

WSU Strategic Pillars (2025 – 2035)



1. Access and Student Success

Rationale:

WSU's land-grant mission begins with access—but that access must lead to real outcomes. This pillar focuses on affordability, statewide reach, a sense of belonging, and preparing students for life after graduation. It positions WSU as a lifelong educational partner, from high school through adult and professional learning.

Focus areas:

- Expanding enrollment pathways
- Improving retention and graduation rates
- Reimagining advising and career services
- Flexible degree and credential models
- Statewide and tribal engagement

2. Academic Excellence and Modernization

Rationale:

A strong academic core is essential to WSU's long-term success. This pillar commits to high standards in teaching and learning, while modernizing curriculum and instruction to prepare students for the world ahead. It emphasizes excellence in faculty, innovation in pedagogy, and alignment with emerging knowledge and technologies.

Focus areas:

- Supporting and retaining top faculty
- Curricular innovation and modernization
- Expanding experiential and interdisciplinary learning
- Teaching innovation, including AI-enhanced learning tools
- Regular review and adaptation of academic programs

3. Innovation and Use-Inspired Research

Rationale:

WSU is a research university with a public mission—solving real-world problems through discovery and application. This pillar prioritizes research that improves lives, strengthens industries, and drives economic and environmental progress. It focuses on strategic areas such as health, agriculture, data, energy, and climate.

Focus areas:

- Interdisciplinary research on grand challenges
- Industry, tribal, and community-based partnerships
- Entrepreneurship and tech transfer
- Modern research infrastructure
- Student participation in research
- Building innovation ecosystems that grow Washington’s economy

4. Systemwide Integration and Institutional Agility

Rationale:

WSU is a single university system with many parts—multiple campuses, extension offices, and digital platforms. To serve Washington effectively, the system must operate in a unified, efficient, and adaptable way. This pillar supports strong local identities while reinforcing shared strategy, smart governance, and a culture of service.

Focus areas:

- Identifying and addressing regional needs
- Coordinating across campuses with shared priorities
- Digital transformation and tech-enabled services
- Shared administrative systems
- Fiscal discipline and long-term sustainability
- Governance structures that support fast and flexible decision-making

5. Human and Community Wellbeing

Rationale:

WSU is deeply connected to the health and wellbeing of the communities it serves. This pillar focuses on improving access to health services, especially in rural and underserved areas, and advancing public health, mental health, and social resilience. It reflects WSU's public service commitment and the power of locally-driven impact.

Focus areas:

- Leadership in health sciences education and research
- Expanding rural and tribal health access
- Mental health support for students and communities
- Strengthening Extension's role in community health and education
- Integrating global perspectives into local solution

6. Elevate the Cougar Identity and Brand

Rationale:

Being a Cougar is more than attending a university—it's a lifelong identity built on pride, excellence, and belonging. This pillar focuses on strengthening WSU's brand across all campuses and platforms, with a focus on national visibility, shared values, and the transformational experience of being part of the Cougar family.

Focus areas:

- Cultivating a nationally competitive and character-driven athletics program
- Enhancing the student and alumni experience across all WSU locations
- Broadening the impact of the Cougar brand through outreach, digital presence, and storytelling
- Aligning internal culture with external messaging
- Fostering lifelong engagement with WSU—from prospective students to alumni and donors