

# Strategic Plan

November 9, 2017

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Salem State University strategic plan concludes a transparent and inclusive campus-wide planning process led by the institution's Collaboration Committee. Through this strategic plan, we affirm the university's mission and vision, and present expanded core values. The university takes pride in our gains towards the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) system goals of college participation, college completion, and closing achievement gaps. Of equal importance in accomplishing these goals has been a commitment to authentic teamwork, an openness to sincere dialogue, and the discernment and engagement required to undertake systemic change.

The strategic plan presented in this document builds on these important gains, learns from both successes and failures, is tempered by internal and external realities, and confidently presents bold yet feasible strategic priorities that align with our institution's strengths and the North Shore's and the Commonwealth's educational, economic and workforce needs.

### **Salem State's four strategic goals are:**

**Financial Vitality:** Strengthen Salem State's financial foundation, align resources with priorities, and foster innovation to drive new revenue streams. Identify and implement additional opportunities to contain, reduce, or avoid future growth in costs.

We must continue to work towards establishing a stronger financial base, by strategically growing enrollment, diversifying program delivery, and generating new sources of revenue. Current Business Intelligence efforts will provide the roadmap.

**Collaboration, Inclusion and Stewardship:** Foster a university-wide culture of inclusion, accountability, collaboration, and stewardship.

The pace of change in higher education requires a coordinated, committed and collaborative process of relationship- and trust-building among faculty, staff, students and external partners. The Campus Climate Study<sup>1</sup> results will help guide us.

**Academic Excellence:** Develop and support high-quality academic programs and innovative educational experiences that equip Salem State graduates to thrive in an evolving workforce and to navigate confidently in an increasingly complex and global society.

Our continued successes in academic excellence require support for faculty development in aid of pedagogical and curricular innovation (including alternative modes of course delivery), as well as greater connection to regional opportunities for experiential learning, continuing scholarship, and civic engagement.

**Student Success:** Create a challenging and supportive learning environment that fully engages students in their learning and promotes attainment of academic, personal, and career goals.

We aim to foster a supportive environment for student growth in the context of the North Shore's shifting demographics and evolving economic trends, with an eye toward providing more nimble responses to the needs of our students and their future employers.

**Implementing these four goals will lead to success in these areas:**

**BHE "Big Three":** Salem State University will continue to boost college participation by strategically increasing enrollment, via expanded partnerships and articulations with PK-12 districts and community colleges and strategic growth in regional high-demand academic programs. Similarly, college completion rates will continue to increase due to improved academic advising and student success programming. Moreover, the university will build on its success of closing achievement gaps by focusing resources on the programmatic areas with highest impact.

**Inclusive Excellence:** Focused attention the principles of inclusive excellence, which promotes a more just and equitable society, supports our institutional mission as operationalized both on our campus and in our region. Moreover, success in achieving the BHE Big Three goals critically depends on a campus climate in which diversity (in its many forms) is acknowledged, valued, celebrated, and integrated into the entire college-going experience. The recommendations from the Campus Climate Study will provide a roadmap to being a welcoming, accessible, student-centered, high-quality academic institution.

**Science and Healthcare on a Liberal Arts Foundation:** Salem State's focus on science and healthcare as firmly grounded in the liberal arts acknowledges the ways in which the university's current strengths and future opportunities are well aligned to the industry strengths and workforce needs of North Shore and Greater Boston regions. Our academic programs in these areas are limited by the condition and flexibility of our physical space. To foster greater student success in these academic domains, the university must continue to extend its regional business partnerships to increase the number of internships and opportunities for student and faculty research.

**Place:** Salem State is the North Shore's university. Every program, department and public space on campus is regionally engaged through teaching, research, civic engagement, service contracts and cultural events. In pursuit of promoting academic excellence (including the BHE Big Three), Salem State will focus its economic, cultural, social, and workforce engagement in collaboration with regional planning to sharpen impact and wisely leverage local resources.

**Civic Responsibility:** Salem State seeks to build upon its historic commitment to social justice and civic engagement. The university will continue to be an exemplar for civic leadership statewide, regionally, and nationally with the intention of achieving the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification.<sup>ii</sup>

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

Salem State University's strategic planning process started in the spring of 2016 with the university's Collaboration Committee accepting the

assignment of campus-wide strategic planning as its charge for AY2017. The committee enthusiastically accepted the role to facilitate an inclusive process for collecting the campus community's ideas and recommendations and distilling them into a four-year strategic plan. The committee was led by then Assistant Dean Nate Bryant and Professor Monica Leisey, with Chief of Staff Beth Bower and Executive Director of Strategic Planning and Decision Support Chunju Chen serving *ex-officio*. Linda Campanella, SOS Consulting, was engaged to assist the committee and work started in July 2016 to assure that all aspects of the Salem State community had input. The committee updated to the president, the President's Executive Council (PEC) and the President's Leadership Cabinet. In addition, Board of Trustees Chair Paul Mattera appointed Trustee Kathy Murphy (SSU '75) as liaison to the strategic planning process.

In the fall of 2016 the planning process focused on assessment, reflection, and visioning. The campus community was first invited to reflect on the successes and unaddressed opportunities of the 2013 - 2017 Strategic Plan. Next, internal and external data were examined, including a number of recently administered student surveys, the Salem State Vision Project Dashboard, our Peer and Aspirant Institution comparative data, and our Board of Trustees Scorecard.

The Collaboration Committee then led an intense and inclusive outreach process to ensure key stakeholders would have multiple opportunities to provide input to assure a shared vision and goals. During the fall of 2016, the SSU community participated in well over 2,000 touch points and engagement opportunities. This broad process was used to craft a consensus on strategic strengths and weaknesses. Through this process our mission was confirmed. It also articulated the university's core values, a new vision statement, and a slate of preliminary goals, each of which were presented to the President's Leadership Cabinet, the campus community, and the Board of Trustees in January 2017. In February, task forces were convened and offered further language and strategies for consideration by the Collaboration Committee and the PEC.

The current product reflects this comprehensive input guided by the PEC's effort to prioritize future work and to ensure a comprehensive strategic positioning for the university. The work between the Collaboration

Committee and the PEC has “pivoted.” Initially, the role of the Committee was to gather, synthesize, and analyze input from the campus community and develop a preliminary set of goals and strategies. The Committee served as a broad-based focus group during the refinement and prioritization of the plan that ensured that the input of the campus community remained the foundation of and provided direction to the final plan.

## **OUR MISSION**

Salem State's mission is to provide a high quality, student-centered education that prepares a diverse community of learners to contribute responsibly and creatively to a global society, and serve as a resource to advance the region's cultural, social, and economic development.

## **OUR VISION**

Salem State University will be a premier teaching university that engages students in an inspiring transformational educational experience.

- We put students first in all that we do and are committed to their success.
- We are a community of learners where all faculty, staff, and students have the opportunity to grow as individuals.
- We are innovators, offering a unique brand of public higher education that inspires students to reach higher and achieve more.
- We remain true to our heritage as a liberal arts university while we prepare students for today’s workforce.
- We serve the communities of the North Shore while we create an ever more globally aware and culturally diverse campus environment.

## **OUR CORE VALUES**

At Salem State University, two fundamental commitments unite and motivate us in daily pursuit of our mission:

1. **Academic excellence:** We cultivate an intellectually vibrant community led by a faculty dedicated to excellent teaching and

enriched by students eager to learn and meet high standards of excellence.

2. **Student success:** We put students first in all that we do and are committed to fostering success in their studies, careers, and life.

We hold the following core values as a public university whose foundation is the liberal arts tradition:

- **Access:** We have a long history of, and deep commitment to, providing a pathway to college participation and completion for first-generation college students and others who may consider this goal beyond reach.
- **Civic engagement:** We forge mutually enriching relationships with, and contribute to, the cultural and economic vitality of our region, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the global community.
- **Inclusion:** We promote an inclusive campus environment that respects human differences, welcomes and celebrates diversity, promotes global awareness, and inspires students, faculty, and staff to be champions of social justice and the common good.
- **Innovation:** We strive to provide a fertile and adaptive environment where entrepreneurial thinking and pioneering approaches flourish.
- **Scholarship:** We support research and creative endeavors that inform or inspire others, expand knowledge and academic disciplines, and connect us with the wider world.
- **Stewardship:** We encourage responsible use and cultivation of resources—human, physical, environmental, and financial.
- **Well-roundedness:** We promote development of a broad range of intellectual, personal, and practical skills and habits of mind by offering educational programs and applied learning opportunities grounded in the liberal arts tradition and geared toward 21st-century careers.

## CONTEXT

### ENVISIONING SALEM STATE IN FOUR<sup>iii</sup> YEARS: BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION

Salem State University **today** is a thriving institution and caring campus community distinguished by:

- academic quality and achievement;
- a student-centered approach to teaching and learning;
- deep roots in the liberal arts tradition;
- a strong, enduring commitment to diversity and social justice dating back to the university's connections with early abolitionists;
- a dedicated faculty, staff, and students who strive to do and be their best; and accomplished alumni who are making a difference in their professions, their communities, and the wider world.

We **reaffirm** Salem State's identity as a teaching institution and our belief that undergraduate education is the cornerstone of our mission.

Simultaneously, we embrace and continue to lean into the opportunities and responsibilities associated with Salem State's evolution from college to university. Graduate education and faculty scholarship, which we define broadly and inclusively, are central to the enterprise. We balance the need to be responsive to workforce needs with an unwavering commitment to an educational experience firmly grounded in the liberal arts.

Our commitment to academic freedom, equity and access, affordability, inclusivity, civic engagement, social justice, student-centeredness, and sense of community that gives Salem State a small-college feel is unwavering, and we will continue to uphold and leverage these defining distinctions as we move forward. Equally strong is our bedrock commitment to serving students from traditionally under-represented and under-served backgrounds, educating and mentoring them, and improving their social mobility. We steadfastly believe a university education can, and should, change an individual's options, opportunities, and overall life trajectory.

## THE FUTURE

Building on our strengths, **four years from now** Salem State will continue to be a thriving, welcoming, inclusive, adaptive university that graduates well-rounded, comprehensively educated, civically minded, socially conscious individuals ready to tackle whatever challenge comes their way; they will be motivated to engage in addressing societal problems that affect the common good and will be well-prepared to succeed and lead in their careers and communities. Resulting in part from enhanced academic advising and a

strategic focus on student transitions, engagement, and wellness, Salem State will make robust gains in retention and completion rates and closing the achievement gap between majority and under-represented student populations.

The university will be even more widely recognized and respected for programmatic centers of excellence in science, healthcare and the “helping professions” (human services) as well as for its leadership in the realm of diversity and inclusion. Undergraduate, continuing education, and graduate studies will be well integrated, and academic programs will respond to evolving needs of students and the workplace they will enter, including workplaces that now consider a professional doctorate to be the capstone degree for entry-level positions. Salem State will be leveraging its location in historic Salem, on the North Shore of Massachusetts, and in proximity to the state’s capital in ways that distinguish the university’s program, enhance the educational experience of students, and contribute significantly to the region by promoting wellbeing and prosperity, safeguarding local resources, and advancing economic growth. The university’s role and contributions in the realm of economic development will be more obvious and more important than ever.

Seeking to be all it can be – but not aspiring to be all things to all people – the university will have engaged in thoughtful institutional discernment about how most effectively to invest and deploy limited resources in order to maximize impact. The campus community through shared governance will make tough choices relating to (i) where to pursue intentional growth based on competitive advantage or community need, and (ii) how to leverage opportunities to go deeper in order to enhance impact rather than go wider in order to expand reach. As a result of new and expanded programs that generate enrollment-driven revenue and diversification of revenue sources (e.g., expanded summer conference operations), Salem State will be more financially stable and thus able to invest more fully in its mission, in its students, and in realizing its potential as a great public university.

Recruitment best practices, clarity of expectations, and focus on cultural sensitivity will have resulted in improved diversity, productivity, and satisfaction among faculty and staff. Employees will increasingly appreciate working in a highly effective and inclusive environment that promotes shared



responsibility and instills a leadership culture on campus at all levels. Promoting student success will be seen as everyone's "job," and an understanding and application of growth mindset not only to close achievement gaps, but also to promote employee growth, will be deeply embedded in the university's culture

## STRENGTHS ANALYSIS

From 2013 – 2017 the university's priorities focused on student success, aligning with the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education's (BHE) "Big Three": college participation, closing achievement gaps and college completion, all with particular emphasis on students from underserved populations. Historically the *most diverse* institution among the state universities, SSU is focused on the recruitment, retention and graduation of *all* of our students. Salem State attracts most of its degree-seeking undergraduates from the culturally and economically diverse cities and communities located north and west of Boston. The majority of entering first year students are first-generation (over 60 percent in 2015), with significant numbers who are Pell-eligible (40 percent among FTFT students in 2015), and students of color (35 percent of first year students in 2016). Achievement gaps for students of color, first generation and low-income students nationally underscore the critical importance of addressing barriers to enable more students to succeed, especially students from communities that have been historically underrepresented in higher education.

To boost college participation, the university partners with regional and Boston-area high schools and non-profits, as well as works closely with Bunker Hill Community College, North Shore Community College, Northern Essex Community College and Roxbury Community College on facilitating the critical transition between the two-year and four-year institutions. To increase retention and completion, strategic investment in programmatic initiatives have included creation of a First Year Experience program (including a campus-wide common reading initiative and a spectrum of First Year Seminars); establishment of the Center for Academic Excellence, a one-stop center for academic support services (advising, tutoring, supplemental instruction); transformation of the university's general education curriculum, including an overlay that addresses issues of diversity, power dynamics, and social justice; implementation of the early warning retention system

"MAPWorks ("Making Achievement Possible"); and consolidation of offices devoted to "the business of being a student" in a centralized (and nationally-recognized) Student Navigation Center.

These efforts have borne fruit: in 2007, Salem State's six-year first-time, full-time completion rate was 37 percent. In 2016, the completion rate had risen 15 percentage points to 52 percent.

The university's recent successes are all the more noteworthy in the face of a challenging demographic context. Despite declining high school graduation rates in the northeast, Salem State's enrollment remains relatively level with 1,145 freshmen in 2016 and increased overall applications and admits. Retention rates are stable at 80 percent. Six-year graduation rates increased to 52 percent, while four-year graduation rates grew to over 39 percent. Arts and Sciences scholarships were offered for select programs with the potential to grow. We have made great strides in traditional measures of student success at the undergraduate level. While our headcount of students has remained level, the diversity of our population continues to expand. In the fall of 2016, 34 percent of our entering class self-identified as students of color. We are closing the achievement gaps between our white students and students of color.

In pursuit of these institutional successes, the university has made a number of strategic investments. For example, the Center for Academic Excellence provides academic support services, including advising, tutoring, mentoring, supplemental instruction, reading and test-taking strategies. The office also collaborates with other departments to ensure that students have the appropriate academic supports to be successful. CAE support services were accessed by nearly 8,000 students last year. These services and the respective numbers of students using them include advising (over 5,000), tutoring (nearly 1,500), and mentoring (nearly 500). In addition, programs supporting low-income and underrepresented populations, such as the Summer Bridge Academy and TRIO Support Services, are also under the CAE umbrella.

In 2016 the president, on the recommendation of the President's Advisory Council on Diversity, Affirmative Action, Equity and Social Justice (PAC-D), created the office of Inclusive Excellence, and hired the university's first vice president of Inclusive Excellence. Academic Affairs, Human Resources and

Equal opportunity, and the office of Inclusive Excellence have collaborated on putting in place guidelines and strategies for the recruitment of diverse staff and faculty and a bias incident reporting protocol.

Student life's diversity and multicultural affairs office offers mentoring programs with faculty fellows supporting underrepresented students. The Brotherhood is an academic success and retention program offered to support self-identified men of color, while BEES (Bold, Educated, Empowered Sisters) is a similar program to support empowering women of color. *INSIGHT into Diversity* magazine recently awarded Salem State University with the 2017 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award, a national honor recognizing U.S. colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Salem State also has the largest number of international students among the state universities. A comprehensive campus-wide initiative to support international student success transformed the previously isolated, independent pockets of international activity on the campus into a coordinated effort. This multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary approach is infusing internationalization throughout the university's curriculum, campus climate, study abroad programs, visiting scholars, student engagement, English as a second language programs, immigrant populations, international students, and community engagement.

The university was the only Massachusetts institution awarded a \$300,000 federal grant (2015) annually for three years from the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women. With these funds a campus office was created and staffed by a professional and a graduate assistant to reduce sexual and relationship violence and stalking on campus, enhance victim services, increase prevention and education, and strengthen campus security.

To support the academic, enrollment management, and student life initiatives, administrative departments also undertook key initiatives. Salem State is committed to capital planning that engages the campus and the broader external community. The university completed a 2040 Master Vision plan<sup>iv</sup> in 2013 that provided a roadmap for capital improvements to support academic excellence and student success. In the past five years, capital

projects focused on promoting student success and improving the student experience with the construction of a new library and learning commons, two residence halls, a fitness center, a student navigation center, and a student parking garage. Our expanding School of Social Work was moved to new quarters and the nationally recognized Salem State Theater Department now has a 21<sup>st</sup> century theater complex.

Over the past three years the university has improved its financial management and operations to meet the needs of this increasingly complex comprehensive university. Organizational restructuring, improved business processes, and transactional systems have been achieved. The creation of a multi-year, data-driven financial planning and execution process are helping to align our resources with strategic imperatives to promote long-term financial stability. The budget is now prepared on an All Funds basis and an updated set of financial benchmarks is in use to assess the institution's financial situation year over year. Work in progress includes development of sophisticated business intelligence analytical tools to assess academic program net margin contribution via integration of data from the disparate student, HR, and financial systems. In FY17 a first-ever, multi-year financial projection (MYFP) was created. As strategic plan initiatives are developed, they are being quantified and layered into the baseline to provide a holistic financial understanding of the future state of the university.

The recruitment of an executive director of strategic planning and decision support in 2015 has significantly improved the university's collection and understanding of data and data management to support analysis of trends and needs. Her collaboration across divisions is focused on using data to inform decision-making in an intentional and consistent manner. Recent examples include new academic program decisions, focused work in the area of academic assessment, and further development of information technology governance and capital project governance processes.

In addition, the university successfully reviewed and received BHE approval for a number of undergraduate and graduate degree programs. The university has again identified areas of academic strength that respond to statewide and regional needs and opportunities. This was accomplished through a data-driven process that considered BHE data, enrollment trends,

market analysis, demographic data, student success information, and programmatic evaluations.

Salem State University always operates with an eye on efficiency and financial prudence, in addition to effectiveness and quality objectives inherent in our operations and activities. We are mindful of the importance of growing revenues other than tuition and fees. Partnerships with external vendors continue to help diversify and increase our revenues. Commissions and other contributions from auxiliary service provider partners generate significant funding for the university. And, a capital campaign led by institutional advancement successfully raised over \$26.5 million, comfortably exceeding the \$25 million goal. Over 12,000 alumni, friends, faculty, students and staff contributed to the 10,000 Reasons campaign. It is of note that the internal campus portion of the campaign brought in \$3.7M with 94 percent support from faculty and staff.

## WEAKNESSES ANALYSIS

Although the 2008 Higher Education bond bill had bond capacity to address the delay in upgrading Salem State's scientific laboratory infrastructure funding was only released for the study. This study confirmed the need for a Science Teaching Laboratory Addition to meet student and industry demand for science and healthcare degrees and credentials. Construction of the proposed Science Teaching Laboratory Addition will serve the ever increasing population of regional students seeking biology, chemistry, healthcare and nursing degrees. Our highest demand program is nursing, and Salem State's other health programs are important workforce growth areas that are experiencing increasing student interest. Biology and chemistry are strong and positioned for expansion. However, the university is lacking the laboratory facilities that meet current industry standards and accommodate this growth. Without increases in enrollment (count), the need to cover labor and facility-related expense growth with revenue growth places pressure on prices (rates) that is counter to our imperative to provide reasonable cost offerings to our students in fulfillment of our mission.

As one of the state universities with the highest concentrations of students who are Pell-eligible, student need routinely exceeds available resources. Consequently, the university delivers intensive outreach to students and

their families throughout the recruitment process and those on-going retention efforts increase financial literacy. These continuous campaigns were systematized in 2015 to insure that student decision-making is informed and that students have adequate financial resources to achieve their educational goals throughout their academic career. In order to leverage the institutional and individual student benefit from the application of financial aid resources, Salem State initiated an in-depth, multi-year analysis of the impact of aid disbursements in 2017. This study will yield predictive analytics to guide the institution in targeting financial resources to those students with the most need, as well as the greatest likelihood of retention and completion, based on a number of factors.

The business model in higher education is increasingly challenged; Salem State is not immune. Annual increases for the majority of employee salaries and fringe benefits are not controlled by the university. In addition, the decrease in the population of college age students in Massachusetts (and beyond) have led to lower/flat enrollment growth statewide, creating a non-sustainable financial pattern. In addition, the university's investments in its physical plant to support student success and academic excellence have resulted in higher annual debt service, lease, and depreciation expenses. The Commonwealth (DCAMM) and the university recognize that significant deferred maintenance exists.

As noted under strengths, the university has re-organized multiple departments to increase efficiencies, break down traditional silos within the organization, and provide more streamlined, effective programs and services for students. These on-going changes take time, collaboration and negotiation. Uniting multiple offices to focus on clear, common goals, however, provides the leverage needed to foster continuous improvement and constructive change for students. While these transformations have increased collaboration and efficiencies, the opportunity to yield even greater benefits for students grows with more time.

As the demographics of the Commonwealth have changed in the past generation, so too has the makeup of Salem State's student body. While we now educate the most diverse student population among the nine state universities, our faculty/staff demographics have not kept pace. Because this lack of congruence between the student body and the faculty/staff has an

impact on the teaching-learning enterprise, we are currently working intentionally and aggressively to bring these demographics into better alignment. Similarly, recent shifts in students' academic interests and workforce needs have created instances in which faculty/staff expertise is not always optimally aligned with areas of high programmatic demand.

On our campus, as in society, the individual student experience can vary greatly due to many factors. The university has initiated Inclusive Excellence training and improving bias reporting procedures to minimize the occurrence of micro and macroaggressions, as well as to respond swiftly and directly when they do happen. Mindful of the strength of our campus diversity and the power of constructive engagement, President Keenan has championed what he calls, "The Salem State Way," as a means to call the campus to engage in difficult discussions, honestly, openly, and respectfully.

While collaboration across campus has increased, the university community is in agreement that much more can be done. The understanding and implementation of a shared vision of Inclusive Excellence has only begun. In the spring of 2016 the president engaged Rankin and Associates Consulting, a nationally recognized firm that provides institutions with an examination of their current campus culture and provides a plan to lay the groundwork for future initiatives, leading to institutional transformation via maximizing equity. The firm worked with a campus climate working group to conduct a study for Salem State. Dr. Rankin presented the results of the study to the campus in early November and an implementation team will continue to work with the campus community to transform the recommendations into actions.

Collaboration on the strategic planning process was successful, but the campus must embrace the university's goal of a culture of data-driven decision-making. More work is needed in putting the rubrics, data-collection, and analytical tools in place to create a stronger culture of assessment throughout the university. Providing increased employee/faculty training and professional development opportunities will be key to success, as well as strong leadership throughout the organization.

## OPPORTUNITIES ANALYSIS

Students build self-esteem and critical social capital by learning and living in a diverse, inclusive community, enabling them to achieve their academic goals and increasing graduation rates. Employers value students with cultural competency skills and the ability to work effectively in teams. As the most diverse of all state universities, Salem State is working diligently to leverage this asset. Seniors and first-year students report that the university places an “emphasis on encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds,” at a rate 12 percent higher than among peer institutions (NSSE 2016.)

Preparing graduates to transition to their roles as productive citizens, contributing to the economy, is a critical goal for the institution, as well as for students, families, and the Commonwealth. The university recognizes the high-impact benefits of internships and experiential learning in preparing students for the work place. However, the proliferation of internship opportunities across campus with widely varying expectations, policies, and practices, has made it challenging to make such experiences consistently accessible, sustainable, and assessable. While internships create rich learning opportunities for students, the expansion of such opportunities has been challenging to manage systematically. As a result, the university must establish greater clarity in expectations for internships as we move toward establishing signature internship programs and better mechanisms to prepare and supervise students in such environments.

Through increasing the university’s ability to oversee internship programs more systematically, the resources devoted to promoting and developing internships could yield greater benefits for students and the community, as the institution becomes a more consistently reliable partner in the process. Thus, opportunities abound for greater collaboration within the university and with the external community, including alumni, businesses, and non-profits, to create and promote internships and to offer a more streamlined and seamless experience for students, faculty, and community supervisors.

Graduate enrollment is strong and growth opportunities exist, particularly as professions impose new educational requirements on practitioners (masters in social work, masters in accountancy, masters of science in athletic training, and a clinical doctorate in occupational therapy all build on existing, strong programs). Another opportunity the university is pursuing to meet



the Commonwealth's goals to increase the educational level of the workforce is degree completion programs.

Future demographic and enrollment trends offer the opportunity for Salem State to explore the benefits and possibility of Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) designation. The university is well-positioned to capitalize on this opportunity to serve the North Shore, through its focus on Inclusive Excellence. Programmatic initiatives in this area include, supporting student diversity, engaging the campus in developing cultural competencies, diversifying university faculty and staff, and eliminating barriers to success identified through the Campus Climate Study.

Increasing partnerships/couplings/articulations with PK-12 districts, community colleges, University of Massachusetts Lowell, and independent institutions in the region demonstrates the university's and public education's significance as a driving force for prosperity on the North Shore. Salem State works closely with the Salem Public Schools throughout the school year and hosts an elementary school on campus. The university also works with other cities including Lynn and Revere to provide both teacher education and programmatic support. And Salem State has a 20-year Upward Bound partnership with the city of Lawrence, including hosting summer residential programs on campus.

Moreover, the growing strength of partnerships with community colleges through collaborative programs such as the Commonwealth Compact, CommUniverCity, and the Early College PIF Grant, highlight Salem State as a destination for students regionally. In addition, administrative efforts to increase transfer pathways through MAST, Mass Transfer, and dual admissions agreements with regional community colleges (Bunker Hill Community College, North Shore Community College and Northern Essex Community College), which go beyond deferred admissions, serve to streamline opportunities for students and increase shared institutional enrollments.

Salem State University continues to strengthen its alignment and collaboration with the business, cultural, economic, and workforce strengths and needs of the North Shore region. Historically Salem State has partnered with businesses and non-profits to respond to workforce needs; to provide

academic research for regional issues relative to economic development, sustainability and historic and cultural resources. Recently, Salem State has become involved in local and regional issues such as Youth at Risk, civic responsibility, veterans' support, LGBTQ rights, and addiction recovery. Additional partnerships and leadership include Salem State's central role in the founding and development of the North Shore Alliance for Economic Development and the university's Enterprise Center which houses and supports start-up and small businesses.

The university maintains signature partnerships with a wide variety of employers. Among these signature partnerships, are relationships with businesses in the area of accounting, the life sciences, information technology, finance, and management. A specific example of Salem State leveraging its academic expertise to the benefit of regional and statewide economic development is the Cat Cove Marine Laboratory in Salem, which serves not only the North Shore, but many coastal communities throughout Massachusetts. In partnership with the Commonwealth, the laboratory produces seed clams which are distributed to cities and towns with dormant clam flats. Faculty and students participate in applied research and contribute to the sustainability of the coastal ecosystem. Cat Cove has partnered with Legal Sea Foods to establish a blue mussel long line aquaculture farm; the first offshore shellfish farm in federal waters on the Atlantic Coast and only the second in the U.S.

The university must expand the university's alternative modes of program delivery, including an increased focus on the credentialing needs of students. On-line offerings and alternative scheduling meet the needs of students who are returning to college later in life (post-traditional high school years), as well as students starting college while still in high school (early college efforts.) Salem State, similar to many sister institutions, serves not only first-time, full-time freshman students, but welcomes a significant number of transfer students from private colleges, public universities and community colleges.

Regionally, Salem State is a member of the Northeast Consortium of Colleges and Universities (NECCUM) through which students at member institutions (public and private) have the opportunity to take courses at and use the libraries of any of the NECCUM member institutions. The consortium

is a venue for consultation with our region regarding programming opportunities. In addition, SSU is a partner in the Life Sciences Consortium of the North Shore, joining three other regional higher education institutions and North Shore Innoventures (a cleantech and biotech start-up incubator) to work collaboratively on advancing the tech community via workforce development, shared research space and instrumentation and research.

The university must continue to identify, cultivate and activate resources external to the campus community. First and foremost are our alumni, who live and/or work within our region. The recent capital campaign, the efforts of the Alumni Association, academic departmental engagement with their alumni, and the connections made with various student support offices such as the office of career services and athletics has increased stewardship opportunities. Collaboration towards shared external relational objectives will be one of the keys to overall success. Our alumni are also important to meeting our inclusion goals especially in recruiting faculty and staff and connecting with our students.

## THREATS ANALYSIS

The Commonwealth has a number of important priorities vying for its limited resources. Available capital funding has proven inadequate to keep up with deferred maintenance or provide spaces of sufficient quality (suitability) and quantity to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century instructional needs. For Salem State, this is most urgently reflected in our lab sciences spaces, a critical challenge given the regional workforce needs in the sciences and health-related fields. Securing funding for the Science Teaching Laboratory Addition is a high priority. Some of the university's physical academic infrastructure is obviously insufficient, which limits enrollment, faculty research and business partnership opportunities. Salem State has responded to the need for alternate delivery modes, such as on-line and hybrid. The university will be using the enrollment management, academic programming and marketing studies to identify additional opportunities for course delivery and the required academic technology infrastructure and faculty course design support needs.

The demographic decline in the Commonwealth's high school population will continue a downward trend in the foreseeable future. This has made the

recruitment landscape increasingly challenging, though at present Salem State has been able to maintain a reasonably competitive position in an industry generally showing negative growth in New England. The strategies described above and below are key to serving future students successfully meeting the workforce needs of the Commonwealth and addressing the goals of the BHE's Big Three priorities.

## **STRATEGIC POSITIONING**

### **BHE "BIG THREE" – Boosting College Completion; Closing Achievement Gaps; and Attracting and Graduating More Students from Underserved Populations**

The proposed goals of Salem State's strategic plan include an emphasis on student success and academic excellence. In AY2007 Salem State had a first-time, full-time graduation rate of 37 percent; at the completion of AY2016 the rate rose to 52 percent. This achievement reflects the university's commitment to all students achieving their goal of earning a baccalaureate education. During this same period of time, achievement gaps closed with our African-American students achieving a 53 percent graduation rate and Latino students, a 42 percent graduation rate. Therefore, the university is confident the strategies in place to promote success are having a positive impact. The percentage of students of color in our student body has grown from 20 percent in AY2008 to 30 percent in AY2016; moreover, our entering class in fall of 2016 was 34 percent students of color, suggesting that the level of diversity will continue to rise. We are committed to continuing these trajectories of student access and success across all of our student populations including dual-enrollment, early college, transfer, and graduate students.

## **MAKING EXCELLENCE INCLUSIVE**

Inclusive Excellence is Salem State's guiding principle for access, student success, and high-quality learning. This framework, adopted from the Association of American Colleges and Universities, helps Salem State integrate diversity, equity, and educational quality efforts into our mission and institutional operations. Making excellence inclusive is thus an active process for Salem State which responds to its historic mission of welcoming

under-served diverse populations such as veterans, first-generation, ethnically and culturally diverse, LGBTQ, or individuals with disabilities. We will achieve excellence in learning, teaching, student development, institutional functioning, and engagement in local and global communities. Inclusiveness and excellence are inter-dependent, as opposed to the traditional perspective that separates the two concepts. To practice inclusiveness is excellence; both are core values of the university.

## **SCIENCE and HEALTHCARE ON A LIBERAL ARTS FOUNDATION**

Salem State has enjoyed a strong reputation for training students in science and healthcare disciplines, and has seen a decade of growth in these academic areas, despite limited facilities and a competitive marketplace. Nursing and biology are majors that are capped due to lack of adequate laboratory space. Nursing students are unable to take full advantage of simulation-based instruction because current facilities are limited in number. Clinical placements in many of the majors that requires them (nursing, occupational therapy) are increasingly difficult to secure, with looming threats by some healthcare partners to begin charging the university for each student placed. In partial response to these limitations, Salem State has added a healthcare studies program specifically designed for students interested in the healthcare and human service industry but who prefer to work in a non-licensed, non-clinical setting, further demonstrating the university's commitment to aligning its programs with one of Essex County's regional strengths and workforce needs. Critical to meeting these regional needs is the construction of the Science Teaching Laboratory Addition to Meier Hall and creation of additional simulation laboratories.

## **PLACE**

Salem and the North Shore region of Massachusetts is a special place where the cultural, natural, and historical are intertwined with an entrepreneurial small business tradition. From the winding ocean fronts and rivers to the bustling seaports and mill towns, Essex County is distinctive. Salem State University's areas of academic excellence and civic connection promote the well-being and prosperity of the region and the Commonwealth. Founded as a Normal School to educate teachers in 1854, the university continues to

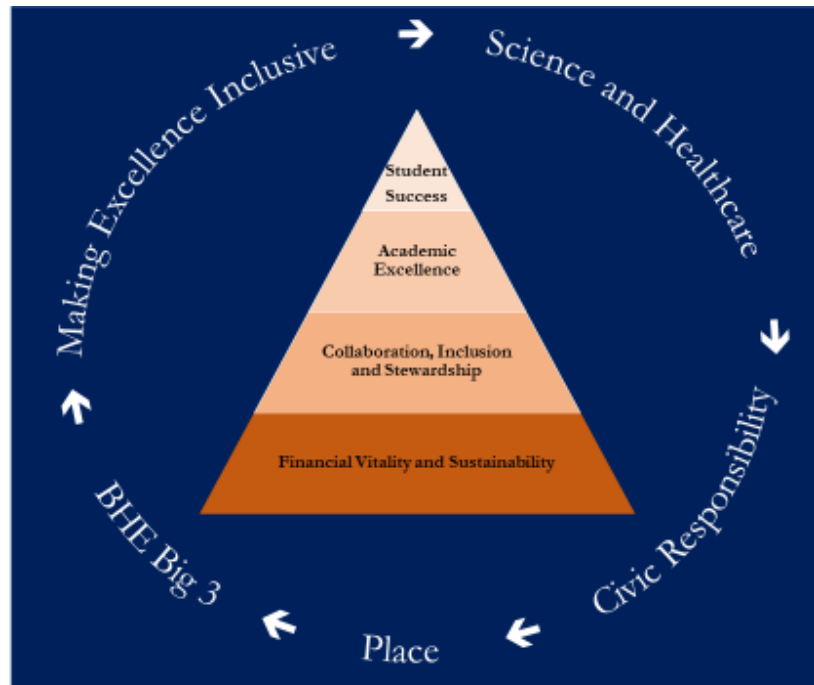
lead in addressing the county's economic, educational, cultural, environmental, and workforce needs. Fostering the health and well-being of the region through education, healthcare, economic development, and social justice responds to the county's aging demographics and increasingly diverse population. Science and healthcare innovation, entrepreneurship, and workforce leadership advances economic growth. The university's academic expertise and research in the areas of coastal environment, cultural heritage, tourism, and arts and leisure safeguard local and regional resources. And, the Enterprise Center and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) provide the community with timely and relevant support for small and large businesses.

## **CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY**

Salem State has a historic commitment to civic engagement and civic learning, which has gained significant momentum with the investment of professional leadership in the Center for Civic Engagement in 2015. The university strives to be an exemplar for civic engagement and civic learning leadership statewide, regionally, and nationally. Already having achieved the national President's Honor Roll for Civic Engagement, our center partners internally with faculty and staff and externally with regional partners to provide our students with the pedagogy and experiential learning opportunities to become engaged members of their communities, the nation, and the world.

## **VISION-SUPPORTING OVERARCHING GOALS AND KEY STRATEGIES**

The strategic positions and the university's goals as reflected visually in Figure A. Financial Vitality and Sustainability, and Collaboration, Inclusion and Stewardship are foundational to achieving Academic Excellence and Student Success. The university has used the January 2016 NEASC Fifth-Year Interim Report<sup>v</sup> as a guide and has aligned the duration of the plan to our decennial NEASC report in 2021.



**GOAL: Financial Vitality and Sustainability - Strengthen Salem State’s financial foundation, align resources with priorities, and foster innovation to drive new revenue streams. Identify and implement additional opportunities to contain, reduce, or avoid future growth in costs.**

#### Financial Vitality and Sustainability Strategies:

- Develop and implement a strategic enrollment plan based on information from three major initiatives undertaken in 2017: a marketability analysis, a financial leveraging study, and internal business intelligence work<sup>vi</sup> that leverages program strengths, capitalizes on identified growth markets, and increases net tuition revenues. Specific programs that the university will target for implementation are a B.S. in criminal justice administration, a B.S. in exercise science, a B.S. in healthcare studies, a B.S. in information technology, and the university will also pursue additional graduate degrees in nursing administration (M.S.), social work (D.S.W.) and occupational therapy (D.O.T.). In the context of the strategic enrollment plan, the university will expand alternative modes of course delivery in academic areas for which such innovations (e.g., online,

hybrid, cohort-based, low-residency) are programmatically sound and fiscally prudent.

- Increase and diversify sources of non-tuition revenue to support ongoing operations and enable investment in strategic priorities, including expanded financial aid for students. Specifically, the university will increase summer conference revenue for the campus' residence halls and meeting spaces; evaluate further public-private opportunities such as leveraging the unique facilities to generate revenue streams via the university's Cat Cove Marine Center (such as the long-line blue mussel farm partnership with Legal Sea Foods) and the Enterprise Center's professional education programming. Increase applications and awards for external public and private grants.
- Increase the Salem State University Foundation's endowment by broadening our campus-wide culture of philanthropy and deepening engagement with Salem State alumni and the wider community.
- Perform ongoing and systematic analyses of academic programs to assess the relationship between required resources and (i) student demand/enrollment trends, (ii) workforce needs, and (iii) contribution to institutional mission; reallocate resources as appropriate to optimize student access to high-demand programs and sustain academic excellence.

**GOAL: Collaboration, Inclusion, and Stewardship - Foster a university-wide culture of inclusion, accountability, collaboration, and stewardship.**

**Collaboration, Inclusion and Stewardship Strategies**

- Establish Salem State as an institution embodying Inclusive Excellence that provides a culture of inclusion and belonging that fortifies SSU's reputation as a welcoming and diverse university committed to inclusion and equity.
- Intensify the culture of assessment and promote data-driven decision making in all aspects of the university's operations.
- Celebrate and showcase the accomplishments of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the university itself; equip and engage members of the SSU community to be effective advocates and ambassadors in



the wider community; and generate a stronger sense of pride and connection to place for all members of the campus community.

- Advance a leadership culture on campus that promotes shared responsibility and accountability for upholding Salem State's core values and behavioral norms.

**GOAL: Academic Excellence - Develop and support high-quality academic programs and innovative educational experiences that equip Salem State graduates to thrive in an evolving workforce and to navigate confidently in an increasingly complex and global society.**

**Academic Excellence Strategies:**

- Building on Salem State's strength as a thought leader in the traditional arts and sciences (including the humanities, science and healthcare disciplines, the visual performing arts), health and human services (e.g., education, social work, nursing, occupational therapy, criminal justice), and business education, expand program enrollments that align with workforce needs through new program development, alternative mode of offerings including on-line, alternative scheduling options, and credentialing.
- Strategically align graduate programs with Salem State's programmatic strengths, regional trends, and evolving entry-level degree requirements in the health and human services sectors to expand the enrollments to meet the regional workforce needs. This will be achieved, in part, by raising the visibility of these offerings.
- Leverage and seek to expand the contributions Salem State makes as a catalyst for economic growth and bring the university's intellectual capital to bear on local issues to expand opportunities for students to have internships and other experiential opportunities that lead to increased post-graduation work placements.
- Provide up-to-date and environmentally friendly facilities and infrastructure, including information technology that meets evolving needs, advances teaching and learning, and attracts high-quality faculty, staff, and students to Salem State. Implement the next phase of the university's Master Vision<sup>vii</sup> including design and construction of

the Science Teaching Laboratory Addition and for the next stage of the North Campus Precinct Study.

- Expand public awareness of Salem State's academic strengths and institutional distinctions, and draw particular attention to the achievements and contributions of the university's faculty, staff, students, and graduates. Champion SSU's distinctive programs, academic pillars of excellence, and unique location as compelling differentiators in a competitive higher education landscape.
- Expand opportunities for civic learning and civic engagement through the implementation of active learning pedagogies

**GOAL: Student Success - Create a challenging and supportive learning environment that fully engages students in their learning and promotes attainment of academic, personal, and career goals.**

### Student Success Strategies

- Increase high school student participation in college through early college, dual enrollment, and pipeline programs (e.g., Upward Bound) targeted at communities with lower college attendance rates.
- Reinvent academic advising to provide comprehensive support for students including multi-year scheduling, curriculum/career maps, refined course offerings, and professional advisors to guide the first two years of study.
- Ensure student success by expanding high-impact programs (student research, study-abroad, internships, cohorts etc.) that prepare students for their future careers.
- Provide a student-centric culture of inclusion and belonging, fortifying SSU's reputation as a welcoming and diverse university.
- Ensure students acquire necessary knowledge, skills, experiences, and sensitivity to be informed and engaged citizens who value diversity and champion social justice, civic responsibility, and Inclusive Excellence to promote a spirit of service and heightened sense of mutual responsibility among members of the campus community.
- Increase public awareness of the intrinsic value to students and the economy of coupling liberal arts majors with professional preparation programs.

## **BUSINESS PLANS**

The Salem State University comprehensive strategic plan is supported by nine integrated component business plans. Each of these components impact the priorities and resourcing of the strategic plan. As cross-divisional planning groups review data and projections, the feasibility and availability of resources to support multiple priorities will be evaluated, and opportunities for consolidation and collaboration identified. This will strengthen the implementation of the strategic plan by assuring that the strategies are integrated, focused, and supportable.

### **Academic Affairs:**

Salem State University will be widely known as the state university that confers affordable, high-quality degree for all students, with a focus on educating members of historically underrepresented communities. The university will also become a “first choice” institution of higher education for residents of the North Shore, widely known for an effective approach to fostering academic success for students of diverse backgrounds at various stages of their personal and professional careers. While maintaining its long-standing commitment to a strong educational core in the liberal arts, over the next four years, Salem State will emphasize growth in those disciplines that meet the current and projected needs of the region, including those requiring preparation in the sciences and healthcare. Undergirding the academic experience of every Salem State student will be commitments to the value of diversity, inclusion, and collaboration to foster a socially just and civically engaged society.

### **Capital Planning:**

The success of the university and its strategic plan depends on providing the physical resources necessary for our students to succeed. Capital Planning (CP) supports the plan by working with all areas of the institution to maintain, improve, and construct the physical resources that will advance the goals of the university. It will be guided by the Salem State University Master Vision 2040 (2013) and the North Campus Precinct Study (2017).

### Community Outreach:

The success of the university and its strategic plan depends on communication and collaboration both internally and externally. External Affairs (EA) and Public Relations (PR) support the plan by working with all areas of the institution and its external partners to promote the strategic concepts while making connections that will advance the goals of the university. This involves strong communication and transparency both within and outside the university. A key factor to the community outreach work that will benefit all five priorities of the strategic plan is enhancing the reputation of the university. This effort will increase our opportunities with external partners while also providing a sense of pride, place, and inclusivity within the institution. This work should focus around the key areas of the strategic plan and allow for all members of the internal community to be aware of, and have a voice in, campus priorities and happenings.

### Enrollment Management/Marketing:

Salem State's strategic enrollment plan will rely on information from three major initiatives. The marketability analysis (performed by industry leader, Stamats) will determine which of our current (or possibly new) programs have room to grow from an external market perspective. This work is largely complete and has identified a handful of undergraduate and graduate programs that have significant growth opportunity. A financial aid leveraging study (performed by industry leader Ruffalo Noel Levitz) will assist with decisions on how to best use our institutional aid to drive key institutional priorities, like enrollment growth and increased net tuition revenue. And, the university's internal business intelligence work to help us identify "profit margin." These three key initiatives will help to shape our enrollment strategy for the future, and allow us to move forward in a data-informed way.

### Finance and Business:

The Finance and Business plan will continue to expand capabilities to improve the financial management of the university. This includes providing data and systems to support decision making and performing analyses to support strategic choices about investment or disinvestment in academic programs, capital assets and administrative activities. This business plan will generate additional revenue from underutilized assets.

### Human Resources/Inclusive Excellence:

The Human Resources (HR) will advance the University's strategic plan by providing superior service, support and opportunities critical to fostering a talented, diverse and engaged workforce. In partnering with Inclusive Excellence, HR views itself as an organizational leader in delivering employee excellence; recommending, supporting, and implementing personnel policies and procedures; providing employee development opportunities; and in partnering with key University constituents and stakeholders to attract and retain an exceptional, diverse workforce. In collaboration with ITS and Finance and Business, HR strives to help senior management produce data driven decisions by seeking appropriate systems and infrastructure to support the employee environment as it relates to student success.

### Information Technology:

Information Technology Services' (ITS) focus will be in three strategic areas. First, developing a campus-wide strategy and implementation of business intelligence to support data driven decision making by departments and senior leadership. Second, ITS will continue to support the creation of new programs by working with the deans and enrollment management to ensure systems and infrastructure are able to support such programs. And, third, ITS has embraced an Inclusive Excellence culture in three different areas; the classroom, the public facing website, and the academic computing environment, and will continue to expand these capabilities.

### Institutional Advancement:

Institutional Advancement (IA) seeks to foster inclusive relationship-building with our alumni, students, and friends, and involve our campus and community partners in the diverse community life of our university. IA will promote investment in the strategic priorities of Salem State University, such as the science teaching laboratories and scholarships to assist in eliminating financial barriers for students. We will connect donor passion with strategic plan priorities as well as engage alumni with our campus as resources for speakers, volunteers, mentors, and employer relation opportunities.

### Student Life:

Student life has recently reorganized to address the needs of Salem State students. The reorganization includes a cluster model, which brings together

the eight student life departments to address three major themes: wellness, engagement and student experience/transition. To deepen the effectiveness of this model, our work will be approached with an emphasis on reducing redundancies and maximizing resources (human and financial capital); focusing on reaching depth of high impact practices for our students and systematizing practices so all students have the opportunity for personal development and learning. Specifically, student life will focus on increased student development and preparedness for a life of learning and personal success; greater retention and persistence of all students, with a focus on the “murky middle” and traditionally marginalized students; and higher student satisfaction in areas of living and learning.

## METRICS

The following table presents the university-wide metrics for Salem State University’s strategic plan. The executive director of strategic planning and decision support is tasked with leading and supporting the campus with development of specific metrics for each strategy. The Collaboration Committee will provide oversight of reporting.

<b>Key Metrics</b>	<b>Baseline FY2017</b>	<b>Goal FY2021</b>
<b>Financial Vitality and Sustainability:</b>		
Total Enrollment (Fall 2016)	9,001	TBD
Endowment	\$28.5M	TBD
Operating Cash Flow Margin	2.16%	TBD
Gift Revenue to University	\$1,800,982	TBD
<b>College Completion</b>		
Six-year Graduation Rate All Students*	52%	62%^
<b>Closing Achievement Gaps</b>		
Six-year Graduation Rate Black - White*	-1.48	0.00^
Six-year Graduation Rate Hispanic - White*	-8.68	0.000^
Six- year Graduation Rate Male-Female*	-5.62	0.000^
Six-year Graduation Rate Pell-Eligible vs. Non-Pell-Eligible	-10.85	TBD
% Faculty of Color	19%	TBD
% Staff of Color	18%	TBD
Achieve Hispanic Serving Institution Status		TBD
<b>Civic Engagement</b>		
Achieve Carnegie Classification for Civic Engagement		2020
<b>Workforce Development</b>		
Open Science Teaching Lab Addition	Study Completed	TBD

\*BHE Big 3      ^Existing Commitments to BHE

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· “Campus Climate” (also called the “college environment”) is defined as “the current attitudes, behaviors, standards, and practices of employees and students of an institution.” Positive personal experiences with the college environment and positive perceptions of the college environment generally equate to successful outcomes. These successful outcomes include: positive educational experiences and healthy identity development for students, productivity and sense of value for faculty and staff, and overall well-being for all. The college environment is shaped through personal experiences, general perceptions and institutional efforts. The campus climate study is multi-stage process that allows us to measure people’s personal experiences and perceptions so that we can more thoughtfully address challenges and plan strategic initiatives to enhance the college environment. An external consultant, Rankin and Associates, was hired to work with our community to develop a survey to administer to the entire Salem State community, to analyze and present the results of that survey and to establish a community implementation team to oversee the use of the data and ensure that concrete actions follow from the results of the survey.

· [http://nerche.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=341&Itemid=618](http://nerche.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=341&Itemid=618)

· Salem State University has aligned its strategic plan with its decennial New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation report in 2021. [https://records.salemstate.edu/sites/records/files/reports/2017-04/NEASC\\_Report\\_for\\_Salem\\_State\\_University\\_01.19.2016.pdf](https://records.salemstate.edu/sites/records/files/reports/2017-04/NEASC_Report_for_Salem_State_University_01.19.2016.pdf)

· <https://www.salemstate.edu/offices-and-services/facilities/capital-planning-and-facilities-management>

· [https://records.salemstate.edu/sites/records/files/reports/201704/NEASC\\_Report\\_for\\_Salem\\_State\\_University\\_01.19.2016.pdf](https://records.salemstate.edu/sites/records/files/reports/201704/NEASC_Report_for_Salem_State_University_01.19.2016.pdf)

· Salem State’s strategic enrollment plan will rely on information from three major initiatives:

1. Marketability Analysis (performed by industry leader, Stamats) – to help us determine which of our current (or possibly new) programs have room to grow from an external market perspective. This work is largely complete and has identified a handful of undergraduate and graduate programs that have significant growth opportunity
2. Financial Aid Leveraging study (performed by industry leader, Ruffalo Noel Levitz) – to help us determine how to best use our institutional aid to drive key institutional priorities, like enrollment growth and increased net tuition revenue. This work will be complete by the end of December.
3. Internal business intelligence work – to help us determine program “profit margin”

These three key initiatives will help to shape our enrollment strategy for the future, and allow us to move forward in a data-informed way.

· See Note iii above.