 percentage-point retention increase toward 77%.
- Secure donor and grant funding to support improved and sustained operations.

4. University Advisement Center

Advising is becoming a more proactive, equity-minded student success engine.

The Center streamlined comprehensive services and expanded proactive advising initiatives, efficiently scheduling more than 5,300 appointments. Strategic cross-campus partnerships and pre-registration models built a structured culture of exploration while improving targeted support for transfer and continuing students.

5,300+

ADVISING APPOINTMENTS SCHEDULED

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- University Advisors Joey Gentile and Samantha Sciandra will present at the 2026 SCSU First-Year Experience Conference on creating a culture of exploration rather than deficit-based 'undecided' messaging.
- Expanded and streamlined services through Advisor on the Go, new-student pre-registration, current-student pre-registration, the FYE Schedule Preference Sheet, and Drop-In/Walk-In Wednesdays using TargetX Engage.
- Scheduled more than 5,300 new and continuing student appointments through MS Bookings.
- Implemented an appointment queue system in TargetX Engage to better manage Walk-In Wednesday traffic.
- Launched the First Annual Transfer Student Celebration in partnership with Undergraduate Admissions.
- Strengthened advising partnerships with Pre-Health, AccessAbility Services, Housing and Residence Life, SGA, MSAS, the Foundation, and school-based scholarship events.

METRICS

- 5,300+ new and continuing student appointments scheduled.
- 2026 regional conference presentation on major exploration and equity-minded advising.
- First Annual Transfer Student Celebration launched.
- TargetX Engage appointment queue implemented for walk-in traffic.

CROSS-CAMPUS CONTRIBUTIONS

- Advising is increasingly linked to retention, transfer student belonging, access services, housing outreach, pre-health advising, SGA feedback loops, and donor-connected student engagement.
- The UAC is moving toward Retention Certification through TargetX Premier Education training.

NEXT-YEAR PRIORITIES

- Expand the Major Exploration program, including a flagship September information-session series.
- Update Bookings appointment types to evaluate service efficiency and utilization more clearly.
- Formalize the Student Success Team and holistic advising model through University Senate.

Part II — Institutional Strength

5. Finance and Administration

Finance and Administration improved financial controls, reporting, and operational readiness.

The division strengthened fiscal planning, controls, and institutional discipline, contributing materially to a favorable NECHE report. Accounts Receivable performance reached its strongest position in more than a decade, and modernization of reporting and lease compliance systems improved transparency and accuracy across the enterprise.

10+ yrs

LOWEST ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE

\$50K

ACCELERATOR PROJECT GRANT

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Contributed to a favorable NECHE report through stronger fiscal planning, controls, and institutional discipline.
- Achieved the lowest Accounts Receivable in more than 10 years and the lowest Accounts Receivable among the four CSUs.
- Converted WebFocus reports to Argos, improving reporting alignment and usability.
- Implemented LeaseQuery to strengthen lease accounting and compliance.
- Collaborated through the Accelerator project to analyze and implement an auto-admit process for incoming transfer students, helping secure a \$50,000 grant.

METRICS

- Lowest Accounts Receivable in 10+ years.
- Lowest Accounts Receivable among the four CSUs.
- \$50,000 grant connected to the auto-admit Accelerator project.
- Key systems advanced: Argos reporting conversion and LeaseQuery implementation.

CROSS-CAMPUS CONTRIBUTIONS

- Finance and Administration supported enrollment growth, retention momentum, Pinney Hall reopening, transfer process efficiency, and fiscal accountability.
- The work strengthens the financial backbone needed for WCSU's broader renewal strategy.

NEXT-YEAR PRIORITIES

- Successfully transition to SaaS.
- Identify and use a predictive market analysis enrollment management tool.
- Implement strategies to generate revenue from new sources.
- Adopt a zero-based budgeting model.

6. Human Resources

Human Resources modernized workflows, strengthened recognition, and supported cost-conscious staffing.

The division advanced workflow automation, employee recognition, and consultative staffing governance. Reorganization and modernization yielded measurable annual savings while improving service delivery, records management, and transparency in position review.

\$91K

ANNUAL HR SAVINGS

55

EMPLOYEES RECOGNIZED
(10+ YEARS)

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Created a Power App for Employee Request for Compensation for Activities payments.
- Held an Employee Recognition Ceremony honoring 55 employees with 10 or more years of service.
- Reorganized HR department staffing, producing \$91,000 in annual savings and reducing staffing by 0.50 FTE.
- Began implementing new features in JazzHR, the applicant tracking system.
- Expanded use of OnBase to reduce manual paperwork.
- Supported a new position request process and tracking app that replaces the prior Position Review Committee with a more consultative, transparent, and trackable approach.

METRICS

- 55 employees recognized for 10+ years of service.
- \$91,000 in annual savings.
- 0.50 FTE reduction through staffing reorganization.
- Workflow modernization across Power Apps, JazzHR, and OnBase.

CROSS-CAMPUS CONTRIBUTIONS

- The new position request process creates a clearer bridge among HR, budget, finance, and strategic staffing decisions.
- Workflow modernization supports faster service, better records, and reduced paper/manual processing.

NEXT-YEAR PRIORITIES

- Create an Employee of the Semester recognition program.
- Create Power Apps for University Assistant hiring and the University Separation Checklist.
- Create a retirement information video, especially in anticipation of a projected increase in retirements before SEBAC 2027.
- Review and revamp the HR website and move appropriate content to WolvesNet.

7. Information Technology and Innovation

Information Technology and Innovation focused on stabilization, risk reduction, enterprise modernization, and academic technology.

The division advanced a multi-year enterprise modernization stack and stabilized critical infrastructure to reduce institutional risk. WolvesNet was implemented as the primary digital front door for the campus community, and virtual reality capability was deployed to enrich immersive learning, with particular emphasis on Nursing.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Defined a multi-year PC and end-user equipment refresh strategy to reduce risk from extended replacement cycles.
- Implemented and continuously improved WolvesNet as the personalized campus portal and primary digital front door for students, faculty, and staff.
- Provided end-to-end Media Services support for campus events, including AV setup, live sound/video, streaming, recording, post-production, and high-quality brand content.
- Implemented virtual reality capability to support immersive learning across academic programs, with emphasis in Nursing, including device deployment, faculty onboarding, classroom/lab readiness, and support processes.
- Launched the Ellucian Banner SaaS transition and advanced Banner 9/SSB, Argos, Windows 11, and Blackboard Ultra rollouts.
- Expanded workflow automation through Power Apps and OnBase to reduce manual, paper-based processes.
- Contributed directly to the WestConn Renewal Plan and NECHE response.

METRICS

- Major enterprise modernization stack: Banner SaaS, Banner 9/SSB, Argos, Windows 11, Blackboard Ultra.
- Campus portal: WolvesNet established as primary digital front door.
- Academic technology: VR capability deployed with Nursing as an emphasis area.
- Campus safety/connectivity: Verizon Westside Campus cellular coverage project advanced through RF engineering and design approvals.

CROSS-CAMPUS CONTRIBUTIONS

- IT&I supported academic quality, event visibility, advising operations, retention systems, NECHE readiness, communications, and workflow modernization across multiple divisions.
- University Advisement Center technology adoption included TargetX training, MS Bookings power use, 5,300+ appointments, targeted volume analysis, SMS-reminder licensing review, and plans for Virtual Walk-In Wednesdays.

NEXT-YEAR PRIORITIES

- Secure funding and staffing support to implement the Western IT Turnaround Plan developed in collaboration with CCSU, addressing deferred maintenance risks in the datacenter and network.
- Complete the IPTV project to provide students with a modern streaming platform and improve campus life.
- Continue implementing student-retention platform features, including early alerts and related support capabilities.

8. Facilities — Planning, Design, and Operations

Facilities delivered visible campus renewal while advancing major infrastructure, safety, and student-experience projects.

The division completed more than 30 projects across student spaces, accessibility, academics, HVAC, athletics, and signage, while advancing 19 additional priorities currently in progress. Facilities work has directly supported student life, accessibility, athletics, academic continuity, campus safety, sustainability, branding, and the enrollment and yield experience.

30+COMPLETED
PROJECTS**19**PROJECTS IN
PROGRESS**4**NEW LANDSCAPE
TECHNICIAN
POSITIONS

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Completed more than 30 projects across student spaces, accessibility, academic/lab spaces, HVAC, EV charging, athletics, signage, office moves, and furniture renewal.
- Advanced student-facing improvements including White Hall student lounges, the Student Center commuter lounge, the Wellbeing Center, Science Building study/tutoring spaces, and the Wolves Den food pantry space.
- Completed major infrastructure and facility work including Science Building cooling tower replacement, Litchfield Hall Annex HVAC equipment replacement, Warner Hall cooling tower/HVAC replacement, O'Neill Center 3rd floor HVAC replacement, and Westside Campus Center exterior steel repainting.
- Supported major capital renewal through Pinney Hall Phase I and Phase II renovations, Pinney Fitness Center relocation, Haas Library CELT refurbishment, VPAC lighting replacement, and WAC football office refurbishment.
- Advanced high-priority projects now in progress, including the Warner Hall Innovation Classroom, O'Neill Center Arena HVAC replacement, VPAC lobby lighting, WAC turf replacement, Wolf Statue, roof replacement designs, building signage, and wayfinding/furniture standards.
- Converted the snow-removal contract to four Landscape Technician positions and supported campus branding through light-pole banners on Midtown and Westside campuses.

METRICS

- 30+ completed projects.
- 19 projects in progress, based on the submitted in-progress project list.
- 4 Landscape Technician positions created through snow-removal contract conversion.
- Target completion dates: WAC turf by July 2026; VPAC lobby lighting by July 2026; Warner Innovation Classroom by August 2026; O'Neill Arena HVAC by September 2026.

CROSS-CAMPUS CONTRIBUTIONS

- Facilities work directly supported student life, accessibility, athletics, academic continuity, campus safety, sustainability, branding, and enrollment/yield experience.
- The food pantry project was a cross-functional effort among Facilities Operations Maintenance trades, Boiler House, Custodial departments, and Planning and Engineering.

NEXT-YEAR PRIORITIES

- Further develop preventative maintenance, energy efficiency, and sustainability efforts while supporting long-term campus planning.
- Research a new platform to replace the current SchoolDude work order system.
- Continue advancing roof, HVAC, wayfinding, signage, furniture, and capital renewal priorities as funding allows.

9. WestConn Police Department

WestConn Police advanced campus safety, crisis readiness, and trust-building through student-centered service, expanded training, accreditation, and stronger cross-campus partnerships.

The department achieved the highest POSTC Accreditation after progressing through three levels in 28 months, while expanding mental health, crisis response, and emergency medical readiness training. Surveys of residential students confirmed a strong baseline of confidence in campus safety even as service delivery improved with fewer staff than in prior years.

90%+

RESIDENTS REPORTING FEELING
SAFE

28 mos

TO HIGHEST POSTC ACCREDITATION

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Sustained a strong student-safety foundation: an HRL survey of 500+ residents showed 90%+ felt safe on campus, while less than 1% felt unsafe.
- Expanded mental health and crisis-readiness training across key areas: Mental Health First Aid, QPR suicide prevention, de-escalation, First Aid/CPR/AED, Stop the Bleed, and Naloxone administration.
- Strengthened partnership with the Student Care Team, with vastly improved police responsiveness to SCT reports and better coordination around students of concern.
- Advanced Threat Assessment Team development, a capability strongly requested by faculty and staff, including a campus forum with a speaker from the National Threat Assessment Center.
- Reinvigorated crisis communications to improve preparation, coordination, and timely response during campus incidents.
- Enhanced services despite operating with fewer staff than in prior years.
- Strengthened trust, transparency, and accountability by achieving the highest POSTC Accreditation after progressing through three accreditation levels in 28 months, establishing a civilian complaint process, and self-identifying performance concerns.
- Advanced a facility dog program through Cold Springs Healing Paws Foundation, naming Janie in honor of Dr. Jane Goodall's connection to WCSU, with Sgt. Jeffrey Silver selected as handler.

METRICS

- 500+ residents surveyed through Housing and Residence Life.
- 90%+ of surveyed residents reported feeling safe on campus.
- Less than 1% of surveyed residents reported feeling unsafe.
- Highest POSTC Accreditation achieved after three accreditation levels in 28 months.
- Six major safety and crisis-response training areas: Mental Health First Aid, QPR, de-escalation, First Aid/CPR/AED, Stop the Bleed, and Naloxone administration.
- Enhanced service delivery despite fewer staff than prior years.

CROSS-CAMPUS CONTRIBUTIONS

- Supported Housing and Residence Life and Student Affairs with survey-informed insight into residential student safety and confidence.
- Improved Student Care Team responsiveness and coordination for students needing intervention, support, or crisis response.
- Responded to faculty and staff priorities by building threat-assessment capability and hosting a forum informed by the National Threat Assessment Center.
- Strengthened university-wide readiness through crisis communication improvements and cross-campus coordination.

NEXT-YEAR PRIORITIES

- Continue mental health, crisis response, de-escalation, and emergency medical readiness training.
- Fully operationalize and institutionalize Threat Assessment Team practices.
- Launch and integrate Janie, the facility dog, as a visible student support, wellness, and community-trust resource.
- Maintain POSTC accreditation standards and continue transparent accountability practices.
- Document staffing and resource needs necessary to sustain service levels and responsiveness.

Part III — Reputation & Partnerships

10. Communications and Marketing

Communications and Marketing significantly expanded WCSU's public reach, brand presence, and digital engagement.

The division introduced new university leadership through high-visibility brand positioning and expanded paid and earned channels across statewide billboards, streaming audio and television, and bilingual placements. An estimated 1,100 WestConn media mentions since August 2025, including approximately 120 references to President Jesse Bernal,¹ demonstrate the measurable growth in institutional voice.

~1,100¹

WESTCONN MEDIA
MENTIONS

~120¹

REFERENCES TO
PRESIDENT BERNAL

702K

ACTIVE WEBSITE
USERS

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Introduced new university leadership through high-visibility brand positioning, including CT LIVE/NBC, Hartford Business Journal back cover, iHeart audio spots, and streamed audio advertising across Connecticut.
- Expanded major paid and visibility channels: billboards from 3 to 7 statewide locations; mall advertising to both ends of the mall; audio ads from 2 to 6 across Apple Music, Amazon Music, Spotify, iHeart Radio, and iHeart Podcasts; streaming TV from 1 to 3 commercials; and bilingual Telemundo versions.
- Secured a 15-second commercial during the Milan Winter Olympics on NBC for expanded brand exposure.
- Increased social reach and audience size across LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.
- Drove major website performance through consistent use of URLs, QR codes, and direct links across marketing materials and advertising.
- Created meaningful student workforce opportunities by engaging five DIMA students for a combined 21 academic credits through hands-on work in Marketing and Communications.

METRICS

- Billboards: 3 to 7 statewide locations.
- Audio spots: 2 to 6 across major streaming and radio platforms.
- Streaming TV: 1 to 3 commercials, plus bilingual Telemundo versions.
- LinkedIn: +3,000 followers to 36,000 total.
- Facebook: +544 followers to 21,003 total.
- Instagram: +507 followers to 8,507 total.
- Website: 702,000 active users; 694,000 new users; 1:49 average engagement time.
- Traffic sources: 977,000 organic search sessions; 600,000 direct sessions; 111,000 referral sessions; 36,000 paid search sessions.
- Student workforce: 5 DIMA students and 21 academic credits.
- Estimated ~1,100 WestConn media mentions since August 2025, including ~120 references to President Jesse Bernal.¹

CROSS-CAMPUS CONTRIBUTIONS

- Supported four major events connected to the presidential inauguration, helping bring more than 1,000 community members to campus.
- Strengthened cross-campus partnerships by supporting high-level initiatives, unified messaging, community-facing campaigns, and public perception.

NEXT-YEAR PRIORITIES

- Strengthen ROI measurement and analytics to better evaluate marketing investments.
- Expand bilingual print and digital materials, including a new TV commercial with Spanish-speaking actors and actresses.
- Continue strategic growth across web traffic, social media, digital advertising, and brand visibility.

¹ Internal estimate; pending independent validation.

11. Athletics

Athletics expanded student opportunity, community service reputation, fundraising, and digital reach.

The department successfully launched six of seven new varsity sports, significantly expanding student opportunities, while elevating Athletics' national profile through community service recognition. Fundraising exceeded annual goals and digital reach grew substantially across web and social channels.

6 / 7

NEW VARSITY SPORTS LAUNCHED

\$230,868

DAY OF GIVING TOTAL

Athletics Website Unique Users
(YoY)



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Sustained enrollment across established varsity and JV programs, reflecting program stability.
- Successfully launched six of seven new varsity sports, significantly expanding student opportunities and elevating the department's profile.
- Established WCSU Athletics as a nationally recognized leader in community service and engagement through the NADIII AA Community Service Award.
- Exceeded annual fundraising goals, with especially strong Day of Giving performance.
- Enhanced brand visibility and recruiting reach through high-quality photography, graphic design, professional communications, and cross-campus collaboration.

METRICS

- 6 of 7 new varsity sports launched.
- Day of Giving: \$230,868 raised, \$23,000 more than last year.
- Instagram April 2026 snapshot: 3,966 followers; 78,953 accounts reached; 14,132 accounts engaged.
- Facebook April 2026 snapshot: 1,005 total users/followers; 36,200 accounts reached; 1,027 accounts engaged.
- X/Twitter: 1,610 users as of April 2026, up from 1,294 in October 2023.
- Website April 2026 28-day snapshot: 123,000 users.
- Athletics website: 661,000 unique users over the last calendar year, a 226% increase over the previous year.

CROSS-CAMPUS CONTRIBUTIONS

- Athletics visibility, student recruitment, fundraising, facilities, communications, and campus pride are mutually reinforcing.
- Continued development of the Berkshire Campus Center and positive enrollment momentum supported the broader student experience.

NEXT-YEAR PRIORITIES

- Successfully implement and competitively integrate women's ice hockey as a full varsity program.
- Advance athletic facility improvements, including WAC turf replacement and outside fundraising support.
- Enhance strength and conditioning resources for varsity student-athlete performance.
- Complete visible campus-pride initiatives such as the Wolf Statue and continue pursuing higher LEC Cup rankings.

12. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

WCSU sustained and expanded inclusive excellence work while anchoring it in belonging and student success.

The university maintained robust DEI, InterCultural Affairs, and Pride offices despite national retrenchment in the field, and joined Excelencia in Education and the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration to advance its Hispanic-serving mission. The Fifth Commitment was launched to establish a healthy environment in which every person feels valued, connected, and able to thrive.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Maintained robust DEI, InterCultural Affairs, and Pride offices despite national closures and retrenchment in the field.
- Joined Excelencia in Education and the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration to advance WCSU's Hispanic-serving mission and immigrant/student support commitments.
- Began the SSITA process to examine, through a student-centered lens, whom WCSU serves, does not yet serve, and aims to serve through data, practice, and leadership.
- Launched the Fifth Commitment: creating a healthy environment where every person feels valued, connected, and able to thrive.
- Expanded programming across Black History, Women's History, Sexual Assault Awareness, AAPI, Pride, Hispanic Heritage, Domestic Violence Awareness, and related areas.
- Expanded training and engagement through Know Your Rights workshops, Safe Zone trainings, NEOGOV Microaggressions coursework, increased Diversity Council student participation, SGA DEI Listening Sessions, and Affirmative Action Plan approval for the second consecutive year.

METRICS

- 2 national affiliations added: Excelencia in Education and Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration.
- Second consecutive year of Affirmative Action Plan approval.
- Programming calendar expanded across at least seven major heritage, awareness, and identity-centered areas.
- SSITA institutional transformation assessment underway.

CROSS-CAMPUS CONTRIBUTIONS

- DEI work is connected to HSI identity, student belonging, psychological safety, shared governance, SGA engagement, and campus climate.
- External recognition and institutional momentum included Newsweek Top College for Women designation, WSJ #2 public university in Connecticut designation, the Hawkes bequest, Boehringer Ingelheim Target School Program, and increased accepted-student deposits.

NEXT-YEAR PRIORITIES

- Finalize reorganization changes.
- Launch at least one sustained initiative connecting with AAPI communities.
- Update brochures and website materials.
- Increase feelings of belonging and psychological safety among students, faculty, and staff while continuing to strengthen DEI presence on campus.

13. Institutional Advancement

Institutional Advancement strengthened fundraising performance, donor engagement, planned giving, and external relations.

The division raised \$1.982 million year-to-date from 3,729 donations and 2,630 unique donors, with Wolves Day of Giving reaching \$405,661 and inauguration-related giving exceeding \$110,000. The work positioned WCSU as a workforce and economic driver for Danbury and the region.

~\$2M

YEAR-TO-DATE
FUNDRAISING

\$405,661

WOLVES DAY OF
GIVING

2,630

UNIQUE DONORS

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Raised \$1.982 million year-to-date from 3,729 donations and 2,630 unique donors.
- Executed Wolves Day of Giving, raising \$405,661 from 2,275 donors in 2026, up from \$367,454 in 2025.
- Planned and executed a comprehensive fundraising strategy tied to the Presidential Inauguration, raising just over \$110,000, with approximately 25% directed to the President's highest institutional priorities and remaining funds supporting student scholarships.
- Implemented Stelter planned-giving tools and strategies to expand long-term bequest commitments.
- Strengthened coordination across fundraising, alumni engagement, and external relations.
- Helped establish a formal on-campus presence for the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board, aligning WCSU more closely with regional workforce development and community services.

METRICS

- \$1.982 million raised year-to-date.
- 3,729 donations and 2,630 unique donors.
- Wolves Day of Giving: \$405,661 from 2,275 donors.
- Day of Giving growth: +\$38,207 over 2025, or approximately +10.4%.
- Presidential Inauguration fundraising: \$110,000+; approximately 25% for highest institutional priorities.

CROSS-CAMPUS CONTRIBUTIONS

- Advancement supported regional workforce alignment, legislative and external relations, alumni engagement, fundraising governance, and culture change around philanthropy.
- External-relations work positioned WCSU as a workforce and economic driver for Danbury and the region.

NEXT-YEAR PRIORITIES

- Redesign the Office of Alumni Affairs to enhance engagement and long-term alumni participation.
- Increase annual unrestricted giving to support key institutional priorities.
- Add 3-5 new Foundation Board members and establish a Development Committee.
- Continue shifting institutional culture toward proactive fundraising, portfolio management, donor engagement, and shared accountability.

14. Legislative Advocacy

WestConn elevated its voice in federal, state, and national policy conversations — using data, coalition leadership, direct legislative engagement, and its HSI and public regional mission to advocate for students, funding, safety, and long-term institutional strength.

The university built a data-informed federal advocacy posture, defended HSI/MSI priorities, and deepened direct relationships with the Governor's office and the Connecticut legislative delegation. Statewide statutory recognition through SB 298 established WestConn's Center for School Safety as the authority on school crisis response drill standards, while national coalition participation positioned the university as a practical policy partner from Danbury to Hartford to Washington, D.C.

\$3.25M+

PROJECTED STUDENT
AID EXPOSURE (H.R.
1)

399

BORROWERS IN RISK
CATEGORIES

\$350M+

TITLE III & V MSI
FUNDING AT ISSUE

SB 298

CT CENTER FOR
SCHOOL SAFETY —
STATUTORY
AUTHORITY

5

MAJOR LEGAL /
POLICY EFFORTS
SUPPORTED

3

FEDERAL SHUTDOWN
PLANNING SCENARIOS

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Built a data-informed federal advocacy posture through AASCU engagement during the 119th Congress, tracking FY26/FY27 appropriations, Pell Grant shortfalls, H.R. 1 impacts, MSI funding, Workforce Pell rulemaking, and federal agency realignment.
- Produced a WCSU-specific H.R. 1 impact analysis quantifying projected student financial-aid exposure, giving campus, system, and labor partners usable data for advocacy.
- Led WCSU's October 2025 federal shutdown response through multi-scenario planning and campus communications focused on policy uncertainty, operational continuity, and student protections.
- Defended HSI/MSI priorities through AASCU rapid-response advocacy after the cancellation of Title III and Title V grant funding.
- Used national coalition networks to support legal and policy efforts protecting tuition equity, immigrant students, international students, and access to higher education.
- Elevated WCSU's statutory role through SB 298, formally establishing the CT Center for School Safety and Crisis Preparation as the statewide authority for school crisis response drill standards.
- Used the March 2026 Presidential Inauguration as a deliberate platform for high-level state engagement with the Governor's office, OPM, workforce leaders, CSCU officials, and elected officials.
- Deepened direct relationships with Governor Lamont and state/local legislators through campus visits, personal follow-up letters, a legislative delegation breakfast, Hartford LOB meetings, and regional legislative events.

FEDERAL POLICY AND STUDENT-AID ADVOCACY

- AASCU engagement: Active federal policy monitoring through weekly updates on the 119th Congress, including appropriations, Pell, H.R. 1, MSI funding, Workforce Pell, and Department of Education program shifts.
- H.R. 1 / One Big Beautiful Bill analysis: Identified a projected \$3.25M+ reduction in federal loan disbursements to WCSU students.
- Borrower impact detail: 77 undergraduate borrowers in the 6-8 credit tier; 80 undergraduate borrowers in the 9-11 credit tier; 242 graduate borrowers.
- Federal shutdown response: Developed 2-week, 1-month, and 90-day impact assessments for the CSCU System Office and OPM, paired with direct campus communication on student protections.
- MSI funding defense: Engaged AASCU advocacy efforts after the cancellation of \$350M+ in Title III and Title V grants, reinforcing WestConn's role as Connecticut's largest Hispanic-Serving Institution.

NATIONAL COALITION, LEGAL, AND HSI ADVOCACY

- Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration: Active national member receiving policy and legal strategy briefings, signing onto litigation and policy efforts, and invited to the June 2026 closed-door Policy and Legal Strategy Session in Washington, D.C.
- HACU National Capitol Forum: Planned participation in HACU's 31st Annual National Capitol Forum on April 21-22, 2026, including Capitol Hill visits and advocacy for Hispanic-Serving

Institutions.

- Amicus and legal-policy participation across five major efforts:
 - Texas Tuition Equity / in-state tuition defense.
 - California AB 540 / AB 131 tuition equity.
 - Birthright citizenship rights for U.S.-born children of immigrants.
 - AAUP v. Rubio — international students, deportation risk, and political speech protections.
 - SEVIS terminations / student visa revocation litigation, including challenges to mass SEVIS record terminations.

STATE LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE BRANCH ENGAGEMENT

- SB 298: Governor Lamont signed legislation establishing WestConn's CT Center for School Safety and Crisis Preparation as the statewide authority for school crisis response drill standards.
- CSCU 2026 Legislative Agenda: Participated in system-level discussions on bond funding release, Finish Line Scholars restoration, and capital investments.
- Presidential Inauguration convening: Used March 26-27, 2026 events to engage statewide officials, including the Governor's office, OPM leadership, workforce strategy leaders, CSCU leaders, and elected officials.
- Governor Lamont engagement: Hosted the Governor on campus in October 2025; followed up with advocacy on bond investments, education-to-workforce pathways, and public-private partnerships.
- Regional legislative engagement: Connected with the Governor at the BioCT Legislative Breakfast and the Greater New Haven Chamber Regional Legislative Breakfast at Southern Connecticut State University in January 2026.
- WestConn Legislative Delegation Breakfast: Hosted Danbury-area legislators on January 15, 2026, with a presentation on workforce alignment, applied learning, facilities, and the strategic plan.
- Hartford Legislative Office Building visit: Met with legislators on October 22, 2025, including Senator Kushner, Representatives Godfrey and Callahan, and Representative Greg Haddad, Co-Chair of the Higher Education Committee.
- Maintained an active fall 2025 legislative meeting calendar and continued direct engagement coordinated with the system office.

CROSS-CAMPUS CONTRIBUTIONS

- Translated complex federal legislation into clear institutional impact data for financial aid, student support, system colleagues, and advocacy partners.
- Connected student affordability, HSI/MSI funding, immigrant student protections, workforce pathways, school safety, facilities, and capital needs into one coherent public-policy narrative.
- Strengthened coordination among the President's Office, Institutional Advancement and external relations, Financial Aid, Academic Affairs, the CT Center for School Safety, CSCU, and national higher education associations.
- Positioned WestConn as both a regional anchor and a practical policy partner for Connecticut — a public university able to pilot, demonstrate, and scale solutions.

NEXT-YEAR PRIORITIES

- Continue proactive monitoring and advocacy on Pell, H.R. 1 implementation, Workforce Pell, MSI/HSI funding, student aid changes, and federal-state program shifts.
- Develop concise WCSU advocacy briefs for bond funding, Finish Line Scholars, capital needs, HSI/Title V priorities, affordability, workforce pathways, and the CT Center for School Safety.
- Deepen relationships with the Governor's office, legislative delegation, Higher Education Committee leadership, CSCU, AASCU, HACU, and the Presidents' Alliance.
- Convert CT Center statutory momentum into funded partnerships, stronger statewide service outcomes, and visible impact for Connecticut schools.
- Use data dashboards and student/regional impact stories to connect policy asks to student outcomes, workforce needs, public safety, and regional economic development.

VIII. Recognitions & Rankings

WCSU earned external recognition across institutional quality, social mobility, academic programs, athletics, sustainability, faculty and student excellence, and HSI advancement.

#1

Public University in CT for Women —
Newsweek

#1

In CT for Social Mobility — CollegeNet

#2

Public University in CT — WSJ / College
Pulse

#1

National BCBA Master's Degree —
Intelligent.com

#30

National Moot Court Program

#33

U.S. News Top Public Schools (up 8
spots from #41)

330,701

kWh/year Annualized Energy Savings

550

Student-Athletes at Day of Service (21
Teams, 70 Sites)

INSTITUTIONAL RANKINGS

- Newsweek — America's Best Colleges for Women 2026 (inaugural list)
 - #100 in the nation
 - #1 public university in Connecticut
 - #3 overall in Connecticut among all colleges and universities
- Wall Street Journal / College Pulse — Best Colleges in America 2026
 - #2 public university in Connecticut
- CollegeNet — Social Mobility Index
 - #1 in Connecticut for social mobility
- U.S. News & World Report — Regional Universities North (2026)
 - #33 Top Public Schools; jumped 8 spots from #41 the previous year
- U.S. News & World Report — Best Graduate Schools 2026
 - Fine Arts and Education graduate programs ranked among Connecticut's Best Graduate Schools

ACADEMIC PROGRAM RANKINGS

- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) M.S. Program — Intelligent.com
 - #1 in the nation for BCBA master's degrees
 - #4 most affordable nationally
 - #15 out of 7,700 colleges reviewed
- Nursing Programs — RegisteredNursing.org (2026)
 - #3 Online Nursing Post-Master's Graduate Certificate Program in Connecticut
 - Undergraduate Nursing program also ranked highly
- Moot Court — American Moot Court Association (April 2026)
 - Program ranked #30 best in the country
 - Second time in program history reaching the national top 30
 - Brief writing team ranked #26 nationally

ATHLETICS RECOGNITION

- NADIII AA 2026 One-Time Project or Activity Community Service Award — WCSU Athletics recognized for the September 20, 2025 Day of Service.
 - 550 student-athletes participated
 - All 21 varsity teams represented
 - Volunteered at nearly 70 sites across Greater Danbury

FACILITIES AND SUSTAINABILITY

- CSCU SEM Champion Award (2025) — Named Strategic Energy Management Champion by Eversource CT and Cascade Energy.
 - Completed 14 energy-saving projects
 - Achieved 330,701 kWh/year in annualized savings

FACULTY AND STUDENT AWARDS

- CSCU Board of Regents Faculty Awards (2025-2026)
 - Dr. April Moreira, Social Work — nominated for BOR Teaching Award
 - Dr. Danielle King, African American Studies — nominated for BOR Adjunct Teaching Award
- 2026 Connecticut Teacher of the Year: Brian Betesh, WCSU MAT graduate in Secondary Education — History.
- Connecticut School Counselor Association 2026 Awards
 - McKenna Griffith, WCSU student — School Counseling Intern of the Year
 - Lisa Kilcourse, WCSU adjunct — CSCA Service Award

DESIGNATIONS AND AFFILIATIONS

- Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) — Connecticut's largest four-year public HSI. Designation obtained Spring 2024; actively promoted and integrated into institutional messaging during this period.
- Excelencia in Education — 'in Action' Network, advancing the HSI mission.

IX. Looking Ahead

Cross-division priorities for the year ahead, synthesized from each unit's stated next-year focus.

The following priorities consolidate next-year commitments from each division of the university. Together they define the institutional path from stabilization toward sustainable, student-centered growth.

FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY & OPERATIONS

- Continue the FY30 fiscal resilience glidepath while protecting academic quality and student-facing services.
- Successfully transition to SaaS and adopt a zero-based budgeting model.
- Identify and use a predictive market analysis enrollment management tool.
- Implement strategies to generate revenue from new sources.
- Secure funding and staffing for the Western IT Turnaround Plan, addressing deferred maintenance in the datacenter and network.

ENROLLMENT, RETENTION & STUDENT SUCCESS

- Strengthen retention, enrollment mix, net tuition strategy, and transfer/adult pathways.
- Grow campus visitors and improve visit hospitality, space, and flow.
- Prioritize out-of-state recruitment where analytics indicate opportunity.
- Use AI and Carnegie market analytics to improve application review and geographic strategy.
- Expand the Major Exploration program and formalize the Student Success Team and holistic advising model.
- Contribute to a 1 percentage-point retention increase toward 77%.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE & APPLIED LEARNING

- Scale innovative, interdisciplinary, flexible, and degree-completion pathways, including 2+2+1 concurrent enrollment pathways with CT State partners.
- Implement applied and experiential learning across all programs.
- Advance visibility through the White Oak Film Festival, 2026 Global Standards alignment, and ASB Strategic Plan implementation.

CAMPUS RENEWAL & SAFETY

- Continue capital execution and transparent shared governance routines.
- Further develop preventative maintenance, energy efficiency, and sustainability efforts.
- Continue advancing roof, HVAC, wayfinding, signage, furniture, and capital renewal priorities as funding allows.
- Continue mental health, crisis response, de-escalation, and emergency medical readiness training.
- Fully operationalize and institutionalize Threat Assessment Team practices.
- Launch and integrate Janie, the facility dog, as a visible student support and community-trust resource.

WORKFORCE, REGIONAL IMPACT & BRAND

- Strengthen ROI measurement and analytics to better evaluate marketing investments.
- Expand bilingual print and digital materials, including a new TV commercial with Spanish-speaking talent.
- Redesign the Office of Alumni Affairs to enhance engagement and long-term alumni participation.
- Increase annual unrestricted giving to support key institutional priorities.
- Add 3-5 new Foundation Board members and establish a Development Committee.
- Launch at least one sustained initiative connecting with AAPI communities.
- Increase feelings of belonging and psychological safety among students, faculty, and staff.



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Western Connecticut State University

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