

# **EAST STROUDSBURG UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2027**

**“ESU: CREATING OPPORTUNITIES  
THROUGH COMMUNITY,  
ENGAGEMENT, & BELONGING”**



**COMPILED SPRING 2023 THROUGH SPRING 2024**

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The Strategic Planning Committee, and President’s Cabinet

## Introduction by University President Long

After more than a year in the making, I am pleased to share East Stroudsburg University's 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, *ESU: Creating Opportunities through Community, Engagement, & Belonging*. This plan embodies our collective dedication to our students, faculty, staff, and community, and stands as a testament to the resilience and perseverance that have characterized ESU in recent years. As we navigate a post-pandemic world and build on the legacy of former President Marcia Welsh's leadership, this strategic plan serves as a blueprint for our future, designed to create lasting opportunities for all members of our university community.

Our previous strategic plan, *Students First: Empowering Innovation through Collaboration 2017-2020*, laid the groundwork for significant advancements in academic excellence, innovation, and collaboration. However, ESU, higher education, and frankly the world have significantly changed since that time. The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged us to rethink how we deliver education and support our students, while also highlighting the importance of belonging, community, and technological advancement in a modern learning environment. With these lessons in mind, our new strategic plan focuses on four key areas that will drive ESU forward.

**First**, we will **Develop a Culture of Student Success** by continuing to place students at the center of all we do. This means providing the tools, support, and opportunities for academic achievement, personal growth, and lifelong success. Our focus will be on enhancing student engagement, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring that every student has the resources they need to thrive in a competitive and evolving world.

**Second**, we are committed to **Fostering a Community of Belonging**, where every individual feels valued, respected, and empowered. "Where Warriors Belong" is not just an aspirational slogan at ESU—it embodies the characteristic that defines our community and is the foundation of the educational experience we aspire to provide. We will actively create spaces for dialogue, understanding, and collaboration, ensuring that everyone feels a genuine sense of belonging.

**Third**, we will **Optimize Information Technology** to better support learning, teaching, and university operations. The rapid advancements in digital technology offer unprecedented opportunities to enhance how we communicate, engage, and innovate. We are committed to modernizing our infrastructure and ensuring that our technology is accessible, reliable, and forward-thinking, creating a digital environment that supports both current and future needs.

**Finally**, we will **Create an Engaged and Motivated Workforce** by cultivating a supportive and dynamic environment for our faculty and staff. Our employees are our greatest asset, and we will invest in their professional development, well-being, and growth. By fostering a culture of collaboration, recognition, and innovation, we will empower our employees to make meaningful contributions to the university's mission and vision.

As an extension of “Where Warriors Belong,” we believe that ESU is a place where courage – a key characteristic in our students – finds confidence, opportunity, and community. Through these four areas, I genuinely believe that our faculty, coaches, and staff will guide our students through their higher education journey and into a successful future.

As a regional public comprehensive university, I am confident that *ESU: Creating Opportunities through Community, Engagement, & Belonging* will not only guide us through the next three years but also position East Stroudsburg University as a leader in higher education. Together, we will build a future where opportunity, innovation, and belonging are at the heart of everything we do.

## **ESU’S AREAS OF FOCUS FOR CREATING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH COMMUNITY, ENGAGEMENT, & BELONGING**

- Area of Focus 1 – Develop a Culture of Student Success
- Area of Focus 2 – Foster a Community of Belonging
- Area of Focus 3 – Optimize Information Technology
- Area of Focus 4 – Create an Engaged and Motivated Workplace

### **AREA OF FOCUS 1: DEVELOP A CULTURE OF STUDENT SUCCESS:**

In order to create a Culture of Student Success at East Stroudsburg University, the campus community will focus on and embrace a clear understanding of how the university measures student success. “Student Success” at East Stroudsburg University encompasses persistence, academic achievement, degree completion, and advancement into a successful career path, in addition to holistic factors that influence personal validation and a meaningful life.

To create such a culture, ESU will encourage students to envision their future aspirations and the academic curricula and skills necessary to achieve their goals and to shape an inclusive and sustainable world. The university will also support and celebrate faculty and staff who embrace the scholarship of teaching and student success.

#### **Goal 1: Implement a retention plan that is data informed and based on the work of the Gardner Retention Performance Management (RPM) initiative.**

In the Spring of 2023, ESU began work on the Retention Performance Management program under the auspices of the John Gardner Institute. Over 40 faculty, staff, and administrators participated in a review of ESU’s retention and progression data in order to propose recommendations to equitably improve student success.

- ◆ Objective 1: Utilize data to implement evidence-based solutions.
  - ❖ Action 1:1: Train faculty, staff, and administrators in data analytics and actionable strategies.

- ❖ Action 1:2: Implement a retention plan based on the 5 identified themes (data, culture, onboarding, academic success, retention).
- ❖ Action 1:3: Assess current degree completion processes that are perceived as obstacles to efficient completion and identify and implement new processes to accelerate the degree completion process.
- ◆ Objective 2: Identify student support initiatives that focus on student success.
  - ❖ Action 2:1: Assess the impact of current student support programs in order to strategically allocate resources.
  - ❖ Action 2:2: Research new student success programs that are relevant to meeting the needs of current and future student populations.
- ◆ Objective 3: Redesign the General Education program.
  - ❖ Action 3:1 Assess and redesign the General Education program to fit state requirements to prepare students with the curricula and skills necessary for advancement into a successful career path, and to shape a more equitable and sustainable world.

**Goal 2: Implement the Aspen/American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) Transfer Student Success and Equity plan for enhancing relationships with transfer partners.**

During the FY 22-23 academic year, ESU participated in the Aspen/American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) Transfer Student Success and Equity initiative. That collaborative experience resulted in a plan to improve the transfer process for students in addition to strengthening the relationships with transfer partners and community colleges.

- ◆ Objective 1: Improve enrollment, retention, progression, and graduation of transfer students at ESU.
  - ❖ Action 1:1: Identify and remove obstacles in the transfer process.
  - ❖ Action 1:2: Improve the onboarding and registration process
  - ❖ Action 1:3: Improve and decrease time in transfer credit assessment to avoid credit loss and increased expense and debt for transfer students.
  - ❖ Action 1:4: Assess, compare, and align technology usage with community college partners
- ◆ Objective 2: Improve transfer students' sense of belonging.
  - ❖ Action 2:1: Host "Transfer Week Celebrations" each year to engage and acknowledge transfer students.
  - ❖ Action 2:2: Create transfer students club (to immediately provide support both social and academic as they become part of the greater ESU community).
  - ❖ Action 2:3: Acknowledge transfer students at all events (Open Houses, Orientations, Convocations, and media outreach) to create a sense of recognition and belonging.
  - ❖ Action 2:4: Develop and implement an effective and efficient transfer student orientation

- ◆ Objective 3: Strengthen relations with local transfer partners.
  - ❖ Action 3:1: Support communities of practice with educational partners (sharing best practices, invite faculty from local community colleges to present at the ESU Provost's Colloquium Series).
  - ❖ Action 3:2: Continue to nurture and expand relationships with transfer partners (for example yearly breakfast summits, shared exhibitions, and co-sponsored events).
  - ❖ Action 3:3: Improve ESU course maps so transfer students will better understand degree requirements.

**Goal 3: Improve the onboarding process for both undergraduate and graduate students.**

Create, implement, and access an onboarding process that is designed to address student needs, promote self-advocacy, and result in increased persistence and completion for all students.

- ◆ Objective 1: Design a class schedule that offers a range of course delivery formats that will meet the needs of all students (residential, distance education, adult learners, dual enrolled) and enable timely completion.
  - ❖ Action 1:1: Provide students with clear information that empowers them to declare majors and choose schedules for themselves.
- ◆ Objective 2: Identify and remove barriers in the onboarding process.
  - ❖ Action 2:1: Redesign and simplify the math placement process.
  - ❖ Action 2:2: Implement a holistic model to meet students' needs.
  - ❖ Action 2:3: Implement an actionable and flexible support model utilizing student success coaches to improve persistence and completion rates. Students will experience support at key junctures of their academic pathway - from their initial onboarding through their academic life cycle (tutoring, financial aid, counseling), thus enabling them to persist and complete in a timely manner.

**Goal 4: Improve and implement academic advising throughout the student's academic life cycle.**

Create a robust and consistent academic advising model for faculty that is designed to improve graduation rates for undergraduate and graduate students.

- ◆ Objective 1: Improve and implement a consistent academic advising process for all students.
  - ❖ Action 1:1: Assess and improve the current advising processes.
  - ❖ Action 1:2: Offer workshops on best practices in advising and mentoring to faculty (acknowledge participation in the tenure, promotion, and review process).
  - ❖ Action 1:3: Provide training on technology (WarriorFish, Degree Works) for all student facing faculty, staff, and students.
  - ❖ Action 1:4: Improve and update all curricular maps for easier advising.
  - ❖ Action 1:5: Design and utilize co-curricular maps for all colleges.

- ❖ Action 1:6: Create an advising website for faculty with resources (check lists, financial aid information, academic progression information, asynchronous training modules, advising syllabi).
- ❖ Action 1:7: Increase the utilization of the Office of Career and Workforce Development Services to support career preparation, facilitate internships and aid in job placement.

**Goal 5: Create a professional development program for faculty.**

Implementing evidence based and inclusive student success strategies will promote learning, engagement, persistence, and an increase in graduation rates.

- ❖ Action 1:1: Implement a meaningful and sustained professional development program.
- ❖ Action 1:2: Align all Distance Education courses with national course design and delivery standards.
- ❖ Action 1:3: Align and plan for all students to experience courses utilizing High Impact Practices (HIPS) (capstone courses and projects, collaborative assignments and projects, common intellectual experiences, E-portfolios, first-year seminars and experiences, global learning and diversity, internships, learning communities, service and community-based learning, undergraduate research, writing intensive courses, global engagement) throughout their academic journey.

**Goal 6: Recognize innovation in teaching, research, and student success initiatives.**

ESU will recognize and celebrate the importance of innovation in creating a culture of student success and embrace and recognize the scholarship of teaching and learning for the entire campus community.

- ❖ Action 1:1: Recognize faculty by implementing programs such as the “Thank a Professor” program. Create innovative teaching awards to celebrate faculty scholarship in teaching.
- ❖ Action 1:2: Support and recognize innovation in teaching through grants, travel, and workshop funds.
- ❖ Action 1:3: Develop a faculty presentation, recognition, and celebration of research (poster papers).

**AREA OF FOCUS 2: FOSTER A COMMUNITY OF BELONGING**

Fostering a community of belonging establishes the foundation for trust, inclusivity, and active listening. A sense of belonging positively impacts performance, retention, morale, school spirit, and engagement, and leads to strategic problem solving and critical decision making. Ultimately, a sense of belonging is the key to realizing potential and the catalyst for creating a campus culture that is defined by respect and gratitude - a place where faculty, students, staff, alumni, and campus guests are valued – A Place Where Warriors Belong!

## **Goal 1: Create an accessible and equitable environment to foster success and nurture a sense of belonging.**

In spring 2022, with the launch of the PASSHE system-wide Campus Climate Survey, President Kenneth Long charged the DEI Steering Committee with developing an Action Plan, including goals and action items, based on the survey's findings and data.

- ◆ Objective 1: Implement the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Steering Committee's Action Plan
  - ❖ Action 1:1: Develop institutional definitions for success and belonging.
  - ❖ Action 1:2: Implement programs that support success and belonging. Use PASSHE Campus Climate Survey data.
  
- ◆ Objective 2: Establish a comprehensive, university-wide communication plan to ensure the efficient and effective dissemination of information.
  - ❖ Action 2:1: Conduct an analysis of ESU's communication flow.
  - ❖ Action 2:2: Evaluate the process for reporting incidents that impact the campus community.
  - ❖ Action 2:3: Develop a multi-tier structure to differentiate between general information, safety updates, and threats to the campus.
  
- ◆ Objective 3: Develop a civic engagement and service-learning strategy.
  - ❖ Action 3:1: Seek grants and professional development to support civic engagement and service learning.
  - ❖ Action 3:2: Conduct an analysis of curricular high-impact practices to improve the campus culture, the learning environment, and to inform the task force.
  - ❖ Action 3:3: Establish a task force that serves as ambassadors and community liaisons.

## **Goal 2: Support recruitment, retention, progression, and completion efforts**

In summer 2023, ESU began work on the Retention Performance Management program, assembling a diverse group of faculty, staff, and administrators. Two committees (curricular and co-curricular) engaged in an evidence-based review of ESU's retention and progression data to propose recommendations to equitably improve student success.

- ◆ Objective 1: Develop a holistic approach to onboard new undergraduate (residential, commuter, and transfer) students beginning at the time of deposit.
  - ❖ Action 1:1: Develop strategies to engage students at distinct touchpoints, from the time of deposit through Warrior Induction.
  - ❖ Action 1:2: Re-design Warrior Induction to increase participation and a sense of belonging.
  - ❖ Action 1:3: Develop strategies to support and engage students throughout their academic lifecycle (transitioning from 1st to 2nd year, 2nd to 3rd year, 3rd to 4th year, etc.).

- ❖ Action 1:4: Develop and provide Financial Literacy and Awareness to all undergraduate students.
- ◆ Objective 2: Develop a holistic approach to onboard and support new graduate students.
  - ❖ Action 2:1: Develop strategies to engage and support graduate students from enrollment confirmation through graduation.
  - ❖ Action 2:2: Develop strategies to support graduate students' academic success, including mentorship opportunities.
  - ❖ Action 2:3: Develop and provide career awareness to graduate students to assist with navigating their career path effectively.

**Goal 3: Prepare the institution to meet the needs and demands of an increasingly inclusive student body.**

ESU's student population and surrounding community continue to become increasingly diverse. With growing student and community diversity, the demand and need to broaden an inclusive campus environment with a strong sense of belonging based on respect, acceptance, and equity is a top priority. Everyone at ESU should be afforded opportunities to succeed academically, professionally, and personally. Because the success of all students is paramount, ESU will remain attentive to student groups such as first-generation students, Veteran students, Hispanic/Latino students, LGBTQ+ students, and Black and African American students.

- ◆ Objective 1: Build Upon the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) and FirstGen Forward designation of ESU as a FirstGen Forward Institution (FirstGen Forward convenes institutions with demonstrated commitment to advancing first-generation student success).
  - ❖ Action 1:1: Develop strategies and implement programs and services to foster First-generation student success.
- ◆ Objective 2: Submit annual renewal applications for statuses for Veteran students including Military Friendly from VIQTOY- Victory Media (GI Jobs), Best for Vets from Military Times, and Guard Friendly from Pennsylvania National Guard Association.
  - ❖ Action 2:1: Develop strategies and implement programs and services to foster Veteran student success.
- ◆ Objective 3: Create the infrastructure to support Hispanic/Latino students and establish a comprehensive framework that addresses their unique needs, fosters inclusivity, and promotes academic and personal success.
  - ❖ Action 3:1: Explore the requirements that would qualify ESU for designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution and seek funding support.
  - ❖ Action 3:2: Develop strategies and implement programs and services to foster Latino/Hispanic student success.
- ◆ Objective 4: Obtain LGBTQ+ friendly campus status on the Campus Pride Index. Establish a comprehensive framework that addresses their unique needs, fosters inclusivity, and promotes academic and personal success.



- ❖ Action 4:1: Develop strategies and implement programs and services to foster LGBTQ+ student success.
- ◆ Objective 5: Build upon the ongoing work of the Men of Color Alliance (MOCA) and the Women of Color Initiative (WOCI) to support the transition and transformation of Black and African American students entering and persisting at ESU.
  - ❖ Action 5:1: Develop strategies and implement programs and services to foster the academic and personal success of MOCA/WOCI students.

### **AREA OF FOCUS 3: OPTIMIZE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

The Information Technology strategic area of focus provides a comprehensive roadmap that aligns the University's information technology infrastructure with the university's overarching mission, vision, and goals. This area of focus outlines a clear and coherent direction for leveraging technology to enhance educational experiences, support administrative functions, and to foster innovation across campus. By strategically addressing technology needs and opportunities, this area of focus aims to empower students, faculty, and staff while ensuring the University continues to move forward with technological advancement and educational excellence.

#### **Goal 1: Improve operational effectiveness and efficiencies through integrated administrative systems and renewed network infrastructure to meet current and future demand.**

The emphasis on e-learning, trends towards hosting cloud applications, increasing demands for the use of video technology throughout the University, emphasis on Bring-Your-Own-Device (BYOD), and the aging switches and cables currently in place, are all areas that will benefit from a business process review, automation, and innovative technologies.

- ◆ Objective 1: Review enterprise Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) applications and deduplicated applications and services.
  - ❖ Action 1:1: Review one-third of the University's Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) annually to optimize administrative systems and automate routine processes to reduce duplication.
  - ❖ Action 1:2: By 2027, reduce hardware, software, and information technology-related maintenance.
- ◆ Objective 2: By 2027, upgrade network core capacity to accommodate growing data demands.
  - ❖ Action 2:1: Upgrade all network switches to provide at least 1 Gbps to every desktop.
- ◆ Objective 3: Identify annually locations that require increased wireless access and infrastructure upgrades.

- ❖ Action 3:1: Replace 150 access points annually through 2027 to strengthen the University's wireless saturation.

**Goal 2: Provide technologies that position IT-related services at the forefront of the student experience that enhance the quality of student life.**

Recognizing that technology plays a significant role in students' experiences, new technologies and IT-related services should be embraced to further support the overall quality of student life.

- ◆ Objective 1: Work with existing information technology partners to offer new products and services and seek to form new partnerships that add value to the overall student experience.
  - ❖ Action 1:1: Integrate LMS (i.e., D2L) with other educational tools and systems to streamline content delivery.
  - ❖ Action 1:2: Action 2: By 2027, reduce service request response times and resolution rates based on user feedback from 24 to 12 hrs. based on severity.
  - ❖ Action 1:3: Establish remote technical support capabilities to assist off-campus users by Fall 2027.
- ◆ Objective 2: Deploy software solutions to track, secure, and enforce policies on university-owned devices used by employees that access institutional sensitive information.
  - ❖ Action 2:1: Continue to enforce security measures and access annually.
  - ❖ Action 2:2: Continue security awareness training for University staff, faculty, and students by 2027 to promote a security-conscious culture.
  - ❖ Action 2:3: Conduct regular audits of data access.

**Goal 3: Teaching and Learning.**

Continue to develop and improve technological resources that, when used by faculty effectively and innovatively, directly impact faculty and student scholarly achievement.

- ◆ Objective 1: Create a user-friendly experience across platforms and tools.
  - ❖ Action 1:1: Implement applications and programs developed for optimal performance by 2027.
- ◆ Objective 2: Equip instructional spaces with technology to support an effective learning environment.
  - ❖ Action 2:1: Identify annually standard classrooms that most need upgrades.
  - ❖ Action 2:2: Create a roadmap identifying priorities and upgrade sequences for all remaining classrooms to ensure all classrooms have smart technology by 2027.
- ◆ Objective 3: Equip classroom teaching and learning environments.
  - ❖ Action 3:1: Plan, design, and contract interior and exterior space to support the University mission.

## **AREA OF FOCUS 4: CREATE AN ENGAGED AND MOTIVATED WORKPLACE**

This goal focuses on supporting ESU's workforce through professional development, resource creation, engagement with the University, and fostering a sense of community. Supporting ESU's workforce is essential to enhance job satisfaction, retain talent, improve performance, promote student success, and create a positive organizational culture. ESU's workforce will be prepared to keep up with industry trends, adapt to new professional and environmental changes, and to remain motivated – all of which will lead to better student success and employee retention and satisfaction. Areas of improvement identified include a need for more professional development opportunities ranging from student support and emergency preparedness to wellness and creating a work/life balance. In addition, easy-to-use guides on institutional processes, services, and resources are imperative.

**Goal 1: Implement initiatives to foster an organizational culture of excellence and well-being, where employees feel valued, supported, and empowered to thrive, resulting in enhanced performance, retention of talent, promotion of student success, and prioritization of health and safety.**

- ◆ Objective 1: Systematically gather employee feedback to assess perceptions, identify areas for improvement, and establish initiatives to enhance job satisfaction, talent retention, performance, student success, health and safety, and organizational culture.
  - ❖ Action 1:1: Create a survey for employees that aims to understand their perceptions and needs regarding work/life balance, mental health or health and wellbeing (stress load), professional development opportunities, available resources, experience at work and satisfaction with job/department/supervisor, and emergency preparedness and safety.
- ◆ Objective 2: Enhance the employee recognition program to create a positive and motivating work environment where recognition is meaningful and where employees feel appreciated and valued.
  - ❖ Action 2:1: Establish a working group for the employee recognition ceremony to work with Human Resources (HR) to enhance the program.
- ◆ Objective 3: Develop and implement an inclusive plan that aligns personal and professional goals with targeted professional development initiatives, with the aim of advancing career opportunities and preparing for future leadership roles that align with the University's vision, mission, goals, and values.
  - ❖ Action 3:1: Conduct a self-assessment of employees to identify strengths, weaknesses, values, and career aspirations that align with both personal values and professional ambitions. Set and prioritize goals based on assessment outcomes.

**Goal 2: Ensure an inclusive and comprehensive onboarding and campus orientation program that nurtures a sense of belonging among new hires, facilitates integration into the organizational culture, and enhances employee retention by providing support, resources, and opportunities for growth and development.**

- ◆ Objective 1: Continually assess the onboarding software programs and make recommendations for adjustments for improvements.
  - ❖ Action 1:1: Review and assess various onboarding software and programs.
- ◆ Objective 2: Assess and review the creation of an inclusive onboard/orientation team to assist new employees to enhance their experience for a positive and smooth transition.
  - ❖ Action 2:1: Assess and create a new onboarding/orientation team to assist new employees.

**Goal 3: Develop two comprehensive manuals/guidebooks tailored for employees and Department Chairs. These manuals/guidebooks will provide detailed information regarding responsibilities, processes, deadlines, and available resources, with the aim of enhancing clarity, efficiency, and effectiveness.**

- ◆ Objective 1: Develop HR manuals for employees. Develop HR manuals for department chairs.
  - ❖ Action 1:1: Develop handbook/guide, complete surveys for impact, and adjust based on feedback.

**Goal 4: Ensure that concerning behavior is promptly reported, addressed, and investigated to prevent escalation, promote safety, and create a safe and inclusive environment.**

- ◆ Objective 1: Create training opportunities and provide resources for appropriately handling behavioral concerns on campus to all faculty and staff.
  - ❖ Action 1:1: Work with outside resources and services to offer training and educational workshops addressing common behavioral issues and proper reporting procedures.

**Goal 5: Create efficiencies in the hiring process to reduce the time to hire for non-faculty and coaching positions while maintaining quality and compliance standards. This will enhance recruitment efficiency while securing positions in a timely manner.**

- ◆ Objective 1: Identify specific procedures and standards to expedite the hiring process to employ highly qualified individuals.
  - ❖ Action 1:1: Assess the current process and identify specific procedures and hiring standards that can be eliminated or shortened in the current hiring process.