



WILLIAM JAMES
COLLEGE

Strategic Plan for William James College



2023-2028

1 Wells Avenue
Newton, Massachusetts 02459
www.williamjames.edu

I. WILLIAM JAMES COLLEGE MISSION AND INTRODUCTION

“William James College strives to be a preeminent institution of psychology that integrates rigorous academic instruction with extensive field education and close attention to professional development. We assume an ongoing social responsibility to create programs to educate specialists of many disciplines to meet the evolving mental health needs of society.”

The following commonly held core values establish the foundation for all academic programming at William James College (“WJC”):

- **Experiential Education** – integrating rigorous academic instruction with substantial clinical experience.
- **Social Responsibility** – educating providers to meet a diverse society’s evolving mental health needs including cultural and language competence and developing programs and partnerships to ensure access to mental health care for all persons.
- **Personal Growth** – fostering a supportive, challenging and stimulating learning environment that pays careful attention to personal and professional development.

These core values have guided the work of this institution for nearly fifty years, as it evolved from the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology, offering one graduate program to a college with four academic departments offering thirteen academic degrees at the bachelor’s, master’s, graduate certificate, and doctoral level. Distinct from university programs that emphasize research and teaching, WJC prepares students, as clinicians and organizational leaders, to apply psychology training that ultimately improves the lives of others. At WJC, the results of academic research and the guidance from psychological theories are evaluated against the real-world experience of clients and stakeholders. Field education, supervision, and exposure to community needs and cultural differences are key elements in the training of the College’s practitioner scholars. While access to behavioral health care and opportunities for leadership are too often limited by language, culture, and economic barriers, WJC develops innovative programs that attract and support individuals who will bring direction, service, and change, particularly to historically marginalized communities.

II. THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CRISIS IN THE U.S.

In December 2021, the U.S. Surgeon General, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Children’s Hospital Association, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry declared a national emergency in child and adolescent mental health. The prolonged period of social isolation, loss, and stress that accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the normal process of growth for young people and left incalculable gaps. The psychosocial skills that must be mastered by developing young people (e.g., initiative, mastery, identity, and intimacy) all depend upon social interaction with others. The adverse impact of this pandemic on our children of every age will likely continue for years.

This report and others like it present a worrisome picture of mental health:

- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reports that 53 million adults and 40 million people (about twice the population of New York) over 12 years-old have a mental illness and/or a substance use disorder.
- In its most recent annual survey, the American Psychological Association (“APA”) found that only 8 to 9% of those over the age of 65 were feeling emotionally distressed, but nearly half of men, women, and children under the age of 44 were.
- Since 2010, research indicates the prevalence of behavioral health disorders has increased to between 35 and 40% of students attending higher education institutions, with corresponding negative impacts upon academic performance and enrollment. Multiple surveys identify mental health as the most significant problem on campus, and academic pressure as the most common cause of anxiety among college students.
- Research finds significant increases in the prevalence of anxiety, depression, eating disorders and substance use among youth along with an alarming rise in emergency room visits. More than one-third of high school students report sadness, hopelessness with a 40% increase in suicidal ideation and planning. Suicide is the second most common cause of death in this age group with young Black children under 13 twice as likely to die by suicide than White peers.
- Finally, a recent report by the Centers for Disease Control found that nearly three-quarters of LGBTQIA+ teens and two-thirds of teenage girls feel persistently sad and hopeless and that these groups have seen a 60% increase in severity since 2011.

Against this backdrop, treatment for mental health and substance abuse disorders has not met demand: one-third of U.S. residents live in one of 6,635 behavioral health professional shortage areas and 50% of the counties in the country lack even one medication prescriber or addictions specialist. This scarcity is especially acute in rural, racially and ethnically diverse, and lower socioeconomic communities in the U.S. Furthermore, patient diversity is not matched by their clinicians; approximately 83% of the practicing mental health professionals are non-Latinx White. Even in Massachusetts, which is among the best resourced areas of the country, more than half of those from all ethnic and racial backgrounds who seek behavioral healthcare cannot find a provider to see them. As a result of decades of underrepresentation in mental health professions, very few people of color are in leadership and clinical positions and most of the academic research, professional policies, and ethical principles in psychology and related fields has been created by non-Latinx White professionals.

For more than two decades, clinicians, researchers, and policy makers have called for action to improve the size, skills, and the working conditions of the behavioral health workforce. Yet very little has been done. The magnitude of this crisis argues for multiple efforts to meet the need. WJC is committed to training multicultural leaders and behavioral health professionals to address the workforce shortage in this country along with teachers, first responders, and others who can create learning and work environments that promote wellness and prevent psychosocial stress.

III. COLLEGE-WIDE HIGHLIGHTS (2017 – 2022)

The College’s most significant achievement over the past six years was the way in which the entire WJC community managed the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, which included the creation of a well-used resource hub. Academic programs and College business were easily moved online and back with several graduations, program orientations, admissions cycles, and new programs launched. In addition, the following items and accomplishments achieved during this period must be noted:

- Audits of the College’s controls and finances were completed without findings or adjustments for every year.
- Following self-studies and site visits, full accreditation of WJC’s academic programs were granted by the APA, New England Commission of Higher Education (“NECHE”), and the National Association of School Psychologists.

- Workforce Development initiatives have taken a prominent place in the work of the College. The Behavioral Health Service Corps (“BHSC”) was successfully founded and executed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2017, WJC has been awarded over \$25M in grants from the United States Health Resources and Services Administration (“HRSA”), Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Mass General Brigham (“MGB”), Children’s Hospital, Accelerate the Future, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and several family foundations in support of student scholarships, stipends, and outcome research in this area.
- The College secured over \$8M in COVID-19 relief funds from the Paycheck Protection Program Loan, Employee Retention Tax Credit, and Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund programs.
- The PsyD in School Psychology degree was retired due to inadequate enrollment and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Human Services (“BS Completion Program”) was begun.
- Teachers21 was acquired and, with the integration of Freedman Center, was transformed into the Center for Behavioral Health, Equity, and Leadership in Schools (“BHELS”).
- The College’s Organizational and Leadership Psychology (“OLP”) Department continues to grow and remains integral to the College’s future success. The Department:
 - Established a new leadership team in July 2021 to coordinate across academic programming, field placement, and other WJC departments. This team has created strong working relationships with OLP professors, particularly through a new Faculty Committee Structure. These and other process improvements have allowed the OLP Department to increase its enrollment, augment its marketing, and better share information and best practices regarding curricula, student advising and mentoring, and research, among other topics.
 - Created new academic programming in partnership with BHELS. In addition, the OLP Department introduced concentrations within the PsyD in Leadership Psychology (“Leadership PsyD”), has redesigned the Master’s Degree in Organizational Psychology (“MAOP”), and aligned its field placement program with NECHE standards.

- Has often served as a standard-bearer for the rest of the College. For example, the OLP department’s proficiency and expertise in IT practices and delivering course content online–without forsaking the intimacy created by its robust community–was invaluable as it assisted other programs to their transition to remote instruction, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the OLP Department leads the rest of WJC in promoting diversity across its faculty and students while minimizing attrition.

| Enrollment by OLP program | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| GCEC | 9 | 11 | 8 | 10 | 14 | 14 | 22 | 14 | 16 | 16 |
| MAOP–Blended | 11 | 12 | 16 | 19 | 20 | 12 | 11 | 9 | 12 | 15 |
| MAOP–online | 13 | 11 | 5 | 25 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 15 | 12 | 20 |
| Leadership PsyD | 6 | 14 | 12 | 11 | 20 | 20 | 23 | 14 | 22 | 28 |
| <i>Total</i> | 39 | 48 | 41 | 65 | 72 | 60 | 66 | 52 | 62 | 79 |

- The President’s Cabinet was established, and several leadership positions were created, including Vice President for Workforce Initiatives and Specialty Training; Vice President for Business Development and Strategy; Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management; Director of Student Life and Student Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; and Director of Communications.
- Window and roof replacement projects will be completed by the end of 2023, with financing secured at a favorable interest rate of 2.44% fixed for ten years.
- A new website was created, and a new Data Management System has been implemented.

IV. STRATEGIC PLAN PILLARS: OVERVIEW, GOALS, AND NEXT STEPS (2023 – 2028)

The Prior Strategic Plan created four strategic pillars and set objectives to be accomplished between 2017 and 2022:

- Support WJC’s Greatest Strengths: Faculty, Students & Field Supervisors
- Own the NE Market for Professional Psychology Education
- Become the Experts at Educating a Multicultural Mental Health Workforce
- Create Alternative Sources of Income

Because these pillars support items that are central to the core mission of the College and its success, they have been maintained in the Strategic Plan. Furthermore, this Strategic Plan outlines the 35 goals and associated tactical next steps within (i) each of those pillars and (ii) a newly created pillar, Optimize the Student Experience. Also please note:

- The Prior Strategic Plan pillar, ‘Create Alternative Sources of Income,’ was recast to, ‘Expand and Diversify Sources of Revenue.’
- The Prior Strategic Plan pillar, ‘Support WJC’s Greatest Strengths: Faculty, Students & Field Supervisors,’ was revised to, ‘Support WJC’s Greatest Strengths: Faculty, Staff, and Field Supervisors.’ As noted above, student experience was given its own pillar and associated strategic goals.

Unless indicated otherwise, WJC will endeavor to achieve these goals by 2028. Finally, please be advised that this is an abridged document—further information, context, and metrics regarding these goals has been reviewed and approved by the College’s senior leadership and Board of Trustees.

A. SUPPORT WJC’S GREATEST STRENGTHS: FACULTY, STAFF, AND FIELD SUPERVISORS

1. Teaching Pedagogy

- Enhance connections between faculty and students.
- Increase engagement with academic content in a meaningful way.

2. Technological Literacy

- Assure a minimum level of digital literacy amongst all our core faculty.
- Achieve digital equity: use technology in ways that are accessible, such as closed captioning or through universal design principles.
- Ensure members of the WJC community adhere to critically important digital security protocols, as mandated by the College’s information technology department.

3. T-SEL

- Assess WJC faculty’s current strengths in Transformative Social and Emotional Learning (“T-SEL”) and encourage these topics to be incorporated into syllabi and course content.
- Encourage faculty to integrate emotional intelligence practices into academics, student advising, collegial relationships, meetings, and community groups.

4. Science

- Introduce processes and oversight that yield more consistent supervision of doctoral projects.
- Incorporate initiatives that seek to infuse scientific principles and methodologies in the ‘everyday thinking’ of those doing the work of the College.
- Employ an Adult Professional Learners model in WJC curricula.
- Translate various ethical principles into research practice.

B. OWN THE NEW ENGLAND MARKET FOR PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY EDUCATION

- Increase thought leadership and visibility by positioning WJC as the ‘go-to’ institution that will help remediate the mental health resource shortage and crisis in schools, as well as the ‘great resignation.’
- Launch a fully integrated, regional branding campaign.
- Leverage WJC’s burgeoning expertise and reputation in behavioral health workforce development to grow student enrollment, agency and government partnerships, and career outcomes outside of Massachusetts.

C. BECOME THE EXPERTS AT EDUCATING A MULTICULTURAL MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE

- Invest in academic programming and services that educate and train diverse cohorts in behavioral health awareness and primary prevention tactics.
- Develop a clear definition of the concept of “multicultural expertise” or “multicultural competency,” as it pertains to WJC’s mission and core values.
- Expand career ladder and professional development programs to recruit and train individuals who are underrepresented in the field.
- Continue to develop a multicultural board, senior leadership team, staff, faculty, and student body (in composition and skills).
- Leverage additional funding for scholarships, stipends, academic resources, mentorship, and professional development training for recruitment and retention purposes.
- Build a network of “sustainable partners” with educational institutions, community-based agencies, private foundations, and government entities (local, state, federal) that are committed to expanding and diversifying the behavioral health workforce.

- Measure the impacts (i.e., short- and long-term outcomes) of WJC’s initiatives on increasing multicultural competence at the individual level (e.g., student, staff, faculty), the group level, and the organizational/systems level.

D. EXPAND AND DIVERSIFY SOURCES OF REVENUE

- Continue to reduce WJC’s dependence on tuition to fund its operations, with a target of maintaining 70% of revenue derived from tuition.
- Create more synergies and interdependencies between non-revenue generating activities and academic programs.
- Enact the recommendations in the online business and research plan.
- Augment current development capabilities—particularly to support student scholarships—while focusing fundraising efforts on WJC’s four Institutional Advancement priorities: (i) workforce development, (ii) preventative behavioral health, (iii) culturally responsive training, and (iv) clinical services.
- Work with the Board of Trustees to grow the WJC endowment, which will ensure enduring support for the College’s mission.
- Develop sophisticated cost-accounting procedures to assess the viability and profitability of specific WJC programs and budgets more accurately.
- Create processes to improve the overall profitability of the College’s operations.

E. OPTIMIZE THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

- Empower the College’s new Director of Student Life and Student Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to provide DEIB and T-SEL-related personal and professional development opportunities and workshops for students.
- Strengthen a sense of belonging for all students while promoting a welcoming and inclusive environment.
- Provide greater awareness of WJC operations to inform students of campus opportunities and their individual responsibilities.
- Offer more focused programs and services for online students to assist in building connections with the College, and with each other.
- Provide academic and professional development opportunities to prepare students to be specialists in their fields who are committed to serving all populations.
- Help WJC students improve their financial literacy.
- Address desires and needs for food services, as articulated by students, faculty, and staff.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In 2024, WJC will celebrate its 50th anniversary. Both this milestone and the creation of this Strategic Plan are causes for introspection—for the College to consider its past and the challenges before it. Without doubt, the College has passed through several challenges and phases as it transformed from one academic program to occupy a leadership position among the independent colleges and universities in Massachusetts. Emerging with greater strength from a global pandemic, WJC must play a leadership role in repairing the damage done to our collective behavioral health, by several years of trauma, loss, isolation, and separation. Technology has both connected and divided our community; we live in a world with greater mistrust and misinformation that is too easily shared online. Despite our progress in so many areas, social, economic, and other injustices remain ever present and pernicious.

And yet, at WJC, we continue to seek the light amid clouds and shadows. The College is growing more diverse in its learning community and its programs, more reflective, more vibrant, and more responsible to others. We are united in cause and in spirit, and in a dedication to executing the College's mission and values. WJC is graduating compassionate force multipliers for good; our students' education allows them to make systemic, positive changes in their clinics and organizations. Our institution honors and convenes a broad array of perspectives brought in good faith. Ultimately, though this Strategic Plan articulates critically important goals for the College, it is the acts of kindness, empathy, and respect carried out each day by our students, faculty, and administration—in classrooms and at field sites—that will ensure another half-century of our success.

This report has been the effort and investment of many faculty, staff, trustees, and consultants. We are very grateful to those who led study groups and contributed to the research, analysis, and composition of this document. William James College and its important mission are ably and generously served by its students, faculty, staff, and volunteers who are committed to meeting the needs of our diverse community. Your support not only had made a difference for our students, but it is helping them to change the lives of those with whom they work.

Thank you for your partnership.

Respectfully submitted,



Nicholas A. Covino, President
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