

Purpose Made Possible

Determination to lead the way

A plan for strategic action for
the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

Our Vision:

UW-Stevens Point in 2025

UW-Stevens Point is a catalyst for resilient and innovative Central and Northern Wisconsin communities, relied upon as a thought leader and responsive partner on issues including health and wellness, economic vitality, and environmental stewardship. We offer national models for sustainability and inclusivity and dynamic hubs for creative expression. Our campuses are Central Wisconsin's gateway for vibrant cultural life and together form a regional "town square" for the exchange of ideas.

We serve students of all ages and stages of life both within and beyond our region, in face-to-face as well as non-traditional classroom settings, providing access to educational opportunities for all. Through a distinctive approach to applied learning, our campuses foster meaningful educational experiences that allow students to take risks, discover a sense of purpose, and achieve success as they define it. We provide an unparalleled environment for students to take lead roles across the university and to make a difference in the community. Students, faculty, and staff are all engaged in growing our university community and its connections with Central Wisconsin businesses, industry, organizations, and government. Our partnerships in Wisconsin, nationally, and internationally enhance the outcomes for citizens and our students while serving particularly to strengthen Central Wisconsin.

We are a data-informed institution that prioritizes shared decision-making and is known for its collaborative spirit. We focus on what is possible even in the face of challenges. We have a strong understanding of financial realities and make fiscally responsible choices in an environment of trust and collegiality. We use our collective knowledge and ideas to ensure that our university will be resilient and relevant.

Both on and off campus, we shape leaders who embody and promote intellectual curiosity, global awareness, critical thinking, problem-solving, civic engagement, and inclusivity. Our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and donors take pride in our university and passionately share stories of how UW-Stevens Point changes lives.



University of Wisconsin
Stevens Point

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Background: UW-Stevens Point Today

Like many institutions of higher education, UW-Stevens Point grapples with shifting demographics that have led to decreasing numbers of high school graduates and fierce competition for traditional-age students. As a publicly assisted regional university, we have been especially challenged by declining enrollment, reduced state support, a tuition freeze, and broader skepticism about the value of investing in four-year degrees. As we have experienced reductions in state aid and declining enrollments, we have exhausted our financial reserves.

The UW System’s restructuring has added complexity and uncertainty but also affords an opportunity to expand access and reimagine our shared impact. Our three campuses remain integral to the region, and we continue to be a vital gateway for first-generation, underprepared, and lower-income students, along with place-bound students who want or need in-person learning experiences. Our engaged and hands-on approach fosters not just discipline-specific skills but also essential aptitude in communication, empathy, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and leadership. Local industries recognize the role this university has in recruiting, developing, and retaining talent and adding to the vibrancy of area communities. Graduates in our backyard and in places across the globe point to the transformational experiences they found at this “hidden gem” university.

UW-Stevens Point has evolved and adapted countless times throughout our 125-year history. Today, within a changing landscape for higher education, we must become more agile and adaptable than we have ever been before. We can only do so together, and with clearer purpose and direction. Listening carefully to the many stakeholders who want both this university and this region to thrive, we are crafting a renewed vision to guide our next steps forward.

As we face these challenges, we will build on our considerable strengths. UW-Stevens Point is among the most excellent regional comprehensive universities in the nation and simultaneously offers several unique nationally recognized programs, providing an affordable, high-quality education. All UW-Stevens Point students receive a solid foundation in science, humanities, art, communication, and social science from their general education coursework, which supports and enhances the development of skills graduates will use in their professional, civic, and personal lives. As students explore different areas of study, they find opportunities to engage with knowledgeable and skilled faculty who are passionate about teaching and dedicated to students’ success and their individual development. All degree programs at UW-



Stevens Point employ practices and experiences to aid our students in achieving their goals, including a variety of hands-on and applied learning opportunities. We have a variety of excellent programs, including strong programs in the liberal arts and in a number of professional fields; among our nationally recognized and distinctive programs are those in Natural Resources, Fine Arts, and Health and Wellness.

Students, faculty, and staff are all hard-working and highly engaged; ours is a can-do university. We have high-quality services to support student success, a robust number of student organizations, and high-achieving athletics programs with an enthusiastic following among students, alumni, and the community. We lead Wisconsin’s comprehensive universities in student participation in international programs. We have a strong tradition of shared governance – we get things done collaboratively.

We have three compact campuses in a beautiful environment. Our location in central Wisconsin makes us easily accessible from any part of the state. Known for our environmental focus and sustainable practices, we have a nature reserve on the Stevens Point campus, an arboretum on the Marshfield campus, and field stations that provide opportunities for teaching, research, and recreation, and we have numerous venues for outdoor recreation in the surrounding cities and counties. Our arts programs support a vibrant culture for our area. We have strong partnerships with our local communities. We embody the Wisconsin Idea.

The Road Ahead: Our Strategic Themes

We will realize our vision of UW-Stevens Point in 2025 by focusing our work in five major themes. We have created goals within each of these themes. In the work ahead, during the next few months teams will continue to develop the strategies, tactics, and metrics by which we will achieve these goals.

1.

Align Financial Model with Institutional Vision

We must not only be able to balance the university's operating budget but align our financial models and strategies with the institutional vision of our university. This will require proactive planning and the use of reliable data to inform financial decisions. We must commit to employing various financial models across the university that allow for agility in decision-making as operational strategies progress in response to increasingly diverse and evolving student needs. As a student-centered university, UW-Stevens Point should have a budget that promotes and rewards activities that are responsive to the desires and needs of the student body. Additionally, alternative revenue resources must be fully explored and developed to provide stability and growth to current and new services and projects that benefit university constituents. Expansion into innovative methods of instructional delivery will not only increase financial stability but will allow the university to support its vision of providing educational access to lifelong learners.

As noted previously, moving forward, goals and metrics associated with the strategic themes in this document will inform university decisions. To enable prioritization, decisions will be made regarding resource allocations and reallocations using agreed upon, data-informed metrics. We will decide not only what current activities should continue and what new avenues should be pursued, but also which existing areas must be reduced.

We must be transparent and able to easily communicate within our university community as well as with regional stakeholders about institutional goals, metrics, and processes in financial decision making. Members of the university community will be given timely access to financial data and review processes that will be used to make future curricular, programmatic, and services decisions. Taking these actions will rebuild trust among students, faculty, staff, and administration. This shared knowledge will provide all constituents with an understanding of university-wide financial implications and a means for unifying toward a sustainable future.

Goals:

- We will align University expenditure levels with available resources. Annual expenditure levels in university departments will be within the annual state budget allocation or the program revenue generated.
- We will utilize financial models that will be data informed, transparent, objective, and action-oriented in order to respond to the priorities of the strategic themes. The financial models will inform decisions to allocate and reallocate resources.
- We will create processes and metrics to support the financial models and to inform decision-making, resulting in greater transparency and understanding of the financial situation of the university.
- We will encourage financial growth. New revenue sources will be explored and analyzed for financial viability. These new revenue sources will complement existing financial resources to allow diversification of university finances.



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2.

Offer Programs to Serve the Lifelong Learner

We will take a multi-faceted approach to adapt our programs and how we deliver them to meet the demands of a changing economy and a changing higher education landscape. We must broaden the range of students we serve. UW-Stevens Point has always been a university that serves primarily traditional-age students. We have felt the negative effects of that focus already, as fluctuations in the demand for four-year degrees within this population have led to significant changes in enrollment. As the size of that population has decreased, and will decrease again in a few years, we can improve our financial stability by increasing our ability to serve adults as well as traditional-age students, while also maintaining the open access that our branch campuses have long provided. This will also enable us to serve our region better.

Even as college enrollments decrease, the demand for workers increases. The population of adults in Wisconsin with some college experience - but no degree - is estimated at 662,000, including 46,000 with at least two years of college (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, *Some College, No Degree: A 2019 Snapshot for the Nation and 50 States*, October 2019, pp. 5, 8). While this population has an interest in further education, they may need, or prefer, courses and programs offered on different schedules than the traditional 15-week semester, through online or hybrid formats, and packaged in ways beyond the traditional degree. They also need course design and instructional approaches tailored to non-traditional students. Some of these potential students are not able to commit to a four-year program at the outset, but will prefer or need to stop out at various points. Such students will be better served with a variety of ways to earn credentials; in addition to Associate Degrees, these could include certificates that will advance their careers and, over time, combine with other certificates and courses to lead to a degree, as well as non-credit continuing education courses and experiences.

Serving these students will require a coordinated effort to identify the programs we should market to this population and change the way we deliver those courses, and also provide the support services this population needs, leveraging the unique resources of each of our campuses. We will make evidence-based decisions



about which programs we can offer to meet the needs of these students and how we can best deliver them to this population. We will base our decisions on the best data available, beginning with the market research recently done for us by Ruffalo Noel Levitz, as well as input from local communities. We will bring together the expertise of people who know the non-traditional student population and the northern part of the state with the academic departments and support services, who will work together to identify and prioritize these opportunities.

In addition to identifying how we can better serve working adults, we will also expand our service to the school districts in central and northern Wisconsin, utilizing distance education and campuses in Wausau and Marshfield to provide dual-enrollment courses and CESA programs to meet needs that individual schools or districts are too small or under-resourced to meet.

These efforts will also require careful attention to our available resources. We cannot immediately supply every program or course that might be desired, but must adapt existing programs or create programs that require only a modest investment of resources, at least in the near term. We will also identify areas of need that we should invest in as resources become available in the future.

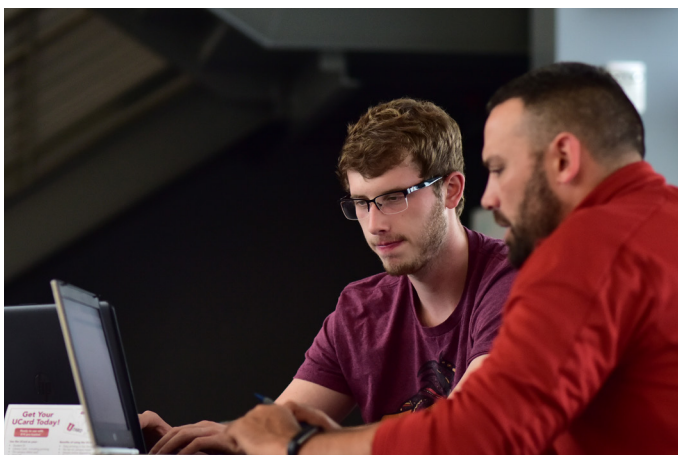
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While we adapt to better serve the adults in our region, we will also refine our program array to continue to serve traditional-age students. In order to achieve fiscal health while adapting to better serve our students, we will need to eliminate or curtail some offerings. Deciding which programs to expand, which to limit, and which to discontinue is a complex challenge, requiring a holistic perspective to achieve a balance across multiple dimensions:

- We have high-profile programs that help define our identity as a university and that can attract students from out of state, and we will maintain the quality of these programs. At the same time, we must maintain adequate breadth in our offerings in order to serve the students in our region, for some of whom UW-Stevens Point is their best (or even their only) choice for a four-year degree due to cost or location. While we cannot provide every program students may desire, providing a broad array of programs is crucial to meet the needs of these students. Any decisions to eliminate programs must be informed by this necessity.
- We will also make our course array fiscally responsible. Often our most high-profile programs are also expensive to offer. We must balance our high-cost programs with others that are less expensive, determining the number and size of the high-cost programs we can sustain, and what other programs best complement them.
- As we expand our services for the non-traditional students, we will continue to offer programs sought by traditional-age students. This will require ongoing review, informed by knowledge of the new generation of students.



To accomplish this, our budget experts will collaborate with our marketing team and our academic programs. Our decisions will be based on the quantitative and qualitative data from our program review process and informed by the need to find the optimal mix of programs to serve our students in a fiscally sustainable way. We will work to create mutualistic and collaborative relationships between programs.

Goals:

- We will establish strategic partnerships with high schools and other educational institutions that support college-bound student success, college completion, and enrollment growth.
- We will grow programs to support lifelong learners through creative delivery methods including but not limited to branch campuses, hybrid, online, or collaborative models.
- We will create stronger student support for life-long learners, including but not limited to course timing/availability, academic calendars, evening/weekend classroom, office and service access, and prior learning assessment.
- We will develop and implement an internal system to better serve prospective students in our market. The system should use data to determine financial and program viability, and inform new programs/offerings relevant to K-12 traditional, adult, graduate, and continuing ed students.
- We will increase our unique cross-disciplinary work to leverage (or promote) our strengths in sustainability, global awareness, and diversity, equity, and inclusion, for prospective students at all credential and continuing education levels.
- We will expand access to education for individuals with multiple abilities, preparedness, and goals.
- We will utilize (campus/governance/communication) structures to support crucial conversations, the development of trusting dialogue, and collaborative conversations across campus units to better connect the institution at large.

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3.

Enhance the Student Experience

UW-Stevens Point is a place where students explore an array of opportunities to grow in knowledge, skills, and dispositions to prepare for professional careers, additional post-graduation pathways, and experiences as global citizens. Whether students are under-prepared for college, high-achieving, or in between, faculty and staff meet students where they are, and do what it takes to help them find their path. While at UW-Stevens Point, students experience applied learning within the curriculum and outside the classroom through laboratories, discussions, field-based courses, and internships as well as student employment, performances and exhibitions, student research, student leadership, and student organization opportunities. From their first year onward, UW-Stevens Point students will be engaged in and out of the classroom in high-impact practices that enhance their learning, foster their intellectual and emotional development, and help achieve their personal and career goals.

We will maintain and improve services that promote student success, including advising, professional and personal development, and the support for the overall well-being of our students. We will enhance our services while paying attention to the specific needs of our students by creating responsive processes that adapt to change. In particular, we will improve our support for rural, first-generation, non-traditional, and underprepared students as well as for students from traditionally under-represented and underserved groups. We will continue to focus on strategies to improve student retention, academic success and personal growth.

Goals:

- We will provide experiences that enhance high-impact practices (HIP) for student learning, development, and engagement.
- We will provide comprehensive student services that support the retention and success of all students.



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4.

Serve Our Communities by Expanding Partnerships and Connections

We believe UW-Stevens Point is woven into the fabric of our communities. We aim to foster relationships that build trust, and are mutually beneficial for our campuses, students, partner organizations and the region. As UW-Stevens Point intentionally builds strategic partnerships, the opportunities for our students to participate in high impact practices increases. Enhanced collaboration with businesses, local governments, non-profit organizations, our alumni, and more will provide new opportunities for student engagement. Many UW-Stevens Point programs already have partnerships that provide internship opportunities; we will develop internship opportunities with partners for students in majors that lack them. We will look for more ways to engage the public with dynamic speakers and artists, performances, exhibitions, and outreach programs, and help to provide services and assistance to regional residents. There are strong economic impacts when business and faculty/staff work together to solve issues in our region. There is a significant interdependency between UW-Stevens Point and the Central Wisconsin communities we serve. We are all stronger when we work together to improve talent attraction and quality of place through arts and cultural opportunities.

Goals:

- We will build an internal database tool to increase awareness of partnerships and work that exists. This database will allow UW-Stevens Point to strategically leverage relationships and better understand where opportunities exist due to gaps in existing outreach work (by industry, geographic locations, etc.)
- We will build an external tool for outreach to improve communication of the resources, expertise, programs, and services available to our off-campus stakeholders.
- We will pursue and achieve Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement



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5.

Enhance Collaboration

We must work together better if we are to achieve our other goals. Doing more with less will require pooling of resources, and responding to changing needs will demand coordinated effort and creative sharing of knowledge and ideas. We recognize that our commitment to student success requires not only excellent classroom teaching and mentoring by faculty, but also advising, co-curricular activities, career planning, and much more. We have a strong tradition of shared governance, including the Student Government Association, and we need to extend that cooperative effort across our departments and offices, and especially colleges, schools, and campuses. Our budget model must be implemented in a way that supports collaboration. We will change policies, procedures, and administrative structures to facilitate, incentivize, and reward collaboration; and foster cultural change to make UW-Stevens Point an institution noteworthy for its collaborative spirit.

Goals:

- We will capitalize on the creation of new schools to collaboratively evaluate curricular and non-curricular structures across the institution's broad spectrum of disciplines and ways of thinking to maximize resource use.
- We will create intentional institutional pathways for schools, campuses, locations, and units to regularly communicate and collaborate in the service of student recruitment, retention, and completion.

