The Campus Today
PROFILE

WMU is one of the nation’s top 100 public universities. In 2000, nearly 29,000 students were enrolled in 165 undergraduate and 89 graduate programs. Outside research support exceeded $45 million. Founded in 1903 as Western State Normal School, the institution grew to become one of the nation’s leading teacher-training colleges before attaining University status in 1957. An engineering complex south of the central campus and an aviation campus in Battle Creek, Michigan, complete the University’s core academic facilities.

To better serve the residents of the State of Michigan, nearly three dozen complete degree programs are offered through regional facilities in eight Michigan cities. These regional centers serve as focal points for WMU’s efforts to broaden the University’s outreach programs.

Since 1998, with the vision of a new University president and a strong leadership team in place, WMU has continued to move to the forefront of higher education, research and public service. As it approaches its centennial year, the University has ensured that its legacy and place within the community will be strengthened and enhanced with the creation of this new Master Plan.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Major planning concerns and challenges were identified and prioritized through interviews and in workshops with the Advisory/Policy Committee and the focus groups.

1. Regional roadway (Stadium Drive), rail line and two valleys (Goldsworth and Arcadia) bisect and separate the campus.
2. Campus entries are often congested and lack definition.
3. Campus edges are in need of definition and are often unattractive.
4. Vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding is difficult.
5. Vehicular and pedestrian safety is a concern.
6. Parking demand exceeds supply in key areas.
7. Building and open space maintenance is deficient.
9. Building placement and open spaces do not reinforce each other effectively.
Ten fundamental Master Plan concepts form the foundation of the campus-wide recommendations.

1. Protect the Valleys  Preserve and enhance the open space character of Goldsworth and Arcadia Valleys. Restrict building development and enhance natural features, landscaping and maintenance levels within these corridors.

2. Develop Campus Edges and Entrances  The University is to be easily identifiable. Establish visually distinctive and significant campus approaches, arrival areas, entries and edges.

3. Ensure Wayfinding and Accessibility  Create a friendlier campus with upgraded signage, informational kiosks and improved vehicular and pedestrian circulation, particularly at entrances and approaches to the University. Plan compliance with ADA accessibility guidelines and four-season access to all campus areas.

4. Plan Alternate Forms of Transportation  Place greater emphasis on safe and efficient transit, bicycle and pedestrian circulation on and off campus.

5. Distribute Parking  Position parking around the campus perimeter to be easily accessible from main roads and near principal centers of use. Coordinate transit and pedestrian interface in order to facilitate access to major destinations.

6. Connect the Campuses  Maintain and enhance visual and physical connections between the West, Oakland Drive and East Campus areas. Improve inter-campus circulation and accessibility. Protect potential bridging points connecting the campuses.

7. Preserve Open Space  Plan future development to preserve and optimize the use of open space to achieve a sense of community and distinctive settings.

8. Develop Districts  Identify and develop districts that reflect a distinct identity, share a common function or are relatively self-contained. District buildings should relate to one another, both physically and through similar functions. Consistently maintain building massing, patterns or grids, density and heights appropriate to each district.

9. Create Campus Activity Hubs  Create pedestrian-scale activity centers that are centrally located and visually distinct, with facilities clustered around a core open space that attracts students and visitors.

10. Distribute Housing  Locate housing throughout the campuses; serve a variety of housing needs and markets.