

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
March 2026  
Division of Student Success Report

### Summary

The spring semester has been busy for teams through the Division of Student Success here at Western Illinois University. With focuses on current student programming, support, and engagement, the team continues to strive to enhance the student experience on our campuses. The following information highlights the team's accomplishments and focuses since December 2025.

### Access and Support

#### Leatherneck Athletics

- Staffing – Head Coaches
  - a. Kooten Johnson has been hired as the men’s head soccer coach, replacing Eric Johnson, who retired after 29 years leading the program. Kooten has been an assistant with the women’s program for the past two years and a special assistant with the men's. Kooten is an alumnus and had previous head coaching experience at Monmouth College.
  - b. Mari Silva has been hired as the women’s volleyball head coach after serving as an assistant coach at Towson University for the past four years. Mari played collegiate volleyball at Florida International University, and is originally from Brazil.
- The Ohio Valley Conference search for a new commissioner is entering its final stages, with interviews being conducted with finalists at the OVC Basketball Championships in Evansville, IN March 5-6. The Huron Group has been retained to work with the Presidents and the new commissioner on a new Strategic Plan for the Conference.
- Alston Awards and Rev Share  
Leatherneck Athletics has awarded student-athletes in women’s basketball, men’s basketball, and football with Alston Awards for academic achievement, along with community service and athletic participation. The athletic department will begin Rev Share payments to student-athletes as part of the post-House-settlement era in college athletics, using Teamworks to administer the Rev Share payments. As a third-party vendor, Teamworks is also responsible for all legal and tax documents that are part of the program.
- For the fall semester, the Leathernecks posted an overall GPA of 3.31 from its 371 student-athletes. All teams finished with a GPA of 3.0 or higher, led by the women’s tennis team at 3.85, while the men’s basketball team’s 3.32 GPA led all men’s teams. Fifty-one student-athletes had a 4.0 GPA for the fall semester.
- The second semester will see the department revisit its 2023 Strategic Plan and update it as well as undertake a facility plan to address the needs, wants, and wishes of the various sports and departments that make up Leatherneck Athletics.

#### Marketing and Communications

- In January, we saw a significant increase in digital campaign engagement:
  - 36% increase in total conversions (which include applications, website visits, campus visit/event actions) year-over-year (YoY)
  - 43% increase in inquiries, 60% increase in campus visit/event actions, and a 14% increase in applications for the month-over-month (MoM)
  - Importantly, this growth was achieved more efficiently, with cost per total conversion decreasing by 36% MoM and 8% YoY, indicating stronger alignment between targeting, messaging, and audience intent.
- We have been strategically enhancing our YouTube presence to better position the platform as a recruitment tool. Our recent YouTube campaign concluded this month, and it generated over 2.8 million impressions (+155% YoY) with a 19.17% view rate, more than double the industry benchmark of 9.29%.

- The Marketing team is expanding its in-house Meta campaigns for academic programs with available funding. Our two most recent three-month campaigns generated a combined total of 145 qualified leads, demonstrating strong performance and measurable return on investment.
- As part of an ongoing effort to showcase the impactful and newsworthy work happening at Western, the Communications & Marketing department has developed a dedicated landing page ([wiu.edu/SuccessHappensHere](http://wiu.edu/SuccessHappensHere)) to serve as a central hub for highlights and achievements across the institution. In the coming months, we will launch a targeted brand awareness campaign to promote this page in several key markets and locations.

#### Office of Public Safety (OPS)

- The Office of Public Safety has two officers at the Police Training Institute.
- Through creative budget reallocation and resource use, OPS will have a new squad car, which is getting fitted in the coming weeks. This is the first new vehicle in many years to start to replace the aging current fleet.
- New duty gear was purchased through both grant and local funds to ensure up-to-date safety and security for the OPS team.

#### Student Belonging and Community Relations (SBCR)

- The Student Belonging and Retention Committee continues to work on identifying barriers to student success and possible retention initiatives to implement at the beginning of the next academic year.
- We hosted a table each day of the Macomb Holiday Tournament in December 2025 and during both days of the WIU Ag Mech Farm Expo. WIU Viewbooks and WIU promotional items were displayed on the tables. A sign from Admissions offering free applications was displayed during the Farm Expo.
- The team made approximately 1,454 contacts with students from December 2025 to February 2026. Outreach lists were generated from different sources, including Care Referrals, EdSights, and the Registrar's Office. Students were contacted by phone calls, text messages, and/or emails.

#### Undergraduate Admissions

- The Office of Admissions is expanding its efforts to recruit students with military affiliations. Ron Pettigrew has joined the Admissions Office staff and will be responsible for visiting regional military installations and developing relationships with each base's education officer. In his efforts, he will represent both undergraduate and graduate opportunities at WIU and begin developing a strategic recruitment plan for these populations moving forward. In addition, with anticipated changes to the federally administered ROTC programs, this new direction will look to enhance the connection between the ROTC program and the University, ensuring that, as new structures are implemented by ROTC, our service to these students will not change.
- With several searches underway, the Office of Admissions will embark on a redevelopment effort to provide a new structure for the recruitment and enrollment of international students. We are actively interviewing for a new role for Director of International Student Recruitment. We are preparing for on-campus interviews for those selected to participate in a second round of interviews. This individual will assume responsibility for coordinating all outreach and recruitment for new undergraduate and graduate international students. In a collaborative effort with the Graduate Studies team, we will charge this new role with developing a strategic recruitment plan for our international student populations. In addition, we are also actively searching for an Immigration Specialist. This role is essential in monitoring and maintaining the institutional visa issuance through the federal SEVP (Student Exchange and Visitor Program). Currently, WIU has two (2) individuals identified as active DSO's (Designated School Officials). As this process continues, we will be collaborating across university divisions to identify several additional colleagues to be approved and certified for this critical work.
- In conjunction with colleagues in Athletics, Communications & Marketing, and the Alumni Relations Office, the Office of Admissions will coordinate efforts to commission a new mascot

costume for WIU. The process can take several months, and this committee will be soliciting vendor options that best depict our beloved Rocky!

- Following the success of fall 2025 Leatherneck Takeovers, a shared series of events sponsored by the teams from Admissions and Alumni Relations, we will be looking to confirm 2-3 additional events in the spring of 2026! Locations will be announced soon, but the continued focus on engaging new students and alums within their local communities will remain the overarching goal. The fall events were intended to generate interest among students seeking admission, whereas spring events will also aim to enhance our yield of new students who have been admitted but have yet to enroll.

#### New Student and Family Programs (NSFP)

- New Student and Family Programs has hired 10 new Leatherneck Success Leaders for a total of 13 student leaders who assist incoming students (freshman, transfers, and online) as they transition to WIU.
- 252 transfer students have met the minimum qualifications (transferred in at least 24 SH; completed 12 SH at WIU; 3.5 gpa) and have been invited to join Tau Sigma, the Transfer Student National Honor Society.
- 600 first-generation students have met the minimum qualifications (30 hours earned; 3.2 gpa) and been invited to join Tri Alpha (AAA), the First Generational Student National Honor Society.
- The Transfer Student Organization has hosted two events this Spring with great success. Two more are being planned in partnership with the transfer student floor in CO/OL.
- Family & Friends Weekend will occur on April 17-19.

#### Quad Cities Student Success

- In November, hosted a Military Appreciation dinner for WIU-QC military students and staff.
- In December, reestablished a commitment with the Riverbend Food Bank to receive food supplies for WIU-QC students and staff.
- In January, in conjunction with the WIU Bookstore, the bookstore operations online to the WIU-QC campus, resulting in an enterprise-level real-time sales, ordering, and inventory control of WIU merchandise.
- In February, hosted a "Purple Pride Bingo" event, awarding over \$1,000 in donated prizes to students.
- In February 2026, Moline High School hosted the Black Excellence Awards at the QC campus.
- The WIU-QC team has completed its move to Riverfront Hall and is settling in to provide a robust academic and student services culture within a unified environment.

### **Connection and Engagement**

#### Building Services

- We have collaborated with Union and campus administration to pilot foregoing the layoff during spring break so that appropriated buildings can be focused on for a week to address concerns.
- Completed the clearing of buildings A and B on the WIU-QC Campus to prepare for tenants.
- Coming off another successful Commencement Ceremony in December, the team is already in discussions for spring ceremonies. Building Services logged 350 hours in the week preceding the preparation (Cleaning, Building Set Up) for the fall ceremony. It is a large time commitment, but our staff takes pride in providing the best environment we can for the Students and their Families to celebrate their achievements.
- Successfully outfitted approximately 12 classrooms on campus with new tables and chair seating that has been brought down from the QC Campus.
- We would also like to share that our staff has received numerous Kudo Letters from departments around campus, praising their efforts. We appreciate those who take time to recognize our dedicated employees who show up and make a difference, despite the challenges that they face.

## Golf Course

- Winter maintenance has been in full swing around HMGC. We have successfully removed over 20 dead trees and completed several landscape clean-up projects.
- Our winter equipment maintenance was further ahead of schedule this year than in the previous 3 years, and we were able to complete some housekeeping projects, such as repainting and cleaning, as a result.
- Spring is around the corner, and we have started booking events for 2026, with 25+ already on the schedule, including crowd favorites like the Leatherneck Classic, MDH, YMCA, and St. Paul.
- 2026 Memberships are available for purchase now. Information can be found on our website at [www.wiu.edu/golf](http://www.wiu.edu/golf).

## Live Mascot Program

- Celebrated Colonel Rock IV “Ray’s” 8th Birthday on February 13th! (Birthday is Feb. 14th) with the Casa Latina Cultural Center and Chingonx Afrocentric Queers student organization, hosting a special birthday party.
- The OVC Conference and Ford Center of Evansville, Indiana, allowed Colonel Rock to attend the 2026 OVC Conference Tournament on March 6th and 7th this year.

## Multicultural Center (MCC)

- The MCC ended the fall 2025 semester with several large events, including Drag Show Bingo (LGBT\*QA RC/UNITY/UUB; 125 attendees), MCC Mixer/Business After Hours (110 attendees), Friendsgiving (BSA/NAACP/NACWC; 100 attendees), and the MCC Holiday Mixer (80 attendees).
- The MCC hosted its Spring Open House on January 29 to introduce students to the cultural/identity centers and the 15 student organizations housed under the MCC. Over 70 students attended.
- Gwendolyn Brooks Cultural Center (GBCC) celebrated Black History Month with several events, including MLK Week of Service (OSE/WAVE), the Black Excellence Brunch (BSA; 60 attendees), the Super Bowl Watch Party (BSA/PGS; 50 attendees), Taste of Caribbean and Africa (ASA/SOCA; 150 attendees), African American Studies Conference (20 attendees), Open Mic Night (Feb. 25), and a Barbershop Talk (Feb. 27).
- Casa Latina hosted Casa Loves You Week, Feb. 9-13, featuring events such as What’s the Chisme? (LGBT\*QA; 10 attendees), Galentine’s Day (Women’s Center; 45 attendees), Roll with Soul (GBCC; 45 attendees), and Ray’s Birthday Bash (CAQ/Live Mascot Program; 65 attendees).
- The Women’s Center will host a series of events to honor Women’s History Month during March, including Women’s History Bingo (Mar. 4), Women’s Panel (Mar. 5), Women’s Empowerment Brunch (Mar. 7), Vagina Monologues (Mar. 10), and Take Back the Night Week (Mar. 23-26).
- The LGBT\*QA Resource Center kicked off its discussion series, *What’s the T\*?* with a Goal Setting Workshop (15 attendees) and Intersection of Race & LGBT\*QA Identity (10 attendees). Upcoming *What’s the T\*?* topics and dates include Queer Representation in Media (Feb. 24) and Transgender Visibility Day (Mar. 31).

## Office of Student Engagement (OSE)

- The Purple & Gold Points program remains popular (As of 2/23)
  - Total Points Earned: 667,450
    - Fall 2025 ended with 576,725 Total Points Earned
  - Total Students who have earned points: 2096
- Leatherneck Link Data (As of 2/23)
  - 960 events in Leatherneck Link
  - 2675 students have checked in 20,351 times
    - Compared to the same time in 2024-2025, which had 2614 students, having checked in 13,294 times (53.08% increase in check-ins)
- The Student Organization Fair was held the first week of the semester with 525 students in attendance speaking with over 130 organization tables, 10 offices, and 20 volunteer agencies

- Over 150 students have signed up for the Spring Leadership Conference for February 28th with alumnus Harvie Harrington as the keynote speaker
- Alpha Phi Omega, a national co-ed service fraternity, is officially re-establishing its chapter at WIU and is currently seeking founding members.
- Fraternity and Sorority Life (FSL) continues to strive toward academic excellence: The Fall 2025 all-FSL GPA of 3.068 outperformed the all-student average of 3.048. The highest-achieving chapter reached a notable 3.460 GPA for the term

#### University Housing and Dining Services (UHDS)

- Successfully moved in new spring students, assisting Football with 20 new commits and working with them to process contracts and get them into hall spaces seamlessly.
- Online renewal for fall 26/27 was completed.
- Launched the new super single community in Thompson Hall and it has completely filled! In addition, received a positive response to launching a new super single option with a full-size bed included.
- Conducted Western Leader Interviews, interviewing 105 students for the RA, DA, and Summer RA positions.
- Sponsored the EIU/WIU Women's BB Game and provided the halftime contest.
- Presented to IHC requesting their support for a 4% room and meal plan increase. They unanimously supported our request.

#### University Union

- Mark Behymer, Facility Operations director in the University Union, was awarded the Al and Elaine Goldfarb Civil Service Employee of the Month for January.
- Conducted a student survey regarding the Union Food Court options, garnering almost 50% participation.
- Construction to begin in the new Office of Student Engagement Center, located in the basement level in the next month.
- The Board Room just received updated technology that enables electronic teleconferencing, similar to the Capitol Room's technology.
- Union Scheduling helped host over 976 events with nearly 24,322 attendees from December to March.

### **Health and Wellness**

#### Beu Health Center

- Get Yourself Tested (GYT), in collaboration with SDSC, will be held at Beu on March 25th.
- Beu staff continues to work with students who are not in compliance with the College Student Immunization Act.
- Similar to many health facilities, Beu is currently seeing an increased number of Influenza diagnoses.

#### Campus Recreation

- Campus Recreation has seen 46,820 patron entries so far this school year, averaging 264.5 visits per day (including winter break).
- Campus Rec had 106 intramural sports participants compete across 2 leagues and 4 tournaments during the Fall 2025 semester. We are seeing a participation uptick in the Spring semester, with 64 participants already having competed across 1 league and 2 tournaments.
- The Rec Center hosted Macomb Middle School for the Reward Day on December 19. Over 350 middle schoolers got to use the Rec Center for a day of fun and games.
- Campus partnered with FSL on January 22 to host Rec & Roll After Dark, a Spring event meant to mirror/complement the Rocky After Dark event that is hosted prior to the start of each fall semester. Over 200 students attended the event despite horrible winter weather conditions (the University was closed the following day due to the weather).

#### Student Development and Success Center (SDSC)

- Angie Lafrance, Instructional Development Specialist in Disability Resources, was CS Employee of the Month for February. Outside of her job working with students to remove barriers to equal access, Angie runs a dog rescue and also spearheaded a pet food drive during the SNAP benefit crisis so SNAP beneficiaries had healthy food and necessary supplies for their pets.
- In collaboration with University Housing and Dining, the SDSC held its second Mocktails Sip and Paint event in Corbin/Olson on February 4th, where over 140 people enjoyed creative mocktails, painting, music, and received alcohol education.
- During the last three weeks of the fall semester and first three weeks of the spring semester, the SDSC handled 16 new accommodations requests, 83 retention reports, and 171 care referrals.

#### Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR)

- The Student Rights and Responsibilities office is implementing new pre and post interaction surveys for students involved in the conduct process. These surveys will allow us to determine where and how we can improve education, understanding, and communication regarding the conduct process. The surveys will also allow staff to ensure all students are treated with equity and respect throughout their conduct process.

#### University Counseling Center (UCC)

- Shout-out to Tom Caudill, who has been diligently working to update all our forms in preparation for a new version of our electronic health record system. The new version is more user-friendly for staff and students.
- Wellness Wednesdays (which include therapy dog dates) are scheduled and are being marketed through social media
- The Gray Matters Collective student group has seen increased attendance and will be hosting a campus-wide speaker this spring.
- The UCC can currently schedule new clients within 7-10 business days.

#### Veterans Resource Center (VRC)

- The Veterans Resource Center remains committed to supporting military-connected students through targeted engagement and responsive services. This January, two spring check-in events connected with approximately 40 students, strengthening the community while addressing individual needs.
- VRC staff, in partnership with Billing & Receivables and Financial Aid, is working toward streamlined approaches to Tuition Assistance that enhance access, improve processes, and support institutional stewardship.
- The VRC is also committed to more visibility and service this spring by taking a more active role in broader campus programs and partnerships while continuing to ensure veterans, service members, and their families remain connected, supported, and positioned for success.