

A photograph of Grant Hall at William Paterson University. The building is a multi-story brick structure with a prominent curved glass facade. In the foreground, a large, three-dimensional orange logo consisting of the letters 'W', 'P', and 'U' stands on a circular stone and concrete base. The scene is set on a green lawn with trees and a clear sky.

GRANT HALL

WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

At my fall semester 2024 State of the University address, the audience and I were joined by a series of on-screen avatars that looked like they could have just dropped into the Shea Center from anywhere on campus where our students learn, live, and work. That's because they were created using artificial intelligence (AI) prompts that reflected the demographic makeup of all William Paterson students. I responded to questions that the avatars presented, drawing on real WP-specific data and also responded to questions that were similarly generated, ranging from student success resources and enrollment trends to the future of campus diversity initiatives and, yes, the current and future role of AI in higher education.

Regarding that last topic, I shared that our AI Task Force is busy engaging key stakeholders on campus in the development of a policy for the responsible and ethical use of AI across the University. I believe that generative AI will have a transformational impact on higher education, and I am confident that William Paterson will leverage this technology for the benefit of our students and our University. Indeed, I am bullish on William Paterson's future, overall, and there are so many success stories from across the institution to support this outlook. I'd like to share just some examples of the great work being done by our students, faculty, and staff to build a stronger William Paterson.

We are closing the fall 2024 semester with nearly 12,000 students, the highest overall headcount enrolled at William Paterson in 45 years. While that previous high was composed primarily of undergraduate degree-seeking students, our current headcount reflects a broader mix of student types, including both undergraduate and graduate students, dual enrollment students, on-campus students, including an expanding cohort of international students, and growing enrollment in WP Online.

William Paterson moved up nine spots, to 60th from 69th of 165 institutions, in the latest U.S. News & World Report Best Regional Universities-North rankings, marking its highest-ever ranking. In just the past four years, the University has climbed 30 spots from its 2022 ranking of 90th on the *Best Colleges* list.



Our University now boasts the largest nursing student enrollment in northern New Jersey, as well as the largest among the state's public regional universities and the largest on any single campus in New Jersey. Consistent with our mission to educate the students who are changing the social fabric of New Jersey, more than 60 percent of nursing students are people of color.

The flexibility and convenience that WP Online provides students, especially working adults, has completely reinvigorated our AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business)-accredited MBA program to the point where William Paterson recently became the second-largest producer of MBAs in New Jersey. I predict we will soon be number one.

We are also making great progress ensuring that our graduates are successful in their chosen fields. The latest data shows that 86 percent of members of the WP Class of 2023 had successful career outcomes six months after graduating – five percent higher than the national average – and reported average starting salaries of nearly \$63,000.

These and all of the past year's highlights are built upon the great work of our students, faculty, and staff, which is reflected in the pages of this *2024 Annual Report*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard J. Helldobler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard J. Helldobler, PhD, President
William Paterson University

I. ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Academic Initiatives

Under the leadership of President Richard J. Helldobler, William Paterson University has accelerated the strategic development and implementation of academic initiatives that build upon opportunities and emerging trends in higher education. These include the growing demand for online learning, particularly by adult learners, as well as for those seeking advanced degrees that are flexible in terms of delivery models and that meet the changing demands of the marketplace.

The University's leadership role in expansion into these markets has led to significant increases in fully online programs and online degree enrollment, which has grown from no such students in spring 2020 to 4,258 students in fall 2024, currently representing slightly more than one-third of the student body.

A leader in New Jersey in enrolling and graduating adult learners, the University transformed its School of Continuing and Professional Education into a College of Adult and Professional Studies, effective July 1,

COLLEGE OF ADULT AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES
WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY

2024. The new college provides innovative approaches to meeting the needs of adult learners, including those who are among the more than 750,000 New Jersey residents who have some college credits but no degree.

The new college is home to the University's nearly 5,000 on-campus and online adult learners. The college houses the Degree Completion and Adult Learning program, which works with returning students on securing credit for prior learning (CPL) through testing, portfolio assessment of related work experience, and credit equivalency options for professional training and credentials. It also provides onboarding for returning adult learners, targeted programming related to career supports, well-being, and academic resources. An innovative "Peer Career Learning" cohort experience, offered through the College, helps adult learners build peer networking connections and career readiness skills, while supporting opportunities to earn credit for prior learning.

In 2021, William Paterson launched a bachelor's degree in leadership and professional studies, the only such degree in New Jersey at the time and one of a few such programs in the country. The degree program, offered both on campus and through WP Online, is designed to provide returning adult learners with a highly flexible

structure that allows them to build on professional knowledge and previously earned credits to meet degree requirements. Currently, 76 students are enrolled in the program, both on campus and online.



A student in the broadcast studio control room

For traditional undergraduates, the University launched a bachelor of arts degree in film, television, and audio, designed to provide students with the opportunity to pursue a degree that integrates across media (film, television, audio, radio, podcasting, digital streaming), combined with foundational knowledge in media theory and production. Offered on the main campus, the degree prepares students for careers as on-air talent or working behind the scenes.

The University also launched a bachelor of science degree in information technology—cybersecurity. This STEM-certified program provides students with foundational knowledge in the theories, tools, and techniques needed for success in the growing field of cybersecurity, with a curriculum that balances theory and analysis with practical application and topics such as ethical hacking, applied cryptography, and system security. The new program is available both in person and online.



The Cybersecurity Research Lab

A new bachelor of arts degree in journalism offers coursework in the core skills of journalism, including editing, interviewing, reporting, and writing, as well as teaching in technology and production. The degree provides students with knowledge in how to create compelling content for social media, digital, print, audio, video, and other emerging platforms. Students can take advantage of extracurricular activities through the University's nationally recognized, award-winning campus chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ), the nation's oldest and most broad-based journalism advocacy organization. The degree is also offered both in person and fully online.

On the graduate level, the University launched a master of arts degree in integrated marketing communication. The innovative 30-credit degree program includes courses in global strategic communication, integrated marketing communication, strategic communication research, content and brand strategy, digital content creation, social media communication, crisis management and reputation, and more. While completing the program, students may simultaneously earn professional certificates in strategic marketing, social media strategy, and corporate communication management. Courses are designed to allow students to pursue projects that align with their academic and professional goals. The degree can be completed in just 12 to 15 months through flexible hybrid and online course options and multiple start times per year. Also available is an accelerated 4+1 program, which allows undergraduate students to earn credit toward the master's degree and graduate with both the bachelor's and the master's within five years.



WPOnline

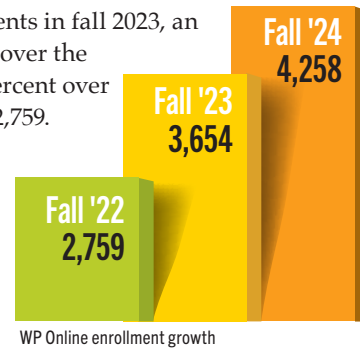
WP Online, the University's fully online degree platform, expanded its portfolio of programs to include five new online bachelor's degrees that launched during fall 2023.

In addition to degree programs in journalism and information technology-cybersecurity, the platform added bachelor of arts programs in communication and public relations, and a bachelor of science program in applied business analytics.

At the graduate level, three master of education programs launched in WP Online during the 2023-24 academic year—school library media, teacher of students with disabilities, and reading specialist—along with graduate-level certificate programs in teacher of students with disabilities, both traditional route and alternate route, school supervisor, reading specialist, and human resources management.

Overall, the University now offers 60 fully online degree programs in business, education, the humanities and social sciences, and healthcare. For fall 2024, 4,258 students were enrolled in WP Online programs,

compared to 3,654 students in fall 2023, an increase of 16.5 percent over the previous year and 35 percent over fall 2022 enrollment of 2,759.

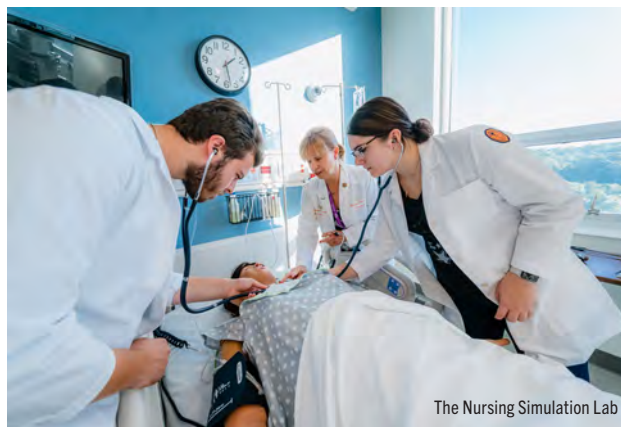


The University continues to expand opportunities for students to earn stackable credentials, such as certificate programs embedded within the curriculum that can provide them with career-relevant skills. On the undergraduate level, the University added 17 new certificate programs: audio broadcasting, corporate accounting and reporting, digital animation, digital marketing, entrepreneurship and sustainable chemical technologies, entrepreneurship, innovation, and community engagement, game design, integrated marketing communication, logistics for a global economy, management accounting, marketing analytics, marketing research, mindfulness and wellness, professional sales, responsible management, social media marketing, and television broadcasting.

At the graduate level the University added graduate certificate programs in corporate communication management, digital animation, game design, and social media strategy.

The Department of Art earned reaccreditation from the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) through 2033 for the undergraduate and graduate degree programs offered by the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. NASAD is the national accrediting agency for art and design and art and design-related disciplines. In addition, the University bachelor's degree program in social work, which launched in 2023, passed the second benchmark for national accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education.

A leader in educating New Jersey's healthcare workforce since 1966, the University established a School of Nursing within the College of Science and Health just prior to the start of the fall 2023 semester. This



SCHOOL OF NURSING

WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY

major academic initiative points to William Paterson's investment in growing its healthcare programs to meet the significant need for nurses and public health professionals, as well as increased demand for online learning by adult learners and those seeking advanced degrees via flexible delivery models.

William Paterson University now boasts the largest nursing student enrollment in the northern half of New Jersey, as well as the largest among the state's public regional universities and the largest on any single campus in New Jersey. As of the spring 2024 semester, nursing enrollment stands at more than 1,800 students across the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. Specifically, since 2019, undergraduate nursing enrollment has more than doubled, from 431 students to 972 in spring 2024. During the same time frame, graduate enrollment has quadrupled, from 190 to 841 students in spring 2024. More than 60 percent of nursing students are people of color.

To further advance opportunities for students, the University signed an agreement with Atlantic Health System, a leading provider of healthcare in New Jersey, to establish a framework for collaboration to improve access to high-quality health profession education and health services in the region. Through the agreement, William Paterson and Atlantic Health will identify and implement joint projects and initiatives geared toward enhancing the nursing and healthcare workforce.

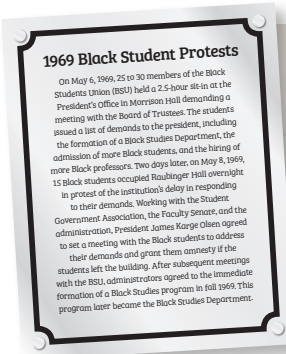
Potential collaborations will focus on enhanced educational and employment opportunities for William Paterson students, including developing pathways for nursing and healthcare students to gain meaningful related opportunities at Atlantic Health; developing programs that enable students to gain employment opportunities in careers that are needed in the northern New Jersey region and consistent with a future career in nursing and healthcare; providing opportunities for academically prepared Atlantic Health nurses to practice as adjunct faculty members; further enhancing a joint research center focused on the advancement of science and grant opportunities; and exploring opportunities to build community-facing and campus-facing health and wellness services.

The University continued to mark a major milestone in the history of jazz education during the 2023-24 academic year: the 50th anniversary of its internationally renowned Jazz Studies Program. Founded in 1973, the program was one of the first degree programs in jazz studies in the nation, offering a unique emphasis on small group playing and improvisation. Jazz majors come to William Paterson from across the United States and all corners of



the world to study with the program's artist/faculty of world-class, New York-area jazz professionals, including current director Bill Charlap, a Grammy Award-winning pianist. The celebration continued during the summer and fall of 2023, with numerous performances of the University's Jazz Room series highlighting the program's impact, including a performance by the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, originally led by the program's inaugural director, the great bandleader, composer, and cornetist Thad Jones.

The University dedicated a plaque in Raubinger Hall commemorating campus protests in 1969 that led to the establishment of the Black Studies program on campus. The programs were launched due to the advocacy of Black students on campus in the late 1960s, including several pivotal days of protests in May 1969 when members of the Black Students Union held sit-ins. After meetings with the Black Students Union, then-President James Karge Olsen and other administrators agreed to the immediate formation of a Black Studies program in fall



Professor Danielle Wallace and Associate Dean Djanna Hill help unveil the 1969 Black Student Protests Plaque

1969—the only program in University history that was developed due to student demand. Originally launched as a minor, that program grew into a bachelor of arts degree in Black Studies, and the formation of a Department of Black Studies. The plaque dedication was part of a Black Alumni Celebration weekend designed to highlight the establishment of the University's academic programs focused on the experiences and contributions of people of African descent.



The Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies dedication event

The Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, which provides education programs centered around the Holocaust and other genocides, celebrated its 30th anniversary in April 2024 with the dedication of its new home on campus in the 1600 Valley Road building. Situated within the College of Education, the Center's placement reflects its focus on how the lessons of the Holocaust and other genocides apply to today's concerns. Led by an Advisory Council of faculty from many disciplines, the Center offers a wide range of programming for the University and the public, including professional development for teachers, public lectures and conferences, and cultural events. Its large collection of resources on K-12 Holocaust and genocide education, housed in the Curriculum Materials Center of the Cheng Library, includes children's literature and curriculum materials curated to support K-12 pre- and in-service teachers' instruction.

"Artificial Intelligence: Is it the Beginning or the End?" was the question discussed during the 12th Annual Contexts conference in October 2023. Hosted by the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, the day-long, multidisciplinary conference brings together students, faculty, staff, and guest experts to tackle complex issues of contemporary significance. Speakers included experts from Sandia National Laboratories, the University of Kansas, New Jersey Institute of Technology, and *Wired* magazine.



"The Universe of Ben Jones," a year-long celebration of the American artist Ben Jones, a 1963 graduate of William Paterson and a New Jersey City University professor *emeritus* of art, took place during the 2023-24 academic year. Funded by a \$150,000 grant from the Mellon Foundation, the project, in collaboration with New Jersey City University, included a retrospective exhibition of Jones's artworks, many of which had rarely been exhibited or were on display for the first time, as well as an exhibition featuring artworks by 17 artists who have been mentored and influenced by Jones. The year-long project also included a performance of *Working:*



Artist Ben Jones '63 speaks about his exhibition

The Musical; a performance by the Spirit of Life Ensemble, and academic courses focused on art, community, and social justice. Over his six-decade career, Jones has focused on interconnections and relationships between global issues including politics, health, the environment, racism, and capitalism, among others, and is considered one of the most important African American artists of his generation.

The University served as host for "New Trends, New Journeys: The 5th Chinese American Art Faculty Symposium" and the 10th anniversary celebration of the establishment of the Chinese American Art Faculty Association, held in November 2023. Joshua Powers, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs, delivered the opening address. The symposium was jointly organized by William Paterson's Center for Chinese Art, Art Department, and College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, and the Chinese American Art Faculty Association. In addition to the keynote speech, professors from 24 universities across the United States presented lectures on various visual arts disciplines to showcase their creative works and research achievements.



More than \$12 Million Secured in Grant Funding

During the 2023-24 academic year, the University garnered \$12.2 million in funding from federal, state, and local government sponsors. Grants supported faculty and academic initiatives in a variety of areas, ranging from individual faculty research and projects to programs focused on education and outreach, providing significant resources that support the University's role as a comprehensive institutional resource in its region and state. Additionally, grants provided funding for student support initiatives.

For the newly created College of Adult and Professional Studies, Kara Rabbit, associate provost for academic initiatives and adult and professional studies, and Quay Davis, director, continuing and professional education, brought in multiple awards from the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development Incumbent Worker Training Grant 2024 totaling \$1,498,640 for training in areas such as the food and beverage, transportation and logistics, healthcare, and technology industries.

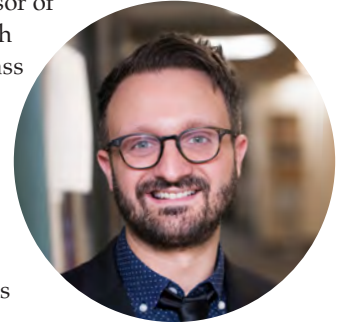
In addition, Johanna Prado, director of degree completion and adult learning within the College of Adult and Professional Studies, helped shepherd a \$150,000 award from the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education to reengage adults who have some credits but no degree and encourage them to re-enroll and complete their bachelor's degree. The grant project, titled "WP Accelerate," supports access to credit for prior learning for the "some college, no degree" population and builds more capacity to address institutional barriers for returning adult learners.

The College of Education was awarded \$563,431 from the New Jersey Department of Education's Reading Acceleration Professional Integrated Development (RAPID Plus) Initiative, which provides professional development opportunities for New Jersey educators and creates resources supporting learning acceleration in literacy in order to bolster literacy in upper elementary grades four through six. In addition, the College received \$222,222 from the New Jersey Department of Education for the Reading Acceleration Professional Integrated Development (RAPID) Initiative, which targets literacy in the early elementary grades (kindergarten through grade three).

The College of Education also received a 15-month, \$564,000 grant from the New Jersey Department of Labor to support a teacher apprenticeship program, "Growing Apprenticeship in Nontraditional Sections – 2024 (GAINS)." The grant provides support for the College's innovative apprenticeship-based teacher educator program which places William Paterson teacher candidates in local partner schools, where they serve

critical roles as emerging educators who are supervised and mentored on an academic path toward becoming certified teachers. The goal is to remove barriers to on-the-job training for more students and help more underrepresented student apprentices gain certification to meet New Jersey's need for more highly qualified teachers.

Jason Silva, assistant professor of criminal justice, whose research examines media and crime, mass shootings, school violence, and terrorism, secured a \$523,900 award from the U.S. Department of Justice for his grant titled "A Comprehensive Assessment of Public Mass Shootings and Active Shootings Involving Misogyny, Sexual Frustration, and Violence Against Women."



Nicole Davi, professor of environmental science and a tree-ring scientist, was awarded a three-year, \$196,447 grant from the National Science Foundation for a project entitled "Collaborative Research: Temperature Variability



and Extremes at Multiple Temporal Scales in North Asia from Millennial-Length Wood Anatomical Records." She also received a one-year, \$44,520 grant from Brock University of Canada to support a project titled "Wood Anatomical and Climate Analysis in the Northwest Territories, Canada."



Rahi Abouk, professor of economics, received a one-year, \$39,659 grant from the National Science Foundation via Spelman College to support his research project "Origins of Disparities in Access to Physicians among White and Black Americans in the Early Twentieth Century." This NSF Build to Broaden Award includes grant mentorship and professional development.



Professor Jason Wicke in the Human Motion Research Lab

Jason Wicke, professor of kinesiology and director of the Human Motion Research Lab in the Department of Kinesiology, received a \$63,961 grant from the Centers for Disease Control for his research on movement and pregnancy titled “Capturing Body Segment Changes during Pregnancy to Develop an Accurate Biomechanical Model.”

Melissa Rosario Jimenez, regional director of the New Jersey Small Business Development Center housed in the Cotsakos College of Business, secured \$175,686 for education and training for business entrepreneurship in Passaic County.

John Parras, professor of English, secured a grant from the Library of America for \$1,200 to sponsor Latino poetry events.



The University was awarded a \$70,336 grant from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts for general arts programming, as well as \$52,156 in support of the University Galleries.

The University also secured a grant of \$10,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities in support of the preservation of the University’s poster and print collection.

The University received a Drug-Free Communities grant for \$635,000 from the Centers for Disease Control for the United in Prevention in Passaic County Coalition (UPinPC) to support continued work on youth substance abuse. The grant is under the supervision of Naa-Solo Tettey, associate professor of public health. In addition, UPinPC received \$158,583 from the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) for addiction prevention programs, \$90,983 for education and awareness programs, and \$13,049 to support work on opioid overdose prevention for young athletes; \$22,000 from the New Jersey Department of Health, Office of Tobacco Control and Prevention, Division of Community Health Services, Community Health and Wellness Unit, for the Passaic County Youth Tobacco Action Group; and \$40,608 from Passaic County for prevention education for youth.

In addition, the University received a \$3,500 grant from the Mexican government, via the Consulate of Mexico. The IME Becas grant program, designed with the support of Mexico’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Institute for Mexicans Abroad, funds higher education or adult education for Mexican students abroad.

Academic Courses and Opportunities

The University provided students with academic offerings designed to challenge them in the classroom as well as experiential learning opportunities through which they could use the skills they learned and apply them in real-world situations.

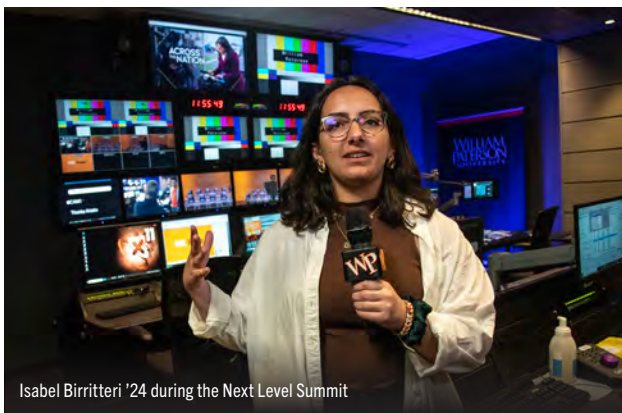
As part of a new interdisciplinary class, *Water and Justice: The Past, Present, and Future of Water in New Jersey*, students gained an in-depth look at water issues by drawing on human narratives and case studies within an environmental justice framework. Developed and co-taught by WP faculty members Nicole Davi, environmental science; Lilian Milanés, community and social justice studies; and Marianne Sullivan, public health, the course was developed with funding from a National Science Foundation grant awarded to the three researchers to study access to reliable and safe drinking water and recreational waterways with a focus on equity in access to these resources. In addition to several hands-on field trips, the students conducted research using an online data tool developed with funding from the NSF grant through which they accessed in-depth information about water systems in every New Jersey community, including data on pollution, contaminants, and violations.



Bill Charlap and Christian McBride

Jazz studies students interacted with the award-winning jazz musician Christian McBride during a four-part jazz residency program in spring 2024. The program included a conversation and performance with McBride and Bill Charlap, the Grammy-winning pianist and William Paterson’s director of jazz studies; a lecture by McBride titled “Ray Brown Meets James Brown—The Convergence of Jazz, R & B, and Hip-Hop,” and two masterclasses, in which selected jazz student ensembles had the opportunity for McBride to critique their

performances. McBride, an eight-time Grammy Award winner, bassist, composer, and arranger, has appeared on more than 300 recordings, and performed with a who's who of musicians, from Wynton Marsalis, Benny Golson, and Pat Metheny, to Sting, Questlove, and Paul McCartney. The residency was funded by a generous gift from donor Barbara Thoen and her late husband, Wayne Thoen.



Isabel Birritteri '24 during the Next Level Summit

William Paterson was one of a handful of colleges nationwide selected by NBCUniversal to participate in its NBCU Academy Next Level Summit held in October 2023. The prestigious biannual event seeks to educate and elevate students and working professionals in the journalism, media, and tech industries. In addition, the University had the special designation of being the first and only college in the history of the event to have a crew of students running the control room during the live broadcast for a national audience of participants. Isabel Birritteri '24, an NBCUniversal intern and news director of WP's Brave New Radio, served as on-air host for WP. The technical crew included: Claire Biennestin '25, Valery Arango '24; Christopher Cugliari '26; Delainne Morales '24; Aria Capria '26, Stephen-Paul Russell '26, Isabella Rocha '26, and Jess Carfello '25. Five students—Nicholas Wilkerson '26, Christal Fernando, MA '24, Kehinde-Sierra Adetula, MA '25, Marc Brandt '25, and Brooke Holzhauser '27—were selected to ask questions of the panelists on air.

StudentConnect, a new initiative led by Melissa Rosario, regional director of the New Jersey Small Business Development Center housed in the Cotsakos College of Business, and Angie Yoo, professor of communication, connected local small businesses with communication students enrolled in the Digital and Social Media Communication course. Launched as a pilot program during the spring 2024 semester, the initiative is designed to provide practical social media solutions to challenges faced by small businesses while enriching students' academic experience with hands-on learning. Student teams in Yoo's class acted as a public relations agency for the businesses, working closely with their owners to develop customized social media campaign plans.



The Opera Workshop staged reading

Students enrolled in Opera Workshop during the fall 2023 semester wrote music for a brand-new opera using artificial intelligence (AI) programs. Music professors Payton MacDonald, Christopher Herbert, and David Weisberg collaborated with the students to write music for several scenes, using ChatGPT to write lyrics and a variety of music generator programs for the music. To help them get a feel for writing opera, the students participated in a masterclass with Timothy Long, artistic and music director of opera at the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester, and attended a performance of *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, a contemporary opera staged at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. A reading of the work-in-progress, along with a discussion, was presented on campus in December 2023.

A new interdisciplinary history and philosophy course, *Yoga Traditions and Practices*, taught by Lucia McMahon, professor of history, examines the historical roots, philosophical traditions, and contemporary practices of yoga—taking students from ancient India to the United States and other western societies through a selection of classical and contemporary sources. The course also includes an experiential component: McMahon, a certified yoga instructor, spends a few minutes of each in-person session demonstrating a breath-based meditation or a standing pose. The course is part of a 12-credit interdisciplinary undergraduate certificate program in mindfulness and wellness launched in fall 2024 that includes courses in history, philosophy, psychology, and Asian Studies.



Students in Yoga Traditions and Practices



The WP Chamber Choir and student instrumentalists who traveled to Europe

The William Paterson Chamber Choir, the University's elite vocal ensemble, along with four small instrumental chamber ensembles, traveled to Belgium and France during spring break 2024 for a performance and cultural tour. The 37-member group, which included students and alumni, participated in Mass at the Antwerp Cathedral, and performed concerts at St. Salvatore and Donatius Church in Bruges, the Parish Church St.-Mer-Eglise, the Church of Madeleine in Paris, and at the Normandy and Utah Beach memorials. The program included choral music in Latin, French, and English from a range of time periods, as well as a number of Americana works. The instrumental chamber ensembles, comprised of a woodwind trio and low brass quartet, performed music from the Renaissance to the present day. Three of the choir members—Cassandra Sutter, Viviana Kaszubski, and Scarlette Horvath—served as student/guest conductors.

Students enrolled in the Honors College course French and Francophone Colonial Legacies traveled to Paris during spring break in March 2024 to visit various museums and other cultural institutions. The course examined French colonialism and its distinct and complex legacies in France, the Caribbean, Africa, North America, and Indochina, evolving attitudes toward colonialism, and how history has forced colonial powers to confront issues of immigration, racism, and the historical oppression of segments of society. The students visited France's National Museum of Immigration History.



Students conducted important research on campus. For example, Nathan Tortos '25, who conducted

research in the lab of Bhanu Chauhan, professor of chemistry, presented his findings at an international conference in France among some of the field's top scientists from around the world. Tortos was the only undergraduate college student chosen to present his research at the 10th Annual European Silicon Chemistry Conference. His topic was "A Systematic Investigation of Platinum Nanoparticle Catalyzed Polymerization and Characterization of Aromatic Silanes." Tortos is now president of the Chemistry Club on campus and works in Professor Chauhan's lab to mentor freshmen and transfer students through the College of Science and Health's ASPIRE program.

Faculty and Staff News and Accomplishments

David A. Fuentes, associate dean and professor of teacher education in the College of Education, was named the recipient of the 2024 Mildred García Founder's Award, presented by the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE). The award, named after Dr. Mildred García, the former president of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, honors exemplar commitment to advancing access and success of the Latinx population in higher education. Fuentes investigates educator experiences, including the experiences of educators of color in K-12 schools and in higher education settings. His current research focuses on high-need school communities and understanding issues of equity as they relate to the function, purpose, and outcomes of public education. In addition, he was appointed to the AAHHE Board of Directors for a three-year term (2024 through 2027).



Lydia Albuquerque, DNP, RN, ACNP-BC, CCRN, professor of nursing, was inducted as an inaugural fellow in the Academy of Diversity Leaders in Nursing. The new Academy, sponsored by the National Black Nurses Association, recognizes nurse leaders for their significant and sustained contribution to advance justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in nursing and health care. A nurse practitioner with specialization in acute care and cardiology, Professor Albuquerque's scholarly work seeks to improve health outcomes for patients of diverse backgrounds.





Grammy Award-winning pianist **Bill Charlap**, director of jazz studies, received Jazz at Lincoln Center’s 2024 Award for Artistic Excellence during its gala, “Celebrating Tony Bennett.” One of the world’s premier jazz pianists, Charlap is known for his interpretations

of American popular songs, and collaborated with Tony Bennett on *Tony Bennett & Bill Charlap, The Silver Lining: The Songs of Jerome Kern* (Columbia), which won the 2015 Grammy Award for Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album. Josh Groban, the five-time Grammy-nominated singer, songwriter, and actor, hosted the gala and honored Charlap for “passing the gift of jazz on to the next generation.” The award was presented by two of Charlap’s mentees, including Caelan Cardello, a 2022 graduate of William Paterson University.

Carol Frierson-Campbell, professor of music, was awarded a 2023-24 Fulbright U.S. Scholar Award to Jordan to continue her research on music making. Frierson-Campbell spent the spring 2024 semester at the National Music Conservatory in Amman, Jordan. She also performed with the National Music Conservatory Orchestra as principal horn.



Six William Paterson University employees—Johanna Prado, director of degree completion and adult learning; Amanda Vasquez, director of the WP Online student success; Kara Rabbitt, associate provost for academic initiatives and adult and professional studies; Daisy Rodriguez, associate director, counseling, health, and wellness; Steve Quinn, associate vice president for University admissions; and Jason Hunter, detective sergeant, University Police—were among those honored by Governor Phil Murphy for their exceptional performance and service at a New Jersey State Employee Recognition Day Award Ceremony in Trenton in May 2024. The ceremony was held to recognize and honor state government employees for their outstanding contributions, a work ethic that inspires accomplishment, and their commitment to excellence in public service.

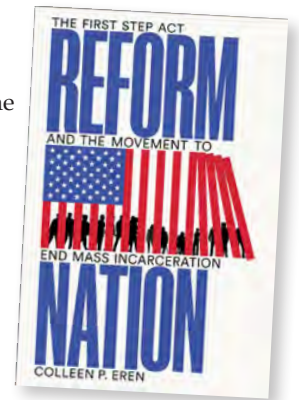
Melissa Rosario, regional director of the William Paterson University Small Business Development Center (SBDC), was selected as a 2024 NJBIZ Leading Women in Business honoree. The awards recognize women who have made a significant impact on business in New Jersey as well as in their communities. Rosario was one of 60 women from across the state who were honored.

Robin Schwartz, professor of art, presented a solo exhibition of her photographs, *Amelia & the Animals*, at PHest See Beyond the Sea Photography Festival in Monopoli, Italy from September 1 through November 11, 2023. Her series of photographs titled “Rescued Foxes Find Refuge in Minnesota” was shortlisted for the 2024 Documenting Humanity, World Report Award of the Festival della FOTOGRAFIA ETICA.

Artworks by Leslie Nobler, professor of art, were included in several exhibitions, including *Women by Women* at the Galen Gallery in West Orange, *L’Dor Vador* at Temple Sharey Tefilo-Israel in South Orange, and Vector Artist Initiative.

Carl Bolleia, assistant professor of music, performed Charles Wuorinen’s *The Blue Bamboula* at a concert in tribute to the influential pianist Ursula Oppens held at Merkin Concert Hall in New York City in February 2024.

Colleen P. Eren, associate professor of sociology and criminal justice, published *Reform Nation: The First Step Act and the Movement to End Mass Incarceration* (Stanford University Press). In it, she explores how a diverse coalition of stakeholders—from celebrities and major corporations to advocates and legislators—were able to come together to pass federal legislation culminating in then-President Donald Trump signing the First Step Act into law in 2018. The law became one of just a few major pieces of federal criminal justice reform since the 1970s to move toward reversing U.S. policies focused on mass incarceration.



Ana Siqueira, associate professor of management and founding director of the Center for Socially Responsible Entrepreneurship and Innovation within the Cotsakos College of Business, earned a 2024 Excellence in Scholarship Award from the United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (USASBE). Bestowed by USASBE’s Social Entrepreneurship Special Interest Group, the award recognizes research completed in the field of social entrepreneurship.

Dr. Jill Guzman, DNP, director of counseling, health, and wellness, was selected as a 2024 NJBIZ Healthcare Heroes honoree. The awards recognize excellence, promote innovation, and honor the efforts of individuals and organizations making a significant impact on the quality of healthcare in New Jersey. Guzman was honored



in the Healthcare Professional category. The *NJBIZ* Healthcare Heroes Award honorees were chosen by a panel of independent judges and include individuals and organizations across 11 categories.

Melissa Reardon Henry, general counsel to the University and the Board of Trustees, was named a 2024 *NJBIZ* Leaders in Law honoree.



The award honors legal professionals and firms whose dedication to the industry and to their communities is outstanding. The *NJBIZ* Leaders in Law honorees were

chosen by a panel of independent judges with experience in the justice system. Reardon Henry was one of 63 legal professionals across the state who were honored.

Brian O’Broin, professor of English, was part of the cast for *An Giall*, a reading of the original Irish language version of *The Hostage* at the Irish Repertory Theater in New York City. *An Giall* depicts the events leading up to the planned execution of an 18-year-old IRA member in a Belfast jail, accused of killing a Royal Ulster Constabulary policeman.

Pixy Ferris, professor of communication, and Kathleen Waldron, president emerita, published their second book together. Titled *Thriving in Academic Leadership* (Emerald Press, October 2023), the book features contributions from presidents and deans around the world who discuss their paths to leadership and issues in higher education. Countries represented included Australia, Canada, Great Britain, India, Ireland, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, the United States and Ghana.



Roy Garcia, associate vice president for alumni engagement and philanthropy, was selected by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) to serve as co-chair of the 2025 District II Annual Conference in New York City. CASE is the guiding association for higher education advancement worldwide. Garcia previously served as co-chair of the Opportunity and Inclusion Committee of the District II Annual Conference.



Eileen Lubeck, dean of students, was selected as one of 30 administrators across the country to receive an Education Advisory Board Rising Higher Education Fellowship. This six-month, cohort-based experience aims to build community, develop a depth of expertise in the topics and issues that matter most to



institutional strategy, and provide focused professional skills development from EAB industry experts. Her project capstone focused on the role of a chief wellness officer, which would address wellbeing from a campus-wide perspective.

Three faculty were honored for excellence during the University’s 2024 Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony. Marianne Sullivan, professor of public health, received the 2024 Faculty Excellence in Research, Scholarship, and Creative Expression Award; Nicole Davi, professor of environmental science, received the 2024 Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award; and David Demsey, professor of music, received the 2024 Faculty Excellence Award for Service.



President Emerita Kathleen Waldron, Professor Marianne Sullivan, Professor Nicole Davi, Professor David Demsey, President Richard J., Helldobler, and Provost Joshua Powers

II. STUDENT SUCCESS

The University remains critically focused on student success and making an impact on the lives of its students who are changing the social fabric of New Jersey, the region, and the nation. During the 2023-24 academic year, William Paterson was strategically focused on serving its many student populations—undergraduate, graduate, and adult learners—by offering a wide range of course options, including in person, hybrid, and online, as well as a full range of student support initiatives.

Enrollment and Degree Completion Highlights

William Paterson saw a gain of nearly 14 percent in the enrollment of full-time, first-time freshmen for the incoming Class of 2028 for fall 2024, including students from 18 counties in New Jersey, 13 states, and 21 countries. In addition, the number of new transfer students on the main campus rose 4.6 percent, while the number of new graduate students increased 14.6 percent.

Overall, William Paterson's total enrollment for fall 2024 grew to 11,896 students, an increase from the fall 2023 enrollment of 10,821. Main campus full-time undergraduate enrollment, the University's most significant source of revenue, fell slightly. The University enrolled 4,298 such undergraduate students, compared to 4,347 in fall 2023. Overall graduate enrollment was 3,431.

The retention rate for main campus full-time first-year students continued its positive trend, increasing to 74.4 percent for fall 2023 from 73.3 percent in fall 2023 and 71 percent in fall 2022. In addition, first-year retention increased in several tracked cohorts, including women, men, Hispanic, Black, and resident students. The University provided targeted interventions by professional advisors in the Advisement Center, as well as integrated supports within the Will. Power. 101 program including specific assistance around barriers to registration, connection to academic and other supports to improve academic performance, funding support for students to purchase books and/or computers as needed, and curriculum in support of academic and other key skills development. Other targeted initiatives include expanded supplemental instruction for high-difficulty courses, providing weekly, peer-led study sessions.

Additional growth was fueled by WP Online, the University's fully online degree platform, which launched in 2020. With two start dates for WP Online during the fall semester, enrollment grew to 4,258 students enrolled for fall 2024, compared to 3,648 students enrolled for fall 2023 and enrollment of 2,759 students for fall 2022. WP Online

students accounted for approximately 36 percent of total enrollment for fall 2024.

In addition, high school dual enrollment grew to 1,440 students for fall 2024, compared to 1,198 students in fall 2023 and 665 students in fall 2022. This continued growth comes after a new approach to this program was adopted in 2018, and the institution now enrolls students at 43 high schools across the region.

The six-year graduation rate fell to 43.9 percent from a rate of 47.7 percent for the previous cohort. The University's four-year graduation rate rose slightly to 30.9 percent from 27.8 percent for the previous cohort, and 26 percent in 2022. These graduation rates are likely a continuing consequence of the pandemic.



In fall 2023, the University launched a vibrant new marketing campaign designed to highlight elements of the institution's new brand and identity, including the innovative support system provided for students through the Student Success Teams, as well as career readiness, access and affordability, active learning, and a commitment to diversity and inclusion. Created in partnership with Ologie, a national marketing and branding agency that specializes in higher education, the new campaign evolves the University's longstanding "Will. Power." concept by positioning William Paterson as a "Powerhouse for Personal Progress" that is launching the workforce of the future. The campaign includes billboard, train, and bus ads, along with a comprehensive range of digital advertising targeted to prospective undergraduate and graduate students, including adult learners.

During 2023-24, William Paterson engaged with a state-wide initiative to reengage adults who have some college but no degree. The effort yielded more than 500 former University students who returned to William Paterson and more than 1,000 students who are engaged in

discussions about returning. New Jersey views this “some college, no degree” population as a key demographic for state economic growth and equity goals.

To support adult learners, the University’s degree completion and adult learning program in the new College of Adult and Professional Studies works with returning students on securing credit for prior learning through testing, portfolio assessment of related work experience, and credit equivalency options for professional training and credentials. The College worked with academic units across the University last year to expand established credit equivalency pathways for returning students with professional credentials, with options to receive course credit for learning completed outside the classroom by submitting licenses, certifications, and/or professional work transcripts.

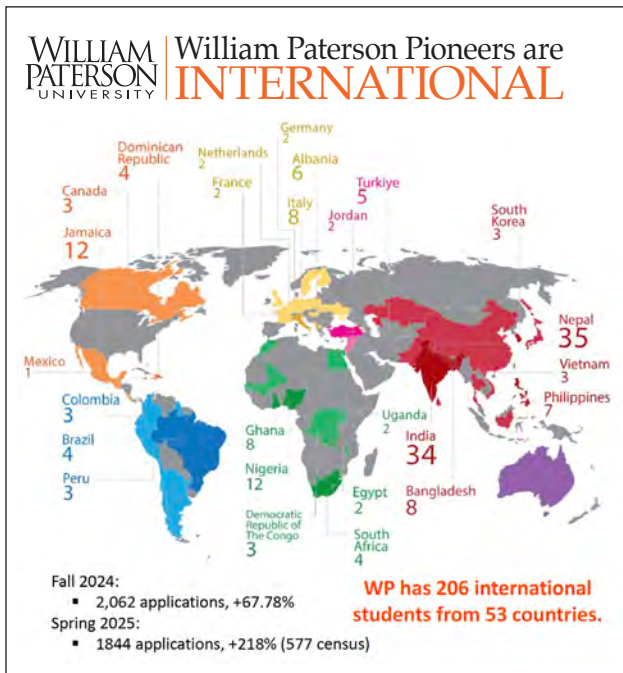
The University’s Office of International Services has launched an expansive plan to increase international enrollment to at least 5 percent of the main campus population by 2027. Efforts have already yielded positive results. More than 2,000 applications were received from international students for the fall 2024 semester, a gain of 68 percent over the previous year. Currently, there are 208 international students from 53 countries enrolled at the University.



As of the fall 2023 semester, all first-year students were assigned a Student Success Team—a financial aid counselor, a professional advisor, and a career coach—to provide direct, consistent contacts who will guide and support them through graduation. As sophomores, their success team expands to include a faculty mentor from the students’ intended academic major. This team-based approach is designed to support coordinated solutions for student needs, build relationships, and ensure that every student has direct access to critical University resources and support.

This initiative has already yielded positive results. For example, 93 percent of students who met with their financial aid counselor avoided balances due that would have interfered with registration for the spring 2024 semester. Seventy-nine percent of those students continued to the spring 2024 semester. And 94 percent of students who met with their faculty mentor in the fall 2023 semester persisted to the spring semester. Furthermore, 78 percent of students who attended four or more tutoring or academic support sessions persisted to the spring, and 86.5 percent of students who participated in the Advisement Center’s re-registration campaign persisted from the fall to spring semester.

In addition, the University implemented the Navigate platform for management, data, and outreach to students. Navigate unites administrators, faculty, staff, and students in a collaborative network that supports students from enrollment to career. During the 2023-24 academic year, 5,918 students used Navigate to schedule and track 26,402 appointments overall, including more than 11,300 advising appointments, 650 office hour sessions with faculty, and 8,600 hours with tutors for academic help, counselors to resolve financial aid matters, and more. In addition, usage was 57 percent above the usage for the next highest peer institution that implemented the platform in the same timeframe.



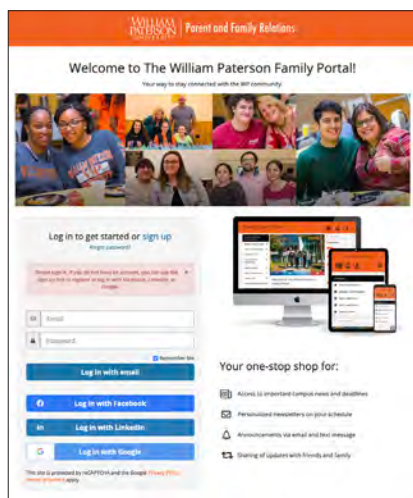
Student Success Support and Initiatives

William Paterson University has built an innovative and comprehensive system of student support focused on academics, career development, and campus life, customized to meet students’ individual needs.

As of the 2023-24 academic year, the Office of Academic Achievement and the Office of Academic Success and Student Transitions were integrated within the Division of Student Development, better aligning these offices to provide a holistic approach to student support, a central focus for the institution.

The offices collaborated across the University to support success, retention, and engagement, holding 34 programs with 18 non-academic departments and 21 academic collaborations with faculty and academic departments. In addition, the Advisement Center implemented advising services for students in all class years through graduation and held 48 registration sessions to assist undergraduates. The Educational Opportunity Fund has a full-time academic coach to support students on probation or those needing additional support.

The Office of Parent and Family Relations, within the Division of Student Development, provides comprehensive resources and programs for parents and families focused on understanding the university experience and facilitating their students' transition to college. The office launched a Real Talk Series, a variety of webinars, workshops, and virtual gatherings focused on specific topics relevant to student success, such as simplifying the FAFSA, advisement, student mental health, and career readiness, among others. Held in conjunction with other offices on campus, the Real Talk Series provides a space where families can ask questions and get to know University personnel and the resources that they offer students. Gatherings are recorded when possible and available for viewing.



In addition, the office manages the William Paterson Family Portal, designed to serve as a primary communication vehicle for parents and families. As of fall 2024, 2,692 parent/family members are registered users, more than double the 1,196 users registered in fall 2023. Of those registered, 1,339 are family members of first-generation students. Since its inception, 59 percent of users have actively engaged with the portal by opening, viewing, or clicking on content.

The University's Will. Power. 101 and 102 success courses for first-year students, taught by professional advisors, continue to successfully provide students

with the specific advice and support they need as they transition to college, covering such topics as study skills, time management, and choosing a major, while also introducing them to campus resources.



The Pioneer Pantry moved to a larger, more accessible space prior to the start of the fall 2023 semester in an effort to increase support for students struggling with food insecurity. The space, now located just steps from the Lot 5 bus stop, allows for an expanded inventory of products, including perishables such as milk and eggs, which are stored in a refrigerator newly donated by the Food Bank of New Jersey. The pantry also offered extended daily hours thanks to a VISTA volunteer. During the 2023-24 academic year, 466 individual students used the pantry for a total of 1,541 visits.

The Counseling, Health and Wellness Center (CHWC) sought to enhance its services for students through several initiatives. As of fall 2023, William Paterson students have free and immediate access to online mental health through Uwill, a leading student mental health teletherapy and wellness platform. The service is provided through a first-in-the nation partnership between Uwill and the State of New Jersey. CHWC serves as the William Paterson liaison to Uwill and CHWC counselors are available to provide referrals, instruction, and training to members of the campus community on how to use the web-based application. Students can choose a therapist based on their preferences including availability, gender, language, ethnicity, and specialty, as well as a time that fits their schedule, with day, night, and weekend options.

In March 2024, CHWC opened a Student Relaxation Lounge in the David and Lorraine Cheng Library on campus. The new wellness space is designed for students who are seeking a quiet place on campus to relax and destress and is especially targeted to the University's neurodiverse population and students in need of relaxation and coping strategies. The lounge was funded as part of a Mental Health in Higher Education: Community Provider Partnerships and Professional



The Student Relaxation Lounge in the Cheng Library

Development Grant from the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE), and was developed through a partnership between CHWC, the Cheng Library, and the Accessibility Resource Center.

The lounge features a relaxation area, a meditation area, and a telehealth room, and is open to all registered students.

Student Honors and Achievements

During the 2023-24 academic year, William Paterson provided opportunities for students to participate in undergraduate research and other scholarly and creative activities, as well as in a variety of civic, extracurricular, and athletic activities, earning honors and accolades.

William Paterson University's student chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, known on campus as WPSPJ, was selected as the 2023 National Campus Chapter of the Year, clinching the top spot from among 108 chapters across the United States. This marks the fourth time that WPSPJ earned national recognition since its founding in 2017 by Nicholas Hirshon, associate professor of communication, who serves as the chapter's advisor. The chapter's wide array of programming included tours of the Al Jazeera bureau at the United Nations, 1010 WINS radio station, *The Record*, and *Newsday*, as well as several on-campus discussions with guest journalists and another 23 such meetings via Zoom. In addition, WPSPJ launched the first podcast by an SPJ campus chapter, wherein members interview journalists from major news outlets; hosted two panels on campus that included journalists from *The Athletic*, *Axios*, *PIX 11*, *Inside Edition*, *USA Today*, and more; and partnered with the SPJ chapter at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island to cohost a long-distance workshop on diversity in journalism.

Jessica David '24 and Felix Camacho '27 were named the Overall Team Champion in the 16th National Sales Challenge hosted by the University's Russ Berrie Institute for Professional Sales in November 2023 on campus. In addition, David won first place and Camacho took third place in the competition's speed selling contest. The three-day event attracts top sales students from the U.S.



Professor Ron Jones, Jessica David '24, Felix Camacho '27, and Professor Mike Chao

and beyond as competitors, with executives from major corporations serving as judges. One hundred students from 25 universities in the United States, Canada, and Hong Kong competed during the 2023 event.



Bill Charlap joins the WP Jazz Orchestra, directed by Professor David Demsey, at Dizzy's Club

Three William Paterson University student groups—the WP Jazz Orchestra and two other small jazz ensembles—performed at Dizzy's Club at Jazz at Lincoln Center on March 12, 2024. Internationally acclaimed pianist Bill Charlap, director of William Paterson's Jazz Studies Program, and baritone saxophonist Gary Smulyan, a member of the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, which began as the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra in 1966—joined the WP Jazz Orchestra, under the direction of David Demsey, professor of music and coordinator of jazz studies, for the first set. The second set featured two small groups: a quintet directed by Charlap, and a sextet, directed by Jeremy Pelt, which performed music by late director of jazz studies James Williams. The ensembles represent three of the 25 jazz groups that are the core of William Paterson's historic Jazz Studies Program, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2023.

Students from the University's radio and television stations, 88.7 FM Brave New Radio and WPTV, won a combined three first-place awards during the 2024 Intercollegiate Broadcasting System Awards in March 2024. Students from 88.7 FM Brave New Radio won in the category of Best Sports Pre/Post Game for the *Football*



Students celebrate Brave New Radio's Marconi Award

Post-Game Show. Students from WPTV won two awards, for Best Comedy Program for *Fake News Network*, and for Best Talk Program for *Very Late*, “Is a College Degree Still Worth It?” Overall, students were nominated for a combined 12 IBS awards.

The William Paterson University Chamber Wind Ensemble, the premier large ensemble for woodwind and brass players and percussionists, and the Community Symphony Orchestra, comprised of music majors, non-music majors, alumni, and members of the community, performed at Carnegie Hall in New York City on April 28, 2024 as part of Distinguished Concerts International, New York’s Windsongs Concert Series. The program featured a wide variety of music, including works by Giovanni Santos, Nubia Jaime Donjuan, Anton Dvorak, Josef Strauss, and Camille Saint-Saens.

Helen Yousaf '24, who earned a bachelor of science degree in medicinal biochemistry and a minor in public health, *summa cum laude*, was named the 2024 “Outstanding Senior” by the William Paterson University Alumni Association. A member of the University’s Honors College, Yousaf also completed the Global Public Health Honors Track. She earned the National



Collegiate Honors Council’s John J. Hanigan Scholarship, which recognizes honors students committed to serving their communities, and presented her research at its 2023 annual conference. She conducted research with faculty members in community and social justice studies, public health, and chemistry and was actively engaged as an intern for the Honors College. She played a key role in organizing Honors College civic engagement events, including “Slices of Service,” a multi-pronged civic engagement project in which students reflected on the issue of food insecurity.

Cristian Tavarez, who graduated in May 2024 with a bachelor’s degree in sport management, was one of 24 college students selected from across the nation for this year’s United States Golf Association (USGA) Pathways internship, which brought him to the U.S. Open Golf Championship.

Jerline Sanchez, a biology major, participated in a pre-med immersion experience in Milan, Italy in the summer of 2024 during which she shadowed medical practitioners and actively observed surgeries and radiotherapy work.

Five WP Honors students— Isabel Nemeth, Jason Peralta, Alexandra Quintero, and Didar Yahia from the Honors Global Public Health Track, and Andy Takagi Rojas from the Honors Music Track—presented their research at the Northeast Regional Honors Conference in April 2024. In addition, Peralta was awarded a Minority Student Scholarship by the NRHC and received an honorable mention for the Student of the Year Award. Quintero, Takagi Rojas, and Yahia received honorable mentions for the Minority Student Scholarship Award.

Bella Jaramillo '24, who graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in English-creative writing, *summa cum laude*, was awarded a Literary Agents of Change Fellowship. This prestigious fellowship includes a generous stipend and a 10-week internship at one of the premier literary agencies in New York City.

Eleven students in the Honors College Cognitive Science Track presented their research at the Eastern Psychological Association (EPA) conference in Philadelphia. The EPA is one of five regional associations of the American Psychological Association and is a place for psychologists and their students in the Northeast to present and hear about the newest research in human behavior.

Julia Sklow '24 presented at the Lycoming College Undergraduate Humanities Research Conference in April 2024. Her work, “Something Wicked This Way Comes: The Rise and Fall of Harry Potter,” was part of the Film, Fantasy, and Humanism panel. The conference provides undergraduate student researchers an opportunity to share their work in the social science and humanities disciplines.

Eight students involved in the Garden State Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (GS-LSAMP), presented their research at the annual 2024 sySTEMic Food Insecurity presentations at Rutgers-Newark. A student team comprised of Samantha Fernandez, Jennipher Gomez, and Jeanette Hudak placed second for their presentation, “Entomophagy as a Solution to Food Insecurity.” A second team comprised of students Tyler Sanchez, Mathew Nieves, Ethan Acosta, Francisco Perez

Ramos, and Bryan Menendez received an Honorable Mention for their presentation, "Composting: The Bane of Food Waste."

Bailey Giles, MM '24, was one of two winners of the Best Jazz Soloist, Graduate College Award in the 47th Annual *DownBeat* Student Music Awards. Established in 1976, the *DownBeat* Student Music Awards are considered the most prestigious awards in jazz education. Hundreds of musicians, music educators, and music industry professionals received their first international recognition as *DownBeat* Student Music Award winners. Giles plays alto and tenor saxophone.



Two students pursuing graduate degrees in psychology were recognized with prestigious fellowships from the American Psychological Association (APA). **Nicole Guevara**, who is pursuing a doctoral degree in clinical psychology, was selected for the APA's Minority Fellowship Program via its doctoral Mental

Health and Substance Abuse Services division. This competitive fellowship, federally funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, provides financial support for tuition, conference travel, targeted mentorship, and training opportunities. **Shara Rondon**, who is pursuing a master's degree in clinical and counseling psychology, was selected for the APA's Interdisciplinary Minority Fellowship Program, which supports the training of ethnic minority graduate students who commit to significantly improving the quality of care provided to ethnic and racial minorities with a mental or co-occurring mental and substance use disorder.



Michaela Raguseo '24 was the student speaker for the University's 2024 Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony on May 22 at the Prudential Center in Newark.

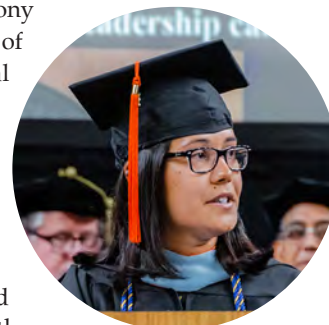


She earned a bachelor of arts degree in mathematics, *summa cum laude*, and completed the Independent Honors Track. She will continue her education at William Paterson by working towards her MS in applied mathematics. Raguseo was an active member on campus, playing on the softball team and working as a tutor in the Mathematics Learning Center.



Amirah Elayan '22 and Brittany Casares delivered the graduate student addresses at the 2024 Graduate Commencement Ceremonies on May 20 in the Sports and Recreation Center on campus. Elayan, who earned a master of fine arts degree in creative and professional writing, spoke at a ceremony

for graduates of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and the Cotsakos College of Business. Casares, who earned a master of education degree in educational leadership, spoke at the ceremony for the College of Education and College of Science and Health.



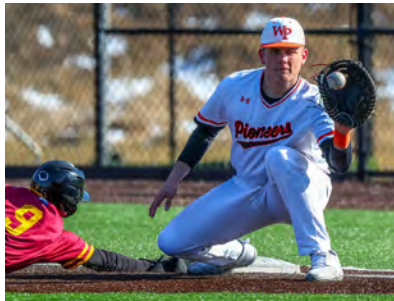
Eight WP students were selected to make presentations in the first Socially Responsible Entrepreneurship Pitch Fest, held by the Center for Socially Responsible Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the Cotsakos College of Business. Each student or team of students presented their ideas in person to a panel of three WP alumni with extensive business and entrepreneurial experience: Mark DeZao '84, owner of D3 Footwear Consulting and former vice president, development and product design, for Easy Spirit; Carlos M. Lopez '09, co-founder and CEO of Tropical Juice Bar and Caribbean Station Restaurant; and Nicole Neal '04, owner of a financial service business and co-author of the children's book, *Seize the Day: Leila's Big Adventure*. Fabio Sorial, a sophomore from Egypt majoring in biotechnology with a minor in business, won first prize and a seed grant for his app Mom Care. Other participants were Rohit Rauniyer, Sereniti Catoe, Angela Grace George, Ashtin Sanchez, Helen Yousaf, Tai Walker, and Konnan Perez Roquel.

The women's volleyball team advanced to the finals of the Eastern College Athletic Conference Division III tournament and the semifinals of the New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) Tournament. Head coach Kevin Rodgers, assistant coach Tiffani Causing, and volunteer assistant coach Bill Le were named the NJAC Co-Coaching Staff of the Year.



Junior volleyball defensive specialist Paola Molina was named to the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) All-America Honorable Mention and the AVCA All-District 4 First Team, while also being honored as NJAC Defensive Player of the Year. She was the first Pioneer in program history to earn each of those three awards.

Freshman first baseman **Ty Kobylakiewicz** was named to the All-ECAC Baseball Team and All-NJAC Baseball First Team.



Overall, 28 student-athletes garnered spots on the College Sports Communicators (CSC) Academic All-District Team.

Seven members of the Pioneer Golf Team were selected to the Atlantic East Conference All-Academic Team.

Nine members of the softball team were named Easton/National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) All-America Scholar Athletes.

Seventy-eight Pioneers secured bids to the Academic All-NJAC Team.

Senior football defensive back Devyn Blount earned a spot on the D3football.com All-Region Second Team and the All-NJAC First Team.

Diversity and Inclusion

Federally recognized as both a Minority-Serving Institution and a Hispanic-Serving Institution, William Paterson is proud of its status as an institution serving students from historically underrepresented backgrounds. More than 60 percent of its students are students of color and 30 percent identify as Latino/a/x. The University continues to be one of the most ethnically diverse campuses in its region, according to *U.S. News & World Report's Best Colleges 2025*.

In January 2024, the University appointed **Jeanne Arnold**, an experienced higher education diversity, equity, and inclusion leader, as chief diversity officer and as a member of the President's Cabinet. Prior to the 2024-25 academic year, the University established a new Division of Equity and Inclusion under her leadership. The division is tasked with creating an inclusive campus culture; supporting the design and implementation efforts for diverse hiring and retention; facilitating diversity, equity, and inclusion training and development; and ensuring compliance is met with federal, state, and local policies specific to Title IX and Title VII (sexual harassment and discrimination based on any protected category). The Office of Student Diversity and Inclusion, the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, the Black Cultural Center, and the Center for Latinidad, previously part of the Division of Student Development, and the director of institutional equity and compliance and Title IX coordinator moved to the new division, incorporating equity and inclusion initiatives for both students and employees in one location.



Among the division's initiatives was the campus-wide administration of the 2024 Campus Climate Survey conducted by the Higher Education Data Consortium (HEDS) to help the institution gain a deeper understanding of student, faculty, and staff perceptions of the extent to which the campus climate supports diversity and equity, leading to enhanced support, policies, and practices, including those designed to prevent or respond to discrimination and harassment.

Career readiness served as the focal point as the Office of Student Diversity and Inclusion encouraged



students to complete the Social Justice Leadership Badge through online diversity training and participation in social justice-highlighted events. Four hundred sixty-two students submitted Social Justice Leadership Badge surveys, with 96 percent indicating that events they attended "reinforced the importance of talking across differences about issues that affect members in our community." Continued partnerships with the Career Development Center offered support for students to highlight their diversity training on their resumes, and to strengthen opportunities for securing competitive internships and jobs.

The 5th annual “Conocimiento” day conference in April 2024 had 170 participants with support from more than 15 clubs, organizations, offices, and departments. As the University continues to grow as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, this experience provided space for discussion and testimonials around Latino/a/x cultural resilience, migration, community action, and organizing. Several students participated in an engaging panel where they discussed their Latinx community identities, histories, and experiences. This was followed by an art exhibition showcasing students' artwork related to mental health, healing, and community resilience.

The Office of Student Diversity and Inclusion continued to offer cultural, educational, and social experiences through the coordination and support of more than 100 programs and events such as Courageous Conversations, theme celebration keynotes and programs, LGBTQIA+ focused events, mentorship/academic support programs, affinity group graduation ceremonies, and more. Over 1,300 students participated in at least one program facilitated by Student Diversity and Inclusion.

In addition, the office, in partnership with the Department of Marketing and Public Relations, launched a photo installation campaign aimed at showcasing William Paterson's diversity, with portraits of students displayed in all three cultural centers, the second floor of the Machuga Student Center, and the Student Diversity and Inclusion administrative office.

Gender and sexuality resources remained a priority with the expansion of the LGBTe+ Mentorship program managed through the Center for Diversity and Inclusion. This program offers a queer-centered approach for peer mentorship to connect students who identify within the LGBTQIA+ spectrum with diverse faculty, staff, alumni, and students while also providing support for self-exploration, personal goals, and professional development.

Career Development Initiatives and Activities

Initiatives and activities designed to help students develop skills that will help them achieve career success following graduation are having a demonstrated impact. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), 86 percent of the Class of 2023 are employed or in graduate school within six months after graduation, five percent higher than the national average of 81 percent.

A major initiative was the launch for the fall 2024 semester of an innovative experiential learning model that affords every student a significant hands-on experience that will prepare them for post-graduation success. The Career Experience Program, required for

all students beginning with the Class of 2028, offers a variety of pathways to help them gain valuable hands-on experience and develop essential skills. Students can select experiential courses within their academic curriculum to fulfill the requirements, which might include a hands-on project, fieldwork, or a civic engagement activity, or take the opportunity to gain experience outside of class through an internship, job simulation, shadowing, or civic engagement experience. The program provides opportunities and experiences that are accessible and attainable for all students—reducing or removing barriers such as transportation or scheduling conflicts with existing employment, that are often deterrents for underserved and low-income students.



The Pesce Family Mentoring Institute, completing its tenth year, continued its efforts to pair successful alumni and local business professionals with select undergraduate students. During the 2023-24 academic year, the Institute arranged 302 mentor/mentee matches, approximately the same as the previous academic year, and increased the number of alumni mentors, who now comprise 58 percent of the program's mentors. Forty-seven percent of the mentees identified as first-generation college students. Data for Class of 2023 graduates who participated in the Institute indicates that 98 percent secured employment or headed to graduate school following graduation.

The Career Development Center, the College of Science and Health, and the Office of Institutional Advancement, collaborated on SHINE (Science and Health Industries



Network for Excellence), a networking initiative designed to connect students with WP alumni in specific industries for panel discussions and networking. Two SHINE events were held during the 2023-24 academic year, one focused on cutting-edge careers in AI and technology, and the other on careers in allied health.

In fall 2024, the Center partnered with the Cotsakos College of Business to launch an industry field trip program. Through the program, an employer partner hosts a one-day field trip to provide students with an inside look at the organization and network with professionals and WP alumni. Students from the Cotsakos College of Business visited Deloitte and Gallo in the fall, with plans to expand the program to different industry sectors going forward.



A career and internship fair

In addition, the Center saw continued high student engagement in areas such as one-to-one appointments with Career Development Center staff, and attendance at events and career fairs. The Center hosted several large-scale recruiting events/job fairs, including a Mega Job and Internship Fair in March 2024. Other focused job fairs included a new Student Worker Job Fair, a Fall Internship Fair, a Meet the Firms Fair, a Marketing and Public Relations Fair in partnership with the Department of Communication, a Cotsakos College of Business Networking Night, a new Education Interview Day and Fair, and a new Healthcare Career Fair.

The Center partnered with multiple programs and campus constituents to deliver career readiness programs and workshops, including Will. Power. 101/102, the Educational Opportunity Fund Summer Program, Athletics, the Honors College, Veteran and Military Affairs, the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, the Cotsakos College of Business, the College of Education, the College of Science and Health, and the new College of Adult and Professional Studies.

The Center's Career Communities program, which launched in summer 2021, is now fully integrated within the University's Student Success Teams in partnership with Academic Advisement and Academic Affairs. The communities, organized by industry, give students the opportunity to choose among seven different career communities as a means to better assist them in expanding their awareness of career paths, solidifying career goals, identifying job opportunities, and expanding their network.

The Center's Career and Professional Success Digital Badge for students, offered as part of the WP Leads Digital Badge Program administered by Campus Activities, Service, and Leadership, helps students discover key career readiness skills aimed at helping them navigate and prepare for the professional world. During the academic year, 1,464 students participated in one or more of the badge modules.



The Peace Corps and William Paterson jointly launched a new undergraduate certificate program called Peace Corps Prep during the 2022-23 academic year, one of only two such programs in New Jersey. During the 2023-24 academic year, four students received the certification. Combining targeted coursework with hands-on experience, the program builds the competencies needed for students to go on to be strong Peace Corps volunteers or other intercultural field workers. The program is jointly housed in the Career Development Center and the Office of Campus Activities, Service, and Leadership.

III. ADVANCEMENT AND ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

Fundraising

Fundraising was highly successful. The University raised nearly \$5.3 million, 96 percent of the goal of \$5.5 million. This included more than \$740,000 raised for annual giving, the highest in University history. Annual giving continues to increase year over year, predominately due to the increase of and focus on annual named scholarships of \$1,000 or more.

The endowment grew to \$28.57 million (unaudited), a 96.4 percent increase in the last five years, and the scholarship endowment, a subset of the total endowment, grew to nearly \$22.8 million (unaudited), an increase of 142.5 percent in the last five years. More than 775 scholarships were awarded in the 2023-24 academic year, providing more than \$1.6 million in student support.

More than 750 scholarships were awarded for the 2023-24 academic year, providing more than \$1.6 million in student support.

Total assets of the Foundation reached \$54.3 million, a 19 percent increase over the previous year, and an 86.3 percent increase over the last five years due to fundraising efforts and market conditions.



Stephen Adzima '75 and President Helldobler at the Athletics Fieldhouse groundbreaking

The Pioneering Champions Campaign, which seeks to raise \$1.5 million in support of the renovation and addition to the Athletics Fieldhouse, received a \$250,000 lead donation from **Stephen Adzima '75**, a former Pioneer football player, member of the William Paterson University Athletic Hall of Fame, and former member of the Board of Trustees, to name the Stephen Adzima Strength and Conditioning Center. The gift establishes an endowed fund for ongoing support of the fieldhouse. In addition, the University will name the baseball locker room in the fieldhouse in honor of the late Alan J. Anderson '81, a member of the William Paterson University Athletic Hall



A rendering of the Fieldhouse project

of Fame, in recognition of a \$200,000 donation from the **Alan J. Anderson** Foundation to the Pioneering Champions Campaign.



As part of the University's Giving Tuesday fundraising initiative, Provost Joshua Powers led a group of faculty, staff, alumni, and students on a hike to the 800-foot summit of High Mountain in High Mountain Park Preserve adjacent to the campus in support of the Provost Powers Student Emergency Support Fund. The fund provides support for full-time or part-time students in good academic standing who are experiencing an unexpected financial hardship to help them reach their goal of graduating.



Provost Powers and hikers on High Mountain

Bernie Williams, the New York Yankees great and Latin Grammy-nominated guitarist and composer; alumna Valerie Pavard '03, née Gross, a New York City-based technology, digital transformation, and outsourcing attorney; and Gallo, a global leader in wine and spirits, were honored at the William Paterson University Foundation's 33rd Annual Legacy Award Gala on April 17, 2024. The Legacy Awards honor those who exemplify the leadership of the institution's namesake, William Paterson, by demonstrating strong support for



President Helldobler, Bernie Williams, Jennifer Cox from Gallo, Val Paverd '03, Averiel McKenzie and Jacqueline Crombie, also from Gallo

public higher education in the state of New Jersey, and generosity to others through philanthropic leadership.

Approximately 320 students, alumni, friends, faculty, staff, and administrators attended the 25th Annual Scholarship Dinner on November 30, 2023. Alumnus Mark DeZao '84, a donor and mentor with the University's Pesce Family Mentoring Institute, was the keynote speaker.



President Helldobler, donors, and students at the Scholarship Dinner

Alumni Engagement

The Office of Alumni Relations and the Alumni Association continued to collaborate with campus partners to find ways for the University's nearly 89,000 alumni to become meaningfully engaged in the life of the University, including volunteer opportunities, programs, engagement experiences, philanthropy, and communication.

The Office of Alumni Relations moved to a new home in the John Victor Machuga Student Center on campus in November 2023. The move, after two decades in the Allan and Michele Gorab Alumni House in nearby North Haledon, is designed to provide additional opportunities for alumni to interact and engage with students.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on November 30, 2023 to celebrate the dedication of the new space as the Allan and Michele Gorab Alumni Center. Allan Gorab

'72, who served as president of the Alumni Association from 1992 to 2000, and his wife, Michele, made a lead gift in 2001 to establish an alumni house as a home for alumni.

The new, inviting space, on the third floor of the Machuga Student Center, overlooks the campus with a view of Zanfino Plaza and is adjacent to student-focused offices, including the Career Development Center, home of the Pesce Family Mentoring Institute, as well as the Career Closet; the Student Government Association; the Office of Student Diversity and Inclusion; and student club offices.



The ribbon-cutting for the Allan and Michele Gorab Alumni Center

Numerous alumni connected with students, faculty, and staff during more than 60 in-person and virtual engagement opportunities. Examples include an inaugural Baseball Beefsteak in October 2023 with nearly 70 alumni in attendance; a sold-out hockey event featuring a reception and attendance at a New Jersey Devils game in January 2024; a Football Beefsteak Dinner in February 2024; and an Alumni-Student Networking Night, in partnership with the Career Development Center, as part of the University's Black History Month celebration in February 2024.

The Class of 1974 celebrated their 50th reunion by participating in the Undergraduate Commencement ceremony on May 22 at the



Prudential Center in Newark, where they joined in the academic procession, following the new graduates into the arena, and received special recognition from President Helldobler during the ceremony.

The following day, May 23, members of the class returned to campus for a 50th Reunion Luncheon, where they were able to reconnect with classmates, reminisce with friends, and reflect on their experience at William

Paterson. President Helldobler, Provost Powers, and members of academic leadership and the Institutional Advancement team also joined the celebration. After lunch, attendees had the opportunity to take a shuttle tour of campus and witness the many exciting changes that have occurred since their time at William Paterson.



Homecoming and Family Day 2023

More than 1,200 alumni, family, and friends returned to campus for Homecoming and Family Day on October 21, 2023. Events included a pre-game tailgate and a groundbreaking ceremony for the Athletics Fieldhouse.

In addition, pre-game tailgates were held prior to several home games during the 2023 football season, which drew alumni, families, faculty, staff, and community members.



Alumni veterans Stephen Hutnik '74, Vincent Mazzola '73, Michael Driscoll '74, Leonard Domino '74, and Donald Liguori '75

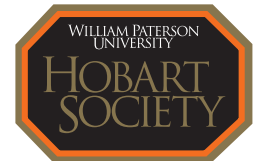
Also on October 21, a group of alumni veterans who graduated in the 1970s, along with their guests, gathered for a luncheon in the John Victor Machuga Student Center on campus. Spearheaded by Mike Driscoll '74, the group had an opportunity to reconnect with one another and their *alma mater*. Those in attendance enjoyed catching up and sharing stories from their time at WP while viewing memorabilia and photos that they brought to share with one another, as well as learning about the University's Office of Veteran and Military Affairs and the many support services offered to veterans, active-duty service members, and their families that assist with the transition from military service member to college student. Alumni veterans had an opportunity to meet and talk with current WP veteran students as well.



Alumni at the NBCUniversal reception

The University welcomed WP alumni employed at NBCUniversal back to campus on October 28, 2023 for a special reception. The event provided an opportunity to socialize with fellow alumni working at NBCUniversal, connect with current College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences students, and learn about the many exciting happenings at the University and within the College. The gathering took place in Hamilton Hall, the home of the Department of Communication, where the alumni had a chance to visit the TV studios, control rooms, and WPSC-FM Brave New Radio station, participate in brief studio interviews facilitated by students, and network with current students seeking to break into the industry. The event was spearheaded by NBCUniversal alumni leadership volunteers Greg Francis '96, senior vice president, technical operations, and Marc Greenstein '23, senior vice president, design and production.

More than 130 alumni, guests, and members of the University community attended the Pioneer Society Luncheon, held on December 8, 2023. The event celebrates alumni who graduated from William Paterson more than 50 years ago. During the luncheon, members of the Class of 1973 were inducted as the newest members of the society.



A new initiative, WP2: William Paterson Women Pioneers, designed to provide educational, leadership, social, and cultural programs where the University's alumnae can interact with and be inspired by others, launched during the spring 2024 semester. Alumni Relations partnered with the Career Development Center to announce the new initiative during the Women's Empowerment



Jhree Davis-Jones '06, MEd '13, Lazara Paz-Gonzalez '02, and Janelle Hall '11 at the Women's Empowerment Social Hour

Social Hour held in March as part of the University's celebration of Women's History Month. A virtual webinar titled "Financial Planning: What Women Need to Know," featuring three alumnae who are all certified financial planners, was held in June 2024. The advisors offered tips geared to helping women thrive and build financial knowledge and wellness.



Alumni and friends in Sarasota

Alumni, friends, and *emeriti* faculty members living in Florida had a chance to connect with William Paterson and one another during two events held in February 2024. Gatherings were hosted on the west and east coasts, in the Sarasota and Boca Raton areas, respectively. President Helldobler participated in both events and shared the latest University news and updates. In addition, alumnus Mark DeZao '84 and his wife, Denise, hosted a private lunch in their home in North Palm Beach, where the University welcomed several advisory council members as well as alumni Christos '72 and Tami '71 Costakos. Collectively,

many Florida alumni and friends continued a tradition of supporting the Florida Alumni Endowed Scholarship, which is awarded in perpetuity annually to a student who resides in or has lived in Florida.

In addition, numerous alumni were engaged in the life of the campus through service as mentors for the Pesce Family Mentoring Institute, classroom guest speakers, members of the University's Board of Trustees, Foundation Board, Alumni Executive Council, and College Advisory Councils, and as panelists for College-specific and University events.



Alumni and friends at the Boca Raton reception

Alumni, as well as WP faculty and staff, continued to connect with each other and enjoy books focused on social justice and other topics through the WP Virtual Book Club. The book club continued the theme of "Social Justice: Learning and Building Community Across Differences" for the 2023-24 academic year. The program is a partnership with the University's Office of Employment Equity and Diversity.

IV. CAMPUS COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENTS

Campus Pride and Beautification

As part of William Paterson's efforts to enhance campus pride and spirit, the University installed a large orange WP monument on the Speert Green lawn near Grant Hall prior to the start of the fall 2024 semester. The new sculpture, known as the WP Spirit Rock, places one of William Paterson's iconic logos at the heart of the main campus and is meant to serve as a natural gathering spot for the campus community as well as enhance both the recruitment process and alumni engagement efforts.



The WP has become an iconic signature for William Paterson University since its launch in 2011, deployed on magnets, pins, athletic uniforms, t-shirts, and numerous other items. This 6.5-foot rendering of the WP sits on a large limestone-faced platform that celebrates a rock that was located nearby at the center of the campus for more than 50 years. The rock was a favorite gathering place for students and alumni and the phrase, "I'll meet you at the Rock," is warmly remembered by many alumni, and documented on a plaque on the platform.

The project was supported in part by a generous gift provided specifically for campus beautification from the estate of the late Edward Skurna '61, MA '69, a member of the William Paterson Heritage Society. It was formally dedicated as part of the University's 2024 Homecoming and Family Day festivities on November 9, 2024.

Facilities and Construction Highlights

The University implemented Workday, the institution's new cloud-based system for Human Resources, Payroll, and Finance. The new system went live on January 1, 2024. Workday's more user-friendly processes will streamline many everyday operations to increase administrative efficiency, as well as provide better and

more relevant real-time insights for business decisions. The project was partially funded by the State of New Jersey.

Construction began in fall 2023 on an addition and renovation of the Athletics Fieldhouse,



an initiative designed to provide the institution's student-athletes

with the resources they need to compete and succeed at the highest level. The project includes a 4,000-square-foot addition to its existing athletic fieldhouse facility. It will include a student-athlete-specific fitness center, featuring strength training and cardio areas, with roll-up glass garage doors facing Wightman Stadium. It will also feature an expanded athletic training facility; individual locker rooms for field hockey, softball, and women's soccer; and a renovation of the existing football and baseball locker rooms. William Paterson fields 13 NCAA Division III intercollegiate teams and currently has 300 student-athletes.



A major renovation and expansion of the Sports and Recreation Center will launch in June 2025 thanks to \$40 million in funding through the Education Facilities Authority recommended by the Office of the New Jersey Secretary of Higher Education and approved by the New Jersey legislature. The project will dramatically improve and expand key instructional resources, as well as sports and recreation facilities. It will include a two-story, 88,000 square-foot addition that will nearly triple the overall size of the building to accommodate a new Wellness Center

and significant new classroom and lab space for the nursing, kinesiology, and movement science programs, in addition to a new fitness center, natatorium, and locker rooms. Existing space will be renovated to create a new training room and Sports Therapy and Rehabilitation Instructional Lab.

In addition, the University received approximately \$2.3 million for technology infrastructure and modernization, with a special focus on upgrading campus Wi-Fi.

Sustainability



William Paterson’s sustainability programs continue to have a significant impact, with campus initiatives focused on conservation, efficiency, and education. The University’s 3.3 MW solar panel installation, among the largest at a four-year U.S. institution, currently supplies 12 percent of campus energy needs. Over the past two decades, while increasing the size of the campus by 47 percent, the University has lowered consumption of electricity by 30 percent, natural gas by 50 percent, and carbon emissions by 1350 tons.

Strategies for reducing energy usage include food waste composting, energy-efficient lighting and HVAC systems, recycling initiatives, resource conservation, and electric charging stations, among others. During the fall 2023 semester, the University unveiled a new initiative focused on collecting plastic bags and plastic film at designated collection locations around the University. The project resulted in the collection of more than 580 pounds of plastic film for recycling.

A new fleet of eco-friendly **campus shuttles** was deployed for the fall 2024. The new shuttles are 100 percent electric with zero carbon emissions, and they boast the latest technology and whisper-quiet rides—excellent for the environment as well as passengers’



safety and comfort. They also offer real-time GPS tracking via an app and onboard Wi-Fi, making commuting across campus easier and more efficient for all travelers. The vehicles’ exteriors have been wrapped with fun, WP-spirited graphics that feature the University mascot Pio “waving” from a window, plenty of Pioneer orange, and the Will. Power. motto.

Wellness Days

For the second consecutive year, Wellness Days were integrated into the fall 2023 semester on October 12 and 13 to provide students with a break and the opportunity to take advantage of available resources to focus on their physical, mental, and emotional health. No classes were held and no assignments were due.

Faculty and staff were encouraged to engage in



activities focused on health and wellness on October 12. The full day of programming included a wide range of in-person and virtual activities designed to

promote health and wellbeing. In addition to sessions on yoga and meditation practices, Dhrupad voice yoga, and Tai Chi, offerings included American Heart Association CPR demonstrations, health screenings provided by the Passaic County Health Department mobile unit, a vaccine clinic provided by Atlantic Health, and a healthy meal prep demonstration by dietitians from St. Joseph’s Hospital and Medical Center.

Other sessions focused on ways to promote wellness in the student population, including inclusive practices for supporting students in the classroom, supporting students in STEM fields, and incorporating mindfulness practices. Outdoor events included lawn games, a campus art gallery walk, and a harvest display build.

Employee Development

The University's Summer Learning and Development Program, now in its sixth year, continued in 2024, providing professional development workshops and team activities built on the growth mindset established by previous summer programs. The theme for 2024, *Lifting as You Climb: Strategy for Success*, focused on learning and developing new practices and skills as a strategy for individual and team success.

Learning was focused on four areas: Leadership for All Levels; Productivity and Time Management; Business Process Improvements; and Wellness, Inclusion, and Self-Improvement. The program ran for five Wednesdays, from July 10 through August 7.

Employees took part in a variety of sessions, including numerous sessions focused on the changeover to Workday, the institution's new cloud-based enterprise system for Human Resources, Payroll, and Finance. In addition, members of the Cabinet and department leaders were able to plan and deliver tailored development and team-building initiatives, including cross-functional meetings, during select Wednesdays. Among the offerings were two programs, Impact Players and Rookie Smarts, based on books by best-selling author and researcher Liz Wiseman.

The University also launched a new initiative, *Open the Front Door – Constructive Communication/Conflict Resolution*, designed to foster a positive, trusting work culture by encouraging employees to communicate openly with each other and to reach out informally for help to resolve issues before they require formal intervention.



Pioneer Recognition Program honorees Carmen Ortiz, Jan Pinkston, Nicholas Hirshon, Francisco Diaz, and Kevin Rodgers

In spring 2024, the University launched the William Paterson University Pioneer Recognition Program to acknowledge exceptional contributions by non-instructional staff and administrators to both the University and the wider community. Employees or teams are eligible to be nominated for recognition for a significant contribution beyond their designated responsibilities and duties in these categories: Leadership and Innovation; Leadership and Team Spirit; Leadership and Professional Achievement; Community Leadership; and Faculty as Mentor. The first honorees are Carmen Ortiz, executive director, Equal Opportunity Fund and Academic Achievement, for Leadership and Innovation; Kevin Rodgers, head volleyball coach, for Leadership and Team Spirit; Francisco Diaz, associate vice president for student development, for Leadership and Professional Achievement; Jan Pinkston, assistant director, Honors College, for Community Leadership; Nicholas Hirshon, associate professor of communication, for Faculty as Mentor; and Joseph Spagna (posthumously), professor of biology, for Faculty as Mentor.

V. PUBLIC RECOGNITION

The University continued to gain significant visibility for its institutional identity through honors and accolades, gains in rankings, continued recognition for social mobility, notable events, and by achieving positive media coverage in various outlets.

Rankings

The University remained among the top-ranked schools in its region, as well as a best value school, according to U.S. News & World Report's newly released 2025 edition of *Best Colleges*. The University moved up nine spots, to no. 60 from no. 69 of 165 institutions, in the Best Regional Universities-North category, marking its highest-ever ranking. In the past four years, the University has climbed 30 spots from its ranking of no. 90 in *Best Colleges 2022*.

William Paterson ranks no. 22 among 165 regional universities in the northern United States on the Best Colleges 2025 list of top performers on social mobility

In addition, William Paterson ranks no. 22 among the same 165 regional universities in the northern United States on the *Best Colleges 2025* list of top performers on social mobility, which measures how well schools graduate students with exceptional financial need. Along with its U.S. News ranking on social mobility, William Paterson University is among the national leaders in helping its students climb the socioeconomic ladder. It ranks no. 54 nationwide in the 2024 Social Mobility Index, created by CollegeNet to measure the extent to which a college or university educates more economically disadvantaged students at lower tuition and graduates them into good-paying jobs.

William Paterson University also was named to the U.S. News Best Values Schools list in the 2025 *Best Colleges* edition. The ranking factors academic quality and cost after accounting for total expenses and financial need. The University ranked at no. 70.

In addition, William Paterson's undergraduate nursing degree program climbed 65 spots to no. 254 out of 686 BSN programs nationwide, placing it in the top 37 percent of programs.

William Paterson is also included on the list of Best Colleges for Veterans, ranked at no. 26 in its region. The list is designed to provide data on top-ranked schools



that make pursuing a college education more affordable for veterans and active-duty service members.

For the 14th year in a row, William Paterson University has been recognized in the *Guide to Military Friendly Schools*, honoring those institutions that are implementing best practices and policies to recruit, develop, and support student veterans, with the goal of providing them the tools they need to successfully move into the next chapter of their lives.

For the 16th consecutive year, William Paterson University's Cotsakos College of Business was included in *The Princeton Review's* guide to the top graduate business schools, which ranks programs across the nation based on graduates' career outcomes, admissions selectivity, student surveys, and academic rigor, among other factors. Cotsakos College of Business programs are accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International, the longest-serving global accrediting body for business schools that offer undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degrees in business and accounting.

Honors and Accolades

Board of Trustees member **William J. Pesce '73**, the retired president and CEO of John Wiley & Sons, was selected as a 2024 *NJBIZ* ICON honoree. The ICON awards honor New Jersey business leaders over 60 for their notable success and strong leadership within and beyond their chosen field, resulting in outstanding contributions to their industry and community. Pesce was among 37 individuals from across the state who were recognized. A member of the Board



of Trustees since 2002, Pesce and his family established the Pesce Family Mentoring Institute at the University. Entering its tenth year, the Institute prepares students for their careers or graduate education by individually matching them with a mentor who provides career advice and guidance. Pesce is also a member of the New Jersey Business Hall of Fame and continues to serve on Wiley's Board of Directors and chairs its Executive Committee.



President Helldobler was named as the recipient of the 2024 American Council on Education (ACE) Reginald Wilson Diversity Leadership Award. The award, named in honor of the late Reginald Wilson, who was senior scholar *emeritus* at ACE and founding director of ACE's Office of Minority Concerns, is presented annually to an individual who has made outstanding contributions and demonstrated sustained commitment to diversity in higher education. A first-generation college graduate and son of immigrants, President Helldobler has advocated for traditionally underrepresented college students during his more than 30 years in higher education and continues to mentor others as an alumnus of the ACE Fellows Program and as a member of the ACE Council of Fellows.

In addition, President Helldobler was the featured speaker at the Second LGBTQ+ Summit held on November 14, 2023 in Atlantic City. The event, which took place during the Annual League of Municipalities Conference, provided an opportunity for him to share updates about the University with an influential audience of public officials and business leaders, including its support for LGBTQ students.

President Helldobler also was included on the 2023 *NJBIZ* Education Power 50 list and *ROI-NJ's* annual Influencers Power 2024 list.

The University was named to *Forbes'* prestigious "Best In-State Employers" list for 2024, recognizing the institution as one of the best-ranked employers in New Jersey based on nationwide surveys. *Forbes* partnered with market research firm Statista to survey more than 160,000 workers nationwide who are employed by companies with at least 500 people. Respondents

were asked about their current employer, as well as any previous employers they've had in the past two years. The anonymous survey covered such topics as the employee's experience with working conditions, compensation and benefits, potential for growth, diversity, and more.



William Paterson was among more than 40 companies and organizations honored with a 2024 *NJBIZ* Empowering Women Award for their commitment to supporting and elevating women employees. Now in its second year, *NJBIZ's* Empowering Women – Companies Leading the Way awards program recognizes New Jersey-based organizations for their tangible and innovative efforts to advance women in the workplace and community. To be eligible, companies must have 50 percent or more than 100 staff working in New Jersey. The honorees were chosen based on their commitment to a variety of efforts, including focused recruiting, hiring, and promoting of women; mentoring programs for women; working toward systemic change in society to combat inequality; and contributing to advancing the cause of women through outside philanthropic or community endeavors, among others.

A community outreach initiative for children through the David and Lorraine Cheng Library received a 2024 Library of Congress Literacy Award, which recognizes organizations in the U.S. and abroad that provide exemplary, innovative, and sustainable strategies to promote literacy and reading. The library was honored for its adaptation of Real Men Read—a national program focused on male mentorship in education—which was launched at William Paterson in 2020 by Neil Grimes, curriculum materials librarian. Every year since, during Read Across America Week and throughout the month of March, male administrators, faculty, staff, and students from William Paterson visit preschools and elementary schools that are part of the College of Education's Professional Development Schools network across northern New Jersey, either virtually or in person, to read to students. Over the last five years, more than 4,000 students were reached by the program.

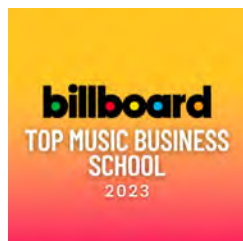
William Paterson University is one of just 100 predominantly bachelor's degree-granting institutions in the nation nominated to apply for the U.S. Department of Education's Postsecondary Success Recognition Program. The program is part of the U.S. Department of Education's "Raise the Bar: Attaining College Excellence and Equity" initiative, which reflects its commitment to ensuring that students of all backgrounds, ages, disability statuses, and income levels can succeed in any postsecondary pathway they choose. The Department of Education identified

the institutions using publicly available data to measure performance on key indicators related to equitable access, success, and post-college outcomes at public and non-profit institutions across the country.



New Jersey Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way served as keynote speaker for a women’s equity conference hosted by the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in August 2024. She spoke to an audience of nearly 200 established and aspiring women leaders from across northern New Jersey.

William Paterson University was named to the FirstGen Forward Network, recognizing its demonstrated commitment to improving experiences and advancing the success of first-generation college students. The FirstGen Forward Network—which partners with higher education, business, the public sector, and others to catalyze first-generation student success in education, careers, and life—selects colleges and universities through an application process. Approximately 40 percent of William Paterson University students are the first in their families to go to college.



Billboard magazine placed William Paterson on its list of “top music business schools” around the world—recognizing the University’s undergraduate program in music and entertainment industries.

William Paterson is one of only two New Jersey institutions on the list, and the only public university to be included. This marked the sixth time William Paterson has landed on the list, which included schools throughout the United States, as well as the United Kingdom and Australia.



New Jersey Senator Joseph P. Cryan visited campus on April 2, 2024 to meet with students as part of a Voting 101 event co-sponsored by the institution’s chapter of the American Democracy Project. Sen. Cryan, who serves as chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee, spoke with students in attendance at the event.

The David and Lorraine Cheng Library received the 2024 Library Excellence in Access and Diversity (LEAD) Award from *Insight Into Diversity* magazine, the largest and oldest diversity and inclusion publication in higher education. The LEAD Award honors academic libraries’ programs and initiatives that encourage and support diversity, equity, and inclusion across their campus. These include, but are not limited to, research, technology, accessibility, exhibitions, and community outreach. William Paterson was the only institution in New Jersey whose library was honored; it was featured, along with 55 other recipients, in the March 2024 issue of *Insight Into Diversity* magazine.

The University was one of 22 individuals and organizations recognized for its sustainability efforts during the 2024 Environmental Leadership Awards ceremony held by the Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey (CIANJ), in connection with *Commerce Magazine*, in April 2024. The annual awards celebrate the achievement, stewardship, and leadership of CIANJ members who seek to make the world a more sustainable place by protecting the environment and natural resources. The University was honored for its work to reduce energy usage on campus.



William Paterson won five trophies at the 56th Annual NJ Ad Club Jersey Awards, including “Best of Collateral” and First Place for its WP Powerhouse Multimedia Advertising Campaign (together with the University’s agency, Ologie). The “Best of Collateral” was the top winner among that entire category of awards, including more than 100 individual winners. It recognizes the Marketing and Public Relations/Ologie Powerhouse advertising campaign including print and digital billboards, bus ads, train ads, digital ads, and the landing page.

Commencement



New Jersey State Senator Nellie Pou (now Congresswoman-elect) gave the keynote address and received an honorary doctor of humane letters at the 2024 Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony held on May 22 in the Prudential Center in Newark. Nearly 2,000 bachelor's degrees were conferred.

During her address, Senator Pou encouraged the graduates to take risks and embrace every opportunity to learn and grow. "You are the architects of your future and your potential knows no bounds," she said. "Every setback is an opportunity for growth, and every challenge is a chance to rise stronger and more resilient. Seize every moment and make it count. Never forget how far you have come."

Senator Pou, the first woman and first Latina elected to represent New Jersey's 35th Legislative District, was awarded the honorary degree in recognition of "her achievements as a public servant, for her initiatives focused on higher education access and affordability, and for her leadership and commitment to improving the lives of all citizens in the State of New Jersey."

In his address at the ceremony, President Helldobler congratulated the graduates on the significant accomplishment of obtaining their degrees. "Your presence here today is proof that you very much deserved



your place at William Paterson and made the most of that opportunity. Whatever comes next, I know that you will make the most of that, too, and be able to proudly claim your place in the world," he said. "I can assure you that our world very much needs all of the many and varied kinds of talent and dedication that the William Paterson Class of 2024 has to offer. It needs the kind of Will. Power. that got you where you are today."

The graduates, who ranged in age from 19 to 77, hailed from 20 states and 58 countries, and included 22 veterans and active service members. Nearly 50 percent were first-generation college students, and the majority worked while earning their degrees.



Graduate Commencement ceremonies were held for doctoral and master's degree candidates on May 20 in the Sports and Recreation Center on campus. This year's ceremonies included nine candidates who were the first to be awarded doctor of education in leadership degrees. In addition, six candidates were awarded doctor of nursing practice degrees and 11 students were awarded doctor of psychology degrees in clinical psychology. Approximately 865 candidates were awarded master's degrees. The students hailed from 17 states and 42 countries.

Media Visibility

Faculty and staff members continued to provide their expert knowledge on a variety of topics to regional, national, and international media outlets.

The announcement of President Helldobler as the recipient of the Reginald J. Wilson Award from the American Council on Education was covered in *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, *ROI-NJ*, and *New Jersey Business*.

NJ Spotlight News, a public affairs TV station with high viewership by New Jersey lawmakers, produced a feature story on the University's surge in nursing enrollment. The piece showed off the nursing program's high-tech labs and patient simulators and included interviews with President Helldobler; Minerva Guttman, associate dean,

School of Nursing; Daria Napierkowski, professor and chair of the Department of Nursing; and nursing student Alice Bruter.

In addition, NJ Spotlight News, local radio station New Jersey 101.5 FM; and *NurseJournal.org*, an outlet geared toward current and future nurses, covered the launch of the School of Nursing with extensive interviews of Provost Joshua Powers.

The University's new College of Adult and Professional Studies was covered by *NJBIZ*, *ROI-NJ*, and *New Jersey Business*.



Students Suead Gabre and Jessica Breedon with Professor Michael Griffiths in Crete

Research conducted by Michael Griffiths, professor of environmental science, and two WP students in caves on the Greek island of Crete during summer 2024 was included in a feature story in *The Record/NorthJersey.com* focused on faculty summer research projects from across the state. It also ran in *The Daily Record* and *The Courier-Post* newspapers in New Jersey.

Martin Gritsch, associate dean of the Cotsakos College of Business, was quoted in a story in *ROI-NJ* about challenges and opportunities in the online MBA arena.



The New Jersey Ballot Bowl kickoff event

Television outlets CBS 2 New York and NJ Spotlight News covered the Ballot Bowl event at WP with primetime news features. *The Record/NorthJersey.com* also covered it with an online video and print/online photo gallery.

Jim Schwarz, age 77, the oldest graduate in the Class of 2024, was featured in a Commencement story in *The Star-Ledger/NJ.com*. Schwarz was also featured in a live interview on WCBS 880 Radio and was included in a News 12 New Jersey television segment, under the "Jersey Proud" series, that included livestream footage from the Commencement ceremony.

The Star-Ledger wrote a feature story about music students in the University's fall 2023 Opera Workshop class who used AI to compose an opera. The online version of the story included a video excerpt of the students' on-campus presentation of the opera.

The University's bachelor's degree program in environmental sustainability was included in an Earth Day-inspired article in the *New York Post*, which featured degree programs in the New York metro area for those interested in careers in sustainability. The piece included an interview with Professor Nicole Davi and a photograph of students engaged in hands-on learning. The article was picked up by Yahoo, MSN, and AskMenUK.

Jason Silva, professor of criminology and criminal justice, was quoted in a *USA Today* story about a mass shooting in Prague, Czech Republic, and mass shooter "copycat" syndrome.

George Kacenga, vice president for enrollment management, was interviewed for a feature story in *The Record* announcing a grant to WP from the Mexican government that is earmarked for student scholarships.

ROI-NJ, *New Jersey Business*, *NJBIZ*, and WRNJ Radio all reported on WP's partnership with Atlantic Health.

WP's U.S. News rankings were mentioned in articles published by *The Record*, *ROI-NJ*, *Patch*, New Jersey 101.5, and others.

Public health professor Corey Basch was quoted in an article about social media in *The Atlantic*, in a story that was one of the most read on the outlet's website. Communication professor Nicholas Hirshon was quoted in a story for *The Record/Northjersey.com* about how AI could change the face of journalism. English professor Martha Witt was quoted in a piece about *The Great Gatsby* that ran in major daily newspapers in the state: *The Record*, *Asbury Park Press*, and *Daily Record*, as well as some local/town newspapers owned by Gannett.

Community Events and Connections

The College of Education, in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), celebrated the grand opening of the state's fourth Learning Resource Center, located on campus in the 1600 Valley Road building. The Learning Resource Center at William Paterson was developed through an agreement with NJDOE's Office of Special Education to support the



The New Jersey Learning Resource Center in 1600 Valley Road

education of students with disabilities, helping them to succeed in the least restrictive environment. The centers provide regional, targeted support to both educators and families of students with disabilities.

The University successfully hosted Passaic County Career Resource and Job Fairs on campus in January 2024 and August 2024. The events include several on-site workshops offered to attendees, and numerous corporate, government, and nonprofit agencies were present to promote their career opportunities. Nearly 1,000 WP students, alumni, and members of the community interacted with employers and community organizations during the events, which were a collaboration between the University and the Passaic County One-Stop Career Center, the New Jersey Department of Labor, and the Workforce Development Board of Passaic County.



President Helldobler interviews Cassidy Hutchinson

A wide range of cultural events, including concerts, art exhibitions, lectures, and other events were held for the community. As part of the 42nd season of the Distinguished Lecturer Series, Cassidy Hutchinson, former special assistant to President Donald Trump and his chief of staff, Mark Meadows, and a key witness at the January 6 hearings, spoke to an audience in Shea Center on March 27, 2024.

The University participated in Wayne Day, an annual event that seeks to bring Wayne residents to learn about the community and its offerings. In addition to hosting booths staffed by members of the alumni and admissions teams, the University's award-winning radio station broadcast live from the event.

Members of the community came together to provide a fun time for young trick-or-treaters at a Fall Harvest/Trunk or Treat in October 2023, which was co-hosted by the Child Development Center and WP Community Policing. Participants with decorated trunks and treats for the youngest Pioneers included the Car Club, University Police, the School of Continuing and Professional Education, the Education Club, the Office of Field Experiences and Partnerships, Human Resources, and WP Online.

For the fourth year, male members of the WP community volunteered to visit classrooms all around northern New Jersey in March 2024 as part of the REAL (Read, Excel, Achieve, Lead) Men Read initiative, co-founded by Neil Grimes, a University librarian. Participants read to preschool and elementary students, providing positive male role models to young boys and inspiring them to read.



The men's and women's soccer teams at the FIFA event

The University was proud to host an international event presented by FIFA, the international governing body of soccer, to highlight its diversity, equity, and inclusion focus through its No Discrimination initiative. The event, the first held by FIFA on U.S. soil as part of its 2026 World Cup festivities, included a presentation by Gerd Dembowski, FIFA's senior diversity and anti-discrimination manager, and was co-sponsored by the New Jersey Pride Chamber of Commerce. A panel discussion moderated by Tom Bergeron, editor-in-chief of *ROI-NJ*, included Saara Hassoun, NJ/NY Gotham FC, chief of staff; Briana Keys, N.Y./N.J. Host Committee, human rights advocate; Jennifer O'Sullivan, NYCFC, chief operating officer; and Elisa Padilla, New York Red Bulls, chief marketing officer. Lauren LaRusso, the co-host city manager for the FIFA World Cup in NJ/NY, spoke with the University's men's and women's soccer teams prior to the event.

For University updates, visit: wpunj.edu



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