

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

STRATEGIC PLANNING

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Strategic Planning at the University of Washington, 2009-present

In 2009, the University of Washington initiated an in-depth strategic planning initiative to address the challenges of the then-anticipated financial crisis and the opportunities presented by emerging trends in higher education. University leaders consulted over 3,500 members of the community—faculty, students, and staff from the three campuses as well as members of the larger community—for input on potential threats, opportunities, and future directions. In a time of major change and uncertainty, the process took nothing for granted and was open to results that might prompt rethinking our mission and long-held practices. What resulted, however, was a deep reaffirmation and commitment to staying true to the UW’s core mission, vision, and values. In addition, the process uncovered a strong mandate to build on this core to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century: to become even more competitive, collaborative, technology-reliant, nimble and diversified; and to provide solutions to society’s most pressing problems.

This strategic planning effort, labeled the Two Years to Two Decades (2y2d) Initiative, reflected the view that the University should be thinking long-term, beyond any given biennium. The 2y2d Initiative was designed to ensure that the University’s near-term actions were in line with a shared sense of how the University community envisioned its future. **The ultimate goal is to actively manage change rather than let change manage the University.**

To implement the 2y2d strategic directions, a steering committee made up of University leaders crafted the Sustainable Academic Business Plan in 2011. As the name implies, the Sustainable Academic Business Plan not only addresses academic excellence, but also is grounded in financial realities. Its long- and short-term goals guide workgroups across the University that are responsible for implementing the 2y2d vision in the near-term, identifying gaps and launching initiatives to fill them. The Plan is regularly updated, most recently in summer 2019.

2y2d, the Sustainable Academic Business Plan, and related efforts have leveraged the University’s collaborative, yet decentralized, culture to empower groups across the three campuses to innovate and achieve common goals in ways unique to each school, college, or unit. Consequently, we have enjoyed wide implementation, strong buy-in, and concrete results. In its reaccreditation of the University in 2014, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities commended our “...robust response to the fiscal downturn, marked by planning that engaged much of the University community. By remaining focused on the University’s mission and values, the institution was able to formulate and implement strategic decisions, and as a result UW has sustained its strong academic reputation.”

As a large and complex institution with multiple stakeholders interested in accountability, the University of Washington has several complementary ways in which we track progress. University accreditation and related metrics ensure we are fulfilling our mission and more than 80 academic programs track quality measures through specialized, programmatic accreditation. Internal qualitative and quantitative measures ensure we are making progress towards the goals articulated in the Sustainable Academic Business Plan. The University also regularly reports to a variety of stakeholders, including the state and the UW Regents, to provide data requested by these entities.

The UW's Mission, Vision, and Values Serve as the Foundation for Strategic Planning

The 2y2d strategic planning process reaffirmed a commitment to the University of Washington's mission, vision and values. To this foundation, community input from over 3,500 participants added a shared vision of the University of the future. Together, these statements tell us who we are at our core, what is essential to maintain, what we can expect of the future, and how we might change and innovate in ways that balance the timeless with the timely.

Role and Mission of the University

The following UW Role and Mission Statement was drafted by the Board of Regents February 1981 and revised February 1998 and July 2013:

Founded in 1861, the University of Washington is one of the oldest state-supported institutions of higher education on the Pacific coast. The University is comprised of three campuses: the Seattle campus is made up of sixteen schools and colleges whose faculty offer educational opportunities to students ranging from first-year undergraduates through doctoral-level candidates; the Bothell and Tacoma campuses, each developing a distinctive identity and undergoing rapid growth, offer diverse programs to undergraduates and to graduate students.

The primary mission of the University of Washington is the preservation, advancement, and dissemination of knowledge. The University preserves knowledge through its libraries and collections, its courses, and the scholarship of its faculty. It advances new knowledge through many forms of research, inquiry and discussion; and disseminates it through the classroom and the laboratory, scholarly exchanges, creative practice, international education, and public service. As one of the nation's outstanding teaching and research institutions, the University is committed to maintaining an environment for objectivity and imaginative inquiry and for the original scholarship and research that ensure the production of new knowledge in the free exchange of facts, theories, and ideas.

To promote their capacity to make humane and informed decisions, the University fosters an environment in which its students can develop mature and independent judgment and an appreciation of the range and diversity of human achievement. The University cultivates in its students both critical thinking and the effective articulation of that thinking.

As an integral part of a large and diverse community, the University seeks broad representation of and encourages sustained participation in that community by its students, its faculty, and its staff. It serves both non-traditional and traditional students. Through its three-campus system and through educational outreach, evening degree, and distance learning, it extends educational opportunities to many who would not otherwise have access to them.

The academic core of the University of Washington Seattle campus is its College of Arts & Sciences; the teaching and research of the University's many professional schools provide essential complements to these programs in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural

and mathematical sciences. Programs in law, oceanography and fisheries, library science, and aeronautics are offered exclusively (in accord with state law) by the University of Washington. In addition, the University of Washington has assumed primary responsibility for the health science fields of dentistry and public health, and offers education and training in medicine for a multi-state region of the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. The schools and colleges of built environments, business, education, engineering, environment, information, nursing, pharmacy, public affairs, and social work, across all three UW campuses, have a long tradition of educating students for service to our region, state, and the nation. These schools and colleges make indispensable contributions to the state and, with the rest of the University, share a long tradition of educating undergraduate and graduate students toward achieving an excellence that well serves the state, the region, and the nation.

Vision Statement

The University of Washington educates a diverse student body to become responsible global citizens and future leaders through a challenging learning environment informed by cutting-edge scholarship. Discovery is at the heart of our university. We discover timely solutions to the world's most complex problems and enrich the lives of people throughout our community, the state of Washington, the nation and the world.

Core Values

- Integrity
- Diversity
- Excellence
- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Respect

The Two Years to Two Decades Initiative's Shared Vision of the Future

From 2009-2011, over 3,500 faculty, staff, student, and community stakeholders from the three campuses participated in focus groups and surveys that asked them to envision what the UW should look like in the next 20 years. Their input helped identify a shared vision of the future of the University.

The UW of the 21st Century

...is more competitive

It will be a more competitive environment with competition from other universities for the best students and faculty. Competitors will include traditional institutions of higher education; those that more quickly update infrastructure to offer online, distance and hybrid options; for-profit institutions; and international institutions that are increasingly viable options to our traditional student base. Individuals and organizations will think more globally about their choices, will be more knowledgeable about alternatives, and will increasingly see themselves as customers with options.

...is more collaborative

There will be greater collaboration within the University across units and disciplines; with other universities, as institutions become more niche but partner to offer breadth; and with the public and private sector locally, nationally, and internationally. Interdisciplinary activities and partnership development and engagement will grow in importance. The nature of disciplines may change as study shifts towards both virtual and face-to-face learning and research communities. Learning will include more project-based, experiential activities, and research will focus on solving specific societal problems.

...is more technology reliant

Students will expect technological infrastructure and related university interfaces to provide ubiquitous, fast, and fully integrated access 24/7 and on demand to the devices of their choice and with convenient, personalized content delivery. Faculty will increasingly demand more and better collaborative tools, networks to support research, and more sophisticated teaching technologies. Physical location and schedules will provide fewer constraints as teaching, research, and supporting administrative activities can be accessed at all hours from remote locations and will make use of cloud computing, social networking, and emerging technologies.

...is more nimble, leading our way through change

More nimble structures and coordinated efforts will be required to maintain high quality teaching, research, and service as the people, infrastructure, and communities change within and around the UW. Anticipating and planning will be key to responding to changing societal trends, demographics, diversity, globalization, and technologies, to meet the needs, interests, and expectations of internal and external communities. In addition to our traditional student profile, students of the future will also include more who are over the age of 25, from diverse backgrounds, non-native speakers of English, part-time students, less textbook-reliant, and who attend classes taught off-campus or online. Administrative functions will shift focus away from bureaucracy towards service.

...is supported by a more diversified funding base

The funding base of higher education will rely more heavily on student-based, research, and entrepreneurial revenue streams. Students will expect more value and service for their higher contribution and will be more likely to value convenience in everything from the application process to student services and learning. Faculty will notice a shift in culture toward more entrepreneurial incentives and earning their salary through a balanced mix of instruction, research, and service, where a drop in one means an increase in another. Administrative units will be under increased pressure to become more efficient and effective and will explore alternative ways of organizing activities, units, and work. Donors and the state will emphasize impact and accountability.

The Sustainable Academic Business Plan: Implementing UW Strategic Planning

Developed as the near-term action plan for our vision—the “two year” of our Two Year to Two Decades Initiative—the Sustainable Academic Business Plan (SABP) moves the University from mission to action. It drives excellence in teaching, scholarship, and research while dealing with financial realities. It lays out the strategic goals and related activities that will keep the UW strong and well positioned in the 21st Century.

As illustrated in Figure 1, on the following page, the **long-term SABP strategic goals** are:

- **Sustain:** Academic excellence and mission; financial stability.
- **Compete:** Attract the best students, faculty, and staff; increase and diversify funding.
- **Transform:** Embrace technology and interdisciplinary collaboration to meet needs of a diverse and dispersed student body; increase administrative efficiencies to maximize resources to invest in the people and infrastructure needed to meet 21st century challenges.

We plan to reach our long-term goals by pursuing **five short-term goals**. Those short-term SABP goals are to:

- **Decrease costs:** using resources efficiently and strategically.
- **Increase revenues:** balancing revenue streams, tackling big research, disseminating discoveries, and attracting community support and investment.
- **Invest in people:** attracting and supporting the best students, faculty and staff.
- **Invest in infrastructure:** providing the academic and administrative tools to support students, faculty, and staff.
- **Preserve access:** keeping tuition affordable and UW degrees accessible.

These short-term goals will be discussed more on page 13, under “Alignment with State Goals,” where we outline our strategies for achieving the goals and show how they align with Governor Inslee’s goals.

A gap analysis uncovered a host of goal-relevant activity already taking place across the University. These activities are captured in reports, briefs, and databases for internal use and serve as the basis for external reporting (see “Assessing Our Performance,” which begins on page 11). The analysis also identified gaps where more activity was needed. The UW’s Executive Office has launched key initiatives and programs to address these gaps.

The following graphic depicts the University’s mission, shared vision of the future, the Sustainable Academic Business Plan, and the most recent initiatives launched as a result of gap-analysis. It also includes the key questions we asked ourselves in the development of the plan:

What is our essential core?

OUR MISSION //////////////////////////////////////
Preserve, advance and disseminate knowledge through research, education & service

OUR PROMISE //////////////////////////////////////
Together undaunted for a world of good — leading-edge student experience, public as a philosophy, proven impact and innovation mindset.

What will the future look like?

THE UW OF THE 21ST CENTURY //////////////////////////////////////
More competitive, collaborative, technology-adept, nimble and diversified. Committed to strategic priorities of maintaining quality, staying true to our mission and providing solutions to society's most pressing issues.

How do we get there from here?

SUSTAINABLE ACADEMIC BUSINESS PLAN/////////////////////////////////////////
Purpose: Align activities with strategic priorities

What are our drivers of change?

Financial Realities

- Uncertain state and federal funding
- Need to diversify revenue streams

Increased Competition

- For the best students and faculty
- For affordable, quality higher education
- From traditional, international and for-profit institutions

21st Century Trends

- Ubiquitous Technology
- Changing Expectations
- Shifting Demographics

What are our long-term goals?

SUSTAIN COMPETE TRANSFORM

What are our near-term goals?

Decrease Costs Increase Revenues Invest in People Invest in Infrastructure Increase Access

What are we doing well?

Existing efforts like those described in briefs, Provost reports, etc.

What more can we do?

KEY INITIATIVES //////////////////////////////////////

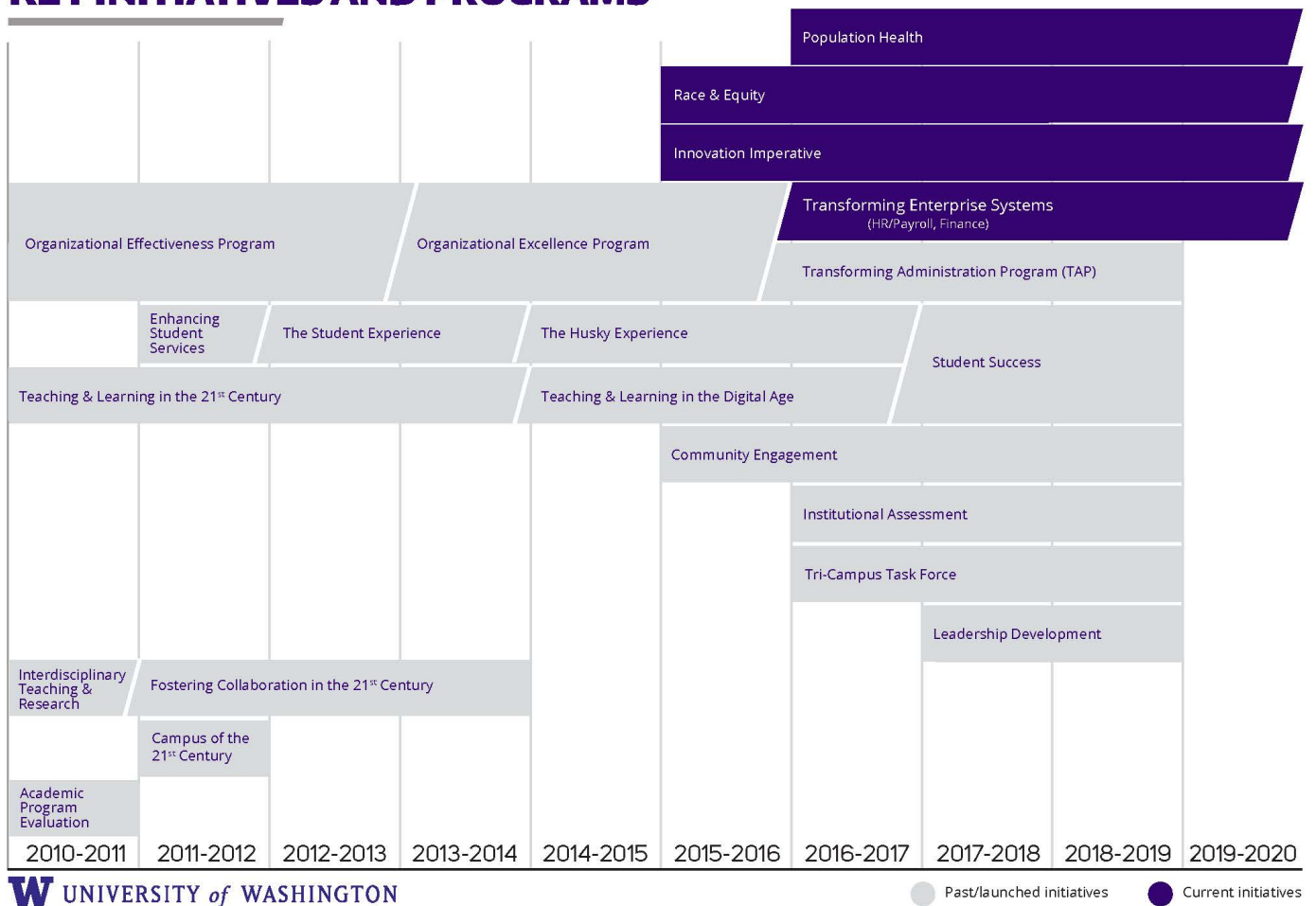
Population Health Innovation Imperative

Race & Equity Transforming Enterprise Systems (HR/Payroll, Finance)

The Sustainable Academic Business Plan has evolved over time and a number of initiatives have addressed key priority areas over the years. Once the work identified for the initiative was completed or determined to be far enough along to operationalize, the work of the initiative was transitioned to a relevant unit or units. The following graphic shows all initiatives past and present, listing those that evolved or were renamed on the same line:

Figure 2: Sustainable Academic Business Plan Initiatives, (Past and Present)

UW SUSTAINABLE ACADEMIC BUSINESS PLAN KEY INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS



Objectives & Strategies

There are two important sets of objectives used at the University of Washington: those of the Sustainable Academic Business Plan and a sub-set that are used for University accreditation. University accreditation goals, objectives and indicators are adapted from the Sustainable Academic Business Plan to fit the specific needs of the accreditation process.

Table 1: Sustainable Academic Business Plan Objectives & Strategies

DECREASE COSTS: Use resources efficiently and strategically to support our core mission
1. Optimize curricular management
2. Redouble efforts to achieve operational & organizational efficiencies
INCREASE REVENUE: Balance revenue streams, support research, and encourage public and private investment
1. Increase revenue for student programs
2. Increase philanthropy
3. Increase assets & services
4. Increase grant revenues
5. Encourage public reinvestment in students and core higher education
INVEST IN PEOPLE: Attract and support the best students, faculty and staff; improve the learning experience; tackle big research; and strengthen diversity
1. Enhance the student learning experience
2. Support effective instructors (teaching & learning, faculty & students)
3. Support effective scholars (faculty & students)
4. Increasing STEM and other high-demand majors fields
5. Recruit, retain, compensate, and support faculty, students, & staff
6. Develop faculty, student, staff leaders
7. Support the goals of the Diversity Blueprint and improve campus climate
8. Invest in and reward collaborations
9. Increase global learning and scholarship
INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE: Enhance academic and administrative tools to support students, faculty and staff
1. Invest in better IT for increased efficiencies
2. Invest in better tools for teaching, learning, research, and data management and analysis
3. Optimize finance & facilities
4. Coordinate assessment processes (accreditation, PEI, 10 year reviews)
5. Promote partnerships & collaborations
6. Improve UW environmental sustainability
7. Improve UW communication and marketing infrastructure
8. Manage enterprise risk
9. Leverage tri-campus opportunities for collaboration and coordination
INCREASE ACCESS: Keep tuition affordable and UW degrees accessible.
1. Enroll more undergraduates, both residents and non-residents
2. Explore cost-effective options for delivering quality teaching to more students
3. Keep tuition affordable
4. Support access through financial aid
5. Support access through strategic enrollment management
6. Support access to transformative curricular and co-curricular learning experiences at the UW

Reaccredited in 2014, the University of Washington underwent a midcycle accreditation site visit in 2017. The assessment committee found the UW committed to excellence and deemed the institution “well-positioned to demonstrate mission fulfillment” in its 2021 accreditation review.

The University accreditation process seeks to answer whether the University of Washington is fulfilling its primary mission of the preservation, advancement, and dissemination of knowledge. University accreditation goals, therefore, center on the core themes that speak authoritatively to our mission: (1) research and scholarship; (2) teaching and learning; and (3) service and engagement.

Table 2: University Accreditation Core Themes and Objectives

Core Themes	Objectives
Research and Scholarship The University remains committed to conducting cutting-edge research that solves society’s problems. Unfortunately, the recent financial downturn has meant a significant drop in state support, which has motivated the University to consider other ways to support and stimulate research productivity. Consequently, we put forth three “stretch goals” with respect to research and scholarship.	Increase institutional support for research and creative activity;
	Establish strategic partnerships and collaborations to support discovery and solve problems; and
	Achieve operational and organizational efficiencies to better support the research enterprise and improve productivity.
Teaching and Learning The University is committed to providing exceptional teaching experiences to a diverse student body – individuals who will become responsible global citizens and tomorrow’s leaders. However, several trends have posed challenges to producing a transformative education: Increasing numbers of non-traditional and international students, with vastly different experiences, are seeking degrees at the UW; learning styles have shifted with technological advances; and the economy has created an increasingly competitive job market. Against this backdrop, we set three teaching and learning goals.	Increase institutional support for student learning;
	Enhance the quality and scope of curricular and co-curricular learning experiences; and
	Enhance the student learning experience through engagement in research.
Service and Engagement The University’s focus on service and engagement highlights the ethos behind public higher education – namely, that research and teaching should serve the needs of society. In the face of declining state and federal funds, the University strives to sustain and reaffirm the public nature of its existence, with the understanding that engagement and interaction with different publics can take many forms and be mutually beneficial to all parties involved. We therefore have three key service and engagement goals.	Increase collaborations between the university and the community in areas that enhance community development;
	Provide the highest-quality healthcare in the region; and
	Increase the alignment, quality and impact of global-engagement activities.

Assessing Our Performance

The UW is accountable to many different stakeholders—both internal and external. As a result, we publish and track a huge quantity and range of information about our activities, including indicators of quality and effectiveness.

Among these stakeholders is the Sustainable Academic Business Plan steering committee, which is the body responsible for monitoring the organization’s strategy and implementation. Membership includes broad representation of UW senior leaders, including three deans, nine vice presidents/vice provosts, and the chair and vice chair of the faculty senate.

In 2011, the steering committee conducted a “gap analysis” to pinpoint areas of the Plan that did not have an obvious campus entity (i.e., a committee, office, administrative leader, etc.) to oversee the work and progress. Since then, the steering committee has launched eleven central initiatives to fill the identified gaps. One of these initiatives, as an example, was the Transforming Administration Program (TAP), which the Provost launched in spring 2015 and was active through fall 2019. TAP encompassed all central administrative units and focused on fulfilling the need for greater collaboration, clear priorities, increased accountability, improved service, and elimination of unnecessary bureaucracy and redundancies. Once the work was well under way with successful outcomes, the Provost launched the initiative, turning over responsibility for continuous improvement to the heads of administrative units.

The committee continued to meet twice annually from 2011 to 2018 to monitor the progress of initiatives and to advise the Provost on emerging issues relevant to the plan. This group was effective but large and experienced significant turnover through the years. In 2019, the Executive Office re-envisioned this group as a smaller, more nimble team of senior leaders who meet annually to assess and update strategic planning. Initiative-specific progress and accountability is ensured through regular updates by initiative leadership to the President and Provost throughout the academic year.

Many tools exist to assist the Executive Office in its monitoring work and to help the UW stay accountable to its diverse stakeholders. These tools, and the data behind them, are compiled by a variety of offices across the University. Some of the most frequently and broadly used reports are created by Institutional Analysis in the Office of Planning & Budgeting:¹

- [UW Fast Facts](#) (a one-page document highlighting frequently-used UW data)
- [UW Public Profiles](#) (interactive dashboards that allow users to explore UW data)
- [External Reports](#) (IPEDS, Common Data Set, and other external reporting)
- [Peer Comparisons](#) (comparisons of the UW to peer institutions on common measures)
- [Internal Data Resources](#) (additional information on [tri-campus](#), [UW Bothell-specific](#), and [UW Tacoma-specific](#) data and reports)

In addition, the Office of Planning & Budgeting tracks progress on a range of goals via the UW’s [Fiscal Year Budget](#), as does the UW’s Finance & Administration office through its [Annual Financial Report](#).

¹ Specific colleges also gather data to assess teaching and learning at more local levels. For example, the College of Engineering provides data on various educational outcomes and trends.

Table 3 presents additional examples of how we assess the UW's progress, via quantitative and qualitative indicators, on the five near-term goals of the Sustainable Academic Business Plan.

Table 3: Tools Used to Compile Indicators and Assess UW Progress

Assessment Tools	DECREASE COSTS	INCREASE REVENUES	INVEST IN PEOPLE	INVEST IN INFRA-STRUCTURE	INCREASE ACCESS
UW Annual Operating Budget	X	X	X	X	X
Accreditation Self-Evaluation Report	X	X	X	X	X
Transforming Administration Program Central Administrative Unit Customer Service Survey	X		X	X	
Capital Planning Project Tracker	X			X	
Sustainability Dashboard & Map	X			X	
UW Information Technology Metrics	X		X	X	
Advancement Return on Investment Report	X	X	X		X
Advancement Benchmarking Report		X	X		X
UW Fast Facts		X	X		X
Tuition and Salary Peer Comparisons		X	X		X
Research Stats & Rankings		X	X		
CoMotion Rankings & Metrics		X	X		
Faculty Recruitment & Retention Initiative Report			X		X
Educational Assessment Reports			X		
Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity Facts			X		X
UW Profiles			X		X
Diversity Statistics			X		X
Published Price vs. Net Price					X
Cost of Attendance Trend Data					X
Graduate School Admission Statistics					X
UW In Your Community – Interactive Map					X

Alignment with State Goals

To show how the UW contributes to our state's priority goals, we've mapped our short-term SABP goals (including strategies for achieving them) to the goals of Governor Inslee's Results Washington and the goals described in the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) 2013 Roadmap. As seen in Table 4, below, the UW's short-term goals and strategies are well-aligned with those of Washington state.

The University of Washington is committed to fulfilling its public mission which includes providing world class instruction for Washington residents; opportunities for social and economic mobility; research, innovation, and ideas that address society's needs; and support for state and regional economic needs.

Table 4: State Goals and Associated Strategies, Mapped to UW Goals

Goals/Strategies Shared By the UW and the State of Washington	SABP Goals	WSAC 2013 Roadmap	Results WA
INCREASE REVENUE: Balance revenue streams, support research, and encourage public and private investment			
Encourage public reinvestment in core higher education	X	X	
DECREASE COSTS: Use resources efficiently and strategically			
Redouble efforts to achieve operational & organizational efficiencies	X		X
INVEST IN PEOPLE: Attract and support the best students, faculty and staff			
Enhance the student learning experience	X	X	
Support effective instructors (teaching & learning, faculty & students)	X	X	X
Support effective scholars (faculty & students)	X	X	
Increase STEM and other high-demand majors	X	X	X
Recruit, retain, compensate, and support faculty, students, & staff	X	X	X
Develop faculty, student, staff leaders	X	X	
Support the goals of the Diversity Blueprint and improve campus climate	X	X	
Increase global learning and scholarship	X	X	
INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE: Provide academic and administrative tools to support students, faculty and staff			
Invest in better IT for increased efficiencies	X	X	X
Invest in better tools for teaching, learning, research, and data management/analysis	X	X	X
Coordinate assessment processes (accreditation, PEI, 10 year reviews)	X	X	
Improve UW environmental sustainability	X		X
ACCESS: Keep tuition affordable and UW degrees accessible			
Enroll more undergraduates, both residents and non-residents	X	X	X
Explore cost-effective options for delivering quality teaching to more students	X	X	X
Keep tuition affordable	X	X	X
Support access through financial aid	X	X	X
Support access through strategic enrollment management	X	X	
Support access to transformative curricular & co-curricular learning experiences	X	X	

Looking Ahead to the Future

With efforts to fill the initial gaps identified by the Sustainable Academic Business Plan well under way, the University of Washington is moving into the long-term, slower work of institutional transformation. This work involves encouraging, inspiring, supporting, and celebrating opt-in participation (at the individual and unit levels) in efforts toward shared goals and toward our vision of the UW of the 21st century. Examples are available via [committees and reports from the Office of the Provost](#), which highlight:

- Population Health
- Innovators in Teaching
- Race Equity
- Husky Experience

The UW's strategic planning principles, developed as part of 2y2d, are weaving into the fabric of the UW, as groups across all three UW campuses engage in a culture of continuous improvement, align their activities with strategic priorities, and work to achieve our shared vision. This integration, and resulting culture change, is particularly notable as many of those working to achieve these goals have joined the UW since 2011 and were not involved in 2y2d. Regardless, they embody its goals, share its vision, and integrate both into their work on a daily basis.

The Sustainable Academic Business Plan remains the fundamental framework for making informed, value-based, and principled decisions, for setting strategic directions (e.g., President's focus on leading change in higher education including the Global Innovation Exchange, an innovative graduate degree program with international and industry partners), and for investing wisely in areas of future importance (e.g., recent investments in interdisciplinary efforts to improve population health, fundraising for coronavirus related research and emergency funds). UW strategic planning and the Sustainable Academic Business Plan continue to support decision-making at all levels, deliver results through ongoing initiatives, track trends and drivers of change, and celebrate success of groups across campus that are working towards our shared vision.

Keep up with the latest on [Strategic Planning](#) at the University of Washington.