By 2021, Widener University will be a leader among metropolitan universities in promoting STUDENT TRANSFORMATION AND SUCCESS through:

**Rigorous Academic Expectations and High-Impact Educational Practices that support intended learning outcomes.**

| **Objective** | **Desired Outcome** | **Assessment** | **Metric** | **Departments Supporting Objective** | **Timeline From/To** |
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| *operationalizes a strategic goal and specifically describes what the institution wants to accomplish.* | *The changed behaviors or conditions that should result when the objective is met; the benefits of meeting an objective.* | *The tool or method used to gather data and evidence to determine if the objective is met.* | *The actual measurement used to determine when the objective has been met.* | *A listing of departments that provide action steps in their unit plans to achieve the objective.* | *Over strategic plan (2016-2021),* |
| 1. Articulate characteristics of rigorous academic expectations and practices | University develops a list of 8 characteristics of rigorous academic expectations and associated practices to be used for assessment | Faculty Council Executive Committee reviews characteristics of rigorous academic expectations | Faculty Council Executive Committee approves characteristics of rigorous academic expectations | Faculty Council Executive Committee | FY 2015 |
| External consultant reviews characteristics of rigorous academic expectations | Provost | FY 2015 |
| Departments and programs select 4 items from the university list of characteristics of rigorous academic expectations and associated practices to be used for assessment | Department and program annual assessment report | All departments and programs submit report that identifies their selected characteristics | Academic Departments and programs  Deans | FY 2016 |
| Departments and programs identify discipline specific characteristics of rigorous academic expectations and associated practices – that are not part of University list – that they want to use for assessment | Department and program annual assessment report | All departments and programs report any additional characteristics that they have selected. | Academic Departments and programs  Deans | FY 2016 |

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| **Objective** | **Desired Outcome** | **Assessment** | **Metric** | **Departments Supporting Objective** | **Timeline From/To** |
| 2. Raise the level of academic rigor. | Increase the number of courses and other academic activities with characteristics of rigorous academic expectations and associated practices that enhance the students’ experience. | Departmental course material analysis  (e.g. Syllabus review) | Collate departmental analyses to meet (or exceed) desired benchmarks for university level (i.e., 7 of 8 colleges have met benchmarks) | Unit/department  Office of Teaching Learning and Assessment | Initial- 2016.  Follow up - 2021 |
| Faculty Council Executive Committee identifies questions from NSSE and other surveys that ask about characteristics of rigorous academic expectations | Meet (or exceed) desired department benchmarks determined by Faculty Council Executive Committee after relevant NSSE  and FSSE questions identified and initial results reviewed | Faculty Council Executive Committee  Office of Teaching Learning and Assessment | Initial- 2016.  Follow up - 2021 |
| Faculty Council Executive Committee works with units to use existing processes (ie Weave) to report out direct assessment of rigorous academic practices | Weave reports contain actionable feedback | Faculty Council Executive Committee  Office of Teaching Learning and Assessment | Initial- 2016.  Follow up - 2021 |
| Increase number of characteristics of rigorous academic expectations and associated practices found in courses expectations that enhance the students’ experience. | Departmental course material analysis  (e.g. Syllabus review) | Collate departmental analyses to meet (or exceed) benchmarks set by Faculty Council Executive Committee for university level (i.e., 7 of 8 colleges have met benchmarks) | Unit/department  Office of Teaching Learning and Assessment | Initial- 2016.  Follow up - 2021 |
| Faculty Council Executive Committee identifies questions from NSSE and other surveys that ask about characteristics of rigorous academic expectations | Meet (or exceed) desired department benchmarks determined by Faculty Council Executive Committee after Relevant NSSE  and FSSE questions identified and initial results reviewed | Faculty Council Executive Committee | Initial- 2016.  Follow up - 2021 |

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| **Objective** | **Desired Outcome** | **Assessment** | **Metric** | **Departments Supporting Objective** | **Timeline From/To** |
| 3. Expand the use of high-impact educational practices. | High impact practices are widely used at Widener | Departmental analysis of high impact practices in the curriculum; Identify classes and other opportunities that incorporate each high impact practice | After initial analysis each department will identify changes and targets for expanding high impact practices. | Unit/department  Office of Experiential Learning and Global  Office of Civic Engagement | Initial FA015.  Follow up spring 18. |
| Faculty Council Executive Committee identifies questions from NSSE and other surveys that ask about high impact practices | Desired increase to be determined by Faculty Council Executive Committee after Relevant NSSE  and FSSE questions identified and initial results reviewed | Faculty Council Executive Committee | Initial FA015.  Follow up spring 18. |

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| **Objective** | **Desired Outcome** | **Assessment** | **Metric** | **Departments Supporting Objective** | **Timeline From/To** |
| 4. Improve high-impact educational practices and student learning outcomes. | More effective implementation of high impact practices | Departmental/Program analysis of high impact practices in the curriculum; Review characteristics of high impact practices; Identify ways to improve implementation of high impact practices | After initial analysis each department and program will identify changes and targets for improving high impact practices. | Unit/department | FY 2016 to  2021 |
| Department and program assessment reports reviewed by Faculty Council Executive Committee | Faculty Council Executive Committee reports out on effective implementation of high impact practices and makes recommendations | Faculty Council Executive Committee  Office of Teaching Learning and Assessment | FY 2017 to 2021 |
| Improved student outcomes | Assessment reports for Institutional Learning Objectives  Assessment reports for general education goals.  Retention rates  Graduation rates  Post graduation placement rates | Desired increase to be determined by Faculty Council Executive Committee after reviewing assessment reports. | Faculty Council Executive Committee | FY 2016 to  2021 |
| Increased student engagement in high-impact educational practices | Faculty Council Executive Committee identifies questions from NSSE and other surveys that ask about high impact practices | Desired increase to be determined by Faculty Council Executive Committee after Relevant NSSE  and FSSE questions identified and initial results reviewed | Faculty Council Executive Committee | Initial fall 2015.  Follow up spring 18. |
| 5. Promote a university culture where academic expectations and high-impact educational practices are developed, supported and rewarded. | Annual and ongoing faculty and staff development on rigorous academic expectations and high impact practices | Number of faculty participating in annual Assessment Days across schools and colleges  Number of faculty participating in initiatives  Number of sessions at bridgeweek and other professional development opportunities  Number of faculty making use of pedagogical fellows and technology fellows | Relevant groups will decide targets | Faculty Council Executive Committee  Office of Pedagogical support  Office of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment | 2016-2021 |
| Provost initiatives to fund rigorous academics and HIP | Increased funding for professional development opportunities | Relevant groups will decide targets | Provost | 2016-2021 |
| Use of and improved implementation of high impact practices and rigorous academic expectations rewarded as part of merit system. | Merit documents | All merit documents will address high impact practices and rigorous academic criteria selected in first objective | Deans | 2016-2021 |
| Use of HIP and rigorous academics part of criteria for teaching awards and other incentives | Review of criteria for teaching awards | If appropriate, teaching awards include the use of HIPs and rigorous academics. | Provost  Deans | 2016-2021 |
| Co-curricular programming supports and promotes high-impact educational practices | Analysis of co-curricular programming for evidence of support for HIPs. | Gaps in support are identified and addressed as appropriate. | Dean of Students and Faculty Council Student Learning and Assessment Committee |  |
| Admissions promotes high-impact educational practices and rigorous academics | Analysis of admissions materials for inclusion of HIPs and rigorous academics. | High-impact educational practices and rigorous academics becomes part of the language used for recruitment | Admissions and Faculty Council Student Learning and Assessment Committee |  |

**Glossary Terms**

Annual Assessment Days: Every year during Bridge Week, one session is set aside during the week for a meeting devoted to the assessment of one of the Institutional Learning Objectives (ILOs). Faculty from across all the schools and colleges, as well as staff and administrators from relevant units, identify exemplary artifacts and work with them using a common instrument, then generate findings and recommendations to be shared at the start of the following academic year.

High-Impact Educational Practices: The list of high-impact educational practices from AAC&U was developed for undergraduate programs and can be used as a starting point for these discussions. Many elements of this list can be adapted for graduate programs. These practices include:

• First-Year Seminars and Experiences

• Common Intellectual Experiences

• Learning Communities

• Writing-Intensive Courses

• Collaborative Assignments and Projects

• Undergraduate Research

• Diversity/Global Learning

• Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

• Internships

• Capstone Courses and Projects

Characteristics of High Impact Practices. From Kuh, G., & O'Donnell, K. (2013) Ensuring quality & taking high-impact practices to scale. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

* Performance expectations set at appropriately high levels
* Significant investment of time and effort by students over an extended period of time
* Experiences with diversity
* Frequent, timely, and constructive feedback
* Periodic, structured opportunities to reflect and integrate learning
* Opportunities to discover relevance of learning through real-world applications
* Public demonstration of competence