

# 2023 Annual Report



**FRAMINGHAM STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

September 7, 2023

# INTRODUCTION

Academic organizations dance to a rhythm orchestrated by the players of students, faculty, staff, board members, community members, and accreditors. Often there is a predictability to this symphony punctuated by events such as student move-in day, the start of classes, athletic seasons, exams, and graduation ceremonies. But the interruption of the regularity of such events is merited for the sake of assessment and improvement. That was this year.

With a new leader at the helm of the institution, the Framingham State University community brought its “A game” to bear and while fulfilling all of its traditional functions and operations, it also took on several planning and review exercises intended to fulfill its responsibilities in advance of the 2024 New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) accreditation visit, as well as to strategically address an enrollment concern that had developed in a pre-pandemic world and worsened through the pandemic to the present day. Some of the past year’s activities will continue in the year to come, but they all were an ongoing presence during the year that brought FSU community members together from every area of the University to assess, evaluate, plan, and produce plans for improvement and growth.

This year’s annual plan, too, takes a different form than previous years. Rather than an exhaustive list of activities itemized to align with the University’s strategic plan, this year’s report highlights key activities and metrics as examples of the University’s strategic plan and its operations, and the impact that they have had on the FSU community.

Additional information is linked throughout the document and may be accessed via the digital version of this document found at: [framingham.edu/about-fsu/presidents-office/university-documents/index](https://framingham.edu/about-fsu/presidents-office/university-documents/index).

# Strategic Initiatives 2018 – 2023

1. Provide a high quality, highly relevant, educational experience, rooted in the arts and sciences, that is transformative, distinctive, and responsive to evolving student, workforce, and societal needs.
2. Prepare students to be ethical and engaged citizens committed to public purpose, inspired to serve, and eager to play leadership roles in their communities, workplaces and the wider world.
3. Provide student services and support systems that promote achievement of educational, personal, and career goals.
4. Be a vibrant and inclusive living-learning community that attracts and retains students, staff, and faculty who embrace the University's core values and will enrich campus life with their presence and engagement. Engage in antiracism work, at the individual, interpersonal and/or system level.
5. Foster a climate and provide necessary tools and support to ensure that every member of the campus community has the opportunity to thrive and succeed.
6. Provide the physical, technological, and administrative infrastructure necessary to create a work environment that promotes excellence, encourages innovation, facilitates collaboration, and supports achievement of strategic goals.
7. Establish a public identity and reputation that reflects FSU's impressive academic strengths, comprehensive co-curricular activities, as well as its contributions to and impact in the wider world.
8. Play a critical and catalytic role as a partner in the MetroWest region's economic, social, and cultural development.
9. Establish a financial resources model to promote long-term stability and sustainability, affordability, and demonstrable return on investment.

# Enrollment & Demographic Snapshot 2022 – 2023 Academic Year

Degrees Conferred
622 Bachelor Degrees 420 Master Degrees

Undergraduate	Full-time		Part-time	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
2,970 Total number of undergraduate students	1,137	1,336	209	288

Graduate	Full-time		Part-time	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
1,141 Total number of graduate students	25	66	238	812

4,111 Total number of students	Full-time		Part-time	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
	1,162	1,402	447	1,100

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS	Degree-Seeking First-Time/First Year	Degree-Seeking (include first-time/first-year)	Total Undergraduates (degree & non-degree-seeking)
Nonresidents* .....	0	15	15
Hispanic/Latino .....	119	530	638
Black or African American, non-Hispanic .....	90	460	487
White, non-Hispanic .....	236	1,483	1,562
American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic .....	2	5	6
Asian, non-Hispanic .....	14	91	107
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic .....	0	0	0
Two or more races, non-Hispanic .....	26	109	114
Race and/or ethnicity unknown .....	3	19	41
TOTAL	490	2,712	2,970

\*Nonresident is defined as a person who is not a citizen or national of the United States and who is in this country on a visa or temporary basis and does not have the right to remain indefinitely.

## Preparation for Reaccreditation through the New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE)

At the outset of the academic year, under the direction of the FSU Institutional Strategic Planning, Assessment, and Accreditation office, the institution charted a course to support the exploration of the University's operations and their alignment with the standards set forth by the [New England Commission on Higher Education \(NECHE\)](#). Accreditation trainings were held over the course of the year and nine (9) distinct committees were formed, aligned with the 9 NECHE standards, including fifty-four (54) individuals from a cross section of FSU, to draft the self-study document. At the conclusion of the spring 2023 term, the committees sent their drafts to the committee chairs for their review and additional editing. The report will be completed during the fall 2023 term and submitted in January 2024 for review by the NECHE Visiting Team who will visit the FSU campus in April 2024.

## Enrollment Practices Examined and Re-imagined

It is often said and always known that without students, the University would largely cease to exist. Since FSU's inception in 1839, enrollment trends have varied as socioeconomic environments, demographic changes, and world events influenced the college-going behaviors of our students. Recent enrollment declines follow an all-time high enrollment in 2014, making the decrease seem even more stark.

The college student recruitment picture has changed since that time, and it became clear that FSU, like other regional public universities, needed to change its enrollment practices and perspectives. In short, the population of people who wanted a FSU education was changing, and the University needed to change with them. As such, a more significant call to action to holistically assess current enrollment practices was needed to address identified issues by optimizing our recruitment and enrollment capabilities. The FSU Board of Trustees initiated the process by authorizing \$1M of reserve funding to invest in this work. FSU needed leadership changes and the reorganization of enrollment, retention and student success operations underpinned this change management process. Five (5) working groups including eleven (11) Action Planning groups comprised of fifty-seven (57) FSU community members worked on a detailed and exacting process that will fuel the University's future Strategic Enrollment Management Plan.

In addition to changes in branding and digital presence described later in this document, a diverse cross-section of University members worked with an outside consultant to begin examining enrollment data, and relevant demographic data for the regions most often served by FSU, and began to develop Strategic Enrollment Planning initiatives that, when combined, will serve as road map to improve both FSU's enrollment future and the lives of the students that its mission directs the University to serve.

**Impact** Projecting, planning for and then enrolling a student population who can benefit from the University's educational programs is central to the achievement of any other goal. Many factors that influence enrollment are outside of our control. How we work with prospective and enrolled students and their families, support our enrolled students and alumni and the programs and services that we offer are within our control and will ultimately determine the measures of our success.



## Student and Family Outreach and Engagement

Departments such as the Family Engagement office and the International Education office in the newly formed Student Success division sought new methods to engage students and their families and build upon students' academic experience at FSU. Using in person and Zoom meetings to draw families into their students' college experience, the departments sought family members to act as allies in supporting student success. Both departments witnessed increases in family connections and are preparing to measure the impact of this work on the overall success and student retention

of students. Results will be viewed through an equity lens to verify results for every population served by FSU.

## Rooted in Education

[FSU's initial founding in 1839](#) was based on the goal of educating the public and advancing the teaching profession. These many years later, education is still a hallmark of the University albeit in many different forms:

- [The Christa McAuliffe Center for Integrated Science Learning](#) is undergoing a complete remodel to update technologies and increase accessibility. A grand reopening is scheduled for early 2024. The McAuliffe Center advances K-16 science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and this year featured a number of programs with emphasis on climate and environmental issues.
- [The Chris Walsh Center](#) provides information for families and educators about the continuum of educational support available to students with disabilities, students who are gifted and students with unmet needs. The Center offered programs this year that engaged over 155 individuals.
- [The Centers for Early Childhood Education](#) partnered with Framingham Public Schools to expand and develop consistent preschool opportunities for Framingham children. The Centers enrolled 30 children as a result of this Partnerships for Early Learners program.
- In the inaugural year of the [Framingham Teacher Residency \(FTR\) AmeriCorps Program](#), ten (10) students served full-time in Framingham Public Schools while matriculating in Education programs at FSU and receiving mentoring from twelve FPS middle school teachers. The \$1.7 million grant from the Massachusetts Service Alliance (the state commission for the federal AmeriCorps program), provides \$574,697 per year over three years. Those funds cover 46 percent of the total cost of the FTR program, while the remaining 54 percent is covered by FSU and FPS through in-kind contributions totaling \$666,301, including \$382,000 in federal Title I funding.

**Impact** Christa McAuliffe, an FSU alumna said "I touch the future, I teach." Those words are true today as the University's innovative education programs impact both teachers and students alike offering opportunities that would not exist but for our attention and support.

## Emphasis on Mental Health – the University Responds

The University received significant resources to enhance its ability to respond to the mental health needs of our students. American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds supported the training of the Counseling Center and Wellness staff to complete an 8-week Benson-Henry Stress Management and Resiliency Training and are now certified trainers of this Mass General Hospital wellness program. Fifteen (15) students completed 8-week training sessions on this important issue and received certificates of completion.

Through resources made available through the Steve Fund whose mission is to promote the mental health and emotional well-being of young people of color, two (2) workshops were offered to FSU faculty and staff, which topics included prioritizing the mental health and emotional well-being of students of color in policies, practice and programming and racially trauma-informed advising, coaching and mentoring.

**Impact** The mission of the University is to prepare students for a productive life and position them for success. Resiliency training provides a tool that a student can use throughout their life to navigate stress and help discover greater productivity and happiness.

## Meeting Students' Professional Needs: Careers and Internship Experiences



The Career Services, Student Orientation, and Student Involvement operational areas have been re-imagined into a new [Center for Student Experience and Career Development](#). In the new model, students' personal growth is not compartmentalized; the unification of three distinct student development areas addresses students as a whole by aligning their academic experiences with co-curricular and out-of-classroom career focused experiences.

**Impact** The University has set a goal for students to graduate from the university with experience and expertise in their chosen academic area(s) along with a complimentary array of "real world" skills that will support them as they advance into professional roles.

## Athletic Success On the Field and In the Classroom



The [athletics programs at FSU](#) attract a significant number of students, with 325 student athletes enrolled in spring 2023. While athletes find success in their sporting endeavors, the University is responsible for making sure they have comparable success in the classroom. To that end, the University is recommitting a dedicated Advisor/Athletic Liaison to support them

in their academic pursuits. This individual will forge strong connections with and amongst the student athletes and their families. Benchmark retention rates for first to second-year students are being determined and goals for improvement will be established, assessed, and monitored for performance.

**Impact** A student athlete will benefit from their athletic participation, but also draw upon close relationships with team members, coaches, and advising staff to experience comparable success in their academic studies.

## First Generation – First and Foremost!

Fifty-seven (57%) percent of FSU's enrolled students are considered first generation students. This means that they are the first in their family to have attended college beyond the associate degree. "First gens" are a persistent group, but in addition to the standard adjustments to college life and coursework, they often navigate admissions, enrollment and academic life without the benefit of a family member who has lived through a similar experience. For that reason, the University celebrates and supports "First gens" by pairing them with faculty who themselves were first gens and with others who may be experiencing college for the first time. Planning for a new program titled: GenOne NEXT LEVEL took place this year and will pilot in fall 2023 providing a cohort model of instruction of a first-year experience course (RAMS101).

First-gens also established an honor society as part of the First Gen Forward organization with sixty-two (62) inaugural members being inducted in May 2023.

**Impact** First generation students don't have to go it alone. First gen status is celebrated and supported through intentional activities and programs throughout the academic year that lead to stronger success and graduation rates.

## Community Conversation on Race and Policing – March 1, 2023

Community Conversations are intentional gatherings for all members of the FSU community to discuss a matter of importance to the group. This year's conversation focused on race and policing and filled the O'Connor Hall meeting room to capacity with students, faculty and staff. Participants expressed their past and current interactions with police and University Police representatives listened and expressed their willingness to build stronger community relations in their roles. These conversations are never easy, but dealing with difficult issues are a path to greater growth and stronger relationships.

**Impact** In order to improve, difficult conversations need to occur and trust must be developed. This community conversation brought the community and University Police together to learn from one another and begin to articulate shared goals and needs.

## Re-commitment to Antiracism and Racial Equity

On March 2023, the University's Executive Council approved an updated [Statement on Antiracism for the University](#) that aligns with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Racial Equity Principles. This statement affirms the institutional commitment to recognizing, addressing, and eradicating all forms of racism and racialized oppression as we evolve in our progress toward becoming an antiracist institution.

## Success Measured – One Student at a Time

Premised on the theory that to attain success we must first understand how it can be measured, the University's academic and operational departments engaged in a "data audit" to determine what data points were already routinely gathered and what additional data would be required to draw a full picture of the effectiveness of our programs. Additionally, emphasis is being placed on creating accessible data so that departmental leaders may independently draw upon a common data set when setting program related goals. Data equity is also top of mind in this initiative by building platforms that will allow for the disaggregation of data by critical groups such as race, gender, age and other relevant categories.



**Impact** Data sets will be created and accessible allowing the University to be self-informed about the current effectiveness of its programs and services and to determine areas of disparity amongst its students. Interventions can then be created to address these weaknesses and assessed for their impact based on predetermined measurements of success.

## Expansion of Resources for Students with Basic Needs

Students enroll at the University having needs beyond those traditionally provided by the University. More than five (5) years ago the University founded the [Rams Resource Center](#) (RRC) to assist students struggling with food insecurity. This year the University secured an ARPA *Ending Hunger Grant* in the amount of \$96,021 to further expand services to food and housing insecure students. The RRC also secured a freezer from a local nonprofit organization to expand fresh food offerings.

An expansion of the University's services to homeless students included a formalized coaching model. One-hundred (100%) percent of the students who participated in the coaching were retained at the University and will return for the next academic year.

**Impact** The implementation of a formalized skill development program through student support and advocacy directly cultivates thoughtful, responsible students who become prepared for successful careers and productive lives. Students with basic needs insecurities often come to FSU without guidance or experience in navigation of institutional systems or self-advocacy. Strengthening this program assures that FSU will remain an inclusive and collaborative community comprised of ethical leaders.

## Stewards of the Commonwealth's Assets

The Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) completed a *Facility Condition Assessment* (FCA) over the past year and was used to inform the Commonwealth's five-year capital spending plan projected to be \$34.2 M and an anticipated five-year capital investment program. These critical investments maintain the University's infrastructure, buildings, and operational facilities. The quality of the educational programs offered is supported by an equal amount of attention paid to the physical and technological surroundings that house and shelter our FSU community.

## Here Comes the Sun....

This year FSU entered into contracts and obtained approvals to proceed with an additional solar array rooftop installation on Larned Hall (Summer 2023) and for a projected solar canopy project at Salem End Road Parking lot for Summer 2024. The University's demonstrable commitment to sustainability continues to grow as funding and opportunities present themselves. The [FSU Climate Action Plan](#), most recently published in 2022, describes additional sustainability activities endeavored by the University.

## A New Look

Seeking to strengthen the University's position in the higher education market, the University developed a new marketing theme and brand. A new logo was developed and adopted by the end of the year and a website redesign is underway and scheduled for roll out in April 2024.

# MetroWest DEI Network

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) [Community Partner Network](#) was established through the efforts of FSU’s Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement Office. This group is designed to provide support, resources, and partnership for the Chief DEI officers at school systems, colleges, and community agencies in the MetroWest area. Goals for the group include developing and maintaining resources to support students, faculty, and staff from historically minoritized communities learning and working at educational institutions in the MetroWest Corridor and building a sense of belonging amongst these groups. Inaugural members include: City of Framingham; Downtown Framingham Inc.; Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center; Framingham Police Department; Framingham Public Schools; Greater Framingham Community Church; Harvard College; Jewish Family Services of MetroWest Boston; MetroWest Jewish Day School; MetroWest YMCA; OUT MetroWest; Wayside Youth and Family Support Network, and the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI).

## Managing Resources

FSU is the steward of the Commonwealth and government resources allocated to the University. In conjunction with its Board of Trustees, the University has the primary fiduciary responsibility of developing a complex budget that sufficiently supports the operational and student needs of the community. Doing so is a herculean task, and even with increases in state funding, demands always outweigh resources. This year was no exception, however, it is notable in that ongoing COVID relief dollars, flowing through the state government coffers, were particularly useful as compensation for declines in tuition, fees, and lodging revenues over the past three years. The following table denotes the resources, their source and the campus impact for this past year:

Source of Funding	Amount	University Budget Use	Impact
Higher Education Emergency Relief Funding (HEERF)	\$3.0 M	Operations Budget	Offset COVID pandemic costs and losses
Federal Emergency Management Agency Funding (FEMA)	\$1.0 M	Operations Budget	Offset COVID pandemic losses
Debt Service Reserve Fund (DSRM) Release	\$2.8 M	Operations Budget	Offset COVID pandemic losses
American Rescue Plan (ARPA) Capital Funding Allocations	\$3.8 M	Capital Investment	Directed to McAuliffe Center Project; Capital Adaption and Renewal projects and Information Technology Equipment
American Rescue Plan (ARPA) Capital Funding Allocations	\$0.5M	Capital Investment	Water and sewer project funding allocations
General Appropriations Act (GAA)	\$6.5 M	Capital Investment	McAuliffe Center \$5M/ Warren Conference Center \$1.5M

## Funding and Support

The [Office of Grants and Sponsored](#) programs submitted fifty-two (52) proposals during the past academic year with a total request amount of \$10.8 M. As of the close of the fiscal year 2023, \$4.5 M had been awarded (43%) with an additional \$5.9M (56%) still pending a decision. These grant funds support transformative activities throughout the campus community. These include: the expansion of existing programs, professional development that supports and retains faculty and staff, and funding for the improvement of our students' lives both through basic food needs and behavioral health needs. All had profound impact on the University.

The [Development and Alumni Relations](#) team implemented a comprehensive strategy to increase giving in FY23 as well. The Division exceeded its goal of \$2.7 M with \$2.81 M being raised by the close of the fiscal year. The department focused on the Commonwealth Endowment Incentive Program to encourage new donors to make endowment gifts and existing donors to make additional gifts to their endowment funds. Another focus was on securing more deferred gift commitments, a strategy that was also successful.

**Impact** Gifts from private donors impact the entire campus, from student scholarships and emergency support, to academic departments and clubs and teams. The infusion of private funding provides substantial benefits for students beyond what can be provided through state support and student fees alone.



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