

2022-2025

# Strategic Plan



*Learning Without Limits*







## Emergence 2025: An Uncompromising Focus on Success

The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan affirms the College's long-standing commitment to quality, access, affordability and upward mobility. The plan firmly places students at the center of all college efforts, establishing and promoting the resources for each student to achieve their goals. This focus extends beyond the classroom, encompassing leadership relationships within the community, while ensuring student success internally and externally as graduates, growing the local economy and workforce capacity, and ensuring the overall vitality and viability of the College during COVID and after toward renewal after the pandemic.

The overall success of this five-year strategic plan will be measured by achieving these success goals by 2025:

**Goal 1:** Survive and Re-emerge a Stronger Institution;

**Goal 2:** Increase & Enhance Academic Programs and Student Success

**Goal 3:** Increase Total Funding Post-COVID through Grants & Other Revenue; and

**Goal 4:** Recover Enrollment through Improved Recruitment & Retention

The work toward these goals is organized around several key themes of focus, which provide a framework for action. Student success underlies each theme and informs the strategic directions in each. The five key planning themes are:

- The Student Learning Experience – Dr. Marianne Van Deursen
- Community Relations & Workforce Development – Eve Azar
- Student Access & Success – Jeremy Beeler
- Facilities – Dennis Florentine
- Fiscal Stability and Sustainability – Barbara Pratt

## Vision

**Provide short-term and life-long learning opportunities to enhance individuals' success, strengthen commitment to the community, and reflect innovation and change.**



## The Process

To fulfill the expedited COVID needs to develop a collegial strategic plan, the planners followed the following three part process in 2022 to ensure pre-COVID planning was still adequate in light of societal and community disruptions.

### Part 1: Review Mission & Vision Statements

At first meeting, the teams reviewed the existing vision, mission and goal statements of Warren, answering the following discussion guiding questions:

- Does your group reaffirm them, or do you have suggested changes?
- Does the Vision and Mission meet the requirements of the Post-COVID reality?
- Is the mission still adequate? Why or Why Not?

The planners then were instructed to send any suggested changes to the president's office at the close of the meeting.

### Part 2: Review Data

Planners were instructed to use existing data sources like Middle States Report, Reports from IPEDS, CCOG Report, etc. Each team member was given access to electronic copies on the website by the second meeting. Any unique data requests were sent to the president, explaining the data desired, its use case, and rationale for college resources to develop the data. One hundred percent of all data requests made by planners were fulfilled either by the research office or another; all requests were approved. This data was used to inform all planning activities.

### Part 3: Strategic Plan

The planners then worked to develop 3-5 Plan Goals/Objectives for each of these six priorities based on conducting situational analyses. The goals logically flowed from Part #1 & Part #2 above. The goals were specific enough to be measurable completed, but broad enough to be strategic in nature. (Instructions example for goals: Raise enrollment -- is to broad; Raise enrollment by expanding marketing to HS seniors by implementing a direct mail campaign by September 2014 -- is to specific; **Raise Enrollment by X% each year for the next five years as a managed growth strategy** -- is perfect). Again, goals were broken into the following thematic priorities.

1. The Student Learning Experience
2. Community Relations & Workforce Development
3. Student Access & Success
4. Facilities
5. Fiscal Stability and Sustainability

## The Strategic Plan Situational Analysis Development Methodology

As part of the planning meetings, volunteer planners were directed to answer the following questions using their mission discussions and data analyses to fulfill Part #3 of the process using these situational analyses processes.

1. Please list Strengths related to your charge:
2. Please list Weaknesses related to your charge:
3. Please list things external to the college that can support your charge:
4. Please list things external to the college that will work against your charge:
5. Please list the three most important things you believe the college should accomplish between now and December 31, 2025:
6. Will the strengths and opportunities support the college accomplishing these? How do you know this?
7. Will the weaknesses and external threats prevent the college from accomplishing these? How do you know this?

## Mission

**Serve a community of learners through accessible, inclusive, and quality learning opportunities designed to meet educational goals and aspirations of students from all backgrounds**

## Strategic Plan 2020 to 2022: COVID Contingency

In March 2020, the Board of Warren County Community College met in an emergency session to suspend all operations to assess the COVID-19 pandemic.

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy forced the closure of all higher education institutions in NJ.

The Board adopted **two strategic goals** for COVID-19 at that meeting:

1. The College will take proactive action to ensure the survival and health of all employees and students, as well as to serve the community in its time of need; and
2. The College will take proactive action to ensure the long-term survival and viability of the institution in light of COVID-19 realities.

### Outcomes

At the conclusion of the COVID-19 Pandemic (for Warren this was deemed February 2022).

- All employees survived and were kept in good health
  - o College worked to vaccinate employees by April 2021 (99% success)
  - o Employees work at home until vaccinated, ensuring their safety;
  - o 100% employee survival with Zero (0) COVID Cases Spread on Campus between March 2020 and May 2022
  - o Employees provided extra compensation to ensure viability and to temporarily transition to a remote environment
- Warren County Community College Emerges Stronger from COVID by May 2022
  - o Strong Financial Position Due to Strategic HEERF Investments
  - o Enrollment Begins to Rebound
  - o Record Grant Dollars Achieved by the College
  - o New Academic Programs Initiated
  - o Community Events Held on Campus when Cancelled All Other Places on East Coast (Zero COVID Spread at Events)
  - o Value of Warren Grows During COVID within the Community

**By Fall 2022, normal planning goals reemerge as focus of the college.**

## Significant Challenges facing Warren County Community College

It would be impossible to move forward with a plan without recognizing some post-Covid realities that the College must face. As we move forward in addressing each of our Strategic Directions, we must be cognizant of the following:

1. The post-Covid workforce is different, as employees in many enterprises have become more vocal about seeking to amass a series of jobs that may provide them with their ideal work-life balance.
2. We are now beginning to serve a “baby bust” generation. The enrollment decline throughout the northeast is already having devastating impact in the states north of us. Colleges are closing at a record pace. The only potential positive for us is some new migration of families interested in moving to a less crowded geographical area of our state.
3. The migration, although still quite slow has changed the county, particularly in the last five years as our region and our college have become more demographically diverse. Our programs and services must be respectful of new ideas and new cultures that our students bring. Warren must be a beacon of opportunity for all and a place where we can learn from each other and embrace those who are coming from eastern parts of our state.
4. In addition to a more diverse population, we must become more aware of the different skills that students bring to our campus environment and try to model. Further, to be successful, we must model our learning processes away from “we’ve always done X this way” to “lets see how AI or some other new trend can be embraced into our curriculum.” Follow the lead of other colleges, who are questioning the appropriate level of “traditional liberal arts” is necessary for today’s graduates.
5. We must recognize that the life of an 18-year-old today is far different than the ones that students faced 20, 30 or even 40 years ago. Our students today are the first fully digital generation. They do not have the familiar touchstones that prior generations had---they have created their own. COVID affected education but also their lives and perhaps their attitudes permanently. It is not up to students to adapt to our ways; it is for us to learn how the students process ideas, values, and goals in their lives.
6. We need to understand that outside pressures from State Legislators, Accreditors, Congress and even Presidents may have a bigger impact on higher education. Our industry is under the looking glass and many want a different direction, including very invasive intervention into curricular issues. We are not immune to outside pressure. We may find our institutions increasingly have to react to the politicization of higher education. Our public no longer holds us above the fray and stories of middle-income families struggling 20 years to pay their student loans or reports of bachelor’s degree earnings in certain fields that are less than those of high school graduates.

**We must continually ask “What is our Value”?**





## Strategic Directions for Warren

- Strategic Direction 1** Revitalize the student learning experience through new ideas and technologies to embrace new learning realities;
- Strategic Direction 2** Enhance community relations & provide next generation workforce development initiatives to both employers and students;
- Strategic Direction 3** Focus on access, equity and inclusivity while also improving student learning outcomes simultaneously;
- Strategic Direction 4** Ensure capital funds are invested wisely to ensure key program and community facility needs and facility longevity; and
- Strategic Direction 5** Provide stable and sustainable resources to enable the institution to invest in new and renewed technologies and in improved instructional quality.

### Strategic Direction 1 Revitalize the student learning experience through new ideas and technologies to embrace new learning realities

As the keystone of our comprehensive strategy to improve student success and completion, the College will continue a full-scale implementation of the 'True Paths' model. Motivated by data demonstrating achievement gaps in student subgroups, the College is addressing the disparities in student success with promising practices tailored to support students' needs, including those who begin college with foundational education needs; those in need of clarification and support in identifying an appropriate career path, those with historical disparities in success, and those planning traditional transfer to a four-year institution.

In this regard, Warren has the potential to grow on from its welcoming personalized culture, to provide an affordable open access education. Staff identified areas of improvement to include better marketing, more social media presence, an improved learning management system, and a more robust schedule of classes to grow enrollment.

#### Strategic Directions

- Fully implement the 'True Pathways' model to clarify effective paths from entry to credential achievement to include: increased employment and transfer opportunities.
- Enhance Student engagement, student access, and institutional visibility.
- Seek external funds to enhance student services that promote student success, and additional funds to procure a more advanced student learning management system.
- Increase academic and student development opportunities by integrating student life, community service, co-curricular activities, internships, experiential learning opportunities, civic engagement and service learning into programs of study.
- Review liberal arts offerings to ensure that they are compatible with the needs of current students and incorporate not only the goals of DEI, but fast emerging technologies, such as AI. Consider all new state proposals for reduced general education courses in favor of more competency-based education.
- Re-train student services staff, so all advisors are competent in career advising and student success initiatives.

## **Strategic Direction 2**

### **Enhance community relations & provide next generation workforce development initiatives to both employers and students**

The College will be at the forefront of addressing both the new growth opportunities for the region and the gaps in educational and skill attainment for all regional residents. Investments in post-secondary training, certificate and degree attainment yield clear economic benefit to individuals, their families, and the economic prosperity of the region. As the regional population changes and shrinks, the College will adjust and offer programs that are relevant and necessary to the interests and needs of individuals, and responsive to new economic growth sectors.

There can be more opportunities to generate community interest and economic growth through sharing college facilities, creating more non-credit pay for service offerings, increasing current ESL offerings to better serve the changing community demographics. Some of the limitations of these efforts are increased by the regional lack of public transportation, increasing competition from other educational providers, the changing Gig economy, and the transformation of the workplace and workforce post pandemic.

#### **Strategic Directions**

- Promote the College as a leading provider of workforce and economic development solutions and corporate training in the region by delivering high quality training and instruction that enables growth, success, and the development of academic programs (both credit and non-credit) that focus on the workplace and workforce of the future.
- Develop and implement opportunities for greater growth and collaboration.
- Expand non-credit offerings and partner with other colleges and educational providers to share unique high-tech program offerings with additional service regions to expand college revenue sources.
- Renew the College website to better inform the students and community of college activities and requirements as well as developing a presence that better highlights all educational offerings and student success.
- Tailor programmatic offerings to focus on high value niche programs that enhance the prosperity and life of local residents.

## **Strategic Direction 3**

### **Focus on access, equity and inclusivity while also improving student learning outcomes simultaneously**

Warren County Community College will position itself as a vital resource that impacts all of Warren County and beyond. The College's inclusive learning community is an important asset where people from all walks of life can grow together and learn how to learn from each other. To this end, the wide range of programs, services, departments, faculty, staff and administrators must be seen and aligned as an interconnected and interdependent whole.

Post-COVID, the College had experienced some growth in external funding for high-tech academic programming related to the uncrewed systems robotic program, but more funding was needed for traditional academic programs and student success initiatives. Staff identified weaknesses in active and viable student activities, the size of the college and related economies of scale, and the lack of alumni relations.

#### **Strategic Directions**

- Author and secure a Title III grant focused on academic program and student success enhancement.
- Expand staffing with positions that can concentrate on revenue enhancement like grant or external fund development and expanded recruitment through a more dynamic social media presence.
- Revise marketing and social media campaigns to concentrate on degrees offered and student realization of success in careers related to these chosen academic programs.
- Revise the Student Ambassador program to create Warren related social media influencers of current students and alumni to enhance current recruitment and general marketing efforts.
- Increase enrollment from Post-Covid semester (Fall 2022) by 15% by the conclusion of the plan (December 2025).





#### **Strategic Direction 4**

### **Ensure capital funds are invested wisely to ensure key program and community facility needs and facility longevity**

The College is committed to providing world-class facilities that reflect excellence. These aspects are fundamental to addressing the needs of students and establishing the College as a high-quality community asset. Warren enjoys well kept, fairly new, high-tech facilities that can meet the educational needs of the regional community. External facilities provide space to expand offerings and services to the regional community.

#### **Strategic Directions**

- Complete and renew the deferred maintenance plan to ensure the long-term viability and vitality of the institution.
- Solicit private funding to expand outdoor learning and recreational spaces.
- Initiate the data development process to author a renewed 2025-2030 Facilities Master Plan based on post-COVID realities prior to the next Middle States visit.





## Strategic Direction 5

### Provide stable and sustainable resources to enable the institution to invest in new and renewed technologies and in improved instructional quality

Warren County Community College will build a sustainable financial model that provides excellent resources for students, fair compensation for employees that are relative to the local economy, and world-class facilities. A focus on student success will contribute to the College's financial stability, enabling the College to continue providing high quality programs and services.

Currently, Warren enjoys a stable financial position that allows for revenue to meet current regional resident and student needs. The college has no long-term debt, a strong deferred maintenance plan, and a fiscal fund balance modeled on the fiscally conservative values of the community. Still, recent statewide mergers and the increasing number of both public and private higher education institutions failing around the state suggest that the College's current values of fiscal austerity should be continued moving forward, allowing advancement to be achieved through the realization of competitive grants. It is vital to note that the population of Warren County decreased in the last census and the high school report cards demonstrate a significant decrease in graduating seniors moving forward. Finally, as the other New Jersey community colleges continue to fail financially, ensuring the long-term success of Warren will require strict adherence to the following strategic directions.

#### Strategic Directions

- Build a sustainable financial model that utilizes a conservative budgeting process where resources are directed to the strategic priorities identified in this plan and ensures strategic saving to ensure long-term fiscal vitality of the College.
- Increase Foundation resources by developing a robust Alumni giving program.
- Develop a long-term Foundation giving program that establishes a renewable \$2-million restricted fund for facility renewal.
- Reallocate resources to serve student needs, investing in high performing programs and divesting resources from programs with low enrollment and/or limited student success
- Develop a long-term staffing plan to reflect current enrollment realities and five-year enrollment projections.

## Performance Indicators

Performance indicators help us measure success in college-wide goal completion. For Emergence 2025: An Uncompromising Focus on Success, we will track our impact with the following indicators and a specialized report focused on these indicators to be completed in Fall 2025 for development of subsequent strategic plan and Middle States Self-Study process.

1. Access (Enrollment Growth & Growth in Student Diversity)
2. Satisfaction (Survey Data)
3. Persistence (Fall to Fall Student Retention)
4. Campus Climate Perception (Survey Data)
5. College Success (Graduation Rates (150% and 200% Rates )
6. Success after Warren (Graduate Follow-up Tracking)
7. Campus Renewal and Replacement Plan
8. College Outcomes Assessment Plan (Assessment of Instructional and Non-Instructional Areas)
9. Program Assessment Annual Reports
10. Annual Faculty Outcomes Assessment Reports
11. Employee, President and Board Assessments

These data reports will be used as the primary documents to inform both the subsequent Strategic Plan and the Middle States Self-Study Report.

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**Warren**  
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