

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

2025 PROGRESS REPORT

THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON

PROMISE I: Well-Being & Stewardship

To cultivate a culture and community where everyone can flourish and be responsible stewards of the University's resources and infrastructure.

1. Strategically grow and invest the University's financial resources and enhance our operational capabilities and infrastructure.

- a. Grow strategic and innovative partnerships and services that will diversify, expand and fortify the University's revenue-generation streams and reduce the University's debt burden.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Significant strategic investment in prospect development has been made to counteract enrollment cliff. As a result, our prospect pool has increased substantially by approximately 35% compared to last year.
- Entered Private, Public Partnership (P3) for student housing to defease debt and generate investment pool for facilities improvements/upgrades.
- Hired the Education Advisory Board (EAB) to assist with Financial Aid Optimization, increasing Net Tuition Revenue.

- b. Continue to modernize and optimize the University's infrastructure, including achieving full implementation of Workday Student® and optimizing integration of Slate and Stellic.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Completed stabilization and improvement initiative related to student billing in Workday. Helped to automate financial aid processes and provide accurate and timely student bills. Added student identification system for all UA students as well as customized budgeting for students at Wayne campus.
- Built out infrastructure and system to better target non-resident students from midwestern states which participate in the Midwest Higher Education Compact (MHEC).
- The Office of Student Financial Aid was first-out-the-door with aid packages for student planning in Fall 2025.

- c. Intentionally and authentically connect with prospective students to increase FAFSA submissions and allow UA to offer the most competitive aid package.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Continuous improvement to the Making Akron Possible (MAP) Grant to enhance affordability for six local counties representing most of our student population.

2. Empower University employees and students to support one another.

- a. Inventory and analyze our existing systems and programs to best support the holistic well-being of our people.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Partnered with ZipAssist under the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) Mental Health Support Grant to promote and support mental health resources for the whole campus community. Sponsored 20+ employee wellness seminars and webinars with AllOne Health, the University's employee assistance program (EAP) provider.

- Sponsored SHRM Mental Health Ally Certification which was offered to faculty/staff in 2024-25.
- Launched the Healthy Minds Survey in 2024 with a 13% faculty and staff participation rate.

b. Leverage technology to connect students and employees with available resources.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Consistent and intentional updates to the Benefits Intranet Site in SharePoint as well as the Employee and Labor Relations Intranet Site to improve the employee experience. Also, implemented Workday Help to give employees a single pathway to ask their HR and Payroll related questions.

c. Optimize our employee engagement, professional development and performance management programs by leveraging Workday.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Redesigned the performance review framework using employee feedback and industry best practices and implemented check-in and review feedback cycles in Workday to support employee development, clarify the significance of individual contributions, and align work with both unit and University objectives.
- Utilized goal setting features in Workday to provide clear direction for individuals and teams to align employee contributions with the University's Strategic Priorities while fostering transparency, engagement, and shared success.

d. Grow the skills of our workforce by assessing skills demand versus supply and developing training programs to bridge gaps.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Initiated key process improvements by partnering with university stakeholders to assess, with the goal of improving, critical operational processes within finance, human resources and information technology.
- Reinvigorated the job enrichment programs for members of the Communications Workers of America (CWA) collective bargaining unit.
- Enhanced professional development by launching Workday Learning to increase visibility of training resources and support employee growth.
- Expanded learning and networking opportunities by offering Spring and Summer 2025 learning challenges to promote skill-development and cross-campus collaboration.

Key Contacts: [Office of Chief Financial Officer \(CFO\)](#), [Office of Academic Affairs \(OAA\)](#), [Office of Human Resources \(HR\)](#) & [Chief Information Officer \(CIO\)](#)

PROMISE II: Academic Opportunity

To establish The University of Akron as a lifelong learning partner, recognizing and valuing diverse learning experiences and combining traditional classroom experiences with innovative approaches.

PROGRESS 2025:

UA Extended Campus (UAX) has established a sustainable, scalable structure for integrating academic and industry credentials while expanding lifelong learning opportunities for students, alumni, and employers alike. Through Coursera and the PLUS+ Path, UA is redefining the lifelong learning continuum, from access and matriculation to graduation and career advancement. Complementing these efforts, the university has achieved steady growth in online credit programs and a notable increase in CPL awards, reflecting our commitment to flexible, learner-centered pathways that recognize experience and support lifelong educational attainment.

1. Focus on pathways that enhance lifelong learning.

- a. Leverage credit for prior learning (CPL) to reward real-world experience and recruit non-traditional degree-seeking students.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Enrollment in the CPL portfolio course (GNST 192, formerly GNST 191) continues to increase each semester
- Developing a database of course equivalencies for American Council in Education (ACE)-approved military credits/training that can apply to any former military UA student.

- b. Implement a comprehensive adult learner strategy that positions UA as the first choice for adults seeking lifelong learning.

PROGRESS 2025:

- More than 1,000 learners have engaged with Coursera via UAx.
- 50+ alumni have used Coursera to strengthen their skills

- c. Offer flexibility and programming in course delivery via optimized pathways.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Increased the number of online degree programs from 16 in 2019 to 35 in the Fall of 2025 with four new degrees in development. In addition, UA currently offers 29 certificates.

- d. Reduce time to a degree by exploring 3-year degree options.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Several are in development/have been approved.

2. Use skills-based stacking credentials to strengthen the connections between the classroom, the community and industry.

- a. Offer students the chance to earn a degree alongside an in-demand industry certificate through the Plus+ Path.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Continued growth of Plus+Path which offers students the chance to earn a degree alongside an in-demand industry certificate. Year-over-year usage has increased 36% with program earning a 4.7/5 satisfaction rating.
- Employer recognition of Coursera certifications continues to increase, creating clear bridges between academic and professional credentials.

- b. Optimize enrollment processes to allow students to enroll in certificate programs directly, regardless of degree-seeking status.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Our number of certificate programs has doubled. Related, we continue to work towards optimizing our guest and transient student enrollment processes.

- c. Explore the viability of creating stackable certificates as a pathway to degree completion and micro-credentialing within courses and programs to help students create a “skills wallet” to increase employability.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Working towards developing a list of articulated credits based on professional credentials that align with specific UA courses or subject-area electives.

3. Become the primary provider of corporate, professional and traditional higher education to businesses in our region, creating new revenue opportunities.

- a. Implement a comprehensive employer relationship strategy in both the credit and noncredit space.

PROGRESS 2025:

- As of FY25, business engagement has increased almost 70% from \$426,782.81 to \$723,296.97 in FY25.
- As of Q1 FY26, business engagement is on track to grow by more than 50% over the FY25 total.
- 80+ new businesses have engaged with UA; 52 have executed training contracts.

- 120+ employees have enrolled in Coursera certificates through employer-sponsored pathways.
- Most businesses leverage Ohio TechCred which saves the state an estimated \$1,200 per credential compared to the \$2,000 allowable reimbursement.
- We have 14 Preferred Provider partnerships with businesses and organizations. Six (6) of these are new in 2025. Notably, we have enrolled 140 students through Amazon Career Choice.
- In Summer of 2023, we launched our first prison education program at Madison Correctional Institute. This partnership represents a growth opportunity for UA.

- Build a marketing plan for this audience throughout University communications, build an “employer” lens area of website with custom media and messaging.**

PROGRESS 2025:

- A custom marketing plan has been developed in parallel with UA’s new institutional brand campaign.
- Continued planning and coordination with University Brand Office (UBO) for seamless integration of custom access and information sharing upon completion of new UA website.

Key Contacts: [Office of Academic Affairs \(OAA\)](#) & [University Brand Organization \(UBO\)](#)

PROMISE III: Inclusive Excellence and Belonging

To increase our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.

1. Enhance students’ sense of belonging and their ability to work and live in a complex global environment.

- Establish baseline data on student engagement and belonging via administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).**

PROGRESS 2025:

- The 2024 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was successfully administered. The next administration of NSSE will take place late winter of 2026 and then every other year moving forward.

- Expand opportunities for student engagement, including evaluating and enhancing the peer mentoring process and increasing the percentage of first-year students participating in learning communities.**

PROGRESS 2025:

- 2024 Learning Communities (LCs)
 - Percentage in LC’s per total new freshman class: 38% (715 students of a possible 1884).
- 2025 LCs
 - Percentage in LC’s per total new freshman class: 45% (933 students of a possible 2069).
- Percentage change from 2024 to 2025:
 - For total LC capacity – 15% increase year over year.
 - For total new freshman class – 7% increase year over year.

- Support Undergraduate Student Government (USG) and Graduate Student Government (GSG) in efforts to enhance belonging by elevating the campus experience and sharing UA’s history and traditions.**

PROGRESS 2025:

- Notable events ’24-25:
 - International Lounge Dedication
 - Downtown Akron Partnership Small Business Series
 - Women’s Empowerment Summit
 - Campus Clean-Ups
 - USG x Black Excellence Commission (BEC) Spirit Week

- Notable events '25-26:
 - Welcome Back Weekend
 - Homecoming Nominations
 - Student Leadership Summit
 - Pride Flag Installation
 - Ohio Department of Higher Education Safety Grant

2. Foster an inclusive and equitable educational and work environment.

a. Revise academic policies to support student success.

PROGRESS 2025:

- The continued and expanded use of CPL for students including:
 - Dedicated CPL Coordinator
 - Slate communication plan and workflow
 - Portfolio course in Brightspace
- Developed, approved, and implemented General Studies degree as a completion degree.
- Approval of reduced credit degrees (90 credit hour degrees) to be implemented beginning Fall 2026.
- Introduced three credits of flexibility into the General Education program.
- Revised General Education programming to meet SB1 legislation to allow for timely graduation of all students.
- Implemented new Student Evaluation system to gain student feedback on instruction.
- Expanded partnership with Coursera through UAx to provide free student access to the platform, short courses, and micro-credentialing.
- Implemented the "All in Book Bundle" to make textbooks and materials more affordable to many students.
- Currently working toward a Syllabus policy to meet SB1 legislation which would make the syllabus available prior to day 1 of the semester.

b. Leverage 'Complete College America' partnership to further close institutional performance gaps with a focus on developmental education, online learning, institutional research and four-year guided pathways.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Highlights include the democratization of data access, the acceleration of gateway math and English success, better clarification of student pathways, and the continued support and socialization of the Take 15 program.

c. Improve training for employee awareness of and ability to engage with a broad variety of perspectives.

Key Contacts: [Office of Student Affairs](#) & [Office of Academic Affairs](#)

PROMISE IV: Research & Innovation

To nurture research and innovation as the anchor public urban research university in Northeast Ohio.

1. Promote and empower faculty research across the University.

a. Use storytelling to share and instill a culture of research excellence.

PROGRESS 2025:

- UCM continues to promote research accomplishments through stories, press releases and quotes. Efforts will be refined and elevated under the leadership of the newly formed UBO.

b. Support faculty in identifying and securing external grants by implementing new grants management and human subjects research software platforms.

PROGRESS 2025:

- The Cayuse grants management and Human Subjects software platforms have been implemented.

- c. Support applied scholarly engagement by encouraging the faculty to review and revise Retention, Tenure, and Promotion (RTP) and merit documents.

PROGRESS 2025:

- As part of the Carnegie Reclassification self-study, a campus-wide review of RTP, RP and merit policies was completed with the help of a part-time faculty fellow. A report detailing the findings of that review is forthcoming to the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) and a toolkit is in development to serve as a model for units who wish to consider revisions to policy guidelines.

- Strong(er) faculty reward policies have been identified as necessary and enhanced internal supporting mechanisms are being discussed.

- d. Support faculty in funding agency compliance by leveraging open access platforms.

PROGRESS 2025:

- University Libraries has established agreements with various publishers that permit UA researchers to publish their work as open access via the Institute of Physics (IOP), Wiley, Cambridge, and Company of Biologists which allows for the avoidance of expensive article processing charges, an increase in article access, and compliance with research funding mandates.

2. Be a leader in the region's innovation economy.

- a. Revitalize the University of Akron Research Foundation as the vehicle for innovation at UA.

PROGRESS 2025:

- UARF has worked with its Board to develop a new Strategic Plan that places UA at the center of its mission, appointed a new Executive Director and Treasurer, hired a new highly experienced Innovation & Entrepreneurship Coordinator, and is actively exploring new opportunities.

- b. Facilitate mutually beneficial partnerships between regional businesses and University stakeholders.

PROGRESS 2025:

- UA's Vice President of Research and Business Engagement (VPRBE) continues to serve as the primary facilitator.

- c. Increase patents, entrepreneurship, technology transfer and licensing agreements.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Ongoing.

- d. Work with partners in the polymer cluster to deliver top-flight research around sustainable polymers as articulated in the recent designation of Akron as a Tech Hub.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Facilitated the location of the Innovation Hub-funded Polymer Pilot Facility adjacent to the UA campus. UA is the lead on the EDA Sustainable Polymers workforce development project (WISE) and UARF is a subawardee from Bounce to provide customer discovery programming for the Innovation Hub Synthe6 Initiative. Several UA faculty are working on Tech Hub committees and have applied for funding.

Key Contacts: [Office of Research and Business Engagement](#), [Office of Academic Affairs \(OAA\)](#) & [University Brand Organization \(UBO\)](#)

PROMISE V: Community and Connections

To proactively collaborate with our communities as a responsive and reliable partner to identify and meet the needs of the region and intentionally contribute to help economic and workforce development, and civic life flourish.

1. Map and grow community engagement across the institution.

- a. Achieve use of Collaboratory in at least 50% of academic units.

PROGRESS 2025:

- UA's Collaboratory currently houses 127 published activities with 28 of 42 (66%) academic units having at least one entry in the system. An additional 297 activities are in the queue awaiting faculty approval.

- b. Establish a baseline percentage of students who successfully complete a community-based curricular learning experience using a course tagging system.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Ongoing administrative planning between OAA, the Office of Community Impact (OCI), and the Registrar with a focus on Workday integration is occurring with a target implementation date of AY26-27.

- c. Develop institutional student learning outcomes for community and civic engagement.

PROGRESS 2025:

- OCI anticipates student learning outcome will be identified by the start of AY26.

- d. Enhance institutional pathways that support applied scholarly engagement for the benefit of our communities.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Recent approval of the Center for Economic and Business Research with the College of Business and the Institute for Computing, Data, and Information Sciences provide new opportunities for applied research.

2. Grow our cultural corridor in the surrounding region through the arts and by connecting with downtown Akron.

- a. Leverage existing UA strengths to enhance relationship(s) with the City (of Akron) and partners (Greater Akron Chamber, APS, County of Summit, Downtown Akron Partnership).

PROGRESS 2025:

- Consistent engagement with City of Akron and Mayor's office. UA police department and Akron Police Department (APD) continue to coordinate and collaborate on safety in our surrounding neighborhoods. UA & Akron Chamber of Commerce in lockstep on technology hub development, administration, and planning. Additional collaborations include the Summit County Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services (ADM) Board partnership with Zippy and an emerging partnership for childcare with the Akron Area YMCA.

- b. Increase opportunities for curricular and co-curricular engagement that intentionally bring UA and students to downtown and the community to campus.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Downtown Akron Partnership (DAP) Zips Invade and Zips Ambassadors programs maintain programming to connect campus to city. USG & GSG actively coordinating and embedding events and community engagement opportunities in/alongside the city.

- c. Grow the AkronArts initiative by continuing to assess and advance existing programs, facilities and relationships and create new ones.

PROGRESS 2025:

- UA's dance program has developed a distinctive Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) partnership with the Joffrey Ballet School.
- Through a philanthropic gift, UA School of Music purchased the University's first Steinway Spirio piano.
- The School of Music and the School of Dance, Theatre, and Arts Administration are combining to become the School of Performing Arts.
- The Myers School of Art faculty continues to optimize curriculum, space, and programming.

- d. Engage stakeholders (students, faculty, staff, downtown stakeholders and the public) in conversations about the mix of uses in the building, programming, and design of the Knight Building project.

PROGRESS 2025:

- Creative Placemaking [Un]class engaged in conversations with Knight Foundation to recognize student voices and perspectives. Capital and facilities planning and campus square footage assessments are ongoing.

Key Contacts: [Office of Academic Affairs \(OAA\)](#), [Office of University Advancement & Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences \(BCAS\)](#)