

A Decade of Change: Short-Term Challenges and Long-Term Opportunities

Ten years ago, the Fort Wayne campus now known as Purdue University Fort Wayne (PFW) completed its comprehensive visit as Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW). It operated as a multi-campus university in which both Indiana University and Purdue University conferred degrees. The Indiana Commission for Higher Education (ICHE) recognized IPFW as a regional university managed and controlled by Purdue University Fort Wayne.

At the time, IPFW operated under renewable management agreements—the most recent being the July 1, 2008 agreement that superseded prior management agreements and was effective through June 30, 2013. Concurrently in 2013, the Indiana Legislative Services Agency (LSA) was charged with examining how organizational changes and mission alignment changes might enhance the capacity of the Fort Wayne regional campus to serve the region, and the respective Board of Trustees for both Indiana University and Purdue University amended and restated the 2008 agreement for one year. The 2013 agreement was extended through June 30, 2014 for one additional year through an amendment to the 2013 agreement, and a second amendment extended the term for one additional year to June 30, 2015.

House Enrolled Act 1001, adopted by the Indiana General Assembly, allowed Indiana University and Purdue University to extend the agreement for one year to facilitate ongoing discussions to continue with the primary objective of achieving a realignment of academic missions. Ongoing discussion, consistent with the recommendations of the LSA, was focused primarily on transferring management and control of all health sciences programs to Indiana University as an additional location of Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). The LSA further recommended that all other academic programs remain at IPFW with Purdue University serving as the governing entity responsible for all remaining and future programs and in alignment with the recommendations of the LSA. With this change, IPFW was renamed Purdue University Fort Wayne.

The magnitude of this change, its challenges, and opportunities provide context for the Comprehensive Review presented to the Higher Learning Commission as part of the Ten Year Reaccreditation process.

Realignment and HLC Approval of Change in Organization

The realignment is described fully in the Change in Control documentation provided to reviewers as part of the documentation for the visit by HLC. Consistent with the Letter of Intent, HLC treated the realignment as a Change in Organization because management and control of the Fort Wayne campus remained with Purdue University. In effect, the change in organization transferred management and control of Health Sciences Programs from IPFW to IUPUI as an additional location. A teach out agreement embedded within the Program Transfer Agreement assured that actively enrolled students could complete their degrees as either Indiana University degrees or Purdue University degrees.

The agreement provided predictable enrollment declines as health science students who were in Purdue programs remained part of the Purdue programs until they either graduated or the teach out period expired. As the teach out has now expired, no health science students are included in the Purdue University Fort Wayne enrollment. This accounts for a significant drop in enrollment at PFW.

To support enrollment recovery and growth in the coming years, the Purdue University Board of Trustees is actively pursuing the addition of new academic programs in high need areas to help attract students. This longer-term strategy includes creation of new bachelor's and master's degree programs that correlate with the region's business and industry needs, increasing undergraduate retention, developing Baccalaureate completion programs through articulation agreements with community colleges in Indiana and the surrounding states in the Midwest, enhancement of the recruiting process through cooperative efforts of the Admissions and Marketing offices, and an aggressive branding and marketing campaign directly aligned with Purdue University's main campus. These strategies align with PFW's new strategic plan, mission, and associated documents discussed throughout the study.

2020 Forward – An Updated Strategic Focus

The Comprehensive Study reflects Purdue Fort Wayne's continued excellence, despite the unprecedented challenges — including enrollment challenges — resulting, in part, from the State of Indiana's legislative decision to realign the combined university (IPFW) into two, separate universities (Purdue University Fort Wayne and Indiana University Fort Wayne). During just its second year following the mandated July 2018 realignment, Purdue Fort Wayne has also faced the enormous challenges associated with the impact of COVID-19 that is disproportionately felt in regional institutions with high proportions of lower income students, including those receiving Pell Grants. Add to these challenges the significant impact of population trends being experienced in Indiana.

The strategic planning process at PFW recognized these challenges as demonstrated through specific strategic areas of emphasis that are included in the final plan:

1. *Champion Student Success* in ways that drive retention, graduation, and student learning.
2. *Enhance Quality of Place* to both attract and retain students and to connect with local communities as a culture destination for the region.
3. *Embrace Diversity, Equity, and inclusion*, including specific recruitment, retention, and graduation initiatives to improve diversity and inclusion on campus and reduce achievement grants.

The university is currently activating the first phases of implementation of the new strategic plan, despite the disruption presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, with the support and approval of the Purdue University Board of Trustees, Purdue Fort Wayne is implementing numerous administrative and curricular changes and enhancements that are consistent with the goals and spirit of the realignment. These changes position the university solidly for the demands of the coming decade.

This includes reorganizing the College of Arts and Sciences into two separate colleges—the College of Science and the College of Liberal Arts—effective July 2021. This change creates a more logical grouping of academic departments and disciplines and permits each college to bring more focus to the curriculum, enrollment, and outcomes. As part of this reorganization, the College of Professional Studies will be dissolved, and its School of Education (created in 2018) will be elevated to a standalone school; its remaining departments will be distributed to other colleges and schools. This follows on the creation of three new schools (all contained within existing colleges) in 2018—the School of Music, the School of Polytechnic, and the aforementioned School of Education.

Several new degrees have been established since 2018 that connect to and support the growing needs of the region. These include a Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology, a Master of Music Therapy, and a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice. These new degree programs are in high demand and will further support the university's enrollment goals.

###