Salisbury University Strategic Plan 2026–2031

Anchoring Our Region, Advancing Our Future

As Salisbury University reflects on its centennial, we do so at a pivotal moment, not only for our institution, but for public higher education, the Eastern Shore and the state of Maryland.

Across the nation, universities are being asked fundamental questions: *Why do you exist? Who do you serve? What difference do you make?*

We are not just a university that happens to be located on the Eastern Shore. We are the intellectual, cultural, and economic anchor of the Eastern Shore. That distinction matters, and it is one we are choosing, purposefully and proudly, to lean into.

This plan builds upon Salisbury University's mission as a regional comprehensive public university, grounded in the liberal arts and sciences, where professional preparation, intellectual inquiry, and civic learning work together to prepare students for meaningful careers, active citizenship and lifelong learning. Salisbury University prepares students to apply their knowledge to real-world challenges through experiential learning, research and community engagement.

This strategic plan makes an intentional choice: **Salisbury University strives to be Maryland's model for connecting broad-based foundational learning and intellectual discovery with regional problem-solving and impact, preparing our students for a lifetime of success.**

We are choosing to be the institution that proves regional commitment and academic excellence are a powerful combination. Our university will serve this place we call home while preparing students to lead anywhere. Students develop skills and perspectives that both have local impact and are designed for global application, preparing them to solve complex problems wherever their lives, careers and passions take them.

Shared Definitions & Commitments
Throughout this plan, terms such as *high-impact practices*, *experiential learning*, and *impact* are used intentionally.

At Salisbury University, high-impact practices refer to structured learning experiences, such as internships, clinical placements, research, service-learning, student leadership, athletics, and study abroad. High-impact practices require sustained engagement, reflection, and application of knowledge – they demonstrate learning outcomes connected to real-world applications.

Similar to high impact practices, experiential learning is the approach in which students actively apply knowledge beyond traditional instruction. Experiential learning focuses on learning by doing and putting theory into practice.

Impact refers not simply to activity, but to measurable contributions to student learning, regional problem-solving, and institutional value.

Specific benchmarks and metrics will be developed during the implementation phase to ensure clarity, accountability, and alignment.

How This Plan Is Structured

The strategic plan is organized into three levels:

1. **Pillars** that define the University's highest areas of strategic priority.
2. **Goals** that articulate what we aim to achieve within each pillar.
3. **Strategies** that establish clear, measurable directions for accomplishing those goals.

Each of the four pillars is supported by a defined set of goals, and each goal is advanced through targeted strategies. What this plan intentionally does *not* include is a prescribed list of **initiatives** – an undeveloped fourth level that turns strategy to action:

4. **Initiatives** are specific actions, programs, and projects that bring each strategy to life.

From Strategy to Action

Following the release of the completed strategic plan, on May 1, an implementation team will work collaboratively with divisions, schools, departments, and shared governance groups to develop initiatives. Together, they will develop division-level implementation plans that identify initiatives aligned with institutional strategies.

In this way, the strategic plan serves not as a static document, but as a living framework – one that guides decision-making, focuses investment, and aligns our daily work with our long-term vision for excellence and impact.

The Strategic Plan

PILLAR 1: Transformational Learning and Academic Excellence that Connects to Real-World Needs.

Goal 1: Make experiential, hands-on learning, grounded in the liberal arts and sciences, the defining feature of a Salisbury University education.

Strategies
- Ensure all students, regardless of background or major, have access to high-impact and experiential learning opportunities.
- Expand and develop pipelines for employer- and community-partnered learning embedded across academic programs.
- Invest in clinical, simulation, laboratory, and applied learning spaces, equipment, and partnerships to increase student access to hands-on experiences.
- Expand and invest in high-impact practices that support student success and/or directly address regional and state-wide needs.

Goal 2: Invest in faculty and staff to advance academic excellence and innovation that directly benefits our students and strengthens our learning community.

Strategies

- Invest in professional development, mentoring, and workload models.
- Incentivize interdisciplinary teaching, research, and community-engaged work.
- Integrate responsible use of emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence.

Goal 3: Align academic programs with workforce needs and regional priorities while sustaining academic integrity and the broad intellectual foundations of a comprehensive liberal arts education.

Strategies

- In partnerships with faculty governance, identify and invest in signature, high demand undergraduate, graduate and certificate programs that solve pressing regional and state-wide needs.
- Develop and expand licensure-aligned, industry-recognized, and stackable credential pathways to create clear, flexible routes for professional advancement and regional workforce development.
- Expand accelerated pathways and transfer partnerships.
- Conduct regular program review and reinvestment.

Goal 4: Advance knowledge and strengthen the region through faculty, staff and student research, scholarship, and creative activity.

Strategies
- Invest in internal funding, grant development, facilities, and administrative support for high-quality research, scholarship, and creative activity involving faculty, staff, and students that advances disciplinary knowledge, especially those that focus on regional priorities.
- Highlight and promote research and creative work to demonstrate our impact, strengthen regional engagement, and enhance the University's reputation.

Goal 5: Ensure all students engage in learning experiences that develop critical thinking, civic responsibility, and global perspectives.

Strategies

- Strengthen and continuously improve the general education curriculum to ensure it provides a cohesive foundation that prepares students for informed citizenship, lifelong learning, and meaningful participation in a complex society.
- Expand and embed meaningful community service opportunities across the campus experience, recognizing service as a powerful contributor to student learning and success.
- Expand international learning opportunities, including study abroad and study away, and global perspectives throughout the student learning experience.
- Incentivize and support the development of interdisciplinary courses that explore complex regional and societal challenges.

PILLAR 2: Support Students and their Success at Every Stage

Goal 1: Foster belonging and engagement while supporting students' academic, personal, and career growth, so every student feels seen, valued, and empowered to succeed.

Strategies

- Expand mentoring networks that connect students with faculty, staff, alumni, and community professionals.
- Develop student leadership, campus employment, and co-curricular involvement into high-impact learning experiences.
- Strengthen signature traditions, events, and shared experiences that build community pride and connection.
- Ensure accessible and inclusive design of programs, spaces, and communications.

Goal 2: Remove institutional, financial, and structural barriers to student success and full student participation in Salisbury University's learning community.

Strategies

- Integrate advising, coaching, and early-alert systems across the student lifecycle.
- Simplify registration, transfer credit, and degree pathways to improve time to completion.
- Expand access to need-based aid, emergency support, and low-cost learning resources.
- Leverage technology and innovation to personalize learning, including expanding flexible learning modalities/times to meet diverse student needs (i.e., online and evening).
- Use disaggregated data to identify and close equity gaps.
- Increase consistency and quality of student advising, instruction, and support through targeted professional development aligned to key student transition points.

Goal 3: Improve student success by investing in programs and practices proven to help students stay on track, complete their degrees, and achieve meaningful learning and career outcomes.

Strategies

- Strengthen our use of institutional data, assessment results, and student feedback to evaluate effectiveness and guide decisions about expanding, refining, or sun-setting student success initiatives.
- Prioritize the expansion and scaling of student-forward programs and practices that show measurable improvements in retention, progression, completion, and equity across student populations.
- Enhance faculty and staff access to timely data, tools, and professional development to support shared responsibility for improving student success outcomes.
- Enable earlier and more effective student support interventions by providing faculty and staff with integrated systems and timely actionable data.
- Reduce fragmentation in the student experience by clarifying roles, decision-making, authority, and accountability across academic, and student support functions.

Goal 4: Promote student resilience, health, and well-being as essential foundations for academic achievement and lifelong learning.

Strategies

- Expand counseling, health, and case-management capacity using a stepped-care model.
- Embed well-being education into orientation, first-year experiences, and academic programs.
- Enhance physical and virtual spaces that support connection, reflection, and healthy behaviors.

PILLAR 3: A Community-Engaged Campus that Strengthens and Uplifts the Region

Goal 1: Build strong partnerships with regional employers, organizations, and communities to address shared challenges and expand learning opportunities for students.

Strategies

- Establish a coordinated university-wide approach to community and employer partnerships.
- Align internships, applied research, and service-learning with regional priority areas.
- Measure and communicate SU's economic, social, and cultural impact on the region and State.

Goal 2: Position Salisbury University as a hub for lifelong learning, civic engagement, and community problem-solving.

Strategies

- Expand continuing education, professional development, and credential pathways for learners of all ages.
- Increase access to educational and civic programming through hybrid and community-based delivery.
- Strengthen alumni engagement as a lifelong partnership with the university.

Goal 3: Strengthen Salisbury University's role as a regional gathering place by expanding cultural and athletic programs that engage and unite the Eastern Shore community.

Strategies

- Increase community-facing cultural events and programs that engage local communities and residents.
- Advance an athletics program that prioritizes student success in the classroom, meaningful community engagement, and competitive excellence, strengthening both the student experience and regional connection.

PILLAR 4: Responsible Stewardship for a Strong Future

Goal 1: Build a campus culture of trust rooted in shared governance, professional development, a strong sense of belonging, and openness to a broad range of ideas and perspectives.

Strategies

- Invest in new onboarding, mentoring, clear career pathways along with leadership/professional development for faculty and staff (aligned with strategic priorities) to position Salisbury University as a best place to work.
- Improve the clarity, transparency, and effectiveness of shared governance processes to support timely and impactful decision-making.
- Recognize and elevate achievements that advance SU's mission and institutional impact.
- Regularly assess faculty, staff and student employee (undergraduate and graduate) engagement, climate, and workload sustainability to guide improvements in policies and practices.

Goal 2: Strategically align faculty and staff roles to advance student learning, academic excellence, and the University's mission.

Strategies

- Regularly assess and adjust faculty and staff workloads, role expectations, and unit structures to ensure capacity is focused on student success, academic quality, and regionally engaged work in a sustainable and transparent manner.
- Implement intentional workforce planning, succession strategies, and targeted professional development so that faculty and staff skills and capacity align with current and emerging institutional priorities

Goal 3: Strengthen our financial resilience and strategic investment capacity.

Strategies

- Launch a comprehensive capital campaign aligned with institutional priorities.
- Diversify revenue through grants, partnerships, entrepreneurial programs, and innovative delivery models.
- Align budgeting and resource allocation with strategic priorities and outcomes while supporting the breadth of programs expected of a comprehensive public university.
- Deepen a culture of philanthropy to increase donor engagement, expand philanthropy and giving, and strengthen long-term financial support.

Goal 4: Modernize systems, operations and infrastructure to improve efficiency, adaptability, and long-term sustainability.

Strategies

- Streamline administrative and academic processes that affect students, faculty, and staff.
- Invest in integrated data, analytics, and AI-enabled tools to support decision-making.
- Improve internal service delivery (e.g., HR functions, IT systems, Workday processes), accountability, and transparency.
- Optimize space utilization and pursue facilities that enhance learning, access, and community engagement.

Goal 5: Sustain enrollment growth while maintaining our educational excellence and the distinctive student-centered learning environment that defines Salisbury University.

Strategies

- Develop strategies to increase or improve recruitment, retention, and program growth across the university with particular focus on areas with demonstrated academic quality, student demand, and strong outcomes, and that intentionally support current regional and state needs.
- Broaden recruitment reach through strategic partnerships, transfer pathways, and outreach efforts, that yield measurable enrollment growth in priority areas.
- Develop targeted graduate recruitment strategies, including cohort-based pipelines, and strengthened graduate student support infrastructure to ensure sustained enrollment growth, retention, and program quality.