

PennWest UNIVERSITY

PENNWEST UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLANNING COUNCIL (USPC) FINAL SUMMARY REPORT JUNE 2026

The USPC monitoring process and committee structure were informed by the five values of PennWest's 2023–2026 strategic plan:

1. **Learning:** We are a community of educators who provide a learning environment where students thrive and achieve their educational, professional, and personal goals.
2. **Growth:** We are student-ready, guiding our students toward personal, financial, and academic success.
3. **Inclusion:** We advocate for all members of our campus communities and provide a supportive environment that builds a sense of belonging and togetherness.
4. **Collaboration:** We engage in innovative partnerships, programs, and opportunities to address the needs of our regional communities and the state.
5. **Culture:** We share a sense of purpose that unites everyone and provides opportunities to learn, work, and thrive.

PROCESS

The strategic plan was developed in the first year following institutional integration, with strategies and initiatives designed to guide progress over a three-year period. Through implementation, it became evident that the institution itself was still evolving. As a result, certain components of the initiatives were adjusted or refined as they were operationalized to better align with emerging needs and opportunities.

Overall, the plan successfully guided institutional work during the three years following integration. However, a key lesson learned is the importance of greater flexibility in planning. Future strategic efforts will benefit from developing initiatives or action plans on an annual basis to better reflect and respond to the institution's continued evolution.

Monitoring of the strategic plan also evolved over the three-year period. In the 2023–2024 academic year, the process emphasized learning and growth, with progress measured primarily through the percentage of initiatives completed or in progress. Student success remained a central priority, shaping efforts such as refining the academic program array and reorganizing colleges. The 2023–2024 year also coincided with a leadership transition, during which the new president placed strong emphasis on culture-building and strengthening strategic communication.

In 2024–2025, while work within Academic Affairs continued, there was a notable shift toward advancing culture and collaboration initiatives. By the final year of the plan (2025–2026),

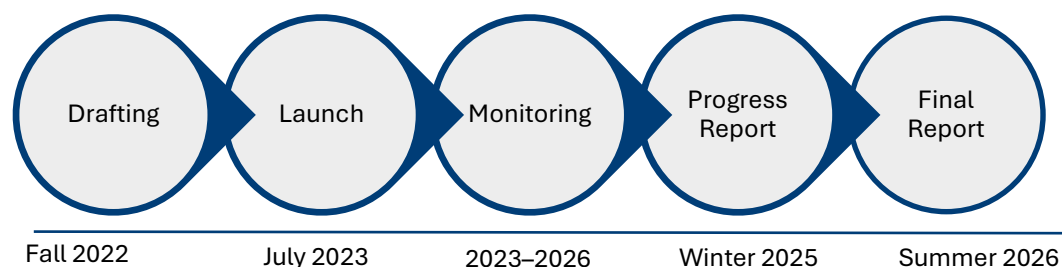
collaboration became a primary focus, with efforts centered on developing purposeful partnerships and strengthening the promotion and positioning of PennWest.

Because the University Strategic Planning Council (USPC) was established shortly after integration, existing assessment plans were leveraged in the early phase to ensure continuity of monitoring and avoid any loss of progress. In years two and three, subcommittees adopted a more independent and research-driven approach, expanding data collection and analysis to enhance the effectiveness and depth of the monitoring process.

Progress tracking was maintained through regular updates to the USPC tracker by each Value subcommittee co-chair. These updates included status reports, key initiative notes, outcomes, responsible contacts, and associated action plans, ensuring transparency and accountability across all focus areas.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles were intentionally embedded throughout the strategic plan rather than treated as a standalone component. PennWest defined DEI in a way that encompasses all stakeholders and positions equity as a foundational driver of success. Accordingly, the monitoring of DEI was integrated across all strategic values—learning, growth, collaboration, and culture, and is reflected throughout the summaries that follow.

TIMELINE



USPC MEMBERSHIP

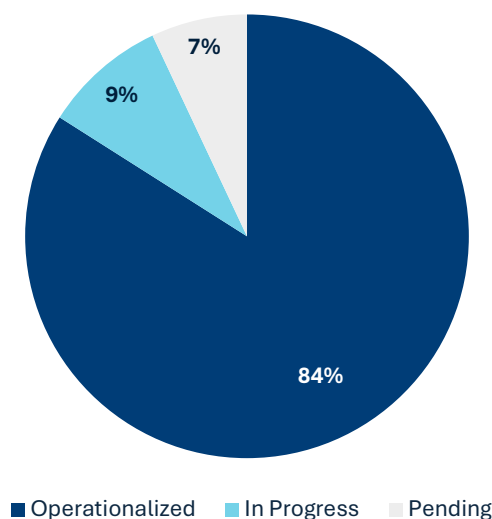
- Susanne Fenske, Vice President, Institutional Effectiveness and Student Affairs (Chair)
- James Fisher, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Fawn Petrokay, Vice President, Finance and Administration
- Teresa Smith, Interim Vice President, Finance and Administration
- Bettini Sawhill Espe, Interim Vice President, Finance and Administration
- Kelly Repinski, Vice President for Communications and Marketing
- Sheleta Camarda-Webb, Associate Vice President, CORE Strategic Initiatives
- Becky McMillen, Executive Director for Institutional Effectiveness
- Cathy Connelly, Executive Director, Donor Relations
- Traci Necciai, Director, Financial Aid
- Jesse Haight, Professor, Department of Education

- Rebecca Wehler, Assistant Professor, Department of Exercise, Health and Sports Sciences
- Kristin Schaffner, Assistant Professor, Department of Education
- Brenda DePaoli, Executive Staff Associate, Institutional Effectiveness and Student Affairs
- Kristine Hall, Executive Staff Assistant, Finance and Administration
- Emily Peters, Student Representative
- Gage Gray, Student Representative
- Jacob Sukhenko, Student Representative

OVERALL SUMMARY

PennWest's Strategic Plan 2023–2026: Path to Student Success was guided by five core values, 17 strategies, and 68 initiatives. Each Value included 4-5 strategies outlining broader goals, with specific initiatives developed under each strategy to be monitored through 2026.

Strategic Plan 2023-2026 Initiative Progress Status



Year Initiative Tracked	Counts	% of Total Initiatives
23-24 Year	28	41%
24-25 Year	15	22%
25-26 Year	25	37%
Progress Status	68	
Operationalized	57	84%
In Progress	6	9%
Pending	5	7%



Overall progress of the strategic plan:

- 84% of initiatives were implemented or operationalized
 - The initiatives have been implemented, and their primary deliverables have been put into operation. Ongoing monitoring or refinement may continue as part of regular operations.
- 9% are in progress
 - Work on the initiative is actively underway. Key activities or milestones are being executed, but the full scope has not yet been implemented or transitioned into ongoing operations.
- 7% are pending
 - The initiative has been identified, but work has not yet begun. It may be deferred due to shifting priorities, resource constraints, or reassessment of its relevance within the strategic plan.

Additional details on specific values are outlined below.

Learning Progress Status		
Operationalized	18	90%
In Progress	1	5%
Pending	1	5%

Growth Progress Status		
Operationalized	18	100%
In Progress	0	0%
Pending	0	0%

Culture Progress Status		
Operationalized	12	70%
In Progress	1	6%
Pending	4	24%

Collaboration Progress Status		
Operationalized	9	69%
In Progress	4	31%
Pending	0	0%

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT

Over the course of the 2023–2026 Strategic Plan, PennWest successfully transitioned many strategic initiatives from planning to sustained operational practice. Beyond achieving an 84% operationalization rate, the plan produced measurable improvements in student success, academic quality, institutional effectiveness, shared governance, and external partnerships.

- Operationalized 84% of strategic plan initiatives, successfully embedding the majority of initiatives into ongoing university operations.
- Expanded student success infrastructure through advising, tutoring, coaching, career readiness, and academic support initiatives that improved engagement and persistence.
- Established university-wide systems for shared governance, assessment, communication, employee development, and recognition that strengthened organizational effectiveness and institutional culture.
- Increased PennWest's regional influence through workforce partnerships, community engagement, internship opportunities, philanthropy, and enhanced promotion of the university's contributions to western Pennsylvania.

- Built a strong foundation for the next strategic plan by creating sustainable processes, strengthening cross-divisional collaboration, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

CONCLUSION

As we conclude this strategic plan, it is important to recognize that this work is never truly finished. While many initiatives have been successfully operationalized and strong foundations have been established, the momentum generated continues to move the institution forward. We extend our gratitude to the many committees and working groups that contributed to the development and monitoring of the plan, as well as to the individual areas and departments that brought these initiatives to life. Their collective efforts have been critical to our progress.

A strategic plan serves as a catalyst for sustained forward movement. This plan fulfilled that role, guiding the institution through a transformative period. As we look ahead, we are well-positioned to build on this progress, using the lessons learned and the momentum achieved to inform and strengthen the next phase of our strategic journey.

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Learning

Jesse Haight, Co-Chair
 Rebecca Wehler, Co-Chair
 Sabrina Hykes-Davis
 Natalie Armstrong
 Kim Hardner
 Kaylee Gmutza
 Josh Domitrovich

Tim Stevenson
 Christopher LaFuria
 John Bielawski
 Shawna Lind
 Ava Long
 Gavin Mitsdarfer
 Stephanie Stern

Growth

Traci Necciai, Co-Chair
 Kristine Hall, Co-Chair
 Alawya Alawami
 Kemi Akinkuowo
 Amanda Sissem
 Jacquelyn Bergo
 Kristy DeBord

Kate McPherson
 Sandra Trejos
 Pratibha Menon
 Stephanie Stern
 Nicole Hiller
 Lynne Fleisher

Inclusion

Sheleta Camarda-Webb, Co-Chair
 Brandon Packard, Co-Chair
 Melisa Bosse-Karczmar
 Rhonda Gardner
 Molly Jenkins
 Jim McGee
 Jim Pflugh

Jennifer Ramsey
 Dr. George Richards
 Jessica Schleig
 Ben Schlipf
 Sydney Speicher
 Dachao Sun
 Laura Tuennerman

Collaboration

Kristen Schaffner, Co-Chair
Rebecca Maddas, Co-Chair
Susan Rutledge
Abdur Rahman
Nripendra Singh
Christopher Lantinen
Amy Eperthener

Jennifer Williams
Peggy McGarry
Suzanne Homan
Tahaney Al-Balawi
Jessica Barwell
Garrett Hannah
Vienna Enos

Culture

Cathy Connelly, Co-Chair
Jeff Bender, Co-Chair
Spencer Norman
Jennifer Barch
Robin Bilan
Everett Painter
Kristen Louttit

Lisa Glasser
Maria Gatesman
Ariel Phillips
Mike Holtcamp
Meagan Mariotti
Jesse Walker
Farina Zeb