

## 2024 Developments

It was another noteworthy year at Wayne State University. From the unveiling of a new agenda to guide its strategic priorities to campus expansions, enrollment increases and national recognition, Wayne State continued to make news from the heart of Detroit.

### **President Espy unveils Wayne State's Prosperity Agenda**

During her investiture ceremony in March, Dr. Kimberly Andrews Espy, Wayne State's president, unveiled the university's [Prosperity Agenda](#), a dynamic framework rooted in three pillars: *Accelerate Mobility for Our Students*, *Empower Health for Our Urban Communities*, and *Fuel Innovation for Our Competitiveness*. Reflecting Wayne State's role as a vital urban public research institution, the agenda underscores a commitment to preparing students for life-changing careers, addressing health disparities in Detroit's neighborhoods, and driving Michigan's economic growth through entrepreneurship and innovation. As a living promise to the community, the Prosperity Agenda bridges the institution's strategic goals with purposeful action to enhance student success, advance knowledge, and strengthen Wayne State's bonds with Detroit and beyond.

### **Gretchen C. Valade Jazz Center opens**

In August, Wayne State University opened the Gretchen C. Valade Jazz Center, a state-of-the-art performance venue that enhances the Department of Music and celebrates Detroit's rich jazz legacy. The center, named for the late Gretchen C. Valade, houses two unique spaces: the 325-seat Detroit Jazz Hall, designed specifically for jazz performances, and Dee Dee Bridgewater's, a 120-seat venue inspired by the intimacy and vibrancy of traditional jazz clubs. The grand opening featured performances by acclaimed artists and honored Valade's legacy as a tireless advocate for jazz. Valade, who passed away in 2022, invested \$9.5 million in Wayne State to ensure a future for jazz in Detroit, linking the Jazz Festival Foundation with a permanent home on campus.

### **Enrollment continues to rise**

Wayne State University welcomed more than 6,900 new students in fall 2024, marking a 5.5% increase over the previous year, with undergraduate enrollment continuing to rise. Nearly 3,100 first-year students joined the university, a 2% increase from last year, while master's student enrollment grew by 10%, bolstered by significant gains in the Mike Ilitch School of Business and the Law School. Approximately 60% of incoming first-year students attended tuition free, supported by programs like the Wayne State Guarantee and the Detroit Promise. Dr. Kimberly Andrews Espy, president, and Dr. Laurie Lauzon Clabo, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs, highlighted these achievements as part of Wayne State's commitment to student success, with strong enrollment attributed to year-round recruitment efforts and enhanced student support.

### **Wayne State named among the nation's top 100 universities**

Wayne State University achieved a historic milestone in 2025 by being named one of the top 100 public universities in the United States. The university ranked No. 97 in the *U.S. News & World*

Report Best College rankings, a 12-spot improvement from the previous year. Wayne State also made significant gains in social mobility, climbing 89 places to rank No. 62 nationally and leading Michigan in this category. Wayne State's overall national ranking rose to No. 179 from No. 201, placing it in the top 12% of 1,500 universities and colleges evaluated, further cementing its reputation as a center of academic and research excellence.

### **WSU OPEN connects university and partners**

In October, Wayne State launched WSU OPEN, an initiative designed to simplify and expand partnerships with corporations, nonprofits and governmental organizations by providing streamlined access to the university's expertise, research and workforce development programs. The first partnership through WSU OPEN was established with Michigan Central and will create a college-to-career pipeline and foster innovation in Detroit's mobility sector. This groundbreaking collaboration focuses on applied learning programs, curriculum development in mobility and engineering, and career pathways while addressing regional challenges through joint research, policy advocacy and talent development initiatives. Anchored by a planned Wayne State presence on the Michigan Central campus, the partnership aimed to drive economic growth, support startups and enhance Detroit's competitiveness in the 21st century economy.

### **Wayne State receives top APLU honor**

In November, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) awarded Wayne State its prestigious Innovation and Economic Engagement Connections Award, the top honor from the 12th annual Innovation and Economic Prosperity (IEP) Awards. Presented at the APLU annual conference, the award recognized Wayne State's exemplary economic engagement and its ability to connect across Talent, Innovation, and Place — the three core IEP categories. President Espy highlighted the recognition as an affirmation of Wayne State's national leadership in preparing the workforce, fostering innovation and driving community growth, central to its Prosperity Agenda. This recognition builds on Wayne State's prior APLU honors in 2018 and 2019.