

Academic **MASTER PLAN**

WALTERS STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



2025–2030

Strategic planning at Walters State Community College

Supporting Faculty, Students and the Structures that Foster their Success

Walters State's future will be defined and driven by an unwavering commitment to our faculty, students and the structures — physical, administrative, curricular and financial — that will foster their success. Such a commitment is founded in the overarching principles of the institution's vision, mission, values and core goals.

The college's Strategic Plan serves to ensure that Walters State continues to be the leader in transforming our community through education. We believe that effects of educational attainment on long-term career success depend on the opportunities and quality of the overall educational experiences. As such, we provide a holistic student success system to meet the continually changing student career and academic credentialing needs through high quality curricular and co-curricular programming and engagement opportunities.

THE ELEMENTS IN THE STRATEGIC PLAN ARE:

VISION

Walters State will be the leader in transforming our community through education.

MISSION

Through a focus on student success and innovative teaching, Walters State enriches the lives of our students and our community

VALUES

Shared values are the commitments made by the college community in how we conduct our work. At Walters State Community College, we value:

- Knowledge
- Individuals
- Community



STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES

Four institution-wide priorities are fundamental to the college's vision, mission and future success:

Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides affordable, convenient access through multiple campuses, innovative technology, and distance education• Collaborates with other educational institutions to promote access, completion, and transfer• Partners with community businesses and organizations to meet specific educational and workforce needs
Student Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offers programs of study leading to associate degrees or certificates• Provides pathways to institutional support services that improve student engagement and success
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fosters a sense of belongingness within the campus community through innovative practices• Delivers public service and non-credit programs in support of workforce training and personal development• Invests in highly qualified faculty and staff
Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creates a culture of continuous improvement and accountability• Seeks external sources of support and funding to further educational opportunities• Provides resources to support community engagement and initiatives

Walters State's strategic plan sets the framework for the college's Institutional Effectiveness process, which includes all administrative, academic and student service areas within the college. The Academic Master

Plan is designed to guide the Academic Affairs' offices and divisions in the IE process and in supporting the college's strategic plan.

Letter from the Vice President for Academic Affairs

Introduction to the 2025–2030 Academic Master Plan

Walters State Community College has long stood as a beacon of educational opportunity in the Great Smoky Mountains Region of East Tennessee. As we chart our course for the next five years, our commitment to the success of our faculty, students, employees and community remains steadfast. The Academic Master Plan for 2025-2030 serves as a roadmap, guiding us toward our vision of transforming the region through education.

At the heart of the college's strategic plan lies our core values: knowledge, individuals and community. These values permeate every aspect of our institution, from our curricula to our partnerships with local businesses and organizations. By embracing these values, we seek to enrich the lives of our students and empower them to achieve their academic, career and personal goals.

Institution-wide Priorities

The college's strategic plan is built upon four institution-wide priorities: Access, Student Success, Quality and Stewardship. These priorities reflect our commitment to providing affordable, convenient access to education and offering programs and support services that enhance student success. Our guiding principles also ensure that we deliver high-quality instruction and foster a culture of continuous improvement and accountability.

Through our focus on access, we aim to reach students where they are, whether through our multiple campuses, innovative technology or diverse modalities. By collaborating with educational institutions, businesses and organizations in our community, we ensure that programs meet the evolving needs of our workforce and society.

Engaging Stakeholders for Success

The development of our Academic Master Plan was a collaborative effort involving stakeholders from across our institution and community. Faculty members played a crucial role, providing valuable insights into teaching practices, belongingness in the classroom and the future of instruction at Walters State.



Dr. Brock L. Fisher

*Vice President
for Academic Affairs*

We also sought input from external stakeholders, including government officials, industry leaders and directors of schools in our service area. By engaging with these stakeholders, we gained a deeper understanding of the external forces shaping higher education and workforce development in East Tennessee.

Embracing Innovation and Continuous Improvement

As we look to the future, innovation will be key to our success. Our Academic Master Plan includes initiatives to enhance active learning, promote reflective practice among faculty and create a culture of care that supports student success. By investing in state-of-the-art resources and fostering interdisciplinary collaborations, we aim to provide our students with transformative educational experiences that prepare them for success in an ever-changing world.

Conclusion

As we embark on this journey, we remain committed to our mission of enriching lives through education. By embracing our core values, engaging stakeholders and fostering innovation, we will continue to lead the way in transforming our community and empowering our students to achieve their full potential.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brock L. Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vice President for Academic Affairs

College Campus Overview

Located in the geographically and economically diverse Great Smoky Mountains Region of East Tennessee, Walters State Community College is a public two-year institution that provides affordable, convenient access to higher education through multiple campus locations, distance education and innovative technology. To provide access and services throughout its 10-county service area, the college has established campuses or facilities in Claiborne, Cocke, Greene, Hamblen, Jefferson and Sevier counties and also serves students in Grainger, Hancock, Hawkins and Union counties. In fall 2023, 5,833 students enrolled at Walters State, including 1,996 dual enrollment students. Sixteen percent of the fall 2023 students were adults ages 25 and older, and 29% were low-income students.

The college offers 20 programs leading to associate degrees in over 120 pathways of study and 16 programs leading to technical certificates. Many of the programs lead to licensure and careers in healthcare fields. Walters State is also one of only two community colleges in the state to host a Regional Law Enforcement Training Academy. Transfer programs encompass numerous academic disciplines providing opportunities for seamless articulation from high school through four-year universities. During the 2022–23 academic year, the college conferred 1,238 awards, including 268 applied associate degrees, 325 technical certificates, two academic certificates and 643 degrees designed to transfer to a university.

The college's support services place emphasis on learning support, student engagement, retention and persistence to completion. To promote global understanding and civic responsibility, international education, diversity and service learning are stressed in the curriculum and co-curriculum. Workforce training services include customized corporate and non-credit healthcare training to support local workforce development. In 2022–23, the college provided 325,495 workforce training hours. In 2018, the college joined the Achieving the Dream Network aimed at strengthening its commitment to equity and student success. The college's overall job placement rate at or above 96% for technical programs provides ongoing evidence of this firm commitment to student success.

WSCC maintains national accreditation in all eligible programs and is accredited by the Southern Association Colleges and Schools Commission of Colleges. Walters State was named the 2022 and 2023 Community College of the Year by the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) and a national Bellwether Award finalist. The college also received over \$8,000,000 in 2019-2022 grants awards.

Over the next decade, Walters State will solidify its long-standing leadership in Tennessee higher education with innovative career and transfer programs that foster success and support individuals to reach their goals of interesting and meaningful work and earning a living wage. WSCC is in a strong position to successfully reach these goals to educate and promote the success of our students and community.

Academic Master Plan Process

The Academic Master Planning Committee consisted of various representatives from academics and the college at large. The members of the committee included the following representatives:

- President
- Interim vice president for Academic Affairs
- Faculty Senate president
- Assistant vice president for Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance
- Dean of Behavioral and Social Sciences
- Dean of Business and Technical Education
- Director of the Instructional Department for Educator Advancement and Success

The planning process was based on three key priorities. First, the Academic Master Plan should be greatly informed by the faculty at large. Second, external stakeholders should be interviewed so the committee could have a clear understanding of community and industry needs and government trends in education. Third, all aspects of the academic plan should support the college's vision, mission and strategic plan.



To support the college's strategic plan while gaining feedback from faculty, the committee created a proposed list of questions, where the answers would guide the committee in determining key priorities for the academic plan. The proposed list of questions received Faculty Senate feedback and committee review prior to being finalized for focus group discussion:

- **Access:** What new program(s) and/or program revisions are needed within the next five years to transform students' lives through education?
- **Student Success:** What teaching practices would you like to implement into your courses to further impact student success and ensure student learning?
- **Equity:** What ideas do you have about enhancing classroom cultures to guarantee that students receive an equitable education?
- **Quality:** What does the future of quality instruction look like at WSCC, both inside and outside the classroom?
- **Stewardship:** What more can we do to create a culture of continuous improvement?

Faculty Senate representatives used these questions to interview focus groups of faculty members from each academic division. In addition, an open focus group was hosted on each of the college's campuses: Claiborne, Niswonger, Sevier and Morristown, for general feedback. Two open virtual focus groups were hosted for any faculty/staff member who could not attend in-person options. In addition to faculty feedback, the committee sought to learn about national and state education and workforce trends. To gain feedback about the external landscape of higher education, committee members met with Tennessee U.S. Senator Marsha Blackburn's educational advisor and the Tennessee Board of Regents' executive vice chancellor for policy and strategy. Closer to home, the committee met with directors of schools for the college's 10-county service area. Feedback was also sought from various college advisory boards, containing industry leaders.

After all focus groups and meetings, the committee reviewed feedback, looking for repeated themes that addressed the future of education for Walters State's students. The academic goals and key priorities were created based on that information.

The Academic Master Plan received feedback and revision from the Vice Presidents' Council, Academic Administrators, Faculty Senate, Academic Affairs Committee and Student Success Committee, as well as various discipline-specific advisory boards. The final Academic Master Plan was created through faculty feedback, informed by external stakeholders and vested through college, community and industry voices.

Environmental Scan

THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Walters State provides flexible and innovative pathways of study with numerous opportunities for academic and career achievement and social and economic mobility. Being a WSCC student boosts confidence and reliance to positively influence our community and our world. At WSCC, we stay current and rely upon data-driven, decision-making strategies to meet the needs of our students and our community. The Academic Planning process that produced the 2025–2030 Academic Affairs Master Plan is essential to understanding the vision and ambitions of our stakeholders and achieving our goals.

The current strategic plan for the Tennessee Board of Regents system was developed for the years 2015–2025. This plan focuses on access, student success, quality, and resourcefulness and efficiency. The plan highlights degrees, certificates and diplomas awarded and awards per 100 full-time equivalent students as vital indicators of success. Likewise, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's master plan has a focus on increasing degree production in the state while addressing the economic and workforce development needs in Tennessee.

In 2013, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam made national headlines for launching Drive to 55. The goal was that 55 percent of the citizenry would graduate with some type of post-secondary certificate and/or degree by 2025. Various forms of state-aid and information became available to support this effort, such as the Tennessee Promise (free last-dollar tuition at community colleges), dual enrollment grants (tuition paid while in high school) and Tennessee Reconnect (tuition for adults).



THE INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

In the 2021 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), student responses indicated that Walters State was ahead of the comparison group average in three benchmark areas: Academic Challenge, Student-Faculty Interaction and Support for Learners. Specifically, Walters State students reported prompt feedback from instructors and examinations challenging students to do their best work as the top two aspects of student engagement. Student learning, engagement and success through high quality learning experiences are the primary focuses of the Office of Academic Affairs.

The Office of Academic Affairs is led by the vice president for Academic Affairs and includes the Instructional Department for Educator Advancement (IDEAS) and seven academic divisions: Behavioral and Social Sciences, Business and Technical Education, Health Programs, Humanities, Mathematics, Natural Science, and Public Safety. These divisions are responsible for promoting the Strategic Plan priorities within the academic structure of the college.

As a critical factor in student access, Walters State has placed a significant emphasis on dual enrollment opportunities for secondary students. In fall 2023, Walters State reported 1,996 dual enrollment students. This population accounted for 34% of the total fall enrollment at the college (WSCC Factbook, 2024). The college has reported an increase in the percentage of dual enrollment students over the past six years.

Successful Walters State students identify their purpose, complete their goals and engage in activities with the campus and the community. Often these goals include transfer to a four-year institution, job obtainment and progression in their current curriculum. According to the 2023 IPEDS report, students in the fall 2019 cohort recognized a 32% completion rate and a 10% transfer rate. The 2024 IPEDS report shows a jump in the completion rate to 36% for the 2020 fall cohort. IPEDS data reported in spring 2023 indicated a fall-to-fall retention rate of 52% for full-time students and 40% for part-time students. Among students who completed an AAS degree or technical certificate, the college reported a 96% placement rate for graduates in 2021 (WSCC Factbook, 2023.)

To promote stewardship, the Office of Academic Affairs encourages collaborations and advisory board memberships with K-12, local business partners, as well as community and workforce partners. In addition, Academic Affairs forges community partnerships in curriculum review and continuous improvement. Efforts are also made to expand collaborations that support students who may wish to matriculate to and from other institutions. Walters State provides students with opportunities to understand the needs of their communities, the critical thinking skills to successfully navigate their current physical and cultural environments and the adaptability to acquire new skills and knowledge that will continue their academic success and economic mobility into the future.



Succeeding in our focus areas

Access

- Provides affordable, convenient access through multiple campuses, innovative technology and distance education
- Collaborates with other educational institutions to promote access, completion, and transfer
- Partners with community businesses and organizations to meet specific educational and workforce needs



Focus area	Key priorities	Initiatives
Local industry-based programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore new programs, program expansions and multicampus program-offering opportunities• Diversify new and existing course formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Healthcare programs• Local industry-based needs• Computer Science• Education• Workforce Development partnerships
Learning resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invest in hardware and software to support students• Empower faculty with learning tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technology for faculty• State-of-the-art facilities• Materials for students• Maintenance of existing technology
Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support college readiness in the community and within the institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early Post-Secondary Opportunities (EPSOs)• Learning Support (LS)• Success in gateway courses• Relationships with K–12 systems• Dual Enrollment expansion and matriculation

Student Success

- Offers programs of study leading to associate degrees or certificates
- Provides pathways to institutional support services that improve student engagement and success



Focus area	Key priorities	Initiatives
Active learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore technological and pedagogical initiatives to help students actively learn and grow	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) initiatives and other pedagogical or discipline-specific practices• Learning Management System (LMS) enhancement• Evaluation tools
Reflective practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use new and existing tools to create a culture of continuous improvement through assessment and reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Faculty Feedback• Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)/ Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLO) evaluation• PowerBi utilization• Customer Relations Management System (CRM) integration
Culture of care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuously improve belongingness in college classrooms and resource availability for student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Campus activities• Student subpopulations, including but not limited to Learning Support (LS) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Quality

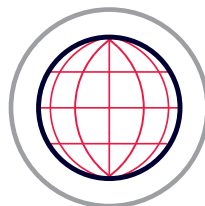
- Fosters a sense of belongingness within the campus community through innovative practices
- Delivers public service and non-credit programs in support of workforce training and personal development
- Invests in highly qualified faculty and staff



Focus area	Key priorities	Initiatives
Career progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in and retain qualified faculty • Streamline and/or reevaluate various processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development • Hiring committee (i.e. consistent materials and processes) • Promotion, tenure, annual and student evaluation processes • Faculty Load
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice transformative educational opportunities • Enhance course or program-specific mastery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-of-the-art resources • Creative and critical thinking strategies • Emerging technologies • Enhanced student learning opportunities (internships, honors program, study abroad etc.)

Stewardship

- Creates a culture of continuous improvement and accountability
- Seeks external sources of support and funding to further educational opportunities
- Provides resources to support community engagement and initiatives



Focus area	Key priorities	Initiatives
Continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalize process for establishing and collecting goal data • Align and communicate college, Academic Affairs, division, department and individual goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment Committee • Academic Plan Steering Committee • Key stakeholder groups
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore teamwork opportunities within and outside the classroom to improve student learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty Senate involvement • Community partnerships • Interdisciplinary collaborations

Bibliography

Factbook, TBR. *End of Fall Term Enrollment Trends by Student Type*. n.d. <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrljoiNGQ0ZGY1MDEtZDc0Zi00MmZmLWFIYjMtZTRkYjQ5N2M1MzhjliwidCI6Ijc4ZTkWNVlzMTE4ZWVtNGE5MS04YjlmLTMzZTRmZTNjYTQ4YSIsImMiOiN9>. 15 December 2023.

Factbook, WSCC. *First Time Freshmen Progression (IPEDs Data)*. 1 August 2023. <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrljoiNjZiYTc5YTctYjZlZC00ODZjLWVxNTMtYzc2YTRhYTZkNzBjliwidCI6IjJiNmQxO-DExLTVhYjktNGUyMi04ZjNjLTJhMDZIN2FkMTM4MSIsImMiOiN9>. 15 December 2023.



Walters State Community College

500 S. Davy Crockett Parkway
Morristown, Tennessee 37813
423.585.2600 | ws.edu

The Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) is Tennessee's largest higher education system, governing 40 post-secondary educational institutions with over 200 teaching locations. The TBR system includes 13 community colleges and 27 colleges of applied technology, providing programs to students across the state, country and world.

Walters State Community College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award associate degrees. Walters State Community College also may offer credentials such as certificates and diplomas at approved degree levels. Questions about the accreditation of Walters State Community College may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information available on SACSCOC's website (www.sacscoc.org).

Walters State Community College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/ expression, disability, age (as applicable), status as a covered veteran, genetic information, and any other category protected by federal or state civil rights law and by Tennessee Board of Regents policies with respect to employment, programs, and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies: Jarvis Jennings, Executive Director of Human Resources, jarvis.jennings@ws.edu, Walters State Community College, 500 S. Davy Crockett Pkwy Morristown, TN 37813, 423.585.6845.