

Thinking About the Next Five Years

Academic Affairs Staff Workshop
August 6, 2025

If you don't know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else.

-Yogi Berra

A vision is not just a picture of what could be; it is an appeal to our better selves, a call to become something more.

-Rosabeth Moss Kanter, American sociologist & Professor, Harvard Business School



From Where We've Come...

	2018-2021	2021-2024
UG Enrollment (incl. of dual enrollment)	-1,156	+727
Grad Enrollment	+687	+1,145
Adult Undergrads (25+)	-24	+555
African Am Students (UG&G)	-102	+282
Hispanic Students (UG&G)	-204	+151
International Students (UG&G)	+42	+85
WP Online Enrollment (UG & G)	+1,573	+2,425
1 st Year Retention to 2 nd Year	-2.5%	+7%
4-Year Graduation Rate	-7.9%	+2%



#1 producer of nurses, MBAs, and of growth in adults returning for an UG or G degree in NJ. Closing fast among graduate degrees in education.

Notes: As of Census I. Note that in recent years, we also track enrollments at Census II given more than one start in the fall for WP Online. When factoring in Census II enrollment, as of Fall 2024, WP total enrollment of all types, including dual enrollment, was 11,936, the highest total enrollment in at least 30 years.

What's Been a Key Driven of Our Gains in Recent Years?



**The Four Pillars of the 2022-2025 Issues Base Strategic Plan
(a *how* and a *what* strategy with a diversified approach
to our student base)**

Where We Are Headed: A New 5-Year Strategic Plan

Plan Development Element	Timeframe
Framework and Theme Areas Presented	State of University Address – Fall25
Engagement Sessions w/ Community Stakeholders	September-October
Goals, Action Steps & KPIs Drafted	November-December
Engagement Sessions w/ Community on Goals	January-February
Final Edits	March
Present to BOT for Approval	May-June



The Higher Education Headwinds

New Threats to Higher Ed's Academic Foundations

1



**Public Policy
& Perception**

*Third-Rail
Academic Issue:*

**Academic
Freedom &
Political Bias**

2



**Enrollment &
Demographics**

*Third-Rail
Academic Issue:*

**Flexibility &
Vocational
Alignment**

3



**Financial
Sustainability**

*Third-Rail
Academic Issue:*

**Faculty Roles &
Disciplinary
Structures**

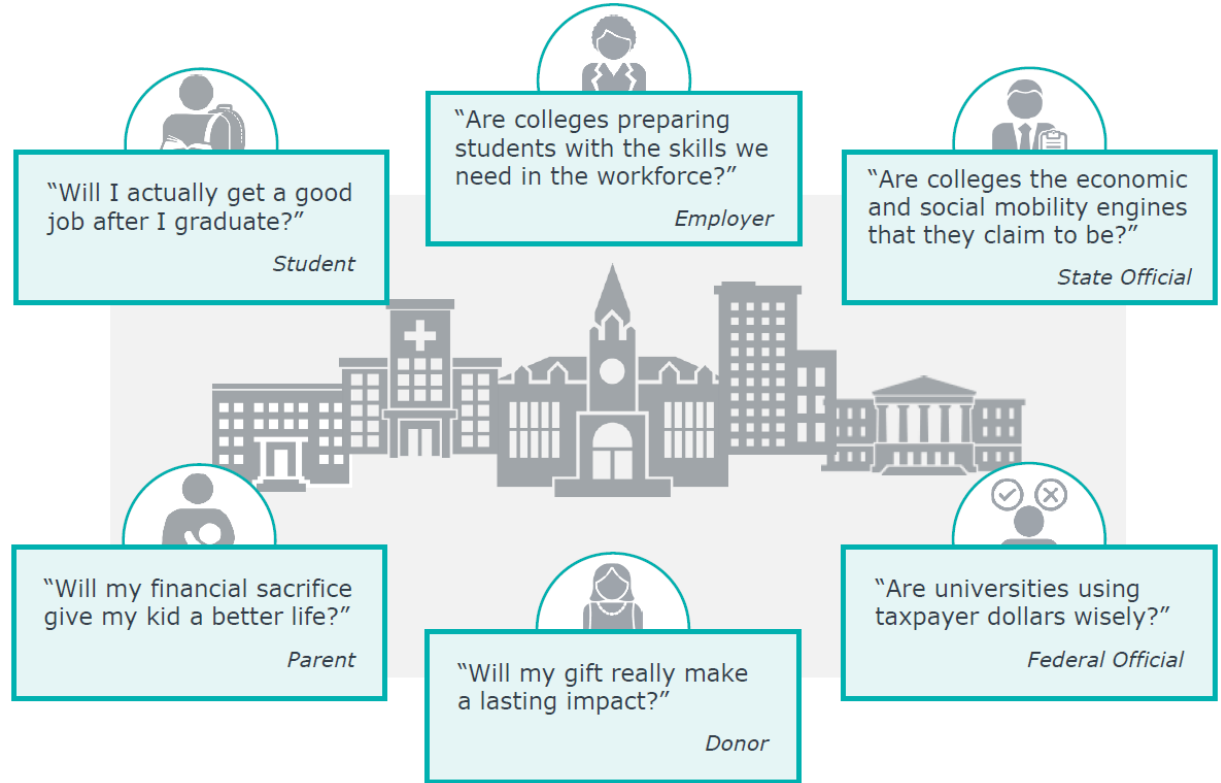
4



**Student
Readiness**

*Third-Rail
Academic Issue:*

**Academic
Rigor &
'Gatekeeping'**



Source: EAB Provost's Roundtable (2025).

The Enormity Opportunity & Challenge of AI

Benefits of AI Higher Education



Access to Vast Amounts of Information

AI-powered search engines and recommendation systems offer students diverse, relevant resources..



Personalized Learning Experience

AI in higher education tailors learning paths based on students' past performance, learning styles, and difficulties.



Enhanced Learning Efficiency

AI-driven tutoring systems adapt content to individual learning styles, boosting confidence and motivation.



Personalized Support

AI chatbots serve as virtual tutors, providing instant, tailored assistance to students.

Drawbacks of AI Higher Education



Lack of Human Interaction

AI in education raises concerns about reduced face-to-face interactions, impacting critical thinking and social skills development.



Potential for Bias

AI systems, trained on biased datasets, may perpetuate gender or racial biases in decision-making.



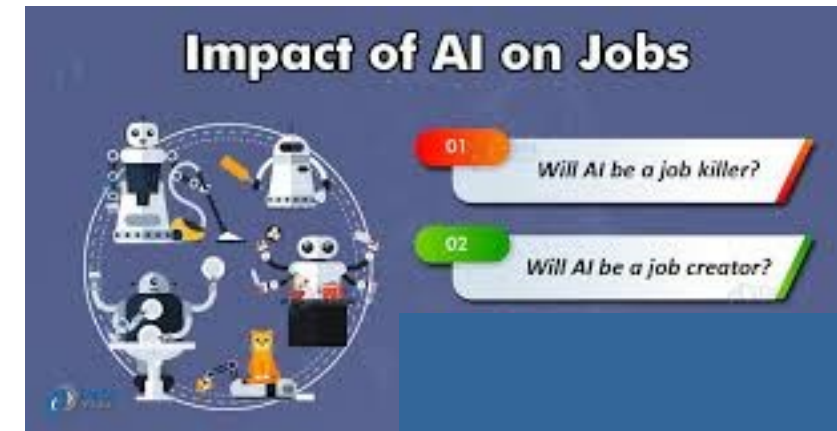
Ethical Concerns

AI's use in education raises ethical concerns related to data privacy and security.



Dependency on Technology

Integrating AI may lead to a dependency that hinders critical thinking and problem-solving skills.



Sources: <https://verge-ai.com/blog/should-students-use-ai-in-higher-education/> & <https://data-flair.training/blogs/impact-of-ai-on-jobs/>

Reflections on the Contribution of Regional State Universities – Group Exercise 1

WHY REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITIES ARE VITAL PARTS OF U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION

JULY 25, 2018 COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

Regional comprehensive universities have been called the “[people’s universities](#)” in recognition of their missions to provide access to higher education and support regional economies and civic and cultural life. There are roughly 430 of them spread across U.S. states and territories – institutions such as Portland State University (OR), the University of Central Florida, and Metropolitan State University of Denver (CO).

These are public universities, founded as teachers colleges, night schools, veterans’ educational centers, and technical colleges. Some 40% of historically black colleges and universities are also regional comprehensive universities. From the start, these universities have widened educational opportunity by lowering barriers to admission and prizing teaching and student-centered programming over research. Among all types of four-year colleges, regional comprehensive universities enroll the largest proportions of underrepresented students – including military veterans, adult learners, ethnic minorities, first-generation students, and immigrants. Furthermore, these universities are efficiently run. Although many flagships

SHARE



CONNECT WITH THE AUTHOR



Cecilia M. Orphan
University of Denver



REPORT Published March 11, 2025 • 15 minute read

Regional Public Universities: Expanding Higher Education's ROI for Students and Communities

ACADE MIX
Upshot



THIRD WAY



CECILIA M. ORPHAN, PH.D.

Associate Professor of Higher Education, University of Denver and Director of Partnerships, Alliance for Research on Regional Colleges



MAC WETHERBEE

Analyst, Data Analytics, Boston Red Sox

The Internal vs. External Focus Mistake on Strategic Planning



A Bold Path Forward: *Strategic Plan, 2022-2032*

1. Bolster student **enrollment and retention** via holistic support and seamless experiences
2. Advance **academic excellence** through innovative programs and faculty pedagogy
3. Double research expenditures to **attain R1 status** and global prominence
4. Foster an **inclusive campus** culture that supports faculty, staff, and student success
5. Improve **operational efficiency** and effectiveness across campus

Focused Inward



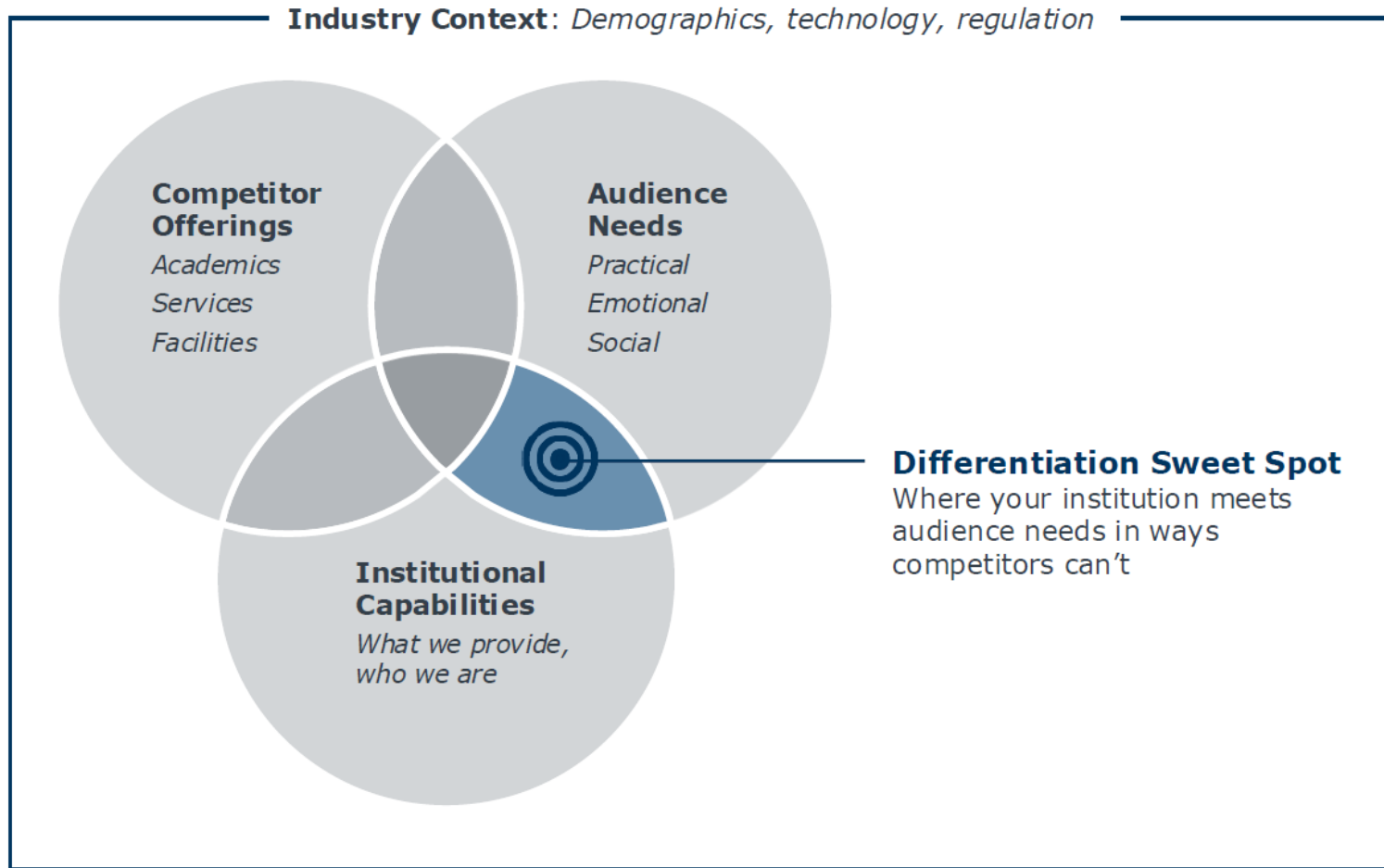
Together, We Are Mountain West: *Strategic Plan, 2022-2032*

1. Advance **social and economic mobility** for all members of our local and regional community
2. Tackle today's **labor market shortages** while building a talent pipeline for the future of work
3. Solve **real-world problems** impacting our local community, government, and businesses
4. Bolster the **economic vitality** of our city, region, and state
5. Factor **community needs** and impact into campus decisions

Focused Outward

Source: EAB Provost's Roundtable (2025).

The Differentiation Sweet Spot



***Key to
Competitive
Advantage:
Pursuing
something that is
difficult for
others to imitate.***

Source: EAB Strategic Planning (2025)

The Goal: Achieving Competitive Advantage

Culture
as Competitive
Advantage

BY PAUL MEEHAN,
ORIT GADIESH, AND
SHINTARO HORI

The Seven Main Types of Competitive Advantage

Cost advantage



Differentiation advantage



Focus advantage



Speed advantage



Innovation advantage



Geographic advantage



Customer service advantage



***Key to “Sweet Spot”
Competitive
Advantage: Pursuing
something that is
difficult for others to
imitate.***

***Could be in WHAT we
offer but also in HOW
we offer it.***

Source: [Link Here](#)

What Makes Regional State Universities Unique?

Regional public universities (RPUs) have a core mission of increasing access to higher education, particularly for students in their surrounding communities, and contributing to regional economic and social development. They achieve this by offering a range of academic programs, focusing on teaching and student success, and fostering strong ties with local businesses and communities.

Sources: [Why Regional Comprehensive Universities are a Vital Parts of U.S. Higher Education](#) and [Regional Public Universities: Expanding Higher Education's ROI for Students & Communities.](#)

Group Exercise 2: What Are our Competitive Advantages?

Group 1: What 5 things would you say are competitive advantages currently for William Paterson University?

Group 2: What are 5 things that you think we could develop into competitive advantage?

Group 3: What are 5 things you think are competitive advantages for Montclair State University? For Ramapo College? For Passaic County Community College?



Thank you for what you do to make William Paterson a special place to work and learn!

“What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

– *Jane Goodall, English primatologist and anthropologist*

