Mentor Case Study: Winston-Salem State University
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Overview of Winston-Salem State University

Winston-Salem State University was founded as the Slater Industrial Academy by Simon Green Atkins on September 28, 1892. Atkins had an audacious vision to create an institution where every student would meet the challenges of the day equipped with an education designed to intellectually prepare the "head, hand, and heart." Twenty-five students attended classes in a one-room frame structure and were taught by a single instructor.

In 1925, the General Assembly of North Carolina recognized the school's curriculum above high school, changed its name to Winston-Salem Teachers College, and empowered it under authority of the State Board of Education to confer appropriate degrees. Winston-Salem Teachers College thus became the first Black institution in the nation to grant degrees for teaching the elementary grades.

In response to a growing medical community emerging in the Winston-Salem area, the School of Nursing was established in 1953, awarding graduates the degree of Bachelor of Science in Nursing. In recognition of the university's growing curriculum and expanding role, the North Carolina General Assembly of 1963 authorized changing the name from Winston-Salem Teachers College to Winston-Salem State College.

A statute designating Winston-Salem State College as Winston-Salem State University received legislative approval in 1969, and in 1972, Winston-Salem State University became one of the 16 constituent institutions of the University of North Carolina, subject to the control of a Board of Governors.

Data Trend Chart

The chart below represents the Winston-Salem State University's graduation trends for Black students (blue line) and for all students (red) over five years.

Winston-Salem State University Graduation Rates

Source: NCES IPEDS Graduation Rates & Enrollment Surveys
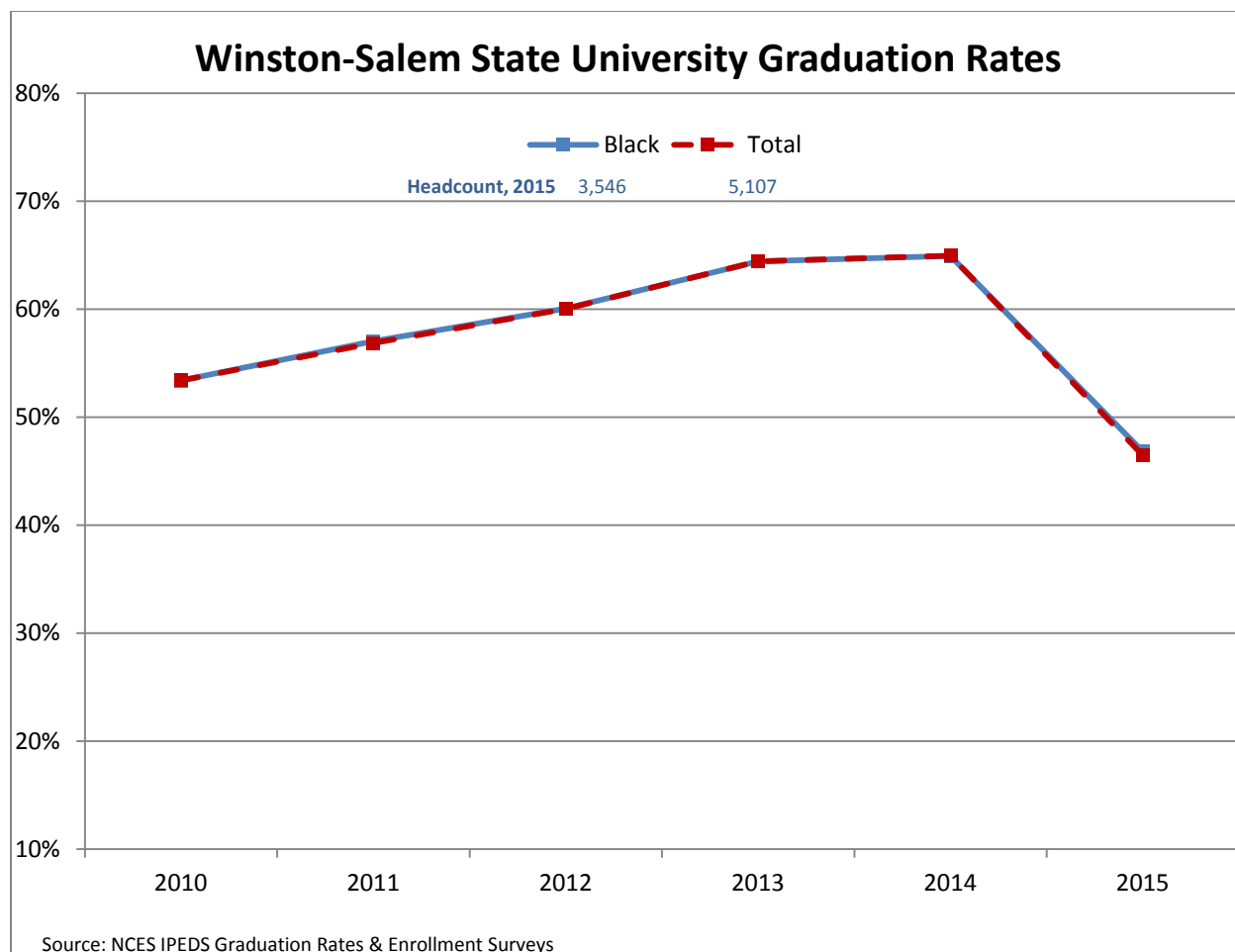
How did the Winston-Salem State University get started on the "student success" path?
In 2016, the university laid out a strategic plan for 2016-21 that embraces a new model for higher education that ensures that every student is prepared for a career and a job that may not yet exist. This plan builds on the success of the prior strategic plan (2010-2015). The plan reflects the university's commitment to producing graduates who are critical thinkers, analytical problems solvers, effective communicators, and innovative and creative collaborators. The plan seeks to engage our students inside and outside the classroom while working to ensure all students have opportunities for deeper learning to stimulate their growth and cultural skills through high-impact learning opportunities, such as internships, research projects, and study abroad experiences.

Several other initiatives have been implemented towards increasing the post-graduation success of students at Winston Salem State University. Upon serious reflection, the University made the decision three years ago to increase the admission criteria. Retention and graduation rates were showing that students who were least prepared at entry were more likely to drop out within the first two years. Holding to a higher set of admission standards has consistently yielded increasingly better prepared freshmen classes over the past two admission cycles. Moreover, first-year retention has improved from 71% to 79%. It must be noted that in an effort to retain

the University's commitment to access, a Dual Degree program with Forsyth Technical Community College was established for students interested in Winston Salem State but who do not meet the admission standards. These students are dually admitted to both institutions with the agreement that they matriculate directly to programs at Winston Salem State University once the Associates degree is complete.

Advising is key to student success. This is especially the case when the majority of students on your campus are the first-generation in their families to attend college. These students have less experience with higher education and require greater guidance and advice as they seek to negotiate the many educational opportunities. A new advising model was implemented at Winston Salem State as a complement to the new curriculum. The model seeks to create a network of advisors for students. Each type of advisor brings a different expertise to the partnership. This advisor is considered the pre-major advisor and will stay with the student until he or she officially declares a major in the second semester of the sophomore year. The role of the faculty advisors is to guide the student through the curricular options, to help the student choose among the many offerings in such a manner as to support the student's intellectual growth. Faculty advisors are paired with a professional advisor. Professional advisors are also well-versed in the curriculum, but they also understand other university processes like financial aid and housing and academic policies. The University has also increased resources for tutoring, supplemental instruction, writing support and support for technology and quantitative skills.

How does the Winston-Salem State University sustain the student success movement?
Consistent monitoring and review of success metrics is critical. We cannot rest on our laurels and success. We must stay current on trends and best practices and integration of data, predictive analytics and system expectations to sustain any level of success.

> *What is the role of the leadership?*
> The University of North Carolina Board of Governors, President, and system are committed to a plan that strengthens our institutions, improves student outcomes and expands access to affordable high-quality degrees. As such, specific system metric goals have been set, and Winston-Salem State University has selected specific objectives on which to focus and for which it is uniquely positioned.
>
> Every level of executive leadership has a role in meeting goals of student success:
>
> - **Chancellor**-leading transformation for the campus and stakeholders.
>
> - **Provost**-leading the curricular discussions as the chief academic officer and leading the faculty across changes in general education, majors, enrollment management and student support.
>
> - **Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs**-leading the co-curricular initiatives that complement and support activities in the classroom.

- **Chief Information Officer**-leading the evolution of technology to support engagement in and out of the classroom for faculty, staff, and students.

- **Vice Chancellor for Finance & Administration**-ensuring financial resources are strategically allocated in support of the strategic plan and success initiatives that improve the quality of facilities and infrastructure for students, faculty, and staff.

- **Vice Chancellor for Advancement**—leading the fundraising efforts to secure sufficient scholarship and endowment funds through alumni, corporate, and foundation gifts to the university that support success goals.

What is the role of culture change?
The manifestation of behaviors in a university are a component of the culture of the university. Anytime change is introduced there is natural resistance. Understanding that change will not always be on a large scale, but any movement of a percentage point is a positive sign that change is occurring. Adjusting expectations will limit frustrations as the change cycle happens.

What institutional data is used to drive efforts?
See Appendix A - Degrees Awarded 2008-2016 - (UNC General Administration InfoCenter Dashboard).

How were challenges overcome?
Winston-Salem State University experienced overall enrollment declines from 2009-2015. Some of this change in enrollment makeup and totals was intentional, as the university placed the focus on a high-touch liberal education model predicated on retention, high-quality learning outcomes, expedited degree completion, and strong matriculation metrics. The results in these areas have been excellent, with significant progress made specifically in graduation rates and time-to-degree calculations (where WSSU ranks among the best in the UNC system). The indirect result of these improvements, however, has been that the university has often graduated more students each year than it has been prepared to replace. Another challenge the university is facing is a decline in retention rates of upper class students. These declines are due to numerous factors we are working to address as a university.

Knowing what you know now, what would the Winston-Salem State University do differently?
Intentional and wide spread conversations about the vision as it evolved would allow more opportunity for buy-in, especially with faculty. Maximizing the influence from campus champions would have been an added benefit.

**Advice for those just starting the student success journey?**
Pace yourself, change will not happen overnight. Real change takes 5-10 years to become culture. Use quantitative and qualitative data as measures of success. Stay consistent with your message to faculty, staff, and students.

Appendix A

Degrees Awarded 2008-2016
(UNC General Administration InfoCenter Dashboard)

Year ▼	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-200
Institution ▲	Degrees	Degrees	Degrees	Degrees	Degrees	Degrees	Degrees	Degrees	Degrees
Winston-Salem State University	1,277	1,455	1,530	1,556	1,472	1,392	1,325	1,139	

Right-click on the table to download data
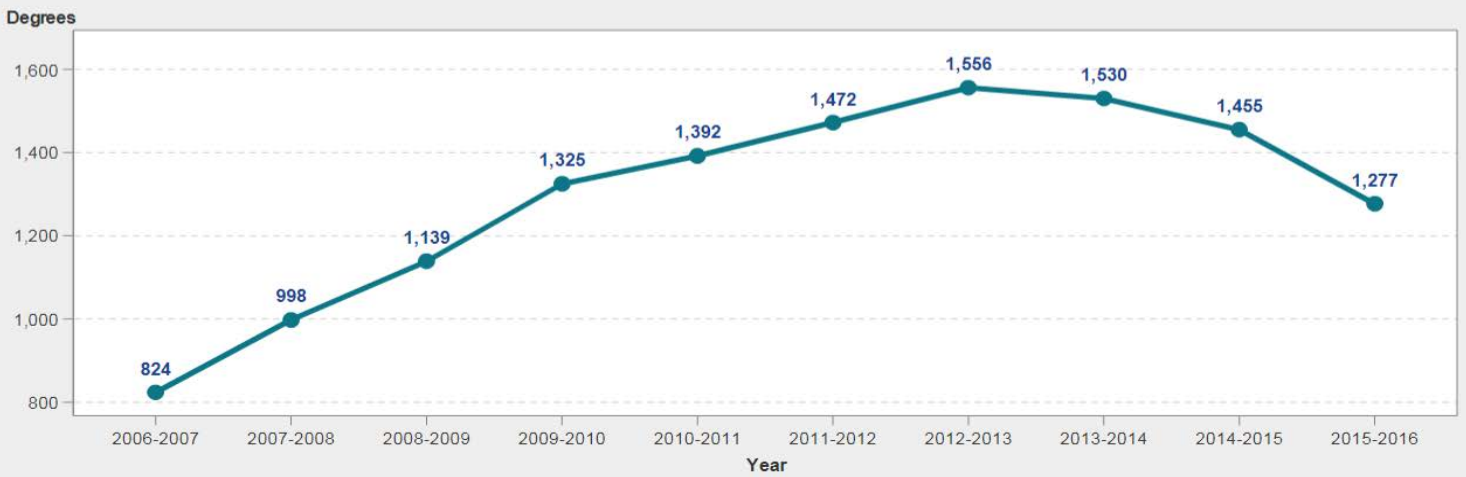
Graduation and Persistence Rates 2009-2015

Graduation Rates

Cohort Year (Entering Fall Term) ▲	Number of Students in Cohort	2nd-Year Grad Rate	3rd-Year Grad Rate	4th-Year Grad Rate	5th-Year Grad Rate	6th-Year Grad Rate	
2009	31,993	0.1%	1.2%	39.4%	58.2%	62.6%	
2010	31,391	0.1%	1.3%	41.1%	59.5%	.	
2011	31,293	0.2%	1.5%	42.6%	.	.	
2012	31,675	0.2%	1.7%	.	.	.	
2013	30,944	0.3%	.	.	.	.	
2014	31,540	.	.	.	.	.	
2015	32,372	.	.	.	.	.	

Persistence Rates = Retained Plus Graduated

Cohort Year (Entering Fall Term) ▲	Number of Students in Cohort	1st-to-2nd-Year Persistence	2nd-to-3rd-Year Persistence	3rd-to-4th-Year Persistence	4th-to-5th-Year Persistence	5th-to-6th-Year Persistence	
2009	31,993	81.8%	72.3%	68.7%	66.5%	65.3%	
2010	31,391	82.0%	73.3%	69.8%	67.6%	65.7%	
2011	31,293	82.4%	73.6%	70.4%	67.4%	.	
2012	31,675	83.1%	74.8%	71.3%	.	.	
2013	30,944	84.0%	75.9%	.	.	.	
2014	31,540	84.0%	.	.	.	.	
2015	32,372	.	.	.	.	.	