

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

September 2026

Division of Student Success Report

Summary

The Division of Student Success focused on preparing for the new academic year, transitioning incoming students, and providing engaging, focused events during the first part of the fall 2026 semester. The following information highlights the team's accomplishments and focus since June 2026.

Direct Reporting Units

Leatherneck Athletics

- Dr. Jeremy Robinett is serving as Administrator in Charge of Athletics while Interim Director Shelby Borchardt is on maternity leave. Interim Director Borchardt will return in October.
- A ribbon-cutting for the new turf at Hanson Field was held on Wednesday, August 26th, drawing a crowd of campus and community supporters. This \$534,000 investment was made possible by funds raised via Leatherneck Football, creating a space for not only our student-athletes but the entire campus community to enjoy.
- Athletics leadership is focused on developing a structured approach to ensure financial resources support the entire athletic program. This includes reviewing spending, aid, and planning for future expenses to ensure the athletic program continues to thrive.
- The legal and legislative landscape surrounding college athletics continues to move quickly. Athletics leadership is staying attuned to individual eligibility lawsuits. Courts are considering several overlapping challenges to the NCAA's authority to determine eligibility, and recent decisions have produced different outcomes.

Marketing and Communications

- Website Update
 - The WIU Core Project Team began meeting with Carnegie over the summer to launch the project. The team completed most discovery sessions over the summer, with input from key stakeholders and University audiences, including alumni and giving, student services, admissions, marketing, faculty, and students.
 - Carnegie has used the feedback gathered during these sessions to begin developing wireframes for several key pages, including the new homepage. The team is currently conducting a tree test with students, a user-experience exercise that asks students to navigate a simplified version of the website's content structure. This helps verify that important information is organized and labeled in a way that users can easily understand and locate.
 - The Core Project Team is working with Carnegie to perform an Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) audit of the University's existing website content to identify and develop information so it can be found more effectively by AI-powered search and answer engines; this information will be incorporated into the website redesign.

Office of Public Safety (OPS)

- Corporal Anderson was promoted to Sergeant, Officer Forman was promoted to Corporal, and Officer Deacan Clardy was hired and is currently at the Policy Training Institute.
- Georgia Oliver retired from parking, and Matt Flynn was hired to fill her position as Parking Manager, alongside Matt Cousins, who was hired as a parking agent.
- OPS is teaming up with MPD for the Citizen Police Academy, using VirTra. VirTra is also being utilized with ROTC, LEJA, and LEJA apprenticeship programs.
- OPS has been active in community events, including Touch A Truck and First Responders Day, and OPS staff has taught two RAD classes, with an additional class scheduled for November.
- Congressman Sorenson visited campus to support our FY 2027 Congressionally Directed Spending Request for Security, Technology, and Equipment upgrades for \$772,000.

- OPS submitted a Grant proposal for the Department of Justice COPS Safer Outcomes.

Student Belonging and Community Relations (SBCR)

- The Student Belonging and Community Relations team represented WIU at Macomb Heritage Days, National Night Out, WIU's First Home Football Game, the Macomb Downtown Block Party, Senator Kimberly A. Lightford's (4 th District – Senate Majority Leader) 14th Annual Uplift Our Future Back-to-School Event at the Brookfield Zoo Chicago, and First Responders Field Day 2026.
- The Student Belonging and Retention Committee hosted two financial literacy events, one in Thompson Hall and one in Corbin-Olson on September 10, 2026. The events drew a strong crowd, and students actively participated.
- The office team continues to conduct outreach to students to provide direct support and information on success and resources.

Quad Cities Student Success

- In July, the GEMS (Graduate Experience in Museum Studies) student organization attended the Association of Midwest Museums Chicago conference, which provided WIU-QC graduate students with experiential learning opportunities, as the WIU-Museum Studies department was a presenting sponsor of the conference.
- The WIU-QC Student Success Team programmed 95 campus events for the fall 2026 semester, giving students the opportunity to earn a total of 2,675 points.
- In the first three weeks of the fall 2026 semester, 172 students participated in events and activities on the WIU-QC campus, including the Pretzels with the President event.

Access and Support Area

Undergraduate Admissions

Office of Admissions

- Zachary Watson was hired to serve as the newest WIU Admission Counselor. His primary recruitment territory will be southern IL. Kendra Taflinger has moved to the role of Admissions Records Officer, a promotion from her previous role as Welcome Center Receptionist. The Office of Admissions welcomed three (3) new Graduate Assistants, Olu Ekwomadu, Kathy Cordova, and Alayna Hankins.
- Admissions Processing welcomed Luke Eddington and Margaret Bolen, both joining our team from the Office of Graduate Studies; they will lead the team in graduate admissions processing.
- 6 new scholarships for the 2027-28 academic year will be implemented to assist recruitment efforts. These scholarships will include the WIU Dual Enrollment Scholarship, the Purple and Gold Engagement Scholarship, JROTC Achievement Scholarship, a Geographic Yield Scholarship pilot, an Emerging Majors Scholarship pilot, and a Community College Partnership Scholarship pilot program.
- In collaboration with Alumni Engagement, the Office of Admissions will be hosting 6 Leatherneck Takeover events during the fall semester. These events are designed to bring together prospective students and alumni in various regions throughout the state.
- Office of Admissions is piloting a program to expand implementation of our Slate constituent relations management (CRM) system. Slate supports student recruitment across all admissions areas through application management, communication, recruitment support, and reporting. The team is working with academic programs to provide structured communication, event coordination, and training for recruitment activities through Slate.

International Student Recruitment

- Eric Fry was selected and is serving as the Director of International Student Recruitment. Eric will focus on strategic investment in our international student recruitment processes.
- International Recruitment hosted eight international students from a regional high school in early September and conducted a redesigned two-day orientation program for both graduate and undergraduate international students for fall 2026

- The team is aiming to help students and the institution navigate new federal rules that limit student enrollment under F-1 student visas to four years for undergraduates and two years for graduate.

New Student and Family Programs (NSFP)

- New Student & Family Programs hosted seven (7) in-person Leatherneck Launch (summer orientation) programs, and two (2) virtual programs between June 2026 and August 2026.
- Leatherneck Welcome Week (First Four) Programs were coordinated by New Student & Family Programs. On Thursday Opening, over 200 students attended Rocky's Union Kickoff, which also introduced them to the updated Office of Student Engagement. Events throughout the remainder of the weekend included *Rocky After Dark* on the football field, *Every Quest Ever*-an interactive scavenger hunt, mini-golf at Ball Fore Entertainment Center, the *MCC Welcome Back Bash*, an outdoor movie on the Hanson Football Field, as well as Open Rec and Digital Rec events. Almost 1500 students attended these events. New Student and Family Programs also helped coordinate the revised academic session, *Your Academic Journey Begins Here*, which drew almost 300 students. It was a HUGE success.
- New Student & Family Programs also hosted a Word Art event on the first day of school as well as the highly interactive *Every Game Show Ever* event the second Monday of classes. Over 100 students attended these two events.

Connection and Engagement Area

Golf Course

- Wrapped up summer leagues, youth camps, and clinics, all of which drew strong attendance.
- Provided 869 complimentary student rounds of golf since July 1, 2026.
- Successfully hosted 28 outings and events throughout the summer season, with 5 more still on the calendar.
- Fall golf course improvement projects are beginning in the next couple of weeks, including fall aeration of greens.

Live Mascot Program

- Live Mascot Owners from across the nation met June 22 and 23 at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, TN, to discuss a variety of mascot-related topics.
- We are working on succession plans as we prepare for Colonel Rock IV's retirement at the end of this academic year.

Multicultural Center (MCC)

- The MCC hosted its first International Student Welcome Dinner on Aug. 20 to help new international students build connections with MCC staff and campus/community partners. 20 students were in attendance.
- The MCC kicked off the semester with the 4th annual Welcome Back Bash during Fall move-in weekend. Over 250 students, faculty, and staff attended.
- The Gwendolyn Brooks Cultural Center, along with the Black Student Association, hosted their annual Back to Back BBQ on Sept. 5, which had over 70 attendees
- The LGBT*QA Resource Center hosted the annual Big Picture Picnic on Sept. 11. This event brings students, faculty, and staff together to show support for the LGBT*QA community by taking a group photo, and it drew over 60 attendees.

Office of Student Engagement (OSE)

- Purple & Gold Points Program starts the year strong with students learning over 188,650 points by 9/11/2026. For comparison, last Year during the same period, students earned 102,825 points, a +85,825 and an 83.47% increase.
- Total Students who have earned points: 1,551 students. Last Year at this time: 1,400 students, a +151 and 10.79% increase.
- Fall events remain strong, with 175 Events in Leatherneck Link as of 9/11/2026, compared to 131 events in 2025-26.

- First Four Weeks Attendance Tracking includes: Rocky After Dark (8/21) - 872, First Four Outdoor Movie (8/23) - 200, Welcome Bingo (8/26) - 295, Fall Student Organization Fair (8/26) - 478, All Student Tailgate (8/27) - 199, Casino Night (9/02) 292, and Rocky's Pancake Art (9/09) - 186.
- 8th Annual Family Day BBQ & Tasting is on Saturday, September 19th

University Housing and Dining Services (UHDS)

- The UHDS team worked with Athletics and Band to house and feed fall athletes and band members during their preseason camps.
- After a couple of years of new student housing contracts declining by over 25%, the decline was only 5% this year, showing stabilization in incoming students.
- Installed full-size beds into Super Singles and created a Super Single community in Thompson Hall. The response has been overwhelmingly positive.
- Improved Thompson Women's Showers by adding doors.
- Added new washers and dryers to all floors of Corbin and Olson Halls.

Building Services

- Our Staff worked diligently through the Summer to prepare the Living and Learning Spaces on Campus for the return of our faculty, staff, and students.
- Provided complete Floor Renovations and Room Cleaning in 3 Rooms at Horrabin Hall for the MHS Flight Program.
- We have welcomed 7 new BSW's into the department.
- Completed all of the staff relocations affected by the reduction of the Colleges from 4 to 2.
- Provided setup and Coverage for the MHS Volleyball Tournament in Brophy Hall.
- Guided staff through the use and flow of the new GCPA Building.

University Union

- Completed the renovation of the Student Engagement Center in the Union lower level and successfully relocated the Office of Student Engagement.
- Preparing for Housing and Dining Services to relocate to the 1st floor of the Union in spring 2027.
- In partnership with Sodexo Campus Services, we unveiled a new "Byte" cooler, a refrigerator vending machine that allows us to sell wraps, sandwiches, and other fresh foods.
- Completed an audit and is working to update and ensure all vending machines on campus are functioning properly.
- In partnership with SIU, WIU is again hosting courses for the Motorcycle Rider Program (Central Region).

Health and Wellness Area

Beu Health Center

- Beu welcomed 33 new international students this semester and ensured they had all required immunizations.
- Staff welcomes WIU nursing students completing their rotations at Beu this semester.
- The student flu shot clinic, in partnership with the Nursing department, is scheduled for October 13th in the Union.
- The team is adapting to a new Electronic Health Record system update.

Campus Recreation

- Campus Rec hired two new full-time staff members this summer. Angelica Rojas-Brito was hired as the new Facility Operations Coordinator in June, and Carlyann Pyles was hired as the new Recreation Programs Coordinator in July
- The turnstile entryway gate has been installed and is fully functional at the SRC Front Desk. This represents a groundbreaking change in Campus Rec facility operation and staffing organization.

- We hosted the UCA/Varsity Cheer Camp for the fourth year in a row, bringing 200+ cheerleaders and their families from over a dozen schools to the Rec Center for four days in the last week of July.
- The Rec Center will host the ADFPF Illinois State Championship powerlifting meet on Saturday, September 19. This is the second year in a row we have hosted the state championship meet.

Student Development and Success Center (SDSC)

- SDSC Health Education delivered new alcohol education programming, serving dirty sodas to 284 students at Casino Night. Another alcohol education program, Think Before You Drink, was redesigned with the first component of walking students to class while wearing drunk goggles, reaching 400% more students than the previous two years.
- Campus Outreach for Vital Essentials is opening this month to serve students engaging with the Benefits Navigator and HOUSE liaison. This program will offer self-care items such as toiletries, laundry detergent, and more to students who struggle financially and those involved in the HOUSE program.
- Since July 26, 2026, the SDSC has responded to 46 new accommodation requests, 52 retention reports, and 157 care reports.

Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR)

- SRR has welcomed a new full-time staff member. Téa Gibson will serve as a hearing officer and focus on student retention. Téa has hit the ground running, training and familiarizing herself with several educational tracking systems our office and institution utilize.
- SRR, in collaboration with OSE, MCC, UHDS, and Athletics, will host Western's first National Hazing Prevention Week (September 21–25, 2026). Each day will feature an educational or awareness event focused on hazing prevention, reporting, and education, culminating in Athletics' Purple Out game on Friday.
- SRR has begun University Conduct Hearing Board member training. Campus community members are encouraged to participate in any of our 1-hour training sessions that work with their schedule. Participants will leave fully prepared to serve as a Conduct Hearing board member.
- SRR has completed its annual Clery Report in collaboration with the Office of Public Safety and the Equal Opportunity & Access Office.

University Counseling Center (UCC)

- The UCC has hired our 2025-26 intern, Deoquase Williams, as a full-time counselor. We also welcomed a new intern, Ethan Sabotta. We have two new outstanding GAs, Krissy Petrou and Abby Watson.
- UCC is partnering with Athletics to attend 4 athletic events in September to promote UCC services and mental health resources to student-athletes.
- Our Leatherneck Lift Up Event (formerly Fresh Check Day), a mental health awareness event, welcomed 104 students, faculty, and staff—an impressive increase from last year.
- We have started the semester out strong with Kinder Mondays and Wellness Wednesdays. The first Therapy Dog event drew 43 students.

Veterans Resource Center (VRC)

- WIU has been recognized among *U.S. Veterans Magazine's* Top Veterans Schools, reflecting the university's continued commitment to supporting veterans, active-duty service members, and military-connected students. Special thanks to Yunfei Zhou of Institutional Research and Planning for helping complete the survey.
- The Veterans Resource Center has partnered with Pepsi to create VRC-branded bottled water featuring recruiting QR codes. These bottles are being distributed at area armories and military installations, as well as upcoming community outreach events, creating a direct connection between WIU and prospective military-affiliated students.
- The Veterans Resource Center is co-sponsoring a World War II Reenactment at Veterans Park October 9–11, in partnership with the Macomb Park District and WIU History Department. The

event provides an opportunity to honor those who served while connecting the history of military service with today's service members and veterans.