



# MEETING THE MOMENT

**Salem State University: Strategic Plan 2023-2028**



# Table of Contents

- THE FOUNDATION: MISSION AND CORE VALUES ..... 2**
  - MISSION ..... 2**
  - CORE VALUES ..... 2**
  
- THE DESTINATION:  
DESIRED OUTCOMES ENVISIONING SALEM STATE IN 2028..... 4**
  
- UNIFYING COMMITMENT AT THE CENTER OF OUR PLAN:  
STUDENT SUCCESS AND LIFE READINESS ..... 6**
  
- THE STRATEGIC ROADMAP: PATHWAYS TO THE DESIRED OUTCOMES ..... 9**
  - I. ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND ACTIVE LEARNING ..... 10**
  - II. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC GOOD ..... 12**
  - III. JUSTICE, DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION..... 14**
  - IV. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND CLIMATE ACTION ..... 16**
  - V. CAMPUS COMMUNITY AND CULTURE ..... 18**
  - VI. OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE ..... 20**
  - VII. FINANCIAL VITALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY ..... 22**
  
- APPENDIX I: THE PLANNING PROCESS ..... 24**
  
- APPENDIX II: ALIGNMENT WITH DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
PLANS AND PRIORITIES ..... 26**
  
- THE ROADMAP: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES ..... 26**

# THE FOUNDATION: MISSION AND CORE VALUES

## Mission

As a comprehensive university, Salem State prepares students of diverse backgrounds and interests to achieve their educational and career goals and to contribute to a global society as ethical and engaged community members. As a public university, Salem State also makes critical contributions to civic life, environmental sustainability, and the cultural, social, and economic vitality of the North Shore region.

We fulfill this mission principally by:

- providing access and an intellectual home for all who desire to pursue a post-secondary degree, regardless of their lived experiences, presentation of self, or socio-economic circumstances;
- equipping students to enhance their social mobility to improve the future well-being of themselves, their families, and their communities, thereby diversifying our region's body of social, economic, cultural, and political leaders;
- promoting the development of a broad range of practical skills and habits of mind, through both classroom-based learning and community-engaged practice, that equip students with the knowledge and confidence required to address contemporary issues of central concern and enter 21st-century careers prepared for success;
- grounding students' personal and professional growth in a contemporary recasting of the liberal arts tradition, with its emphasis on intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, creative problem solving, and effective communication;
- leveraging Salem's unique place in the American historical, cultural, and geographic landscapes as a vital asset in cultivating an intellectually vibrant and civically engaged community of learners and scholars; and
- serving as a leader, partner and resource for the North Shore region while working collaboratively with other state universities and community colleges in Massachusetts to create a more equitable public higher education system.

## Core Values

In pursuing our mission, as a campus community we embrace, are inspired by, and seek to embody the following core institutional values:

- **Academic Excellence** – We are dedicated to assuring teaching excellence and providing experiential and culturally responsive pedagogies and other high-impact strategies that promote learning in and beyond the classroom. We are committed to building and supporting a diverse faculty of highly qualified teachers and scholars who are equity-minded and student-focused. We balance an unwavering commitment to an educational experience firmly grounded in the liberal arts with the responsibility to be responsive to regional workforce trends. We believe in promoting faculty and student research and creative endeavors that expand knowledge and academic disciplines, inform or inspire others, and connect us with the wider world.
- **Student-Centeredness** – We believe in, care about, and empower every student, and we believe everyone on campus, no matter the job description, has a role to play in contributing to student success. Being student-centered means learning who our students are and what they bring when they enroll; understanding who they wish to become and where they want their educations to lead them; helping them discover their strengths and passions; and then supporting and challenging them to dig deeper, reach higher, and go farther than they imagined possible.



- **Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion** – We promote an inclusive campus environment that respects human differences, welcomes and celebrates diversity in all its dimensions, promotes global awareness, and inspires students, faculty and staff to be champions of equity and social justice. We believe justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion should be key considerations in university decision making, resource allocation, program design, and policy development.
- **Belonging** – We are committed to ensuring that the campus life and the classroom experience provide a sense of belonging to all students, particularly those from under-represented or marginalized backgrounds, first-generation students, and students who struggle economically or with challenges that may make them feel alone, different, or excluded.
- **Open Inquiry** – We promote and value critical exploration of diverse perspectives and democratic principles through open dialogue and civil discourse.
- **Civic Engagement** – We believe a public university must be connected with and contributing to local, state, national, and global communities by engaging meaningfully in all spheres of civic life and fostering productive exchanges of knowledge and skills to the mutual benefit of students, faculty, and community.
- **Access and Affordability** – As a public institution, Salem State’s education should be readily and affordably accessible to any student from any background who qualifies for admission. Ability to pay should not be a barrier to access or completion.
- **Environmental Sustainability** – Salem State is deeply committed to reducing its environmental impact and to wise stewardship of natural resources. We believe the university must do all it can to promote and model environmental sustainability and to help SSU students understand both what is at stake and what can be done to address an accelerating climate emergency.
- **Collaborative Leadership** – We value all voices and viewpoints, and through a commitment to transparency, clear communication, collaboration, and shared governance, we are committed to providing all members of the Salem State community meaningful opportunities to discuss and have input on issues affecting the future direction of the university.



# THE DESTINATION: DESIRED OUTCOMES ENVISIONING SALEM STATE IN 2028

Based on outreach to and engagement with campus stakeholder groups during the diagnostics phase of the strategic planning process, SPC believes **the outcomes implicit in the statements below reflect ambitions and aspirations shared by the Salem State community broadly**. Collectively they are an expression of who and what Salem State hopes to be and what it will strive to do and become within five years.

The aspirational desired outcomes below informed the goals and objectives that are the core elements of the strategic plan and will inspire the work necessary to make progress toward realizing those goals and objectives by 2028.

- **Relating to Student Success** – Salem State University will be a student-ready and student-centered university—meeting students where they are; considering what their individual needs, assets and interests are; and offering them flexibility to design their educational path to align with their skills and desired degree outcomes. SSU will have a clear, specific, and shared understanding of student success and a clear path to implementation, achievement and assessment. Our graduates will be well prepared to pursue next steps—employment and a career, an entrepreneurial venture, further study and an advanced degree, service to the community, or whatever destination their academic journey leads them to.
- **Relating to Academic Program** – Salem State University will offer undergraduate and graduate students an education designed to serve the public good by preparing them to tackle the challenges of a rapidly changing, increasingly complex world. Reflecting our unique role within the Commonwealth’s system of public education as the North Shore’s comprehensive state university, our academic programs will have a distinctive focus that leverages established SSU strengths and regional assets. Students will learn from a faculty dedicated to continual improvement as teacher-scholars in service to both the success of their students and the advancement of knowledge in their respective disciplines. Through a curriculum that infuses into each degree pathway the core principles of the liberal arts and the power of “learning by doing,” students will develop the knowledge, skills, creativity, and confidence to succeed in their chosen careers and contribute positively to their communities.
- **Relating to Civic Engagement** – Salem State will be recognized as the Commonwealth’s Civic Engagement University, where pedagogies and experiential learning experiences foster a sense of social responsibility and prepare students to think critically and work creatively to address societal needs and engage with their world. On and off campus, civic engagement will be highly valued, practiced, assessed, and recognized.
- **Relating to Reputation** – Salem State will fortify its reputation for excellence, quality and value, and it will increasingly be a first-choice institution for anyone seeking to earn a degree or pursue a career in higher education in Massachusetts. The SSU brand and identity will be authentic, clear, and understood by all our stakeholders. People will know who we are, what matters to us as a university, and what we contribute to the local, regional, and state communities. Our leadership in the areas of civic engagement and environmental justice and sustainability will be increasingly recognized by the public as institutional distinctions.
- **Relating to Justice, Equity Diversity and Inclusion** – Salem State will further diversify an already inclusive and welcoming community. All academic areas will intentionally use learning models and practices that incorporate content that reflects diverse ways of knowing, being and experiencing the world. SSU will build a strong record of hiring and retaining faculty, staff, and administrators of color. The university will invest in professional development around culturally responsive teaching and services, and SSU’s retention and graduation rates for minority or marginalized student groups will be better than the state average. SSU will be a leader in Massachusetts as a Hispanic Serving Institution modeling the design and implementation of an intentional, successful plan to serve, support, and empower students at and through all levels of the institution.

- **Relating to Campus Climate** – Our campus culture will be open and collaborative, offering many and diverse opportunities for faculty, staff and students to be meaningfully engaged in campus life. We will have an energetic and respectful workplace, and all employees will be valued as members of our community. Salem State will build trust and a sense of common purpose on campus by sharing data in a transparent manner, institutionalizing data-based decision making, and promoting opportunities for all campus constituencies to have input and be engaged through the shared governance process. School spirit and institutional pride will be on the rise.
- **Relating to Human Resources (faculty and staff)** – Salem State will invest in our people, because people are the greatest asset we have. We will be guided in our human resource policies and practices by the desire to establish SSU as a first-choice destination for prospective faculty and staff and as a place where current faculty and staff want to stay. We will recognize and celebrate excellence, and professional development will be seen as an investment in the University’s future.
- **Relating to Facilities** – SSU BOLD, Salem State’s campus unification and modernization project, will have addressed major capital needs of the university by establishing a compact and efficient campus core while maximizing programmatic synergies and streamlining operations. The campus master plan will have been updated, paving the way for future progress toward modernizing campus facilities. In addition, a significant amount of deferred maintenance will have been eliminated following sale of South Campus. SSU’s physical facilities will foster a sense of belonging for members of the campus community and will be competitive with facilities on other public and private campuses throughout the state.
- **Relating to Environmental Sustainability** – Against the backdrop of an accelerating climate crisis and rising student concern, as well as bold state mandates for operational change, Salem State will address the climate crisis by pursuing campus de-carbonization, broadening sustainability scholarship, and deepening community connections. SSU will continue to pursue green investment policies and strive to reduce carbon emissions steadily with the goal of achieving carbon neutrality by mid-century. Faculty, staff, and students all will be engaged in a collective effort to reduce SSU’s impact on the environment and address climate concerns more broadly.
- **Relating to Financial Resources** – Salem State will be in a healthy, stable financial position. Through prudent cost control, effective enrollment management, a successful \$70-75M fundraising campaign, and persistent advocacy for increased public funding, revenues will be sufficient to sustain operations while also allowing for investment in key strategic priorities. Committed to the ultimate goal of ensuring affordable access and minimizing student debt upon graduation, SSU will have made important strides toward making the cost of attending affordable and as predictable as possible for the duration of a student’s academic journey.

These aspirational desired outcomes paint a picture of Salem State as it hopes to be by 2028. They are ambitious and bold, particularly in view of the very serious challenges posed by declining student enrollments. They envision the university at its best. They are simultaneously the motivation behind the five-year strategic plan and the destination to which the plan—through its overarching goals and associated objectives, as well as annually developed implementation strategies and action plans—is designed to lead.

# UNIFYING COMMITMENT AT THE CENTER OF OUR PLAN: STUDENT SUCCESS AND LIFE READINESS

Our commitment to student success and life readiness is the unifying commitment at the very center of this strategic plan and will remain Salem State University's North Star. We are committed to fostering student success and life readiness by creating a challenging and supportive learning environment that fully engages students in their learning and promotes attainment of academic, personal, and career goals. **This core commitment is reflected in and supported by the strategic plan's seven goals and associated objectives.**

## A Challenging and Supportive Learning Environment that Fully Engages Students in Their Learning and Promotes Attainment of Academic, Personal and Career Goals.



Achieving the following objectives aimed squarely at promoting student success and life readiness is deemed essential to progress. As such, these imperatives merit special attention in the strategic plan and will require campus-wide attention as the plan is implemented.



## Student-Centered Strategic Imperatives

- **Build and sustain a campus culture of inclusion and belonging** in which diversity in its many forms is acknowledged, valued, celebrated, and integrated into the entire college-going experience
- **Strengthen onboarding structures, activities, and services** to assist students in adjusting to and succeeding as engaged learners in a university learning environment
- **Provide experiences and supports that improve retention and promote timely** progress toward educational goals for all student populations, including dual-enrollment, early-college, transfer, and graduate students
- **Remove institutional barriers** that negatively affect the college experience or academic progress of non-traditional, minority, marginalized, or economically disadvantaged students
- **Expand high-impact programmatic and engagement initiatives**—such as student research, study abroad, internships, and community service—that prepare students for future careers and help students build confidence, connections, and life-skill learning outside the classroom
- **Reimagine and revamp the approach to student advising** in order to provide more comprehensive and holistic support and promote students’ engagement, well-being and academic success throughout their years of study.







# THE STRATEGIC ROADMAP: PATHWAYS TO THE DESIRED OUTCOMES

## Goals and Objectives



# I. Academic Excellence and Active Learning

**Goal:** 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

**Objectives:**

- 1.1 Sustain Salem State’s commitment to providing a foundation in the liberal arts and strengthen the general education curriculum
- 1.2 Provide an array of transformative experiential learning opportunities that prepare students for a lifetime of engaged citizenship, successful careers, and upward social mobility
- 1.3 Design and deliver academic programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels that are cross-disciplinary, civically minded, culturally responsive, and anti-racist
- 1.4 Engage students and scholars in improving the human condition through academic programs, research, and creative activities that address the pressing matters of our time, including social justice, racial equity, health disparities, climate change, and economic inequality
- 1.5 Leverage our location in historic Salem on the North Shore of Massachusetts, while also constructing a more globally aware curriculum, in ways that further distinguish the university’s academic offerings and enhance students’ learning experiences
- 1.6 Provide students a strategically designed class schedule that offers a range of course delivery formats and equip the faculty with the tools and confidence to ensure the quality of students’ experience in any course does not depend on modality
- 1.7 Remove barriers to successful degree program completion through implementation of retention and persistence strategies for at-risk, under-represented, and systemically marginalized learners
- 1.8 Create and implement a more robust academic advising model for both undergraduates and graduate students that leverages technology and is integrated, equitable, and readily accessible





## II. Civic Engagement and Public Good

**Goal:** Cultivate a civically engaged community of learners and scholars committed to public problem solving in a diverse democracy, and align curriculum, co-curriculum, research, and creative activity with opportunities to promote the public good

### Objectives:

- 2.1 Build on SSU's historic commitment to social justice and civic engagement and expand Salem State's reputation as the Commonwealth's Civic Engagement University
- 2.2 Increase our campus community's understanding of the intersection of civic engagement with justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion work
- 2.3 Expand and strengthen the university's regional connections for experiential learning, civically engaged pedagogical and curricular innovation, scholarship, and creative endeavors
- 2.4 Organize and enhance experiential learning opportunities and increase use of high-impact practices to support students' personal development and professional preparation
- 2.5 Strengthen the university's capacity to foster students' leadership skills for the purpose of social change
- 2.6 Enhance SSU's impact in the North Shore region by working with community stakeholders to identify societal challenges that can be addressed through meaningful, collaborative partnerships





### III. Justice, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

**Goal:** Increase the diversity of our campus community, and promote equity and inclusion in all programs, policies, and practices

**Objectives:**

- 3.1 Continue to promote equitable access and boost college participation through expanded partnerships with PK-12 districts and improved, barrier-free transfer pathways for community college students
- 3.2 Incorporate principles of universal design to foster a more inclusive learning environment that acknowledges and supports a diverse range of student needs and abilities and promotes equitable outcomes for all learners
- 3.3 Create a culture of support for, and expand investment in, professional development for faculty, staff, and student employees around, culturally responsive teaching and learning, student services, and operations in all areas
- 3.4 Transform academic programs, policies, pedagogies, and practices such that they are rooted in a commitment to racial equity
- 3.5 Build a strong record of hiring, supporting, and retaining faculty, staff, and administrators of color and from historically underrepresented groups, and increase SSU’s retention and graduation rates for minority or marginalized students
- 3.6 Assert SSU’s leadership as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) modeling the design and implementation of an intentional, successful plan to serve, support, and empower students at and through all levels of the institution
- 3.7 Prioritize research, creative activity, and knowledge creation that contribute to the scholarship of teaching and learning, particularly as they relate to the experiences of students from historically under-represented communities
- 3.8 Continue striving to remove financial barriers to access by investing in financial aid for students and championing the cause of providing debt-free public higher education in Massachusetts



## IV. Environmental Stewardship and Climate Action

**Goal:** Reflect Salem State's core commitment to protecting the natural environment in campus facilities, operations, academics and decision making, and equip faculty, staff and students to understand and engage in addressing the climate emergency

**Objectives:**

- 4.1 Create a campus culture of sustainability and infuse sustainability into campus decision making
- 4.2 Demonstrate leadership in climate action and climate justice by engaging the Salem State community and broader North Shore region in educational and collaborative initiatives that raise awareness and contribute significantly to efforts to safeguard local resources
- 4.3 Implement emission reduction strategies and aggressively pursue carbon neutrality
- 4.4 Develop and implement a sustainable waste management system that emphasizes waste prevention
- 4.5 Maximize opportunities for low-carbon construction and for energy and water efficiency in all new building projects and major renovations
- 4.6 Ensure that buildings, landscapes, and natural areas create and sustain a campus community that conserves natural resources, restores environmental quality, and protects biodiversity
- 4.7 Ensure sustainability-related academic offerings meet student interest and support opportunities to create and disseminate knowledge relating to environmental stewardship and climate action





## V. Campus Community and Culture

**Goal:** Foster a campus culture that fuels school spirit, sense of community and collegiality, mutual respect and trust, and shared commitment to student success and the University's long-term future

**Objectives:**

- 5.1 Engage faculty, staff, and students in creating and maintaining a supportive environment that promotes student engagement, empowerment, sense of belonging, and progress toward goals
- 5.2 Ensure clear and consistent internal communications foster awareness, transparency, trust, and a deeper sense of community among campus stakeholders
- 5.3 Promote a heightened sense of pride in Salem State's identity and the accomplishments of members of the Salem State community
- 5.4 Nurture the development of meaningful professional relationships at all levels of the organization and foster an engaged student community that promotes relationship building and involvement in campus life
- 5.5 Foster physical, mental, social, and emotional wellness among all members of the campus community in an environment that feels safe and prioritizes holistic health
- 5.6 Expand professional development opportunities and encourage lifelong learning for faculty and staff
- 5.7 Strengthen shared governance practices and seek expanded campus participation in conversations and endeavors relevant to institutional mission and goals
- 5.8 Equip and engage members of the SSU community to be effective advocates and ambassadors for Salem State in the wider community



## VI. Operational Excellence and Infrastructure

**Goal:** Continuously assess and improve the administrative and operational systems, structures, and processes that support the university's mission of teaching, research and public service, and maintain physical facilities and technologies necessary to deliver the mission effectively and efficiently

**Objectives:**

- 6.1 Establish Salem State as a first-choice place to work and pursue a career
- 6.2 Prioritize meeting student needs and promoting organizational effectiveness when evaluating, determining, and implementing optimal staffing models and levels
- 6.3 Enhance operational capacity to support students throughout the calendar year cost-effectively through innovative, collaborative approaches to expanding services and resources available to students in need
- 6.4 Complete the transformative SSU BOLD project to address major capital needs and establish a compact, efficient campus core
- 6.5 Update the campus master vision plan and continue to chip away at deferred maintenance
- 6.6 Enhance physical infrastructure and facilities management plans to improve access and optimize experiences for all who attend, work at, or visit the university
- 6.7 Develop and implement an enterprise risk management model for all university functions, and build a campus-wide culture of assessment, continuous improvement, and accountability
- 6.8 Pursue strategies to standardize, streamline, as necessary upgrade, and support technology systems and infrastructure across campus





## VII. Financial Vitality and Sustainability

**Goal:** Fortify Salem State’s financial foundation by stabilizing enrollment, growing income from existing and new revenue streams, advocating for greater public funding support, continuing to build a culture of philanthropy, and aligning resources with strategic priorities

### Objectives:

- 7.1 Expand interest in enrolling at Salem State through strategic marketing aimed at expanding public awareness of the intrinsic value and enduring benefits of a Salem State education
- 7.2 Sustain tuition and housing-related revenues by improving retention and completion rates for current students
- 7.3 Increase tuition revenues by diversifying and expanding markets and student populations and through new and expanded programs that generate enrollment-driven revenue
- 7.4 Seek to grow and diversify sources of non-tuition revenue, and proactively advocate for increased public funding
- 7.5 Foster a campus-wide culture of philanthropy and deepen engagement with Salem State alumni and the wider community
- 7.6 Ensure policies, systems, budgeting practices, and staff competencies are adequate to sustain financial health
- 7.7 Engage the campus community and shared governance in thoughtful institutional discernment about how most effectively to invest and deploy limited resources in order to maximize impact and promote shared accountability for prudent resource management









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