



create
west virginia

Visioning for a Future WVU

A Preliminary Report on
Community-driven Transformation

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FOR
West Virginia University Board of Governors
& the Public

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Summary

Create West Virginia (CWV) is a nonprofit organization established in 2007 to promote entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic development in the state. The organization initiated *Visioning for a Future WVU* to create a channel for alumni and other stakeholders to express ideas and visions for a future institution that is genuinely responsive to the needs of West Virginians and able to attract talent from around the world.

Since constant transformation is inevitable and welcome, CWV hopes to contribute to the process that creates a nimble, collaborative, innovative institution capable of anticipating and managing change. CWV looks forward to a WVU that prepares our people for authentic success in the 21st century innovation economy.

The team gathered input from stakeholders across the state via live sessions and an online survey. CWV hosted in-person sessions in Charleston, Wheeling, Martinsburg, and Morgantown with a hybrid option to join each session via Zoom video conferencing. Respondents participated in the online survey. The team collected, analyzed, and synthesized this feedback.

Asked to describe their overall vision for WVU, respondents shared a wide range of priorities such as: WVU should provide a “world-class” education; students should have access to “well-rounded” academics across diverse disciplines; accountability and transparency must be priorities in managing the budgetary crisis; as the flagship institution, WVU should prioritize public service and education as a public good; accessibility and affordability of public education should be increased and/or sustained; and WVU should drive cultural and economic development in the state.

Respondents overwhelmingly believe faculty, staff, and students should have a voice in developing this vision, followed strongly by communities and alumni.

Common themes emerged via specific suggestions to move toward the recommended visions such as installing new leadership; freezing the transformation or pausing the cuts; engaging more stakeholders; increasing state funding; cutting administrative bloat and the highest salaries; and increasing transparency and accountability during the transformation process. Other themes that emerged presented a lesser but not insignificant trend toward including consulting expertise in-house, liquidating infrastructure assets, and drawing on athletic funding.

The continuation of these dialogues to develop more relationships and gather more input from stakeholders across the state is a priority for CWV. We aim to bring together more voices and proceed with visioning a future WVU. CWV welcomes the opportunity to discuss ideas emerging from this project with all interested parties. CWV will build on work started by this report and invites the WVU BOG to integrate the feedback presented by communities most affected by the current transformation.

Introduction

Background

West Virginia University (WVU) is about to conclude a transformation process that the administration sees as critical to the University's future. Facing a financial deficit and shrinking enrollment, the University administration responded with an academic restructuring plan that many describe as short-sighted.

The WVU administration announced a \$45 million budget shortfall in 2023 and recommended the elimination of 169 faculty positions in addition to the 135 staff and faculty positions already terminated. This plan also would eliminate 12 undergraduate academic programs and 20 graduate programs, reducing course offerings by roughly 10 percent.¹ The administration entered an \$875,000 contract with RPK Group, a national higher education consulting firm, lasting from April 18 to December 31, 2023, to develop these recommendations. Following an appeals process, the final recommendations restored two undergraduate academic programs and three graduate programs. The WVU Board of Governors is scheduled to vote on the final proposal on September 15, 2023.²

As a public land-grant institution established in 1867, WVU receives a portion of its funding through the general revenue budget as appropriated by the West Virginia Legislature. If state funding had remained equal in FY 2024 to that of 10 years ago, the University would have an additional \$37.6 million in funding today.³ Had that been the case, the total shortfall would have been only \$7.4 million.

Goals

CWV recognizes the critical role West Virginia University plays in the state, region, and nation. Through *Visioning for a Future WVU*, the board and staff at CWV aspire to harness alumni and WVU supporters' energy, passion, and ideas, and to share that package with university leadership.

University administration launched a campaign about the transformation process on the University website in May 2023 targeting campus constituencies.⁴ Media inside the state and major national media are covering the story, suggesting that the WVU transformation model could be a template for other schools facing similar financial challenges.

¹https://provost.wvu.edu/files/d/da8e760e-d129-47c1-b06d-5fe927b2ec34/summary-of-preliminary-recommendations-for-faculty-reduction_8-13-23.xlsx

²<https://provost.wvu.edu/academic-transformation/academic-program-portfolio-review>

³<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/18/us/west-virginia-university-budget-cuts-deficit.html>

⁴<https://transformation.wvu.edu/>

With the University's process underway, CWV held four public sessions (Charleston, Wheeling, Martinsburg, and Morgantown) and invited online comments from WVU alumni and other stakeholders. Their comments suggest that constituents are not fully aware of the scope of the transformation and the reasoning behind it.

WVU supporters expressed surprise, disappointment, criticism, and uncertainty about the ongoing transformation process. Some questioned and challenged the university's decisions, including infrastructure investments to accommodate growth in enrollment that did not occur. Others want the administration and Board of Governors to pause implementing restructuring plans that could alter the University forever. Still others believe the West Virginia Legislature should provide greater financial support to the University. Some suggest that drawing on portions of athletic funding could mutually benefit academics. Others call for the expansion of student, staff, and community engagement and the incorporation of faculty expertise before voting on the process. Many suggest a combination of these.

CWV recognizes the University has many different channels of communications, but many supporters have expressed concern that their opinions and perspectives are unheard. Those who attended public meetings and responded to a CWV survey are eager to be heard.

The board and staff of CWV recognize the complexity of charting a course in a sea of change. CWV appreciates that University leaders face many challenges, including escalating costs and changes in the economy, demographics, and student expectations. CWV also understands that institutions must manage change and be fiscally prudent. The future will not belong to the irresponsible.

WVU has many ways to communicate. CWV suggests one more. To support the state's flagship and first land-grant university, CWV proposes establishing an organized, ongoing effort that encourages alumni, students, families, and other WVU supporters to provide their vision for what they see as the state's most beloved and critical institution.

As a result of its recent meetings and online survey, CWV believes alumni and University supporters are eager to organize and develop ideas, strategies, and dreams in a systematic and ongoing fashion. Such a network of WVU supporters would generate questions for the University and, as appropriate, seek to discuss specific ideas. In turn, CWV would provide the University with ideas from enthusiastic supporters who respect and support the University.

We ask the University administration, Board of Governors, and government leaders to consider the vision, ideas, and critical thinking that the community has contributed through this report. Create West Virginia is a strong supporter of the evolution of West Virginia University. We reach new frontiers when Mountaineers climb together.

Methodology

The foundation of our *Visioning for a Future WVU* methodology focused on hosting open forums to maximize accessibility and garner feedback from WVU stakeholders. During these sessions, our team moderated discussions, ensuring that participants expressed their genuine vision for the University. Our study, being predominantly qualitative, focused on eliciting organic ideas, questions, and sentiments from those who participated in our roundtable discussions and online survey.

Live Visioning Sessions

The team organized four live roundtable discussions entitled, *Visioning Sessions for a Future WVU*. CWV set the tone for the meetings to foster creative thinking and innovation toward envisioning a WVU of the future. During moments of uncertainty surrounding the announced budget cut proposals, this posture offered a counterbalance to a lot of the emotions and negative sentiments stakeholders shared. We encouraged everyone to speak their mind, and many people agreed there was a need for an outlet to air grievances, speak to feelings induced by the proposed cuts, and talk about what made the recent announcement so impactful to the participants.

Given little time to plan, the team organized these visioning sessions as quickly as possible in four regions of the state to provide multiple dates and locations for engagement. Though the team would like to have hosted more sessions, we selected four cities to fit our time constraints. We started in Charleston, the Capital. The team then took the sessions to Wheeling and Martinsburg as regional centers. Our final session was in Morgantown, home of WVU.

Charleston - 08/29/2023 6pm-7pm at the Kanawha County Public Library

Wheeling - 08/30/2023 6pm-7pm at the Ohio County Public Library

Martinsburg - 08/31/2023 5:30pm-6:30pm at the Martinsburg-Berkeley Public Library

Morgantown - 09/06/2023 5:30pm-6:30pm at First Presbyterian Church

Each session took place in person with a virtual component via Zoom video conferencing. Everyone present was given an opportunity to speak and be recorded on video live with the in-person and virtual audience. Most participants were simply asked to “Tell us why you are here, and about your connection with WVU.” We answered questions and referred participants to information available to us regarding WVU’s preliminary recommendations, and also recorded questions that need more investigation. Per the core mission, the team listened for participants’ ideas and visions to convey to WVU decision-makers. All sessions were recorded in their entirety and are available online on CreateWV.org hosted on Create WV’s YouTube channel at YouTube.com/@CreateWestVirginia.

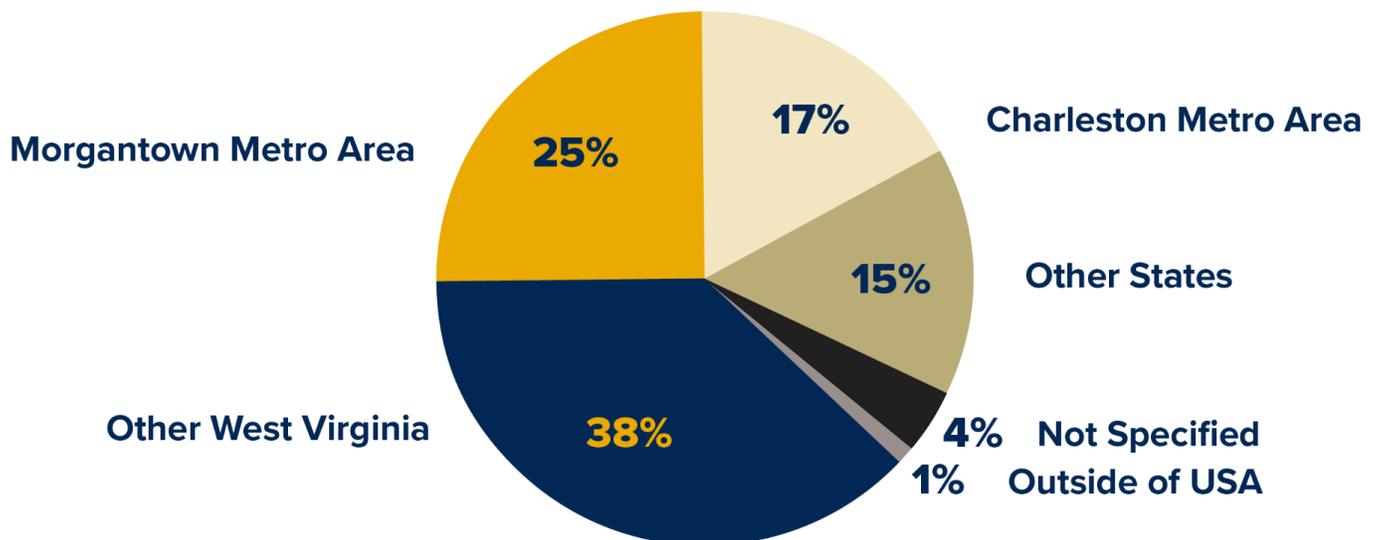
Online Survey

Two hundred and forty-one people participated in the online survey over five days. The deadline for input to be considered in this preliminary report was at 11:59pm on September 6, 2023. More responses continue to come in after this deadline and will be considered in a future report. Participants were encouraged to provide their names, emails, locations, and relationships to WVU. However, identifying information was not mandatory, a concession designed to increase accessibility and to allow input from individuals who preferred to remain anonymous. All respondents were required to answer three core questions centered around vision, voices, and ideas:

1. "What is your overall vision for WVU?"
2. "Who should have a voice in developing this vision?"
3. "What are your suggestions for moving toward this vision from where we are now?"

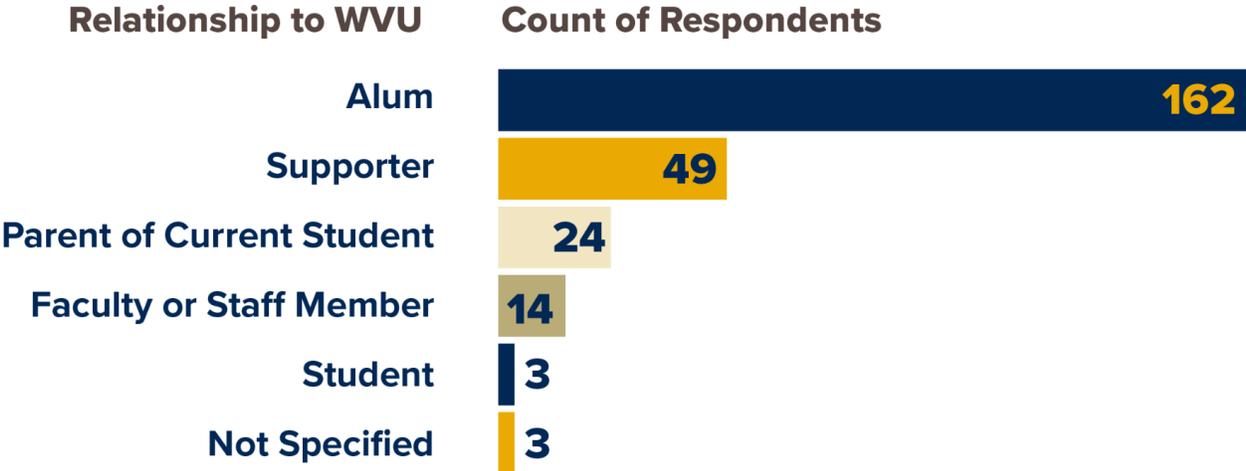
Survey respondents hailed from 19 states and four countries. The vast majority of survey takers were based in West Virginia at 80 percent. Within the state, greater than half of West Virginians who took the survey were based in the Morgantown or Charleston metro areas. Chart 1 describes this geographic breakdown.

Chart 1. Survey Respondent Geographic Breakdown



Participants voluntarily self-identified their relationships to the university. More than two-thirds of respondents defined their relationship to WVU as alumni. Chart 2 displays this breakdown of survey respondents with respect to their relationship to WVU. Respondents who described their relationship to WVU as a donor, West Virginia resident, parent of an alum, concerned community member, or fan, were coded as supporters. Note that respondents could hold more than one relationship to WVU or could opt out of this question. For example, a respondent could identify as an alum of WVU while also being a parent to a current WVU student. This means the sum of the categorized count of respondents will not equal the total number of survey takers.

Chart 2. Survey Respondent Relationship to WVU



Challenges

The organization of live sessions and online surveying presented notable time constraints. In the span of fewer than two weeks this project came into fruition, beginning with a meeting on August 27, 2023, and concluding with the publication of this preliminary report on September 8, 2023, exemplifying agile project leadership. Agile project procedures were necessary. With more time, we could have broadened our reach and increased our sample, as detailed below. Still, common themes and concerns became apparent among the participants within the visioning sessions and survey. To address the challenge of attaining a wider geographic reach and more representative engagement, the continuation and expansion of *Visioning for a Future WVU* is paramount.

Survey Sample

Invitations to the live Visioning Sessions in Charleston, Wheeling, Martinsburg, and Morgantown were distributed via press releases, through CWV and partners' social media, and through individual email invitations to colleagues.

The team provided surveys to attendees of the Visioning Sessions to capture any remaining thoughts. We also sent out invitations to complete the survey through partners' email lists and a Facebook ad campaign targeting West Virginians interested or associated with higher education, or interested in budget and finance. Voices came from several sections of West Virginia and out of state; a large majority came from Morgantown and Charleston.

For future studies, the team recommends increased random sampling. We would like to have included more voices who currently either have low or no interest in higher education, students or families who have not attended college, and younger audiences. Underrepresented geographic and demographic areas should be targeted, such as rural and southern West Virginia, and communities of color. A more diverse range of opinion would strengthen future visioning.

Given that most survey respondents are aware of WVU's proposed academic transformation, it could be interpreted that those most interested in completing the survey did so because they have a stake in higher education or WVU. Increased sampling could determine if there is a higher level of support than the data suggests for proceeding with the transformation as prescribed by the administration and BOG. Out of 241 survey respondents, one favored the current plan for transformation.



World-Class Education

“I desperately want my children to have the opportunity to attend an R1 research university in their own state. The announced cuts directly threaten WVU’s research status and limit the opportunities for an affordable world class education in West Virginia.” – Survey Respondent

[My vision for WVU is] “A competitive university that provides world class education with programs that will assist with gaining a career in an ever expanding global market.” – Survey Respondent

[My vision for WVU is a] “World class university that values the contribution of STEM, education, the arts, health, humanities, and every major in between to make this world a better place for everyone.” – Survey Respondent

“I want WVU to offer a world class education to WV natives at a price that the average WVian can afford. I want it to be a gateway between WV and the world. I want to capitalize on the love non-WVians feel for their alma mater to help promote our brand outside the state’s borders, but I want to focus first and foremost on our land grant mission to enrich the state and her people through education.” – Survey Respondent

[My vision for WVU is] “to be a world class institution in modern career offerings and maintain its status as a leading liberal arts university.” – Survey Respondent

Well-Rounded Academics

“I think people need to be well-rounded. You can’t just focus and, say, take all foreign language or all music classes. For example, I had a couple of classes in economics as well. Long story short, I taught piano privately for a while, had to decide if I wanted to teach in the public schools or not, and decided to take a different course. What I did afterwards, I decided that I was going into computer networking. My foundational degree at West Virginia University gave me the skills that I need to be able to apply it to another field.” – Jenine Atoj, WVU BA Musical Arts Eberly College; Canady Creative Arts Center; minor in Foreign Languages



“I know that you don’t have to have a technical education to be an artist, but some of the best artists that I have worked with—either professionally or just known personally—they do have an extensive background in art education. And then, myself, my degree is in Fine Arts and I really, I loved it because it wasn’t just the core curriculum, it wasn’t just things that I needed to learn, but it also helped my passion.” – Christine, Wheeling business owner; Bachelors of Fine Arts

Transparency & Accountability in Crisis

“There has to be more transparency. There has been a massive lack of transparency and cohesive vision for this transformation that has been incredibly frustrating, especially as administration keeps saying they are being as transparent as possible when they continue to use bad data, say contradictory things to the press, are unable to spell out what the university will look like after this transformation, and silence students and academic units. It has been so demeaning and frustrating to be treated like children by this administration when they are taking these opportunities away from future Mountaineers, and the concerns we are bringing to the table are valid and reasonable. Listen to us and meet us where we are.” – Survey Respondent

“Accountability—many administrators and senior leaders were asleep at the wheel while this budget crisis was developing. They need to admit their errors and be held accountable. Unfortunately, these same individuals are now making painful decisions that minimally affect them, and are potentially career destructive to dedicated faculty.” – Survey Respondent

“Complete review of land grant requirements; complete audit of University accountability of funds, programs, and practices; assessment of the needs of the state of West Virginia to create, fulfill and maintain employment within the state” – Survey Respondent

“Install oversight and accountability for all of WVU, especially at higher levels. Vet future leaders thoroughly to avoid theft and corruption” – Survey Respondent

“Top down reorganization. Accountability first and foremost. Shrink absurd admin salaries and meaningless placeholder title positions. Value academics, faculty, and students.”
– Survey Respondent

“As a graduate and believer in the value of WVU as an integral institution in West Virginia, I find it appalling that there has been no accountability for the current financial and logistical situation that the university has found itself in. Students and faculty and WV citizens are dealing with the consequences of the financial neglect and poor decision-making that leadership has made. I have no faith that continued trust in that existing leadership is going to carry the University through the hardships that their decisions have yielded.” – Survey Respondent

“Conduct a thorough independent review and audit of leadership actions and decisions leading up to the the financial shortfall” – Survey Respondent

“Pause all eliminations of programs and positions until an independent audit of WVU’s entire budget can be conducted. Any cuts to programs should be mirrored by cuts in administrative positions and salaries. Staff in the private sector routinely take pay cuts during times of crisis. Finally, [the Board] of Governors has a duty to the people of WV and should be held accountable.” – Survey Respondent

Service & Education as a Public Good

[My overall vision for WVU is] “better leadership, stability, service to the communities in the state. Develop academics highlighting research and solutions to problems present in West Virginia.” – Survey Respondent



“Proper funding by the Legislature of the major public institution of higher learning in West Virginia is not a short-term solution; it is what should have been a major part of the solution all along. And it has been pointed out for some of our citizens, WVU was the only option for a higher education.”

– Robin Godfrey, WVU College of Law 1976, parent of 4 WVU graduates

Accessible & Affordable Public Education

“A lot of kids can't afford to go out of state. And so we're really not talking about making the rich richer but the poor, poorer.”

– Betty Rivard, WVU 1975 Elementary Education, MA; 1976 Masters of Social Work



“If liberal arts programs continue to be defunded and removed from universities, it will cost a lot more in order to get that education elsewhere, minus the fact that you're not providing something as valuable as a liberal arts education to the residents of the state and those who want to come in for an education.”

– Carrie, WVU 1998 World Languages, Public School Teacher

Cultural & Economic Development

[My vision for WVU is] “For WVU to be a key driver in the economic and cultural development of West Virginia.” – Survey Respondent



“When I heard that foreign languages are going to be eliminated... I was so shocked that I wrote a letter to the Board of Governors. We got together with one of the German professors who is a neighbor, and we wrote a letter... about the importance of foreign language... I'm very concerned that foreign languages are not only kept here at the flagship university, but that they are put into the schools K through 12, especially middle and high schools... My students, at Morgantown High, for example, they thought that the Germans were all Nazis... it was very important for me to show them the true Germany.... Eventually, that also led me then to have an exchange program with my hometown in Germany... to foster, open the world up to my students.” – Gertraud Irwin, WV K-12 English and foreign languages teacher, secondary and college level

“Visions are wonderful but they must also be tied to reality. A student's goal after university is to find a job. Coordination with job creators is a must. We must show a university degree is worth the time and money spent in the long run.” – Survey Respondent



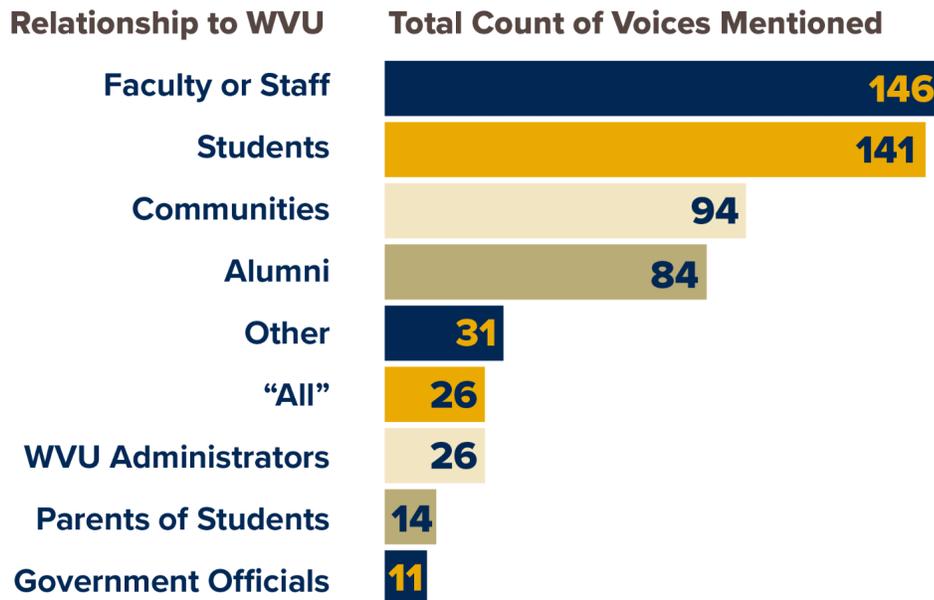
Voices

Who should have a voice in developing this vision?

In the survey, respondents answered the question about who should have a voice in developing the vision for WVU. The responses were analyzed, categorized, and sorted into several frequently mentioned parties, including faculty and staff, students, communities, alumni, parents of students, government officials, WVU administrators, and “all stakeholders” or “everyone.” Infrequent responses include outlier examples, such as industry, K-12 educators, donors, non-profits, and non-responses. Chart 3 details the breakdown of the respondent perspectives and trends on who should have a voice in developing the vision for WVU.

It became apparent that respondents overwhelmingly believe faculty, staff, and students should have a voice in developing this vision, followed strongly by communities and alumni. Those that listed “all stakeholders,” “everyone,” or “all voices” are separated into an independent category given the ambiguity of who is included in the respondents’ definition of stakeholders. Note that survey takers could list more than one voice in their response, and, therefore, Chart 3 accounts for the total count of each voice recommended to be included in vision development across all responses.

Chart 3. Survey Responses: Who should have a voice in developing this vision?



Selected Quotes on Voices:

- “Alumni, current students, current faculty, retired faculty, and parents of students should have a voice in developing this vision.” – Survey Respondent
- “The local community should have a very large voice in what happens at WVU considering it affects our personal lives the most.” – Survey Respondent
- “I'd like to see a greater focus on the voices of alumni who have stayed in the state of WV and who have a desire to give back to WVU... Folks who work directly with students in the classroom and via student support services should have a bigger voice than they currently seem to.” – Survey Respondent
- “WVU students, faculty, and surrounding community members, but particularly those who are often marginalized or silenced. We need to hear from BIPOC peoples, from first-gen students and teachers, from international and multi-language students and teachers.” – Survey Respondent
- “Staff and students especially need more voice and a part of shared governance.” – Survey Respondent



Proposals & Ideas

What are your suggestions for moving toward this vision from where we are now?

Many responses throughout the survey referenced general and specific proposals and ideas to further their vision for WVU and to navigate the budget crisis, as summarized in Chart 4.

Common themes emerged in the online survey via specific suggestions as well as more generalized guidance toward action:

- Install new leadership
- Freeze the transformation and pause the cuts
- Engage more stakeholders
- Increase state funding
- Cut administrative bloat and the highest salaries
- Increase transparency and accountability during transformation process

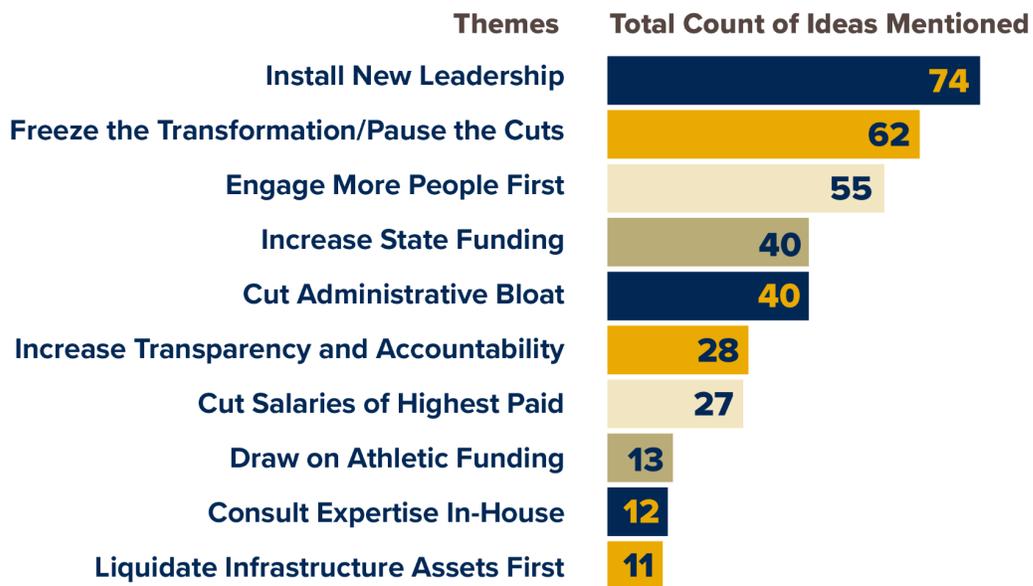
Other themes that emerged presenting a lesser, but not insignificant, trend:

- Consult expertise in-house
- Liquidate infrastructure assets
- Draw on athletic funding

Outliers also appeared, such as a suggestion of increasing the “soda pop” tax as a model to generate revenue for the University, privatizing WVU to avoid state regulation, and continuing the transformation as recommended by the administration.



Chart 4. Survey Responses: Frequently Mentioned Suggestions



Attendees made a wide range of suggestions during live sessions and via the online survey. Below, CWV presents quotes on themes most often shared by participants.

New Leadership

“Replace the current administration and board of governors with people who understand education and who will advocate for the students and people of West Virginia, not for themselves. In addition, we need more faculty who are from this state and understand the history and culture—and care about the state.” – Survey Respondent

“These proposed changes need to be frozen while more time is taken to think through the best way to undo the problems that have been caused by the current administration. During this period, new administration should be brought in to take over in a rolling exchange—and with Gee going first.” – Survey Respondent

Transformation Freeze

Pause to find more long-term solutions

“Freeze any changes, remove current president from decision-making, identify new leadership committed to an inclusive broad-based and professional planning process, audit finances and program data for common base of where we are now, ask governor and/or legislature for funds to cover costs during this process, arrive at a vision and common goals and proceed from there.” – Survey Respondent



Engagement of Stakeholders

[My vision for WVU is] “For there to be true engagement with all stakeholders in the development of a multi-year plan which would include key KPIs, funding plans and identification of leaders who will see the project through to completion.” – Survey Respondent

“Curtail the proposed cuts until the administration can see and hear about the interrelationships between programs and between the university and communities in the state. Make sure strengths and possibilities are determined and appreciated before drastic and irreversible cuts are made.” – Survey Respondent

Transparency and Accountability

Audit

“I think an outside, unbiased audit that isn't hired by Gee should investigate the financial issues facing WVU and what administrative cuts could be helpful in addition to more effective fiscal management.” – Survey Respondent

“Conduct a thorough independent review and audit of leadership actions and decisions leading up [to] the financial shortfall.” – Survey Respondent

Public Hearings

“Opening up the discussion on forums such as this and others is a start. There has to be a focus of value beyond monetary and budget concerns. Get young people on board because it is their world.” – Survey Respondent

Budget Reform

Sliding scale salaries

“Cut highest paid salaries on a sliding scale for short term management and prevention of faculty and staff cuts while the visioning process and longer term funding is secured.” – Survey Respondent

Cut administrative bloat and highest salaries

“Administration and other highly paid staff and faculty must take pay cuts. This alone will not solve our deficit, but it would serve as an important act of solidarity and would build some trust between administration and faculty, staff, and students. This could be done at a progressive scale based on salary.” – Survey Respondent

“Academic administration should reconsider their salaries and the necessity of their positions rather than instructors. A school's vision and purpose is to educate, therefore there are some more valuable voices and opinions than others. I think one professor's voice is much more valuable than any administrator's.” – Survey Respondent

“While changes are necessary, it's the executive level bloat at WVU that needs to be addressed. What would it take to solve the WVU budget crisis? Cutting administrative payroll back to 2013 levels would completely eliminate the FY 2024 budget deficit. Cutting it back to 85% of 2013 levels, to match the decline in enrollment, would generate savings of \$74 million. This would eliminate the entire projected budget deficit for the next 5 years, through the ‘demographic cliff’ expected to begin in 2026-27.” – Survey Respondent

Evenly distributed budget reduction

“I suggest we freeze the transition and these proposed cuts and explore other options such as across the board cuts as opposed to one program.” – Survey Respondent

Athletic support for the academics

“We need to creatively re-envision how the athletic and academic sides of the university work in partnership with each other and share profit. College sports and student athletes only exist because we are a university. There is no reason that there cannot be more revenue sharing from athletics to academic needs. It is done at other major Division I schools already. It is time to assess and assert our priorities. I recommend appointing a committee of faculty and professional staff to thoroughly examine athletic expenses and revenue and to make recommendations to right-size the athletic program and costs. Let WVU be the leader in a national movement to develop the right balance between academics and college athletics programs.” – Survey Respondent

“There is an opportunity to discuss policy limits on athletic budgets, like what portion of ticket revenue goes to athletics versus a general fund after covering costs or returning the student fee paid to the athletics department back to the students, as a cushion until longer term solutions can be implemented. Some examples of university athletic programs that gave back to their academic institutions are Ohio State, UT Austin, and Purdue - notably all land grant institutions. This idea of academics and sports mutually and financially supporting one another isn't new or radical.”⁵ – Morgan King, WVU BS Civil Engineering, WVU's 3rd British Marshall Scholar, Fulbright Scholar



⁵ <https://www.chronicle.com/article/as-sports-programs-get-richer-few-give-much-for-academics/>

Legislative Action & Advocacy

Encourage state legislators to increase support for higher education and WVU

“There is no greater responsibility of our state government than ensuring the health of our public education system; they must be actively part of the solution.” – Survey Respondent

More advocacy from WVU leaders to encourage funding from state

“More aggressive, persistent advocacy for adequate funding at the State Legislature and with other decision makers.” – Survey Respondent

Taxes such as the “Soda Pop Tax”



“Number one, I'm 82 years old. When I was about *that* tall, they passed a penny Coke tax to build West Virginia University Medical School. What is that Coke tax today? A penny. A penny. So how's that happened? ...It was 20 percent. One penny was 20 percent. What would be 20 percent on a Coke today? How much money would that raise? Millions and millions and millions of dollars.”

– Joe Mullins, OU MFA Sculpture & Bronze Casting; Creator of Military figures on State Capitol Grounds Monument Honoring Veterans



Infrastructure Asset Liquidation

“Why buy every apartment complex and bit of land? Why not let private investors and developers share in that risk? Nobody was watching enrollment trends and predictors?”

– Survey Respondent

“Cut unnecessary new building costs. Maintain what you have as economically as you can”

– Survey Respondent

“Buildings are not what provide education, it’s the people within that do the work and create the magic of opening minds to a greater world and life.” – Survey Respondent

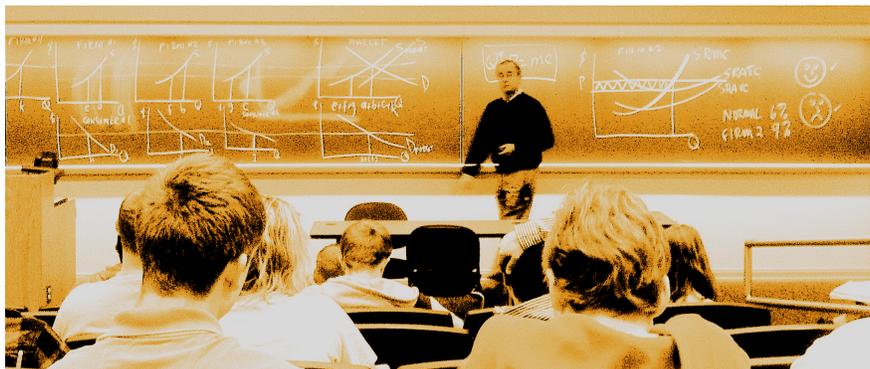
“Alumni who visit Morgantown have been puzzled in recent years by the development of new buildings, new housing, the unnecessary acquisition of property, the rise in number and salaries of administration when everyone’s been aware of declining enrollment due to increased tuition costs.” – Survey Respondent

Consultation of Expertise In-House

“Absolutely NO MORE outside consultants for this process. Hiring consultants erodes trust with the university community. WVU faculty and staff are the experts; we are the ones who train people how to ask questions, collect data, analyze data, and make educated decisions; indeed, that is the purpose of a university. Recruit our own faculty and staff into problem solving. We are the ones who know the stakes and have a vested interest in a balanced and healthy budget. It is not only wasteful, but insulting, to use consultants when WVU is full of in-house experts.”

– Survey Respondent

“Eliminate the consulting group that does not understand WVU’s culture, its role as an R1 research and land grant institution, and its contribution to the state... Create a working group of faculty, staff, and students, (not selected by President Gee) who understand WVU’s culture and role to identify better alternatives to the current transformation.” – Survey Respondent



And More Ideas...

Growing Revenue Streams

“The transformation must focus on revenue generation in addition to cutting costs.” – Survey Respondent

“You know, research is part of the core requirement and expectation for every faculty member. Conducting research—that requires a certain amount of creativity and work and dedication. And some of that research, it commercializes, especially if you’re in an applied area, and you’ve got grad students working on certain kinds of projects you can commercialize. And I think that that should be part of the long-term vision of WVU. Should be to encourage research, number one, but secondly, to create incentives for commercializing those...that’s what TransTech was all about.” – Carl Irwin, WVU Math Prof, director of TransTech (WVU) retired



“Has anyone at WVU considered working closely with their Political Science department to assist with advocacy for state funding? How about an independent study where professors, professional lobbyists, and students work together to secure funding for their own university? I imagine for a state legislator, it would be pretty tough to turn down some young students working hard for an A.”

– Corey Zinn, WVU BSBA 2014, WV business owner, Create WV Executive Director

Data-Driven Courses & Offerings

“When businesses apply for loans, they have to do a needs assessment. The University needs to do a needs assessment on a massive level. Ask the local community what they need. Get into the high schools in WV and ask the students what they plan on doing in the future and plan accordingly.” – Survey Respondent

“We should be having conversations with businesses and people of the WV economy about what is needed in the workforce, and also we should consider attempting to attract more diverse populations to come to WV. We need more people with skills for a more diverse culture. WVU could be a magnet for the kind of people we’d like to see in WV or even to be connected to WV, so it should be seen as an investment in the state to fund certain programming, not just looked at for profit.” – Survey Respondent

Questions

Throughout the in-person sessions and online survey, common questions and uncertainties emerged, listed below:

- **What is going on? What is the transformation? What are we missing?**

“What is going on here? What really is going on here? ... I'm starting to think they don't really want West Virginia students, you know, and that they're aiming for something else. And I know that's out there... there's something behind all this that doesn't make sense.”

– Kate Long, WVU 1968 English



- **How much is the deficit exactly? Why cut more than necessary today?**
- **Why are self-sufficient or profitable programs being eliminated, and what is the projected impact of the budget by removing these programs?**



“The Department of World Languages, Literature and Linguistics makes an average annual profit of \$800,000. Why is a fiscally viable program that brings acclaim, employment and economic development opportunities to our state be cut? Why the MFA in Creative Writing, a program that is self-sufficient? Why would it be cut? The same can be said of many of the other WVU programs, including the Business and Economics Communication Department.”

– Judy Hamilton, WVU 1986;

College of Law 1993, spouse of alumnus, parent of alumna, and aunt of current student

- **How much is the deficit affected by the mission to increase rental property and build more infrastructure projects despite enrollment decline?**
- **Are members of the Legislature reluctant to fund WVU because of risk of mismanagement?**

“I'm hearing that with the current leadership [at WVU] and the kinds of things that are happening right now as we speak, that there are legislators who want the best for WVU, but don't trust them to use money wisely. And I just wonder, how do we get out of that conundrum?”

– Betty Rivard, WVU 1975
Elementary Education, MA; 1976 MSW





“I do believe there is a mysterious management problem at WVU that is not present at most of these other institutions. So the problem that the legislature created by underfunding higher education in general, I think has been aggravated by poor management at WVU. So—and I'm not advocating for a change in administration—but what I'm trying to get at is, on the one hand, there are people that want to totally change the purpose of it and are, you know, labeling it with all these kind of extremist labels. And on the other hand, there are people that really want to help, but don't trust giving them the money to get through this crisis.”

– John Doyle, former WV House of Delegates (1982-1984, 1992-2012, 2018-2022)

- **How much consideration has gone into the downstream impacts of removing specific academic programs, such as effects on competition for national scholarships, fellowships, and honoraries? What about the economic impacts that are harder to measure?**

“I also don't think that people understand the consequences for the community because if there's an exodus, the economic base, the region is going to be decimated. You know, who's going to buy a house here? Who will come to the region and participate and help? It's so short sighted.” – Lynn Sobolov, WVU MS of Education, Reading Specialist



- **How much have current and political events affected this decision?**



“I'm having difficulty understanding why this state and why our administration is... I don't know how to put it any better than to say it seems like we are running an anti-globalist kind of situation here, not just here in our state, but maybe around the country. Maybe we're setting a trend. But if that is the case and there is a bias against Morgantown for whatever reason, or a bias against WVU versus Marshall garnering a lot of funds, I just don't understand... and I would like to—if somebody needs to be called out on this—instead of calling them out, let's call them in.”

– Alice Meehan, WVU 1978 Psychology BS, Rehabilitation and Mental Health MS

Next Steps

This preliminary report starts the conversation. CWV intends to continue these dialogues by developing relationships across the state. We seek to convene groups of stakeholders and continue to organize this visioning process. We welcome an opportunity to discuss this further with the WVU Board of Governors and Administration. Thinking beyond this proposed transformation is critical to the future of WVU and the entire state. We urge the WVU BOG to open the door to more perspectives and establish a continuing dialogue.



Appendix

See below for links to the online survey, video recording of live sessions, and press coverage.

- Create WV 2023 Visioning Survey
 - **FORM** - <https://forms.gle/bt4nmDvpwtGnoXwt5>
- Create WV “2023 Visioning Sessions for a Future WVU”
 - **VIDEO PLAYLIST**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ii96b9dqbM4&list=PLBSCOIXpJtfVEhbDtQvkDUoprJSNxVpxR>
 - Charleston - 08/29/2023
 - **VIDEO** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ii96b9dqbM4>
 - **NEWS ARTICLE - WV METRO NEWS**
<https://wvmetronews.com/2023/08/29/wvu-alumni-and-stakeholders-share-thoughts-on-recent-proposals-vision-for-schools-future/>
 - Wheeling - 08/30/2023
 - **VIDEO** - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQSe6GTkb_U&t=11s
 - **NEWS ARTICLE - WEIRTON DAILY TIMES**
<https://www.weirtondailytimes.com/news/local-news/2023/09/programming-cuts-seen-as-bad-for-wvu-states-future/>
 - Martinsburg - 08/31/2023
 - **VIDEO** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9DT4BOFVjk>
 - **NEWS ARTICLE - THE JOURNAL**
https://www.journal-news.net/journal-news/wvu-alumni-and-stakeholders-gather-to-discuss-universitys-future-amidst-budget-crisis/article_f6bbaa2b-6052-57c8-8b16-26989caf4a50.html
 - Morgantown - 09/06/2023
 - **VIDEO** -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYVPIN6vFsE&list=PLBSCOIXpJtfVEhbDtQvkDUoprJSNxVpxR&index=4>
 - **NEWS ARTICLE - WV METRO NEWS**
<https://wvmetronews.com/2023/09/07/alumni-comment-on-wvu-budget-cuts-at-create-wv-forum-in-morgantown/>
 - **NEWS ARTICLE - DOMINION POST**
<https://www.dominionpost.com/2023/09/06/wvu-alumni-offer-ideas-for-wv-us-future-during-meeting-hosted-by-create-west-virginia/>