

**PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE**

**ON**

**CURRICULAR INNOVATION**

**NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

**MAY 2008**

## **Introduction to the Presidential Task Force on Curricular Innovation**

The Presidential Task Force on Curricular Innovation was derived from the first strategic imperative: “Preserve, Strengthen, and Extend NIU’s Teaching and Learning Environment.” The initial Strategic Planning Task Force (2006-07) identified several academic initiatives and issues that can be best addressed at the university level by the Task Force on Curricular Innovation:

- Identification of approaches to expand and enhance engaged learning
- Evaluation of new approaches to general education, including competencies in:
  - Critical thinking and problem-based learning (expectations of the VSA)
  - Multicultural and international perspectives
  - Communication skills “across the disciplines”
  - Other key skills/competencies/knowledge bases needed in today’s society.
- Evaluation of the feasibility of a more coordinated/formal system for offering capstone experiences for students (e.g., research projects, service learning, civic learning, internships, international experiences, etc.)
- Exploration of the implementation of a “themed year” or “themed biennium”; and solicitation of ideas from the campus community for the first of these campus-wide forums
- Exploration of concepts for new technology-based learning forums
- Exploration of mechanisms to develop more departmental (upper division) Honors projects
- Exploration of any of the other concepts from the “Strategic Imperatives” document (or new approaches that would support the Strategic Imperatives) that would be related to curricular innovations and would be best handled as University-wide initiatives.

The twelve members of the task force identified one or two of these issues to address. These subgroups would provide a synopsis of their activities every two weeks at task force meetings (from December 2007 through April 2008). These small groups searched the literature, identified sources of information both on and off campus, and talked to NIU administrators to fully comprehend the problem they were examining and to identify “best practices” used by other institutions to deal with their problem. Initially, the task force members identified two overarching goals:

- Goal 3: Actively engage students in their own learning
- Goal 4: Improve upon and maintain high quality teaching effectiveness among faculty and staff

After months of researching the issues listed above the task forces identified a number of strategies and actions for each goal. Frequently, the actions were ideas developed from within the task force subgroups, however a number of strategic planning concept paper ideas authored by individuals outside of the task force were considered and included to address the various strategies.

The task force reviewed 38 concept papers related to curricular innovations to explore their relevance to the developed strategies. All authors of the 38 concept papers submitted to the Curricular Innovation Task Force and other interested parties were invited to attend Thematic Conversations that occurred February 11-14, 2008. Following the thematic conversation, all concept paper authors were encouraged to work together and submit possible proposals to the task force by April 25, 2008. Twelve such proposals were submitted and are included in this report as appendices with the general support of the members of the task force. During the last month of work, the efforts of the task force went into refining the strategies and actions and organizing the ideas in a meaningful manner. Many of the task force members became very involved in developing proposals for each strategy as well as authoring concept proposals (see appendices). Ideas brought forward in the remaining parts of this report represent a foundation from which other activities can continue as NIU implements its strategic planning process.

The violent and tragic campus shooting event of February 14, 2008, had enormous impacts on the NIU community including those involved with the task forces. When the task forces met in late February for the first time after that event they decided to continue in their efforts. Furthermore, based on this event and the reaction of the NIU community, the task forces developed a vision statement:

*“Solidify the NIU Huskie identity as one of a strong, caring, and engaged community committed to local, regional, and global citizenship.”*

Task force meetings from early March through early April focused at refining strategies and their related actions. These discussions helped the task force members realize that a number of proposed actions could be used to address more than one strategy. During April efforts were focused at organizing the final report, getting authors of concept proposals to complete their proposals in formats for both the final report and NIU Strategic Planning Reporting Template, and developing a presentation for NIU’s President, Provosts, and the Council of Deans.

The task forces were asked to prioritize strategies and related concept proposals. Using the categories developed and used in the strategic planning reporting template, Immediate, High, and Long Term, the task force developed the tables below that provide a summary of our priorities and important comments related to each strategy and concept proposal that the NIU administration may want to consider as they determine their funding priorities. The strategy and concept proposal titles provided were shortened so they could be used in the NIU Strategic Planning Reporting Template (i.e., strategy/concept proposal titles in Final Report are complete).

**Table 1. Priorities and Comments for Task Force Strategies**

<u>Task Force Strategy</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Comments/Issues</u>
Strategy 3.1—Engaged Learning	High	This strategy has actions that begin in 2008 and continue through the funding period. Need to identify coordinator is HIGH
Strategy 3.2—General Education	High	This strategy has actions that begin in 2008 and continue through the funding period. Need to identify coordinator is HIGH.
Strategy 3.3—Approaches for Collaborative Learning/Teaching	Immediate	This strategy contains a number of concept papers that can be funded independently, and at a low cost; some are LONGTERM
Strategy 3.4—Use of State-of-the-Art Technology	High	This strategy contains a number of concept papers that can be funded independently. Need to identify coordinator is HIGH.
Strategy 3.5—Campus Theme	Long term	Success of this strategy requires developing an appropriate process to implement at NIU
Strategy 4.1—Faculty Review	Immediate	This strategy focuses on policy changes.
Strategy 4.2—Resources to enhance Teaching Effectiveness	High	This strategy contains a number of ideas that will require significant resources.

**Table 2. Priorities and Comments for Concept Proposals (see Appendices)**

<u>Concept Proposal</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Comments/Issues</u>
Study Abroad	High	Significant funding; Strategy 3.1
Common Reading Experience	Immediate	Fund after “Campus Theme” approach has been developed; strategy 3.1 and 3.5
Survey—Teaching Improvements	Immediate	Small funds needed; addresses Strategy 3.3
Incorporate WIMBA	Immediate	Small funds needed; addresses Strategy 3.3
E-Repository	Long term	Small funds needed; addresses Strategy 3.3
Experiential Learning Consortium	Long term	Concerns about costs; addresses 3.3, 3.4, 4.2
Student Electronic Portfolios	Long term	Long-term project; addresses 3.3 and 3.4
NIU Success Web Presence	Immediate	Small funds needed; addresses Strategy 3.4
Online Teaching/Learning	Immediate	Small funds needed; addresses Strategy 3.4
Electronic Tutors	Long term	Small funds needed; addresses Strategy 3.4
Themed Year Initiative	High	Costs appear too high; Strategy 3.5
Instructional Release Time	Immediate	Significant annual costs; Strategy 4.2

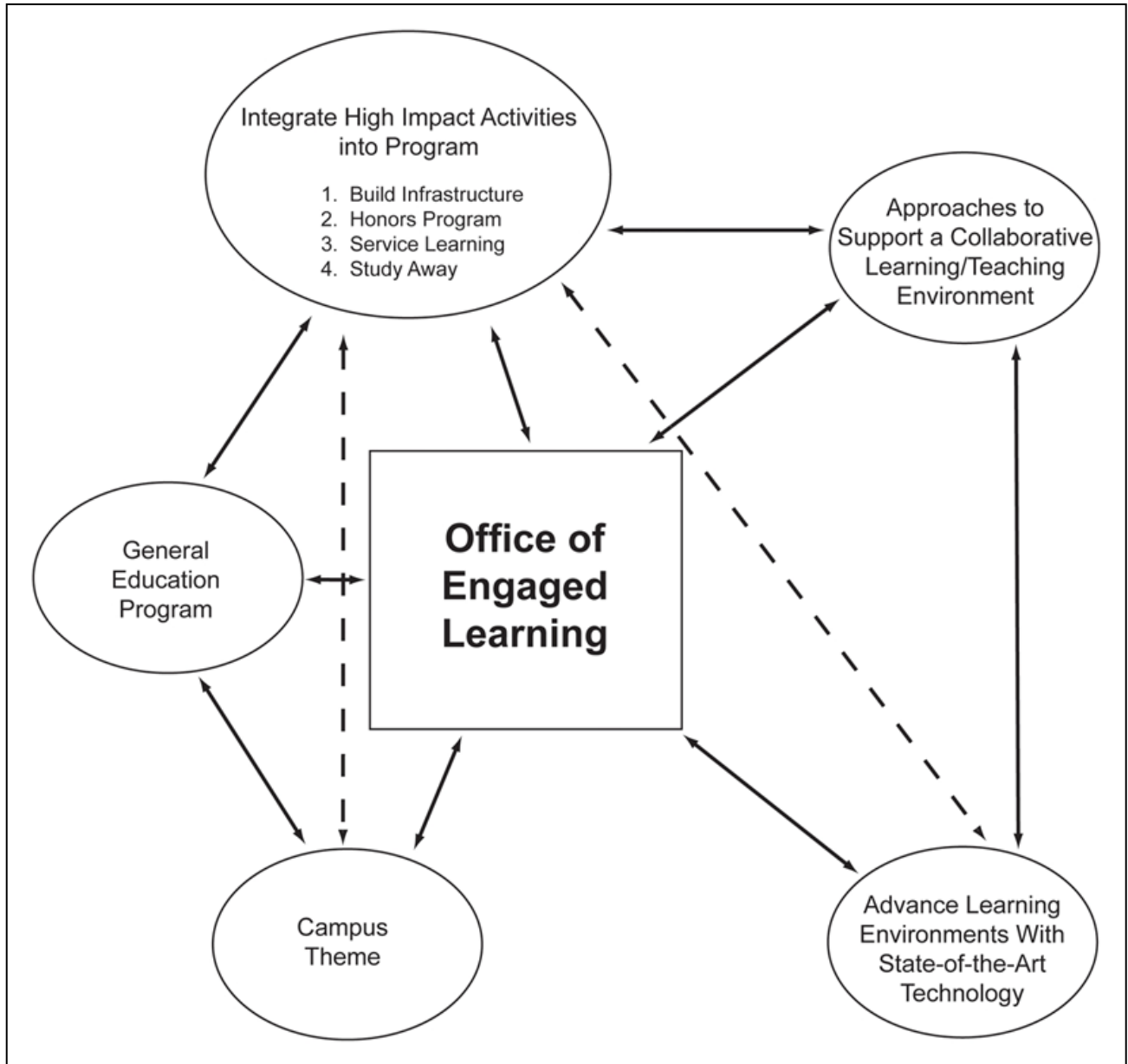
### **Goal 3: Actively Engage Students in Their Own Learning**

Historically, the primary process of educating students at the university-level has involved an instructor providing a lecture and students listening and taking notes. Those who have studied such passive learning environments have found that within ten minutes most students lose interest in the topic and are no longer following the instructor's lecture. Educational benefits to students occur when high impact activities (i.e., engaged learning) are included in the educational process (Kuh 2008). Too often educators view that the majority of the learning process rests on their shoulders. However, when the learning process is shared between faculty and students who are actively engaged taking greater ownership of their own learning, students are able to synthesize the material and faculty are able to further enhance the exchange of knowledge. The process becomes more rewarding for both. Thus, there are two important questions facing the Task Force on Curricular Innovation: 1) how successful are NIU's faculty and staff at actively engaging students in their own learning and 2) what curricular efforts should we support in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

The Task Force on Curricular Innovation identified five strategies that we believe will guide NIU in its efforts to enhance student learning and critical thinking skills. As a foundation to this process, we suggest that as soon as possible, the administration identify space on campus to develop an Office of Engaged Learning. This office will provide a number of services to students, staff, and faculty who are involved in improving education on campus as well as archive and maintain data and information related to ongoing engaged learning activities (e.g., the Honors Program, service learning, study away, faculty/student collaborative research and service projects, internships, etc.). Attached to this office (Strategy 3.1) are the other four strategies under Goal 3: Develop and implement a significantly revised general education program, develop approaches to best support a collaborative learning/teaching environment, advance learning environments with state-of-the-art technology, and integrate courses, extra-curricular activities, and programming around a "campus theme" (see Figure 1). These strategies are related to one another and when considered as a whole they will foster the active engagement of students in their own learning.

Key components or actions of each strategy include: identifying a person(s) who will lead his/her initiative and oversee activities (coordinator); assessing current practices on campus (e.g., identify, archive, and make available real-time databases); bringing information and findings related to student, staff, and faculty participation in engaged learning activities to the NIU community; developing a strategy to implement future activities (e.g., change the existing general education program student learning outcomes) based on faculty and student input; and assessing whether newly developed activities are successful in improving education on campus. These key individuals will depend heavily on existing administration and shared governance groups to advance critical ideas and activities in engaged learning

**Figure 1. Conceptual diagram showing relationships between five strategies under Goal 3-- Actively Engage Students in Their Own Learning.**



Strategy 3.1: Increase High Impact Engaged Learning Activities by Establishing an Office of Engaged Learning

Imperatives Addressed:

- Preserve, Strengthen and Extend NIU’s Teaching and Learning Environment
- Make NIU an Institution of “First Choice” for Faculty Students and Staff
- Strengthen and Extend NIU’s Regional and Global Impact

Goal: Develop, coordinate and centralize high impact activities designed to promote student intellectual and civic engagement and success.

Rationale: NIU offers a variety of high impact activities (e.g., honors, study abroad, learning communities, first-year experiences, service learning) designed to engage students in their own education and their communities. Similarly, efforts are made to prepare students to be good citizens and to possess a sense of civic agency. However efforts in this area are fragmented and in some instances not well developed or, at the very least, are not well coordinated. Further, information about these activities is similarly fragmented with the proverbial right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing in many instances leaving students and faculty at a disadvantage and administrators attempting to track and report on these activities and their impact on student learning. Coordination, collaboration and centralized access to information would address these issues and would promote further development of engagement/high impact activities. Special attention given to the area of civic engagement would further NIU’s commitment to preparing students to be good world citizens and civic contributors. In addition, this centralization would allow for seamless interaction and collaboration with other university interests including General Education.

Actions:

a. **Establish *Office of Engaged Learning (OEL)*** that will focus on high impact as well as civic engagement activities with students. This Office will report to the Provost’s/Vice Provost’s office. The OEL will assess the current status of high impact and civic engagement offerings on campus, work to increase offerings, coordinate with existing programs, develop new opportunities and establish a mechanism for archiving campus-wide data on engagement activities as described in the following steps.

It is anticipated that the OEL will be more conceptual than material for the first one and one-half years as its efforts will focus on information gathering, organizing, coalition building and development of a few new offerings. One function of the OEL during this period will be to arrive at a recommendation for a permanent structure and support staffing. The following six months will be devoted to transition to permanence including involvement in the search for and appointment of a permanent coordinator. Therefore the overall timeline is two years

(i.e., July 2008 – July 2010) with a host of activities being proposed as described in the following sections. For convenience, each action is summarized in the attached chart along with *requisites, budget considerations, measurable outcomes, champions and priority designation*.

1. Staff the OEL and provide infrastructure:

- a. Hire Interim Coordinator. Job responsibilities are spelled out in the following steps but generally will include:
  - i. gathering information from across campus on current offerings of high impact engagement activities
  - ii. soliciting interest in additional activities and offerings
  - iii. working to expand the Honors and study abroad programs, developing community placement resources in the NIU geographic catchment area (including development of a computerized database of existing activities)
  - iv. developing a university-wide service learning program (including a research service learning component)
  - v. developing at least one academic program (a minor) and recruiting faculty participation and support.

Faculty involvement will require a great deal of one on one interaction between the director and the faculty. As such the Interim Coordinator should be a senior tenured faculty member, familiar with the variety of NIU shared governance requirements and committees, and someone who has a full-time commitment to this effort for the 2008 – 2010 academic years.

- b. Full-time Graduate Assistant (20 hours/week). This person will serve to support the Coordinator in information coordination, record keeping, data gathering and analysis efforts. If possible, a person enrolled in a doctoral program with database skills would be desirable.
- c. Part time secretarial support. This person will assist in communications with on and off-campus constituencies, schedule data gathering meetings and discussions, manage the university paperwork (e.g., travel documents) and other responsibilities as required to successfully execute the OEL's activities.
- d. Contract consultants. It is anticipated that the information gathering efforts will include identification of professionals who either independently or by virtue of their schools' programs, will be able to provide valuable assistance to the OEL as its nature and structure are developed. Funds will need to be allocated to utilize these consultants in to assist the NIU effort.
- e. Travel funds for OEL Interim Coordinator. It is likely that one or two conferences or summits will be identified over the course of the time that the Center is developed to final (recommended) form. It would be preferable to hire consultants as a more cost efficient approach to targeted assistance, but it is foreseeable that the Interim Coordinator would be advised to attend a few key conferences to gather cutting edge information, to network, and to identify appropriate consultants.

- f. Locate the OEL, provide infrastructure services. At this time, it seems likely that this OEL will need to be co-located with an existing related program. Possible sites include the Honors program, the FDIDC, the Provost's/Vice Provost's office, or the Career Services Center. Ideally, the ½ time secretary could be shared with the existing program. Space needs for the immediate future would be limited to an Interim Coordinator's office, ideally an office for the GA and a space for the secretary. Shared copier, telephone and internet access would also ideally be available through a collocation approach. Final size, location and related determinations for the OEL will be a part of the recommendation made at the end of this interim period.

**Requisites:** Office space, staff and infrastructure (temporary and permanent)

**Budget considerations:**

Salary for Interim Coordinator – CUPA comparables for a similar position (Honors Director at doctoral institution) places that salary @ approximately \$50,352

Half-time salary for office support associate (3) @ \$14.00/hr = \$14,560 /yr.

Contract consultants –TBD

Full-time GA Ph.D. candidate @ \$700 X 12 months = \$8,400

Travel – TBD

Computer: Dell Inspiron 530s XP (\$639); Dell Laser Printer 3110 (\$449)

**Measurable outcomes:** Office established and staffed in designated space

**Champions:** Provost/Vice Provost, Nancy Castle

2. Support efforts in service learning by re-joining the College Compact. This will allow NIU (through the OEL) access to cutting edge information, materials and resources. Further, it will be a visible indicator of a commitment to service learning and will provide some prestige to NIU on the state and national level.

**Requisites:** Administration commitment, OEL handles paperwork and maintenance of membership.

**Budget considerations:** Membership calculated based on enrollment - approximately \$3,000.

**Measurable outcomes:** Membership accomplished and promoted on campus as reflective of University commitment, NIU's name listed on membership list with

other prestigious universities; Compact resources accessible and utilized – adaptation of at least two concepts/activities in the first two years.

**Champion:** OEL, President’s Office, Castle

3. Join the Reinvention Center to access cutting edge information and protocol, networking and other resources developed by this organization of Carnegie research ranked institutions that have developed formal approaches to increased inclusion of undergraduate students in *research with faculty*. Further, this will be a visible indicator of a commitment to increasing student research opportunities and will provide some prestige to NIU on the state and national level.

**Requisites:** Administration commitment, OEL handles paperwork and maintenance of membership.

**Budget Considerations:** TBD - it appears to be free of charge.

**Measurable Outcomes:** Membership accomplished and promoted on campus as reflective of University commitment, NIU’s name listed on membership list with other prestigious universities; resources accessible and utilize - adaptation of at least two concepts/activities in the first two years.

**Champion:** OEL Coordinator & staff.

4. Seek Carnegie Foundation Community Engagement Classification to gain access to resources and to publicly affirm institutional commitment to deepen the practice of service and to further strengthen the bonds between the campus and communities. Benefits include public recognition, visibility and accountability

**Requisites:** Administration commitment, OEL handles application and related paperwork and maintenance of membership.

**Budget Considerations:** TBD.

**Measurable Outcomes:** Membership accomplished and promoted on campus as reflective of University commitment; NIU’s name listed on membership list with other prestigious universities; resources accessed and utilized, aids in faculty buy-in.

**Champion:** OEL Coordinator & staff.

5. Gather and catalog information on high impact and engagement activities in place at NIU using the Carnegie classification framework as a guide. (Note: efforts should be directed to simultaneously securing faculty buy-in while soliciting information)

- a. Assemble best practices-similar programs information via the College Compact, Reinvention Center, Center for Democracy and Citizenship, and via other programs to be identified.
- b. Working with appropriate campus entities (e.g., FDIDC, Honors, Study Abroad, Career Services) develop electronic survey to be distributed across campus to faculty and staff pertaining to practice and interest in the high impact areas of
  - Capstone experiences
  - Field placements
  - Student engagement portfolios
  - Study away (national and international programs)
  - Traditional research with faculty (pay particular attention to the research cluster groups being developed via the graduate school)
  - Service learning
  - Research service learning
  - Themed activities (e.g., FIGS, residential programming, themed year, common reading programs)
  - Others as may be identified

**Requisites:** OEL works in collaboration with campus units; E-survey sent under President's signature; database development service via IT.

**Budget Considerations:** Work to be completed by OEL Coordinator, GA and support staff (salaried); Possible need for IT person to consult on setting up a searchable database (\$6000).

**Measurable Outcomes:** Updatable database of campus activities (can be used to report on Carnegie Classification requirements).

**Champion:** OEL Coordinator, Castle

6. Continue participation in the National Survey of Student Engagement practices; and include Faculty survey. Use this data for internal evaluation and program improvement purposes as well as reporting as needed.

**Requisites:** Administration commitment to engage in the survey and to follow up once data is collected and recommendations are made.

**Budget Considerations:** TBD – fees for both NSSE and FSSE.

**Measurable Outcomes:** Updatable database of campus activities (can be used to report on Carnegie Classification requirements).

**Champion:** OEL Coordinator, Castle

7. Create formal Service Learning Program with special attention given to development of research service learning (i.e. linking academic knowledge, ethical inquiry skills

and civic leadership capacities through research and coursework) and civic agency (i.e., a combination of civic knowledge and the ability to effect change).

- a. Work with FDIDC to identify pool of faculty and staff engaged in service learning. Solicit this group to serve as advisors.
- b. Working with FDIDC and advisors, convening faculty discussion/focus groups as necessary, and using the data and information collected in 3.4.5b, define the mission, purpose and structure of a Service Learning program on campus. Work with appropriate shared governance bodies as appropriate. Similarly, gather information on community needs both regionally, nationally and eventually internationally. Structure to include:
  - Faculty training and follow-up mentoring through implementation
  - Faculty support and assistance as classes are developed and offered
  - Community contacts for service learning sites
  - Procedure for pairing faculty w/ appropriate sites
  - Procedure for pairing students with faculty/sites
  - Evaluation procedures for service learning experiences; target civic responsibility component as appropriate to each assignment
- c. Develop database format for community placement contacts
- d. Develop computer database format to match up a community need with a faculty member or academic discipline or class and vice versa.
- e. Work with a few select programs (as identified through this initial process) to pilot test the system and service learning components through coursework. Likely these would fall into the areas of civic agency and research service learning.

**Requisites:** OEL works in collaboration with campus units (e.g., FDIDC, shared governance committees, Career Services); database development service via IT.

**Budget Considerations:** Work to be completed by OEL Coordinator, GA and support staff (salaried); Possible need for IT person to consult on setting up a searchable database.

**Measurable Outcomes:** Updatable database of campus activities and number of courses identified as already including service learning component, increase in number at year's end (note: helpful for Carnegie Classification requirements), increased courses offered by three per year.

**Champion:** OEL Coordinator, Castle and Jes Cisneros

8. Develop a minor in the area of service learning. The development of an academic minor related to civic/community services highlights NIU's commitment to civic engagement and public purpose. The minor would involve a selection of courses already available on campus and the likely development of new courses including a survey of community service in American culture, community service from an international perspective, directed readings and activities courses, and a capstone project. The proposed minor has logical synergies with the International Studies

program (especially the study abroad component) and the Honors program and as such these collaborations should be explored. To have maximum impact, the minor should not belong to one department but rather have a broader campus affiliation.

**Requisites:** Work with departments, targeted programs and via shared governance curriculum related bodies.

**Budget Considerations:** Work conducted by salaried employees.

**Measurable Outcomes:** Creation of a minor and subsequent to that, number of students taking the minor (goal of minimum of 5 by 7/2011)

**Champion:** OEL Coordinator, Nancy Castle

9. Increase departmental participation in Honors Programming
  - a. Working with Honors Advisory committee, develop and lay out a clear set of criteria and a set of guidelines for development of departmental Honors programs.
  - b. Work with departments to adopt these criteria and develop Honors options within their majors.
  - c. Working with student outlets and advisors to promote participation in Honors programming.
  - d. Continue to work closely with departments to promote increased faculty participation via increasing the number of Honors courses offered and capstone projects supervised.
  - e. Make special effort to promote Honors programming within traditionally underrepresented populations (e.g., ESP programs, CAAR students). Work with the students to achieve the goal of Honors participation if at all possible by developing clear criteria for inclusion and working with departments.
  - f. Increase the number of students seeking (and obtaining) International scholar program awards (e.g., Fulbright, Marshall, Rhode) especially via Honors programming.

**Requisites:** OEL and Honors staff work with departments and shared governance bodies

**Budget Considerations:** Work to be conducted by salaried employees; increase in number of stipends offered to faculty to teach Honors sections. Additional \$8,000 in the initial two years.

**Measurable Outcomes:** Increase in number of departments offering honors programming (increase by 5 by 2011); increase in number of students taking honors options (especially from underrepresented groups); (increase by 10%); increase in number of students in international scholar programs (to increase by 4 by 7/2010).

**Champion:** OEL Coordinator, Castle, Jes Cisneros and Honors program staff.

10. Increase student participation in faculty research.

NIU does not capitalize on its classification as a research extensive university in a way that includes undergraduate students' free inquiry and participation in research. Establish the skill of inquiry as the value added aspect of an NIU degree by increasing the engagement of undergraduates in research activities on campus.

- a. Coordinate, enhance participation and collect evaluation data on existing research opportunities, e.g., USOAR and the CIUE – student instructional research and improvement grants
- b. Develop additional avenues for students to become engaged in research with faculty supervision or assistance. These might include faculty directed overseas independent research projects and/or involvement with the research clusters being discussed as part of the campus wide Strategic Planning process.
- c. Provide assistance to faculty to pursue research topics, research collaborations and research funding specific to their discipline (and its relationship to community service) or on the topic of community service itself (e.g., the relationship between community service and moral/ethical development).

**Requisites:** Administration commitment.

**Budget Considerations:** Work to be carried out by salaried employees; stipends for student researchers and/or continuation of funding streams in place for existing programs. OEL coordinator can apply for various external grants to assist with the implementation of this component of engaged learning.

**Measurable Outcome:** Number of programs newly offering student research options and number of students participating to increase by 2 by 7/2010.

**Champion:** OEL Coordinator; Provost's office.

11. Increase opportunities for students and faculty to engage in study away experiences.

Working from the framework set forth by the American Council on Education, and working closely with the General Education Committee, incorporate global learning outcomes that reflect the NIU commitment to helping students develop the knowledge base, skills and attitudes needed to function as a global citizen. For purposes of this discussion and reflecting the student body of NIU, "global" includes out of town, out of state, or out of country. As part of this:

- a. Use faculty e-surveys identified in previous steps. Ascertain interest in participation in study away programming. Convene group of faculty, FDIDC, OEL and International Programs staff to explore avenues for supporting faculty to incorporate this feature in courses and majors as possible.

- b. Identify funding mechanisms to assist students to meet the expenses of pursuing a study away
- c. Support faculty to prepare new programs abroad as pertaining to their areas of expertise and interest. Identify funding mechanisms to support them.

**Requisites:** Funding for and support of OEL, FDIDC, International Programs

**Budget Considerations:** Work to be carried out by salaried employees; stipends for faculty and students.

**Measurable Outcome:** Number of programs introducing study away option and number of faculty and students participating. Target of at least one additional program, with one faculty and student(s) by 12/2010.

**Champion:** OEL Coordinator, Castle, Provost's office, International Programs (Deb Pierce)

12. Continue to explore Strategic Concept Planning papers seeking those that may be relevant to increasing opportunities for student engagement in high impact activities. Work with faculty and staff who submitted Concept paper ideas for the Strategic Plan on topics related to this area. Explore those who are interested and willing to work on developing and broadening the scope of their proposals. These would include proposals based on: FIGS, residential programming, themed year, common reading programs, and other high impact/engagement activities.

**Requisites:** Authors of "narrow" concept papers willing to explore broadening their approach to encompass the entire campus.

**Budget Considerations:** Work to be carried out by salaried employees; stipends for student researchers and/or continuation of funding streams in place for existing programs.

**Measurable Outcome:** Number of programs expanded and adopted into the OEL approach.

**Champion:** OEL Coordinator, Castle, Provost's office.

13. Seek external funding to support OEL and high impact/engagement activities. Work with NIU Foundation to develop information about the OEL to attract potential donors. Judging by programs across the country, there may be a significant naming opportunity in this. Further, seek external funding through grants and foundations for the variety of activities housed or coordinated under the OEL.

**Budget Considerations:** Work to be carried out by salaried employees.

**Measurable Outcome:** Number of external funding events secured (target of at least 1 by 12/2010), amount of funding secured.

**Champion:** OEL Coordinator, NIU Foundation, others as appropriate.

14. Recommendations regarding the function, structure and administrative housing of the OEL.

**Budget Considerations:** Work to be carried out by salaried employees.

**Measurable Outcome:** Report filed by 3/2010.

**Champion:** OEL Coordinator

**Overall Evaluation Plan:** For each action step listed above, measurable outcomes are defined. These are the performance indicators. In some instances there is a combination of outcome measurements; they are listed per step. The OEL will monitor each evaluation measure by modifying the attached form as follows and using it to guide monthly review of progress to goals which will be documented and compiled into a yearly report on progress (bimonthly).

**Priority: High**

**Diversity:** The actions listed under this strategy will be developed to promote the full participation and success of students, faculty, and staff with disabilities through the development and maintenance of accessible teaching and learning environments. These environments shall be designed to meet legal mandates and ensure equal participation regarding physical, attitudinal, and technology access.

By its very nature, engaged learning is designed to appeal to a broad range of learning styles and it is the intention of this proposal to include a diverse population of students in terms of race, ethnic diversity, gender, socio-economic status and academic abilities.

Action Step	Action	Timeline	Requisites	Budget considerations by category	Performance Indicators	Priority
1	Establish Office of Engaged Learning - Staff and locate Office	7/2008-7/2009	Office space, staff, infrastructure	Salaries, travel, office support	OEL established	High
2, 3, 4	Join/participate in national organizations	7/2008-7/2009	Administration commitment, OEL	Membership fee	Memberships accomplished; a minimum of 2 concepts or activities adapted for use at NIU	Immediate

5	<b>Data collection</b> a. assemble best practices b. survey	8/2008-5/2009  8/2008-3/2009	OEL OEL, I.T. assist  Administration commitment	Survey and database development funds	Database developed, data entered and centralized	Immediate
6	NSSE/FSSE	Ongoing	Administration commitment, OEL	TBD	Participation, results presented to NIU for review and utilization	Immediate
7	<b>Service Lng Program</b> a. Advisors b. Mission/goals structure c. Database for community contacts d. "matching" e. Pilot program f. Ongoing eval	9/2008-12/2008 12/2008-3/2009 12/2008-3/2009 12/2008-3/2009 12/2008-12/2009 3/2009-1/2010	OEL, FDIDC, Career Services, Shared governance bodies, IT    OEL	Copier service, travel to Chicago IT person for database	Program formalized, databases developed, number of activities logged (increases by at least 3/year); number of community agencies contacted, number of community programs included (increases by 3/per year); pilot pre-and post data collection set in place; final recommendations (per "f").	High
8	Minor in Service Learning	7/2009-12/2010	Shared governance curriculum bodies, s, willing departments,	N/A	Creation of minor, number of students taking the minor (5 by 2011)	Immediate
9	Increase Honors Programming	7/2008-12/2009	OEL, Honors staff, departments, shared governance curriculum bodies	Additional stipends for faculty teaching Honors sections	Existence of formalized criteria, increase number of department's (5 by 2011) 5% increase in student participation	Immediate

<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Requisites</b>	<b>Budget considerations by category</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Priority</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Student involvement in faculty research</b>	<b>3/2009-7/2010</b>	<b>Administration commitment</b>	<b>Stipends for student participation (e.g., travel)</b>	<b>Number of programs and number of students participating to increase by 2 by 7/2010.</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Study away experiences</b>	<b>7/2008 – 7/2010</b>	<b>International Programs, FDIDC, OEL</b>	<b>Funds to support faculty development, student and faculty stipends</b>	<b>Number of programs introducing study away option and number of faculty and students participating to increase by 1 by 12/2010.</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Explore other Concept papers for expansion</b>	<b>7/2009-7/2010</b>	<b>Willing authors, viable ideas</b>	<b>TBD</b>	<b>TBD</b>	<b>TBD</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Seek external funding</b>	<b>7/2009-ongoing</b>	<b>OSP, OEL</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>At least one funding source identified and accessed by 12/2011</b>	<b>Immediate at the time</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Final Recommendation</b>	<b>3/2010</b>	<b>OEL</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>Recommendations made/report filed with Provost's office</b>	<b>Immediate at the time</b>

Strategy 3.2: Develop and Implement a Significantly Enhanced General Education Program

Imperatives Addressed:

- Preserving, strengthening and extending NIU’s teaching and learning environment
- Making NIU an institution of “first choice” for students, faculty and staff

Goal: Develop, implement, and assess an integrative general education program (GEP) clearly aligned with the University’s mission, goals, and learning expectations for undergraduate education

Rationale: Based on reports from other public universities, a strong general education program yields potential benefits to multiple stakeholders.

- For students
  - Instilling a sense of belonging to a community, pride in NIU
  - Improving chances and increasing opportunities for academic success,
    - by broadening students’ awareness of the variety of disciplines
    - by improving skills and enlarging knowledge-base
    - by encouraging engaged learning, problem-solving, critical thinking, etc.
  - Enabling better advisement (esp. for non-majors and transfer students)
- For NIU
  - Improved retention rates
  - Higher profile for NIU, resulting in higher application rates
  - Enhanced intellectual life on campus
  - Academic programs enhanced by integrating major and general education goals
  - Broadened and deepened sharing of core university values
  - Increased alumni enthusiasm and support
- The state (and beyond)
  - NIU graduates will
    - have the ability to integrate knowledge and skills creatively to meet social needs
    - be better prepared for citizenship in a diverse, multicultural society; and indeed, in a global world
    - be lifelong learners who think broadly and deeply

Champions: The following committees know, and endorse, a plan to thoroughly review the general education program: General Education Committee, Faculty Senate, Undergraduate Coordinating Council.

The following individuals have pledged their support: Carolinda Douglass, NIU Director of Assessment Services; Dan House, Institutional Research; Murali Krishnamurthi, Faculty Development and Instructional Design.

Additional champions needed from ITS, admissions, academic advising, public affairs/marketing, and community colleges.

Actions:

**a. Document faculty and student knowledge of the general education program and related student learning objectives**

- Attend General Education Institute sponsored by AAC & U.
- Collect and review syllabi from current general education courses.
- Who teaches general education (i.e., faculty status)?
- Survey student and faculty awareness of NIU general education mission and goals

***Measurable Outcomes:***

- “White Paper” on general education review and revision
- Summary report on current status of the general education program
- Course map identifying coverage of current general education program goals

***Timeline:*** Summer - Fall 2008

**b. Define the purpose of general education at NIU**

- Engage campus-wide discussion. Solicit input from multiple stakeholders
- Follow a conscious, deliberate approach resulting in data driven outcomes and products
- Clarify the relationship between general education goals and baccalaureate goals.

***Measurable Outcomes:***

- Clearly articulated rationale for NIU’s general education program.
- Appropriate student learning outcomes identified.

***Timeline:*** Spring – Summer 2009

**c. Evaluate the current general education program’s ability to meet its defined purpose**

- Review data generated by Strategies 3.2a and b.
- Identify specific areas of needed change
- Investigate revised strategies and/or alternative models for general education

***Measurable Outcomes:***

- Summary report with recommendations for enhanced general education program

*Timeline:* Fall 2009

**d. Formulate a plan to improve the general education program based on the recommendations from Action c.**

- Use the GEC and UCC to provide content, input, and review
- Discuss renaming the program (e.g., “University Studies”)

***Measurable Outcomes:***

- Revised submission and review process
- Enhanced faculty support (e.g., listserv for general education faculty on teaching ideas and assessment, “General Education Guidebook” for general education faculty, training and handouts for new faculty orientation)
- Increased promotion and dissemination of program goals and purpose (e.g., General Education website, information and handouts for use during student orientation)

*Timeline:* Spring 2010 – Spring 2011

**e. Implement a significantly enhanced general education program—emphasizing its importance for all students at NIU**

- Establish an implementation taskforce including (but not limited to) representatives from the GEC, Faculty Senate, UCC, UCPC, ITS, Student Association, Student Affairs, advising—IAI, and scheduling. Also, include the catalog editor and university assessment coordinator.
- Phase implementation over appropriate time periods
- Assess each phase of implementation
- Conduct ongoing assessment to determine if the program and its courses achieve program and student learning objectives.

***Measurable Outcomes:***

- Regular and meaningful use of assessment data (e.g., Eportfolios concept paper by Michael Day)

*Timeline:* Summer 2011 – Spring 2012

***Requisites:*** The needed resources to accomplish these five actions are as follows:

- The coordination of action steps and reporting responsibilities should be under the direction of one person, who reports to the Provost, GEC, and UCC. This position should be independent of any specific college. It is recommended that this position be funded starting Summer 2008.
- As soon as possible, establish an online data management system for submissions, assessment reporting, and sharing of information.
- Revise the faculty merit review process to provide incentives for participation in the general education program.

### Evaluation plan

- Each strategy has a specific timeline, anticipated activities, and expected outcomes.
- Performance reports will be shared with the GEC and UCC.

### Priority

- Each strategy is critical to success. The overall project success of the project depends on the sequential attainment of Actions a-e.

### Diversity

- The actions listed under this strategy will be developed to promote the full participation and success of students, faculty, and staff with disabilities through the development and maintenance of accessible teaching and learning environments. These environments shall be designed to meet legal mandates and ensure equal participation regarding physical, attitudinal, and technology access.
- By its very nature, general education must be designed to appeal to a broad range of learning styles and it is the intention of this proposal to ensure that the program meets the needs of all students in terms of race, ethnic diversity, gender, socio-economic status and academic abilities.

Strategy 3.3: Develop Approaches to Best Support a Collaborative Learning/Teaching Environment

Imperative Addressed:

- Preserve, strengthen, and extend NIU's teaching and learning environment.

Goal: Actively Engage Students in Their Own Learning.

Rationale: In striving to retain students through the four year matriculation cycle, NIU must continually address the ways in which the physical space configurations on our campus impacts opportunities for collaborative learning experiences. Research has shown that employers are interested in students who not only master content and critical thinking skills but who have the necessary tools to work collaboratively to accomplish necessary goals.

Additionally students and their future employers expect graduates to acquire a range of technology skills to be able to use a wide array of software or to at the very least understand it sufficiently to engage productively with those who do use it. Thus our teaching spaces and strategies must allow for the development of those skill sets.

To that end, it is necessary to begin with some assessment of the way our current classrooms meet the needs of faculty and students in terms of providing opportunities for collaboration and for engaging productively with technology. Actions can be prioritized based on the timelines of each proposed concept paper.

Actions:

**a.** Conduct a faculty survey regarding teaching environment improvements and disseminate results of survey to faculty/staff and Provosts

***Timeline:***

- Fall 2008: Design and distribute survey
- Spring 2009: Analyze responses from survey
- Spring/Summer 2009: Seek appropriate funding sources

***Requisites:***

- Survey Design by CIUE
- Distribution of Survey via Survey Monkey (see "Survey for Improving Teaching Environments" by Keith Millis for additional details)

***Budget constraints:*** Clearly the faculty survey focusing on existing teaching environments doesn't require the types of resources (personnel, equipment, software, etc.) that the other actions require. And importantly, without that information, how the university makes further decisions regarding learning environments is limited. Once the survey is completed, other actions could then follow.

**Measurable Outcomes:** Members of the CUIE will receive the results and discuss the results. They will identify specific recommendations (e.g., room X needs Y). They will then rank order each recommendation on relative need, as defined by the number of respondents who mentioned it.

**Champions:** Keith Millis, Faculty Development and the Provost's Office

b. Examine opportunities to incorporate online/blended course collaboration (WIMBA) into various educational experiences on or off campus. WIMBA provides software that interfaces smoothly with Blackboard and provides a virtual classroom for synchronous online course delivery. The text-based system in Blackboard is limited in scope and restrictive in addressing the needs of all learners. Because of the rapid changes currently occurring on campuses across the country in teaching, it is imperative that NIU continually expand its resources and responses to the changes in technology and its impact on course delivery. Additionally, an increase in online and blended courses can reduce the continual need to enhance and expand bricks and mortar classroom spaces. Leadership in this area must come directly from the Provost's office while engaging a broad base of support within all colleges.

**Timeline:**

- March 2008: Acquire a pilot license 6 months for a collaborative learning environment (WIMBA) for use in online and blended courses and integrate it with Blackboard learning system.
- March – April 2008: Train and help faculty use the collaborative learning environment (WIMBA).
- April-May 2008: Obtain feedback from faculty users of the collaborative learning environment (WIMBA).
- May - June 2008: Based on faculty users' feedback, acquire an annual unlimited site license for the collaborative learning environment (WIMBA).
- July-August 2008: Integrate obtained license with Blackboard and begin full-fledged training and support for faculty to use the collaborative learning environment in their blended and online courses.

**Requisites:**

- Pilot license for WIMBA – \$6000 (acquired already by Provost's Office).
- ITS personnel for integrating the pilot WIMBA software with Blackboard – no additional personnel requested at this time.

- Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center personnel for training and helping faculty use the pilot WIMBA online collaborative learning environment – no additional personnel requested at this time.
- Unlimited annual site license hosting for WIMBA \$21,150. The software is hosted by WIMBA and NIU does not have to acquire hardware or install the software locally. License includes technical support. Additional Voice Tools (annual unlimited license) \$11,125.
- Phone support for students to listen to the audio by phone in case of a lost or lack of internet connection - \$600 annually for NIUTel

The development of a virtual classroom can occur independently from other actions

**Champions:** Murali Krishnamurthi (Director of Faculty Development) and the NIU administration (Provosts) and shared governance groups such as UCC. A coordinator to oversee development and use of state-of-the-art technology in learning environments needs to be established under the Provost Office.

**Measurable Outcomes:** The use of software to create on-line/blended courses by faculty/staff should be monitored over time. A performance indicator would be that we see a 50% increase in the number of on-line/blended courses by 2012.

c. Create a “bank” of case studies and e-learning objects based on experiences with and results of high impact student activities that can be shared across campus. There are many positive efforts currently occurring at NIU. Such a database is a valuable resource for all faculty as they explore additional programs. It will also facilitate students’ enrollment in such activities and programs.

**Timeline:** The following concept paper proposals have individual and detailed timelines. Please refer to the appendix for details:

- “E-Repository” by Kai Rush and Keith Millis
- “Student Electronic Portfolios” by Michael Day
- “NIU Experiential Learning Consortium” by Omar Grayeb

**Requisites:** The following concept paper proposals have individual and detailed timelines. Please refer to the appendix for details:

- “E-Repository” by Kai Rush and Keith Millis
- “Student Electronic Portfolios” by Michael Day
- “NIU Experiential Learning Consortium” by Omar Grayeb

**Measurable Outcomes:** The creation of a database of engaged learning activities can occur independently from other actions. A database should be developed (and maintained) that archives specific examples of approaches used to support collaborative learning/teaching environments on campus. The level of faculty participation in developing this database should be monitored and used as a measure of success.

This database should be easily accessible to all faculty/staff to assist them as they incorporate more engaged learning (i.e., high impact student activities) into their courses. The greater the use of these approaches by faculty the staff the better.

**Champions:** Michael Day, Kaisone Rush, Keith Millis, and the NIU administration (Provosts) and shared governance groups such as UCC.

d. Develop a NIU Experiential Learning Consortium: The proposed Consortium builds on current initiatives on experiential learning in different colleges at NIU. It would encourage students and faculty to work collaborative across disciplines in teams modeling real work experiences. Seek external funding to enhance support of these collaborative activities.

Development of the Experiential Learning Center would be useful after campus-wide data collection has been initiated and as such should be considered a more long-term activity.

The collaborative learning/teaching approaches developed should focus on student engagement and be evaluated or assessed to determine whether they are successful at helping students achieve stated student learning outcomes.

***Timeline and Requisites:***

Please see table on following page

***Budgetary considerations:*** This goal will require some reallocation of funding to complete the initial actions associated with the survey and the purchase and use of WIMBA. The other actions, those associated with developing an E-Repository, Electronic portfolios, and an NIU Experiential Learning Consortium will require more funding and a long-term commitment of time/resources by those involved.

**Champions:** Murali Krishnamurthi (Director of Faculty Development), Omar Grayeb, and the NIU administration (Provosts) and shared governance groups such as UCC.

Evaluation Plan: Each action item listed above has its own set of milestones and performance indicators. They are outlined in the related templates.

Priority: **Immediate**

Diversity: The actions listed under this strategy will be developed to promote the full participation and success of students, faculty, and staff with disabilities through the development and maintenance of accessible teaching and learning environments. These environments shall be designed to meet legal mandates and ensure equal participation regarding physical, attitudinal, and technology access.

Timeline	Tasks	Resources
<b>Phase I- Year one</b>	Identify colleges and units that have an interest in project based experiential learning capstone activities that involve a team based approach to solving real world organizational issues and challenges.	5% release time for the champions (Omar Ghrayeb, Jane Mall, Philip Eubanks, and Amy Buhrow)  Two champions visiting one other university Experiential Learning Consortium @ \$2000 each.  Two Champions attend a conference about experience based learning @ \$2000 each.
	Research other experiential learning type consortiums at other universities and attend experiential learning conferences.	
	Develop an organizational chart and communication channel for the NIU Experiential Learning Consortium with the colleges and units that have expressed interest in participation in the consortium.	
	A process and policy for engagement and partnership with the colleges and units will be developed.	
<b>Phase II - Years 2 3</b>	The NIU Experiential Learning Consortium concept will be fully implemented	TBD
	Assessments/evaluations will be developed to measure the goals and objectives listed above in this proposal.	
	Based on assessment results, modify organizational Chart and policy of Engagement as needed.  Develop Marketing material and publications to advertise the Consortium and develop partnerships with outside constituents.	
<b>Phase III - After year 3</b>	The NIU Experiential Learning Consortium continues its operation	TBD
	Annual assessment will be conducted	
	Active marketing and outreach plans are implemented.	

### Strategy 3.4: Advance Learning Environments with State-of-the-Art Technology

#### Imperatives:

- Preserve, Strengthen, and Extend NIU's Teaching and Learning Environment
- Make NIU an Institution of "First Choice" for Faculty, Students and Staff

Goal: Actively Engage Students in Their Own Learning

Champions: Murali Krishnamurthi (Faculty Development), A new position, Technology Coordinator, to be named by the Provost. Other champions include other faculty/staff members: Laura Vazquez, Keith Millis, Kaisone Rush, Michael Day, and ITS.

#### Actions:

Using of state-of-the art technologies will encourage faculty to explore innovative ways of teaching and engaging students in the course content as well stimulate their critical thinking skills. (The Technology Subcommittee views "technology" to include computer-related as well as non-computer related technologies, e.g., clickers, instructional media, video, etc.). NIU should identify, acquire, and use new computer-based learning objects and environments that will be attractive to a new generation of learners and promote critical thinking skills and the deep learning of course content. To that end, NIU should adopt the following strategies and action steps (where ever possible action steps are delineated in referenced strategic planning proposals):

#### a. **Appoint a Technology Coordinator to integrate technology into pedagogy and course delivery practices at NIU**

Rationale: Due to the pervasive and complex issues arising with the full integration of technology in teaching at NIU, it is recommended that the primary champion for this goal should emerge in the Provost's office (person unnamed at this time but referred to below as Technology Coordinator). It is not envisioned that this person and their support personnel would come under ITS though their ability to engage productively with ITS is essential to the successful outcome of their goals. This individual should also be familiar with best practices in the use of technology in pedagogy and would be the leading champion for all of the action steps outlined below.

- The appointment of this person is the first priority to executing the strategy outlined below.
- The staff should initially consist of one at least one professorial-level coordinator, one professorial-level assistant and three support staff members.

#### ***Timeline:***

- Summer 2008: Define this position and establish office space, budget and facilities for this area
- Fall 2008: Begin search
- Fall 2009: Implement this position

#### b. **Take stock of the current uses of technology at NIU and acquire necessary technologies.**

Rationale: We should not invest in technologies that do not conform to instructional goals and needs of faculty, outdated, or are too difficult to learn and use effectively in their

courses. This can be done from the Provost's office prior to the implementation of the Technology Coordinator office outlined in Action a.

- Provide support for the survey of teaching spaces (Millis-Teaching Spaces).
- Develop internal/external funding sources to acquire state-of-the-art technologies. This can be facilitated by providing incentives for creating programs and for writing external grants for resources.

***Timeline:***

- Fall 2008: Design and distribute survey
- Spring 2009: Analyze responses from survey
- Spring/Summer 2009: Seek appropriate funding sources

**c. Ensure that all students gain computer-related skills or competencies: Additional champions: General Education curriculum coordinator, and various department curriculum committees**

Rationale: Students arrive at NIU with vastly different levels of computer skills based on institutional background and socio-economic status. NIU must strive to insure that all students leave with at least basic computer skills that will prepare them to achieve personal career goals, to be productive 21<sup>st</sup> Century citizens, and to make them competitive in the global market place.

- Identify minimum type and level of computer literacy to be achieved by all students.
- Develop and include basic computer literacy courses in General Education.
- Encourage departments to establish computer competency requirements and develop or identify courses that meet such requirements.

***Timeline:***

- Fall 2008: The General Education Committee in conjunction with Computer Sciences should undertake a discussion of this issue and return recommendations to the Technology Coordinator in Provost's office by Spring 2009
- Fall 2009: Implement course design and/or curricular revisions
- Fall 2010: Begin curricular revisions

**d. Wi-Fi the entire campus as quickly as possible and encourage students to bring and use laptops whenever possible: Additional champion: ITS**

Rationale: This would reduce the need for the continual expansion of computer labs on campus and support the mission of technological advancement in teaching and learning (ITS, strategic plan). Because of the nature of this recommendation, ITS is the chief champion for its implementation.

***Timeline:***

- Fall 2008: Analyze necessary hardware needs and create a plan for the proposed system
- Spring 2009: Begin installation
- Spring 2010: Complete installation

**e. Encourage electronic student portfolios: Additional champions in English Department: Michael Day.**

Rationale: Electronic portfolios (1) enable students to learn in engaged ways, (2) promote expressions of learning (e.g., multimedia presentations) which are difficult to achieve with traditional methods (e.g., a paper), (3) extend, create and enhance social networks among learners, (4) enable a cumulative record of the student achievement, (5) afford learning about technology, (6) increase job placement, and (7) could be used to attract new students. Michael Day is the champion for this course and will need course release time or an additional summer month to create the course protocol.

***Timeline:***

- 2008/09: Begin course design
- Fall 2009: Implement course

- f. **Showcase the use of state-of-the-art technologies** for teaching and learning to help faculty and students share their expertise and experience with others. This can be accomplished via the Huskie web site (see Vazquez web presence concept paper).

Rationale: This concept paper is intended to request support for the creation of a centrally based website that would be used to brand and promote the Huskie identity for students and faculty. We feel that it is essential for the NIU community to promote the work of its constituents in a manner that is immediately available to web-site visitors who may be unfamiliar with NIU's organizational structure. To accommodate the breadth of scholarship and research work produced at NIU, this site will need to be a multi-media repository of student work that might include

- photographs
- slide shows
- powerpoint presentations
- podcasts,
- video and audio projects
- text files

While some of this material is already on the NIU site, the information can be difficult to locate without knowledge of appropriate search terms. The NI YOU profiles are a step in the right direction, but currently they are limited to text and have a "questionnaire" feel to them. The purpose of a Huskie Pride Site is to showcase the outstanding work that is produced by individual students, student groups or by student/faculty partnerships. The proposed Huskie Pride site would be linked to NIU's homepage and have direct links to the various multi-media products. In addition this site would attract alums by providing Huskie electronic enhancements such as:

- Ringtones for Cell phones (e.g., Huskie bark)
- Huskie images for Cell phones (regularly updated from event photos)
- Huskie images for screensavers (regularly updated from event photos)

This Huskie Pride site could be an excellent repository for information that highlights student/faculty research partnerships, honor capstones and capstone projects in general. It would draw visitors to the NIU site as students who are featured there would want to promote visitors via web 2.0 sites like Facebook and MySpace. A central repository would prevent visitors from needing to search individual departments for such information. This multi-media repository could also be incorporated into the NI YOU profile page with links to the

products. In any case, visitors to NIU's website will be able to directly experience the kinds of projects that our students and faculty create.

Through their departments the individual faculty members or students, who are responsible for producing the material would need a web designer who would perhaps format or arrange the work for easy viewing and proper linking. This program would need to be marketed to faculty and students so as to promote their participation in the Huskie Pride Site. The site would need to maintain an archive so that visitors could return to see work done in the previous years.

Such a site could also include quotes from students about their experience while completing their capstone projects and/or working closely with the faculty who guided them. For undergraduates, this would highlight the accessibility of faculty members for work with students. For graduate students, it would provide an opportunity for sharing research ideas with a larger community of scholars without needing to prepare or host their own website.

In an era where funding is becoming increasingly difficult for higher education, it seems critical that we remind the public of the excellent scholarship being produced at NIU. At the same time, this kind of site can also encourage students interested in academic performance to consider NIU as a community that supports and fosters student scholarship at all levels.

***Timeline:***

Fall 2008:

- Solicit input and support from Deans and Chairs

Spring 2009

- Organize materials to be disseminated notifying faculty and students as to how to participate. The various departments will need to determine which projects it wishes to promote.
- Gather materials for the website

Summer 2009

- Design initial website prominently linked on the NIU homepage

Fall 2009

- Launch Site

Fall 2010

- Assess site impact and report to Provost's office

***Requisites***

A summer month to work with web designers to create a visual presence that is both in keeping with the NIU design template and appealing to the tech-savvy potential students who will be attracted to the site. During this period, this individual would contact faculty members across the university to encourage their contributions to this site and establish a schedule for the acquisition of contributions.

This individual would also need one course release time during 2008/09 and Fall 2010 to oversee

the acquisition and production of video to be used to document student performances and capstone projects and to file a report assessing the value of the site. This could be done in collaboration with undergraduates familiar with their cohort and simultaneously become an enhanced learning opportunity.

***Champions:***

- Site Coordinator: this position could be held by a faculty member who could receive a course reduction or summer month to devote to this project
- NIU has web designers in public affairs who could create and structure the site though additional server space to host the site may need to be acquired. Perhaps the next most difficult task is to encourage student and faculty participation. Participation and support would need to be solicited at the department level.
- Deans: As envisioned this site would need to carry content beyond the faculty members and students who may be featured in public affairs notices. Gaining some participation from every department in every college at NIU should be the goal.
- The Honors Program Director would be a participant in organizing content for this site as many students produce honors capstone projects. URAP participants are another important constituency for this site as are any faculty who actively engage with students in the pursuit of research or artistry. This site should also include work done by student organizations on campus. Besides honors and capstone projects mentioned above, many faculty require the production of final course projects that are reflective of a student's high academic achievement but lack a way to display this work. This site would provide such an outlet.

***Evaluation:***

A link to email the designer would allow a way to monitor site issues. A link to the various department chairs or their designees would allow chairs to monitor peoples' responses to the content on the site that represents their faculty and students. Additionally using tracking devices, NIU could monitor the number of visitors to various areas within the site determining the total number of visitors in any given period. This would allow analysis of the value of the site as a promotional tool. Disinterest from the public after a one year run would determine the value of continuing the site.

***Priority: Immediate***

**g. Adopt a systematic approach to encourage and support the development of on-line curricula.**

Rationale: It is absolutely critical that NIU address the needs of geographically diverse student populations to remain competitive in the region. According to the April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008 issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education, nearly 3.5 million or 20% of all students taking courses in higher education are doing so in an on-line environment. The growth in this area in the past ten years has been overwhelming. It is important for faculty to receive training and assistance to facilitate the transformation of an existing course to one that will be taught on-line/blended. This development should also consider the benefits and challenges of providing on-line certificates or degrees. Enhance support for increasing the number on-line and blended courses/programs offered at NIU across all colleges. Additionally, the

development of on-line and blended courses will limit the need for continual brick and mortar expansion of teaching spaces while providing quality educational opportunities to students across a broad geographical area. Champions for this include the Technology Coordinator mentioned in Action Step 1 as well as Kathy Wright, Murali Krishnamurthi, Kai Rush, Joe Scudder and Keith Millis.

- See Rush and Millis' (goal 1) strategic plan.
- Enhance support for increasing the number on-line and blended courses/programs offered at NIU across all colleges (Kathy Wright, Kai Rush, and Murali K., 2009-2010).
- Establish a university-wide taskforce on online teaching and learning to assess needs at all levels and move NIU to the next level on this issue.
- Adopt best practices for the development and execution of on-line courses. (Currently being explored by the CLAS On-line Faculty Institute)
- Identify niche areas for delivering online courses/degree programs/certificates in the region.
- Develop university-level mechanisms for supporting academic units that deliver online degree programs/certificates. Reward faculty (e.g., release time, GA support, recognition) who re/design and deliver courses using innovative technologies.
- Provide hands-on assistance with on-line curriculum development as well as support during on-line teaching
- Provide faculty with course-release time to design on-line courses

***Timeline:***

- Fall 2008: Establish acceptable protocol and assessment rubrics for on-line courses
  - Fall 2009: Establish a university-wide taskforce on online teaching and learning to assess needs at all levels and move NIU to the next level on this issue. This committee will work under the Technology Coordinator outlined in Action a. and will complete its first report by Summer 2009.
- h. **Create computerized intelligent tutors:** Additional champions: Kai Rush and Keith Millis  
Rationale: Computerized tutors are engaging to students, increase learning, offer individualized training, and are available 24/7. Rush and Millis' Computerized Tutoring Center concept paper.
- i. **Develop a computer-based testing facility:** Additional Champions, Joseph Scudder, Murali Krishnamurthi, Kai Rush  
Rationale: A computer testing facility would be beneficial for several reasons. Computer-based testing (CBT) allows students to take real and practice tests with receive immediate feedback. Research has indicated that testing and feedback contributes to learning. CBT also enables a variety of testing experiences (e.g., multimedia presentations) which are difficult to achieve with traditional tests and facilities. A CBT facility would also enable students to take tests at a variety of times, freeing up class time for other activities. See Rush and Millis' (goal 1) concept paper and Murali and Scudder concept paper.
- j. **Re-Design of classroom spaces:**

Rationale: This proposal in its entirety is predicated on the need to address necessary instructional space configurations to effectively utilize new technologies in teaching. Necessary space alterations will be addressed by the technology assessment survey (see Millis concept paper on faculty survey).

***Timeline:***

- Survey: outlined above under Action b above and Strategy 3.3 Action a.
- Fall 2009: Technology Coordinator will assess the results of this survey for necessary technology enhancements for teaching spaces

Evaluation Plan: The evaluation plan including performance indicators and milestones are developed within the individual concept papers.

**Priority: Immediate/High (Most actions described will require significant amounts of money, time and resources to be successfully completed.)**

Diversity: The actions listed under this strategy will be developed to promote the full participation and success of students, faculty, and staff with disabilities through the development and maintenance of accessible teaching and learning environments. These environments shall be designed to meet legal mandates and ensure equal participation regarding physical, attitudinal, and technology access.

Strategy 3.5: Integrate Courses, Extra-Curricular Activities, and Programming Around a “Campus Theme”

Imperatives:

- Preserve, strengthen and extend NIU’s teaching and learning environment.
- Make NIU an institution of first choice” for faculty, students, and staff.

Goal: Actively Engage Students in Their Own Learning

Champions:

- Campus theme subcommittee of the Curriculum Innovations Task Force:
  - Mary Pritchard, Jes Cisneros, Mona Salmon, Desiree Matel-Anderson
- Faculty committees that promote the academic environment such as CUAE and Graduate Council.
- Faculty team members who will study best practices
- Campus theme coordinator to be hired during the 2008-2009 academic year to work with a campus theme steering committee composed of faculty/students/and staff

Rationale: Campus theme provides a common topic that is used across the university and community to integrate courses, extra-curricular curricular activities, and other programming. The campus theme provides a concept-based integrated curriculum (curriculum & co-curriculum) that will achieve the goals of baccalaureate and graduate experience and support the four strategic planning initiatives and NIU mission. The term “campus theme” was chosen to suggest that the theme can be implemented 2-3 academic years.

Action:

- a. Faculty team will study best practices in campus themes and make a specific recommendation (Kafer/McCord—2008-09).
- b. Faculty committees will identify how the campus theme might be implemented at NIU—definition, purpose, process (Pritchard and Cisneros—2008-09).
- c. Establish a campus theme coordinator and campus theme steering committee of students/staff/faculty who will oversee its development and implementation.
- d. Launch the first campus theme in 2009-2012.
  - Introduce campus theme idea (e.g., Rode)
  - Involvement—Seek campus “buy-in” into activities (Castle, 2009-10)
  - Reflection/Assess success

***Timeline:***

- Summer 2008: Identify faculty members to serve on the team that will study best practice – provided with guidelines for their report – Representatives should include UCC, CUAE, GEC, and graduate council members as appropriate. (Kafer/McCord proposal

- Fall/Summer 2008: Faculty team research campus themes, attend workshops, and visit campuses as appropriate to determine best practice that can be adapted to NIU
- Fall/Winter 2008: Faculty team reports to appropriate faculty committees such as CUAE, Graduate Council, GEC, UCC, Faculty Senate, University Council; Council of Deans as appropriate
- AY 2008-2009: Identify campus theme coordinator and campus theme steering committee. Identify campus theme program goals and student learning outcomes
- Spring 2009: Select first campus theme to begin in fall 2009 and continue until 2011/12  
Announce theme to the campus community and begin planning activities and events  
Ask faculty to plan for including the theme in classes
- Summer 2009: Introduce campus theme at summer orientation and introduce reading part of the program
- Fall 2009: Begin first year of the campus theme  
Introduce at the academic convocation, new student week, and faculty orientation
- Fall 2009-Spring 2011/12: Campus theme implemented
- Spring 2011/12: Campus theme evaluated and new cycle begins

***Requisites:***

Funding for part-time campus theme coordinator (additional \$15K per year to someone's salary) who will work with the campus theme steering committee composed of faculty, students, and staff

***Budgetary Constraints:***

Financial support requested in concept papers:

- Kafer/McCord-Themed Year Initiative: \$43,920 – I might spend money differently, not sure about all the travel.
- Rode-Common Reading Experience & Jaeger- OneBook, One University (~\$30K)
- Gallagher – Periodic campus-wide themed events (No cost developed)
- Other related concept papers that might develop

New budget items (~\$15K/year):

- Publicity – posters, ads, website, blogs, etc
- Speakers
- Supporting documents such as lesson ideas, activities
- Common reading experience – possibly a list, semester theme, departments select, etc
- BlackBoard community or web site to share ideas

Existing systems to be used:

- Library purchases
- Convocation
- Commencement

- Special months – such as women’s history, black studies
- Graduate colloquium speakers
- Seminars & non-credit workshops
- Residential experiences

Evaluation Plan: Campus theme is implemented as a continuing university program embedded in the NIU culture and has internal committee evaluate the outcomes (2010-2015). Artifacts will be collected during the campus theme years and used to evaluate the program, assess student learning, and plan for the next cycle. Evaluation will be based on campus theme program goals and student learning outcomes.

Performance Indicators:

- Number of classes that include the campus theme
- Number of extra-curricular and community events that use the campus theme
- Student work reflects their ability to think systemically and holistically about the theme
- Feedback obtained each semester from faculty who incorporate the theme in their classes
- Integration of theme into campus orientation programs
- Use of the campus theme by community groups
- Students, faculty, staff, and community members engage in discussions about the campus theme
- Evidence that the campus theme has promoted multidisciplinary thinking
- Enhanced student/faculty/staff experiences and engagement in their own learning & growth
- Involve on-campus and off-campus constituencies

Milestones:

- May 2008 – identify members of faculty team that will study best practice in campus themes
- August 2008 – faculty team presents report to Provost and appropriate campus committees
- September 2008 – identify campus theme steering committee
  - President Peters announces campus theme in State of the University Address
  - Campus theme steering committee begins to work with NIU assessment coordinator to develop student learning outcomes
- November/December 2008 – appoint campus theme coordinator
- January 2009 – announce process for submitting and selecting the campus theme
  - Establish criteria for selection of the campus theme
    - Theme should be applicable to all campus units
    - Enhance the university experience –
      - Participation is optional, but encouraged - academic freedom issues
- March 2009 – campus theme steering committee announces campus theme and work begins on promotion materials and suggested activities, speakers, etc.
- June 2009 – campus theme introduced in the summer orientation program
  - Campus theme coordinator will begin to document activities and monitor outcomes – artifacts for assessment at a later time

- August 2009 – roll out of campus theme at new faculty orientation, academic convocation
- January 2011/2012 – evaluate campus theme and assess student learning outcomes using artifacts collected during the process
  - Begin planning for the next campus theme
  - The cycle continues

Summary Process: The campus theme coordinator and steering committee will monitor and document campus theme activities and collect artifacts that can be used to evaluate the process and assess student learning.

Priority: Immediate. The faculty team needs to be named in order to begin the study of best practices in summer 2008.

Diversity: Many NIU constituencies will be encouraged to use the campus theme for their programming. This may include integration into Unity in Diversity and the Women’s History Month, Black Heritage Month, Asian American Heritage Month, Latino Heritage Month, LGBT activities and others.

#### **Goal 4: Improve Upon and Maintain High Quality Teaching Effectiveness Among Faculty and Staff**

Northern Illinois University has always viewed teaching as one of its primary responsibilities to its constituents. There is a large number of NIU faculty who are engaged in effective teaching practices and who strive to enhance this aspect of their career development through a number of engaged learning activities. Many believe and understand that high quality learning requires the use of a range of teaching methods and approaches. Furthermore, faculty and staff are becoming increasingly aware that effective teaching goes beyond delivery of content, focusing on meeting established student learning outcomes measured at the course, program, and university levels. Increasing assessment demands from external accrediting agencies will further require our faculty and staff to evaluate what we accomplish in our classrooms.

Our task force strongly believes that if NIU is to make significant and worthwhile changes to the existing curriculum as described in Goal 3, faculty must re-examine their teaching styles and adapt new approaches and technologies that will foster broader learning among our increasingly diverse student body. As a prelude to any discussion of enhancing student engagement, it must be acknowledged that this will require an adjustment in approach for many faculty members and a change in some aspects of the campus climate in general. Such change will also require a commitment on the part of the university to support such efforts through possible realignment of resources or creation of new resources (e.g., possible establishment of a Office of Engaged Learning that would assist faculty to collaborate with external sites—Strategy 3.1). Addition and/or expansion of high impact activities to current faculty loads will require additional time, creativity and concerted effort on the part of the faculty. To be successful, the leadership for this effort must come from the top whereby it is clear that the administration, to a person, will prioritize resources to accomplish these goals. Student engagement efforts and high impact learning strategies must be rewarded in tenure/promotion evaluation systems as well as in annual merit reviews. Upper administration, Deans and the appropriate faculty bodies (e.g., UCPC/UC, FS and GC) must work together to change current merit/evaluation system(s). A Boyer-esque approach where the scholarship of teaching is included in tenure, promotion and merit considerations should be explored.

In an effort to seek resources and to further articulate our public commitment to student engagement pedagogy our task force suggests that the university consider re-joining the Campus Compact and seek Carnegie Foundation Community Engagement Classification (see strategy 3.1). If we are to meet the strategies outlined in Goal 3, it is imperative that we have an engaged faculty and staff, one that is recognized for its efforts in teaching and learning outcomes. Most of the changes suggested within the two strategies in Goal 4 involve university policy changes and reallocation of existing resources.

Strategy 4.1: Transform policy involved in faculty review at the department, college, and university levels to enhance teaching effectiveness.

Imperatives:

- Preserve, strengthen, and extend NIU's teaching and learning environment.
- Make NIU an institution of "first choice" for faculty, students, and staff.

Goal: Improve upon and maintain high quality teaching effectiveness among faculty and staff at NIU.

Champions: NIU administration (President, Provost, Vice-Presidents, Deans, Chairs) and shared governance groups such as the University Council, Faculty Senate, and the College Councils.

Rationale: Addition and/or expansion of high impact activities to current faculty loads will require additional time, creativity and concerted effort on the part of the faculty. To be successful, the leadership for this effort must come from the top whereby it is clear that the administration, to a person, will prioritize resources to accomplish these goals. Student engagement efforts and high impact learning strategies must be rewarded in tenure/promotion evaluation systems as well as in annual merit reviews. Upper administration, Deans and the appropriate faculty bodies (e.g., UCPC/UC, FS and GC) must work together to change current merit/evaluation system(s).

Actions: Transform policy involved in faculty review at the department, college, and university levels to enhance teaching effectiveness.

- a. Examine department level: annual merit evaluation  
Most faculty at NIU are examined yearly for merit increases based on 40% scholarship/research, 40% teaching, and 20% service at the department level. This unilateral system may not be appropriate for all faculty members every year. It does not leave latitude for a faculty member who may find it necessary to extensively revamp curriculum to meet changes in best practice. The curricular innovation task force would like the administration/shared governance groups to promote a more flexible process for annual faculty evaluation.

**Requisites:** Policy changes at the department level (no funding required).

**Timeline: 2008-10**

- b. While it is a rather straightforward process (counting papers, scholarship-related activities, etc.) to evaluate scholarship/research as well as service contributions, teaching evaluations are generally limited to student evaluations. This method does not provide sufficient feedback and is often affected positively or negatively by grades. As part of the annual merit evaluation, the faculty's teaching effectiveness should be evaluated using a teaching portfolio developed by the faculty member or peer review by other trained faculty (e.g., College of Education). This will provide documentation and assessment of the faculty's pedagogical strategies.

**Requisites:** Policy changes at the department level. Personnel funding to grant three College of Education faculty/staff a course release to train other departments on how to develop useful and appropriate peer-review processes—Approximately \$20K per semester.

**Timeline: 2008-10**

c. Decisions associated with tenure and promotion at the college level have generally been focused on an individual's scholarship/research contributions (vita and external letters). In most cases, evidence of effective teaching are rarely discussed or used in these decisions (unless there has been a significant problem in the classroom). Colleges will incorporate evidence of teaching effectiveness (teaching portfolios and/or peer review) in the tenure and promotion decisions.

**Requisites:** Policy changes at the College level (No funding required).

**Timeline: 2008-10**

d. Sabbatical decisions are generally based on the desire to enhance one's research background. In certain cases, sabbatical proposals will describe how the faculty member expects to enhance course materials (e.g., lectures, homework assignments, etc.) based on what is learned from the sabbatical process. Colleges will require that faculty identify where knowledge gained from a sabbatical experience is incorporated into the teaching/learning experience. Those asking for a second or third sabbatical will have to show proof that results from earlier sabbatical proposals were incorporated into course materials.

**Requisites:** Policy changes at the College level (No funding required).

**Timeline: 2008-10**

Evaluation Plan: There are a number of performance indicators or milestones that can be used to address whether the level of teaching effectiveness has improved across campus. If recognition and rewards for excellence in teaching at the faculty/staff level are altered, the task force believes that NIU may experience a significant paradigm shift toward a greater balance between excellent research/scholarship and teaching. We believe that these changes benefit student learning, faculty and staff teaching effectiveness, and NIU's reputation within the region as a school of choice.

Some of the performance indicators and/or milestones identified with the stated goal include:

- Existing course evaluations for individual faculty improve over time.
- Faculty/staff become more involved in engaged student learning or high impact student activities as listed in a teaching portfolio (list on faculty service report).
- Faculty peer reviews (of teaching) demonstrate improvement over time.
- Newer faculty become more enthusiastic about the use of effective teaching methods which changes the overall campus culture.
- Overall, faculty/staff embrace teaching and are challenged to continue to review and revise teaching methods to meet the changing ways in which students learn.

Priority: IMMEDIATE. This goal will not require a significant reallocation of funding, however, it will require a great deal of time to debate these significant changes to how we evaluate ourselves as faculty and staff. The Task Force on Curricular Innovation truly believes that if we are going to achieve success in “actively engaging students in their own learning” those who will be leading this charge (NIU’s faculty and staff) need to be not only praised for their level of participation, they need to be recognized and rewarded in a similar fashion to those who rewarded for their research and scholarship.

Diversity: Issues of diversity are not specifically relevant to these policy-related issues though students with a diverse range of learning styles including a range of physical and intellectual abilities will benefit from the faculty’s greater attention to the enhancement of teaching at NIU.

Strategy 4.2: Provide faculty and staff with needed resources to create new curriculum and enhance teaching methods.

Imperatives:

- Preserve, strengthen, and extend NIU's teaching and learning environment.
- Make NIU an institution of "first choice" for faculty, students, and staff.

Goal: Improve upon and maintain high quality teaching effectiveness among faculty and staff at NIU.

Champions: NIU administration (President, Provost, Vice-Presidents, Deans, Chairs) and shared governance groups such as the University Council, Faculty Senate, and the College Councils.

Rationale: Faculty must re-examine their teaching styles and adapt new approaches and technologies that will foster broader learning among our increasingly diverse student body. As a prelude to any discussion of enhancing student engagement, it must be acknowledged that this will require an adjustment in approach for many faculty members and a change in some aspects of the campus climate in general.

Actions:

a. Though NIU is a Research I institution, a faculty member is typically evaluated on an equivalent investment in teaching and research. Though faculty are granted sabbaticals to enhance their research, they are never given release time to improve or enhance their teaching, a practice that suggests an emphasis of one over the other. NIU will reallocate funds to grant a one-course release-time every three years to faculty members who desire to improve undergraduate teaching (see Instructional Improvement Release Time Concept Proposal by Laura Vazquez in Appendix).

**Requisites:** Policy changes at the University level. Ideally, approximately five teaching improvement course releases would be offered per semester at ~6K/faculty member for a total of \$30K per semester (fall/spring).

**Timeline: 2009-11**

b. At the university-level top teaching faculty can be awarded the Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching (EUT) and/or Presidential Teaching Professorship (PTP) awards while at NIU. Outside of this select group other effective teachers, especially at the Associate Professor Level, can remain anonymous to the NIU community. Administrators and shared governance groups will be tasked with identifying additional teaching awards, especially for those at the Associate Professor level.

**Requisites:** Create criteria for selection process (minimal financial award or teaching improvement course release).

**Timeline: 2008-10**

c. Past and present PTP and UET award winners should be viewed as a pool of teaching experts for others on campus. As such they could become part of a group of faculty/staff who could help others (especially new and untenured faculty) develop a range of pedagogical strategies and enhance engaged learning in their classrooms. Emphasizing teaching effectiveness from the start of a faculty's tenure at NIU will over time change the campus attitudes toward engaged learning. Those awarded the EUT and/or the PTP will become part of a NIU Master Teaching group and will be asked to participate in periodic student learning/teaching effectiveness workshops on campus primarily focused toward new and untenured faculty. Faculty who participate in some minimum number of these workshops will receive a "Teaching Certificate" from the administration.

***Requisites: None.***

***Timeline: 2008-10***

d. Provide faculty and staff with needed resources to create new curriculum and enhance teaching methods.

- NIU has always provided faculty with resources (e.g., money, course reductions, new classroom equipment, etc.) to enhance the educational experience for students. This has been accomplished through support from a number of shared governance groups and administrative offices. Over the past decade the use of Blackboard by faculty and students has increased dramatically across campus. Recently, NIU has tried to increase the number of courses available for on-line education. To continue addressing the need to enhance engaged learning into the future, the faculty will need to have state-of-the-art tools available to them. However, many of the teaching resources needed by faculty are currently unknown to most university decision makers.

Faculty and staff should be surveyed to ascertain what is needed to enhance engaged learning in classrooms across the campus. This survey could be conducted by a number of groups, however we suggest that the coordinator of engaged learning be tasked with this activity (see template on Strategy 3.1 Develop Office of Engaged Learning). The survey could determine the importance of each of the following resources needed to improve teaching: release time, summer stipends, training, ongoing professional development, classroom equipment, hardware/software, etc.

***Requisites:*** Summer month of salary for Coordinator (\$9,000), one semester course reduction each semester (~\$6K per semester) to develop and disseminate survey to faculty and staff, and to evaluate results, and write up a report to be delivered to the Council of Deans and Provosts.

***Timeline: 2008-09***

e. As student learning changes from a more passive lecture-focused education to an interactive learning environment where they are engaged frequently in various high impact activities the need for resources to create and implement such activities must be addressed.

The proposed Consortium builds on current initiatives on experiential learning in different colleges at NIU. For example, the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology offers all its students to work in teams through the senior design projects. The College of Business has its own Experiential Learning Center that provides students from all majors across the college the opportunity to work as teams of junior consultants. Guided by a faculty coach, each team solves real world business issues for non-profit and for profit organizations. The English Department has an active internship program, which includes Professional Writing Partnerships for aspiring technical and professional writers. The Consortium will integrate all these individual efforts and facilitates experiential learning that complements the NIU curriculum to enrich students' academic programs and help students to develop higher-order skills. The consortium will share best practices and establish a way to communicate to students the team based, experiential learning opportunities from other colleges.

The administration should support the NIU Experiential Learning Consortium proposal (template by Ghrayeb et al.) which promotes the successful use of high impact activities as an effort to engage students in the learning process.

### ***Champions***

- College of Engineering and Engineering Technologies - Omar Ghrayeb, ISYE Department Chair,
- College of Business - Jane Mall, Director, Experiential Learning Center and Amy Buhrow, Outreach Specialist
- College of Liberal Arts & Sciences - Philip Eubanks, Acting Chair, Department of English
- College of Health and Human Sciences – Contact TBD
- College of Visual and Performing Arts – Contact TBD
- College of Law – Contact TBD
- College of Education – Contact TBD

***Requisites:*** See NIU Experiential Learning Consortium Template

***Timeline:*** See NIU Experiential Learning Consortium Template

f. Faculty and staff who want to enhance their teaching are always seeking opportunities to learn more about curricular delivery methods. NIU, and more specifically Faculty Development, have brought a number of excellent speakers to campus as well as developed the Multicultural C.T.I.

More funding is needed to expand these learning opportunities for faculty/staff (especially for new and untenured faculty). It is important to create a culture change on campus—one that actively promotes effective teaching and the need to incorporate more high impact activities in the classroom.

***Requisites:*** Approximately \$50 to 100K is set aside each academic year to bring consultants and guest speakers to campus to provide one/two-day workshops on various effective teaching techniques and methods.

***Timeline: 2008-12***

g. As important as it is for faculty and staff to become involved in these high impact activities with their students, it is necessary to determine or measure, through various assessment techniques, whether students are obtaining appropriate learning outcomes from these experiences.

The director of engaged learning will work with the director of assessment services and faculty involved in using, developing, and/or enhancing high impact activities to create appropriate measures (rubrics) to determine whether students are obtaining the stated learning outcomes associated with specific activities.

***Requisites:*** Approximately \$50 to 100K is set aside to support the development of appropriate assessment tools/methods associated with various high impact student activities proposed by faculty/staff in concert with the Director of Assessment Services.

***Timeline: 2008-12***

**Evaluation Plan:** There are a number of performance indicators or milestones that can be used to address whether the level of teaching effectiveness and the use of high impact student activities by faculty/staff has improved across campus. If resources are provided to faculty and staff to improve teaching, the task force believes that NIU may experience greater participation by faculty/staff and an overall better educational experience for our students. We believe that these changes benefit student learning, faculty and staff teaching effectiveness, and NIU's reputation within the region as a school of choice. Some of the performance indicators and/or milestones identified with the stated goal include:

- Greater participation of faculty/staff in educational workshops put on by faculty development.
- Faculty/staff become more involved in engaged student learning or high impact student activities as listed in a teaching portfolio (list on faculty service report).
- Faculty/staff do a better job of addressing specific student learning goals and create appropriate assessment tools to create evidence of teaching success.
- Newer faculty become more enthusiastic about the use of effective teaching methods which changes the overall campus culture.
- Overall, faculty/staff embrace teaching and are challenged to continue to review and revise teaching methods to meet the changing ways in which students learn.

**Priority: HIGH.** This goal will require a significant reallocation of funding (upwards of \$250K per academic year when considering all the actions described). It will require a great deal of time to develop positive interest to participate in these activities. The Task Force on Curricular Innovation truly believes that if we are going to achieve success in “actively engaging students in their own learning” those who will be leading this charge (NIU's faculty and staff) need to be not only praised for their level of participation, they need continual education (on successful teaching methods) and resources to revamp courses as they become aware of new educational tools.

Diversity: All members of the faculty and staff will have the opportunity to participate in these educational efforts focused on improving teaching effectiveness. Additionally the kinds of pedagogical enhancements that will result from the efforts outlined above will improve the faculty's ability to engage with the wide range of learning styles and background experiences of NIU's diverse population.

**Appendices  
Curricular Innovation  
Concept Proposals**

**Strategy 3.1—Develop Center for Engaged Learning  
Concept Proposals**

***Engaged Learning and Curricular Innovation through Global Opportunities—Deb Pierce (Executive Director of International Program)***

Goals.

- Northern Illinois University will increase participation by NIU undergraduate students in study abroad from the current 1.4% per year to 3.0%. We will accomplish this by integrating study abroad more fully into undergraduate curricula; by supporting financially those faculty who wish to create new faculty-led study abroad programs; and by establishing a study abroad travel grant program for NIU students.
- The institution will also explore establishing global learning outcomes for all baccalaureate degree programs, specifying the knowledge and skills which all NIU undergraduates need to accomplish in the global arena before earning the bachelor’s degree.

Champions.

<b><i>Participant(s)</i></b>	<b><i>Affiliation</i></b>	<b><i>Expertise</i></b>
Anne Seitzinger	Director, Study Abroad Office (SAO)	Designing faculty-led programs and supporting faculty in leading these
Pamela Rosenberg	International Programs	Developing budgets for study abroad programs; managing multiple accounts
Sarah Ansell, Emily Gorlewski, Rita Withrow	Study Abroad Office (SAO) Staff	Advising students in finding program that fits needs
Hidetada Shimizu	Associate Professor, College of Education; member International Programs Advisory Council	Advocating for international experiences for COE faculty, students.

Christopher Markle	Associate Professor, College of Visual & Performing Arts; member International Programs Advisory Council	Advocating for international experiences for CV&PA faculty, students.
Deb Pierce	Associate Provost, International Programs	Promoting all aspects of comprehensive internationalization of NIU.
Michael Kolb	Professor, Anthropology	Developing and leading study abroad and field school programs
Xueshu Song	Professor, Engineering Technology; member, International Programs Advisory Council	Teaching from a global perspective
John Hartmann	Presidential Teaching Professor, Foreign Languages & Literatures	Advocating for international experiences and foreign language learning.
Eric Jones	Assistant Professor, History	Leading study abroad programs and advocating for international experiences
Michael Gonzáles	Presidential Research Professor, History & Director, Center for Latino & Latin American Studies	Advocating for international experiences and foreign language learning.
Sarah Blue	Assistant Professor, Geography and Advisor, International Studies minors	Advocating for international academic options such as the minors.

### Imperatives.

Both goals listed above, increasing participation in study abroad by NIU undergraduate students, and seeking to establish global learning outcomes for students earning NIU baccalaureate degrees, would enhance engaged learning, **thereby strengthening the teaching/learning environment**. One of the most intense and challenging experiences available to undergrads is participating in education outside one's own country, and studying there with an NIU faculty member typically provides a strong engagement in learning. Improving NIU's study abroad profile would allow our faculty and students to make connections around the world and to bring back international perspectives to those students who for whatever reason are not able to study abroad. Because study abroad is very attractive to high-ability

students, improving our participation rate would improve our competitive profile for all students and ***make us more nearly an institution of “first choice”.***

Clearly stating learning outcomes for our students which are related to global knowledge and skills would ***strengthen our teaching/learning environment*** by emphasizing that global perspectives are a necessary aspect of any baccalaureate education as we move through the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Graduating students who have accomplished the proposed outcomes would ***strengthen our global and regional impact*** because they would be better prepared to compete in our current globalized marketplace. Strengthening our reputation through global learning outcomes would ***improve our profile as a competitive institution of first choice.***

### **Strategies, Diversity and Evaluation**

Strategies to realize the goal of increasing study abroad participation by NIU undergraduate students include the following:

#### ***Strategy 1: Integrate study abroad throughout the undergraduate curricula of the various colleges.***

Action Step 1: SAO Director and staff will meet with academic advisors (undergraduate advising offices) in all colleges to discuss the benefits of study abroad and how it might fit in with the undergrad curricula in each college.

Timeline:        Already begun; first year activity

Diversity:        In discussions SAO staff will emphasize the need for students of all backgrounds and majors to participate in study abroad.

Evaluation:      Measure will be completing all college meetings by December 2008.

Requisites:      Support from academic deans for the initiative, to allow and encourage their advising staff to participate in meetings.

Rationale:        After holding workshops for academic advisors for three years, we now believe a more targeted approach is timely. SAO staff and academic advisors together can identify the best programs for students in particular majors and the best time in an undergraduate major for those students to participate.

Action Step 2: In cooperation with advisors in each college, SAO Director and staff will create appropriate materials that advisors can distribute to all students during advising appointments early in their academic careers.

Timeline:        Activity for second half of first year and for the second year.

Diversity: SAO staff and college advisors will insure materials are culturally sensitive and speak to students from all ethnic backgrounds, especially those under-represented in study abroad.

Evaluation: Completing advising sheets for majors in at least one college by the end of spring semester, 2009 will indicate initial success. Completing advising sheets for majors in three more colleges by the end of spring semester 2010 will indicate follow-on success.

Requisites: Design support from Media Services, \$2000 in printing costs.

Rationale: Producing well-founded and informative advising sheets will reduce burden on advisors and will help students identify appropriate programs.

Action Step 3: Advising sheets will be posted on the website of each college and of the Study Abroad Office.

Timeline: Second year activity

Diversity: In developing the advising sheets above, SAO staff and college advisors will insure materials are culturally-sensitive and speak to students from all ethnic backgrounds, especially those under-represented in study abroad.

Evaluation: Getting four colleges' advising sheets on the website of SAO by fall 2010 will indicate success.

Requisites: Administrative support from International Programs. With similar support from college offices, advising sheets could appear on their websites as well.

Rationale: Market analyses indicate current students prefer web-based materials over print, so getting these advising sheets on the web is crucial if we are to reach our target audience.

Action Step 4: SAO will host an on-campus conference for advisors from all undergraduate colleges and from the Advising Center to allow advisors to share best practices and compare notes on their successes.

Timeline: Third year activity

Diversity: We will invite advisors from all programs, including the Advising Center, to participate and to focus on students from underrepresented groups.

Evaluation: Gaining participation from at least one staff advisor and one faculty advisor from each college, plus at least two advisors from the Advising Center, will constitute success on this action step.

Requisites: Planning support from SAO and International Programs; release time for advisors from colleges and offices; \$2500 to support lunch, materials, certificates, and stipends for the advisors.

Rationale: We need all advisors to realize they are an integral part of increasing the participation rate of NIU undergraduate students in study abroad. If we involve them in activities, such as this conference, they will be more likely to develop buy-in and commitment.

***Strategy 2: Provide financial support to faculty who wish to develop new faculty-led study abroad programs.***

Action Step 1: Establish guidelines and procedures to award funds to aspiring faculty leaders of study abroad. Also establish expected outcomes for the persons receiving the award.

Timeline: First year activity

Diversity: We will target a diverse group of faculty and staff to serve on the committee to establish these procedures.

Evaluation: Procedures established by the end of fall semester 2008

Requisites: Support from deans and from directors of the Centers for Southeast Asian Studies, Black Studies, and Latino and Latin American Studies.

Rationale: We need to create a transparent process for awarding these funds to maximize faculty support and buy-in.

Action Step 2: Promote funding opportunity to all faculty and staff at NIU.

Timeline: Conduct promotional activity starting with International Education Week in November 2008; continue into early spring 2009.

Diversity: Continue to target a diverse group of faculty in promotional efforts.

Evaluation: Gaining applications from ten faculty in this first round would indicate success.

Requisites: Administrative support from SAO and International Programs to conduct e-mail campaign, post information on websites, and to create flyers to distribute on campus.

Rationale: We will need to promote this actively because it would be a new initiative and most faculty do not expect financial support to create a study abroad program.

Action Step 3: Award funds in spring 2009 to be used in summer 2009; repeat one time in 2010.

Timeline: Second and third year activity

Diversity: In making the awards the committee will need to consider issues of academic and personal diversity, to continue to support faculty buy-in.

Evaluation: Giving away all available funds will constitute success.

Requisites: \$2000 to provide to each faculty member who is provided with an award; if we have five awards we will need \$10,000 in this first year of awards, with \$10,000 for the second year. We propose this program to continue no more than two years.

Rationale: Providing faculty with some financial support to travel to a venue and organize a program will insure more new faculty-led programs. Faculty-led programs in study abroad are the most effective for our student population at NIU.

***Strategy 3: Create a study abroad travel grant program for NIU students. This program would add \$5 to the student general fee which would create a fund to provide awards for students participating in study abroad, typically to use for travel costs.***

Action Step 1: Administer online survey to all NIU undergraduate students regarding their interest in study abroad.

Timeline: Spring semester 2008 (already in process)

Diversity: Because the survey is going to all NIU students, the population responding will likely be diverse.

Evaluation: Response rate of 15 – 20% will indicate success.

Requisites: Support from Student Association, student member of the NIU Board of Trustees, SAO, Public Affairs, Office of the Vice Provost, Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

Rationale: Student leaders will use these data to support the request to create a study abroad travel grant.

Action Step 2: Develop guidelines and procedures for the travel grant program.

Timeline: Fall semester 2008

**Diversity:** The committee to develop these guidelines and procedures will need to include students from diverse backgrounds, who will need to insure that procedures do not disadvantage students from first-generation or underrepresented cohorts.

**Evaluation:** Guidelines and procedures will need to gain support of wider group of student leaders as well as of administrators before being presented to NIU Board of Trustees.

**Requisites:** Student leaders will need to take leadership role in committee to design guidelines, along with SAO staff. Members of the committee will need to have full results and analysis from online survey administered in spring 2008.

**Rationale:** Appropriate procedures and guidelines will build support and buy-in for this travel grant program. They will also provide accountability which will be important for continued support.

Action Step 3: Seek approval from NIU Board of Trustees.

**Timeline:** March 2009

**Diversity:** Approving this study abroad travel grant program will make programs abroad much more accessible to students from diverse or underrepresented backgrounds, who typically feel study abroad is not available to them.

**Evaluation:** The Board will evaluate the proposal, and their approval will constitute success.

**Requisites:** The proposal will need to be carefully and clearly written in order to gain the approval of Trustees, with good supports to counter arguments that the student general fee is already too high.

**Rationale:** Approving this program will make study abroad much more available to all NIU students. Not only will the awards reduce costs significantly, but they will also combat the perception that study abroad is completely out of reach financially for most of our students.

Action Step 4: Promote travel grant program to NIU undergraduate students.

**Timeline:** Starting once the NIU Board of Trustees approves the program and continuing over the summer and at the study abroad fair in fall 2008.

**Diversity:** We will make special efforts to target underrepresented populations for this promotional campaign.

**Evaluation:** Getting a large number of proposals for the travel grant program will constitute success.

**Requisites:** Administrative support in the SAO; support from the Student Association; \$500 to place advertisements in the Northern Star; administrative support for webpage design.

Rationale: Students will need to know about this program in order to take advantage of it.

Action Step 5: Award funds in fall semester 2008 for use in spring semester 2009 and in spring semester 2009 for use in summer 2009 and fall 2009.

Timeline: Begin awards fall 2008 and continue every fall and spring semester thereafter.

Diversity: Having these awards available will greatly increase the diversity of our population participating in study abroad.

Evaluation: Awarding all the funds allocated for FY2009 will constitute success.

Requisites: Support from the Student Association and from administrative offices to create the awards committee. We will also need the budget support of the Business Manager of International Programs to account accurately for the funds provided and awarded.

Rationale: Making these awards will increase the number of students participating in study abroad. Even students who don't get awards but who know about them will be more likely to study abroad.

### **Strategies for second goal**

Strategies to realize the goal of creating global learning outcomes for NIU baccalaureate students include the following:

***Strategy 1: Gain the support of the Engaged Learning subcommittee of the Curricular Innovation Task Force for global learning outcomes; also gain the support of Assessment Services and of the Council of Deans. Such outcomes would specify the knowledge and skills related to global matters that all baccalaureate graduates of NIU would need to achieve.***

Action Step 1: Provide undergraduate curricular deans (typically, associate deans) with materials on global learning outcomes from the American Council on Education. Also provide these materials to members of the Engaged Learning subcommittee, to staff of Assessment Services, and to members of the Council of Deans.

Timeline: Fall semester 2008

Diversity: Global learning outcomes will spread international information and perspectives through the undergraduate student body, because all students regardless of background or major need to be ready to compete in the global marketplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Evaluation: This step will be successful if a majority of each of the groups mentioned above will support the move toward global learning outcomes.

Requisites: \$800 to purchase the materials from the American Council on Education.

Rationale: Learning outcomes of any variety are somewhat new to NIU, so we will need to build support for these carefully and thoughtfully.

Action Step 2: Host a workshop or campus conference for interested colleagues on how an institution can identify global learning outcomes that respond appropriately to institutional context, needs, and goals.

Timeline: Fall semester 2009 (spring semester is too crowded already, and we need to build support thoughtfully rather than quickly).

Diversity: We would seek to include colleagues from all colleges and from programs serving underrepresented students.

Evaluation: Having at least two representatives from each college, with a total of 25 participants, would constitute success for this workshop.

Requisites: \$1,000 for materials and for luncheon. Support from deans for release time for their staff or faculty to participate.

Rationale: Creating institution-specific global learning outcomes is much more appropriate than simply adopting some identified by another university. In this way we can respond more carefully to the needs of NIU students, faculty and staff.

***Strategy 2: Establish faculty committee, responsible to the Provost, charged with reviewing the goal of creating global learning outcomes and with identifying outcomes which would be appropriate for NIU.***

Action Step 1: Create charge to committee and describe planned composition of the group; get approval from Provost's Office.

Timeline: Spring semester 2010

Diversity: It will be important for this committee or task force to represent all colleges as well as to include faculty from underrepresented groups.

Evaluation: Establishing and populating this task force will represent success.

Requisites: Support from the Office of the Provost and from deans.

Rationale: Developing faculty buy-in requires thoughtful approach and clear inclusion. We will need representation from all colleges in order to create appropriate learning outcomes.

Action Step 2: Develop and present retreat program for the faculty committee and bring in a consultant to facilitate the committee's work on identifying NIU global learning outcomes; the consultant could come from either the American Council on Education or from a nearby institution which has created such learning outcomes for their campus.

Timeline: Fall semester 2010

Diversity: It will be important for this committee or task force to represent all colleges as well as to include faculty from underrepresented groups in the planned retreat.

Evaluation: At the end of the retreat the task force and consultant will need to have identified the list of appropriate global learning outcomes to propose to the campus.

Requisites: \$4000 to cover consultant expenses and honorarium; \$1000 to cover costs of presenting retreat. Support from Office of the Provost and from deans.

Rationale: Especially for an institution which has not previously adopted learning outcomes, developing such outcomes requires the support of a trained facilitator and consultant.

***Strategy 3: Gain needed approvals for the new global learning outcomes from general education committee, curriculum committees, etc., and add the global learning outcomes to the undergraduate catalogue.***

Action Step 1: Develop partnerships between International Programs and appropriate offices on campus to gain approvals; follow advice of experienced staff and faculty.

Timeline: Spring semester 2011

Diversity: In these partnerships we will need to keep in mind the needs of students from different backgrounds and fields of study.

Evaluation: Gaining needed approvals will constitute success.

Requisites: Support from offices and leaders who have worked this process before.

Rationale: Gaining support for a new element in the curriculum always requires care, diplomacy and patience.

***Strategy 4: Establish assessment protocols for the global learning outcomes.  
How will we know if our students achieve these? What will happen if a particular student does not achieve the full range of global learning outcomes?***

Action Step 1: Seek guidance from Virginia Cassidy and Carolinda Douglass, as well as from colleagues such as Christa Olson from the American Council on Education who work with institutions developing such global learning outcomes.

Timeline: Fall semester 2011

Diversity: Establishing assessment protocols for the global learning outcomes will insure that all our baccalaureate students, regardless of background or major, leave NIU with a solid understanding of global issues.

Evaluation: The assessment protocols will provide the environment for evaluation.

Requisites: Support from campus colleagues, Assessment Services, Office of the Provost.

Rationale: We cannot establish learning outcomes without also creating assessment protocols in order to know whether our students have achieved the outcomes desired.

**Documentation of Support**

>>> Sarah Ansell 4/25/2008 2:26 PM >>>

Hi Deb,

I wanted to let you know that I am on board with this proposal. It sounds good.

Sarah Ansell

>>> Sarah Blue 4/25/2008 11:15 AM >>>

Hi Deb,

This email is to state that I support both the proposal for engaged learning through global opportunities and the proposal for a Global Studies Center. You can add my name to the list of supporters.

Congrats on all of the good work you're putting into these proposals.

Best,

Sarah

Sarah A. Blue, PhD

Assistant Professor

Department of Geography  
Northern Illinois University  
DeKalb, IL 60115

**>>> Emily Gorlewski 4/25/2008 8:37 AM >>>**

Deb:

Please let me know if there is any help I can give you on this proposal. Thanks for copying me; of course you have my full support!

Emily

**>>> Michael Gonzales 4/25/2008 2:21 PM >>>**

Dear Deb,

I enthusiastically endorse your goal to increase study abroad and global learning opportunities for NIU undergraduates.

Michael

Michael Gonzales

Director, Center for Latino and Latin American Studies

Presidential Research Professor

**>>> "John Hartmann" <[hartmann.jf@gmail.com](mailto:hartmann.jf@gmail.com)> 4/25/2008 9:20 AM >>>**

Deb, Yes. I support it 100%. Go for it! - John

**>>> "Eric Jones" <[iloveroti@gmail.com](mailto:iloveroti@gmail.com)> 4/25/2008 1:48 PM >>>**

Deb, absolutely I'm a supporter. My students are really suffering because of the steep airfares to Asia. - Eric

**>>> Michael Kolb 4/24/2008 5:15 PM >>>**

Yes, count me in of course.

Michael

**>>> Christopher Markle 4/24/2008 11:20 PM >>>**

absolutely I champion this and I hope it happens....

**>>> Pamela Rosenberg 4/25/2008 9:20 AM >>>**

Hi Deb,

Yes, you may add me as a champion for these initiatives.

Thanks,

Pam

**>>> Anne Seitzinger 4/24/2008 5:10 PM >>>**

Hi Deb:

I support these goals. I think increasing the current enrollment from 1.4% to 3.0 percent is very ambitious but would be especially feasible by the implementation of the study abroad travel grant program for NIU students. Are we giving ourselves a time line for achieving this increase?

I hope the writing is going well!

Anne

>>> **Hidetada Shimizu 4/25/2008 5:41 PM >>>**

Hi Deb,

Yes, you have my support! Hope I am not replying too late. I've been in meetings all day long.

Hide

>>> **"Xueshu Song" <[xueshu.song@gmail.com](mailto:xueshu.song@gmail.com)> 4/24/2008 5:03 PM >>>**

Deborah:

I do support your proposal. Please feel free to list my name wherever it may

Help garner additional support.

Best,

Xueshu

>>> **Rita Withrow 4/25/2008 2:39 PM >>>**

Hi Deb,

I feel that this a very good proposal with goals that I could help support.

Thanks,

Rita

# Addressing NIU's Key Strategic Planning Imperatives Through a Common Reading Experience

*A Concept Proposal by Denise L. Rode, Ed.D., Director,*

*Orientation & First-Year Experience*

## **Introduction:**

The concept of a Common Reading Experience (CRE) has been embraced at colleges and universities across the United States in recent years. Patterson (2002) has described the purpose of the CRE as providing “a common academic experience for all first-year students and. . .strengthen(ing) the academic atmosphere of the institution from the first day the student arrives on campus” (L. Patterson, 2002, *New Ideas in First-Year Reading Programs Around the Country, First-Year Experience Newsletter, 14(3)*, p. 8). Other goals and purposes of the CRE are to:

- Promote dialogue and a sense of community among students, faculty, staff, and citizens of the surrounding area
- Set academic expectations for new students (their “first assignment”)
- Provide a shared intellectual experience that fosters critical thinking and writing skills and which helps students construct meaning for themselves
- Bridge the in-class and out-of-class dimensions of learning
- Enhance a climate of respect and appreciation for diverse backgrounds and experiences/develop multicultural awareness
- Develop a culture of reading as a means of counteracting a societal decline in core literacy skills

Readings selected by CRE committees on other campuses typically explore universal themes of identity, gender, race, ethnicity, and civic responsibility that contribute to students’ academic and social development and can be addressed from multiple points of view. While the broad goal of “student success” is at the center, the CRE also models academic behaviors, sets expectations for what it means to be a college student, fosters high levels of engagement on campus, and promotes higher-level thinking and learning. As an offshoot of the CRE, many institutions bring the selected book’s author or another expert on the topic to campus as a speaker at Academic Convocation or during the fall term. Others discuss the book in small groups or develop service projects in keeping with the reading’s themes. With President Peters’ recent call for a “themed year” at NIU, the CRE fits directly into the Strategic Planning Task Force Work Group I’s recommendations of “(incorporating) the theme into the curriculum, the co-curriculum, NIU materials and activities, and the campus community” and “establish(ing) a unified reading selection for the theme (required in some settings) as a way of creating conversation on campus and in the larger community” (Report of the Strategic Planning Task Force, Work Group I: The Teaching and Learning Environment, 2007).

## **Strategic Plan Imperatives:**

These outcomes impact three of the imperatives set forth by the Strategic Planning Task Force, namely, to:

- Preserve, strengthen, and extend NIU’s teaching and learning environment

- Develop a strategy for investing in multidisciplinary scholarship and artistic clusters
- Strengthen and extend NIU's regional and global impact.

The outcomes of a CRE would have a direct, positive effect on the recommendations of the NIU Strategic Planning Task Force Work Group I (The Teaching and Learning Environment) as they relate to the values of engaging learners, thinking broadly and deeply, embracing and expanding diversity/multicultural curriculum transformation, and conversing about ideas.

**Goals/Strategies Addressed:**

Northern Illinois University will enhance student learning and engagement as a result of this high impact activity early in the academic year. The specific Strategic Plan Overarching Goal addressed by the CRE is Goal 3: *Actively Engage Students in their own Learning* (Strategies 3.2, 3.5, and 3.9). The CRE also advances the *Task Force Vision Post 2-14* (Solidify the NIU Huskie identity as one of a strong, caring, and engaged community committed to local, regional, and global citizenship). As stated in the Report of the Strategic Planning Task Force, Work Group I, this proposal meets the recommendation of incorporating the theme into the “curriculum, the co-curriculum, NIU materials and activities, and the campus community” and “establish(es) a unified reading selection for the theme. . .as a way of creating conversation on campus and in the larger community.”

**Champions:**

The Common Reading Experience in a true collaborative partnership between Academic and Student Affairs. The program can be administratively based out of Orientation & First-Year Experience, but must have strong faculty support and involvement. Specific departments critical to implementing a CRE include, but are not limited to:

- New Student Orientation, Welcome Days, and Academic Convocation
- University Honors experiences (cornerstone and/or capstone)
- The First-Year Success Series
- UNIV 101/201 courses (expanding the academic focus)
- First-Year English courses
- Programs offered by NIU's Cultural Centers
- Residential Academic Initiatives
- College and departmental curricula and programs
- Cross-departmental and cross-divisional efforts
- Eventually, partnerships with campus and community groups and local businesses will be built with such organizations as Barnes and Noble, the University Bookstore, Village Commons Bookstore, the DeKalb Public Library, Altrusa International (a community service organization), and Mortar Board Senior Honor Society, which champions literacy as its national service project.

In short, the CRE at Northern would strengthen existing programs and partnerships while adding some new components.

**Positions/Individuals Involved:**

**Primary:**

- Director of Orientation & First-Year Experience (Denise Rode)
- Associate or Assistant Director, Orientation & First-Year Experience (currently vacant)
- Vice Provost (Earl Seaver)
- Vice President for Student Affairs (Brian Hemphill)
- Associate Vice President for Student Affairs (John R. Jones)
- Assistant to the Director of First-Year Composition (Ellen Franklin)
- Director of COMS 100/100P Program (Ferald Bryan)
- Director, CHANCE Program (Leroy Mitchell)
- Student/Faculty Selection Committee (TBA)

**Secondary:**

- President (John G. Peters)
- Provost (Raymond Alden)
- Vice Provost for Academic Planning & Development (Virginia Cassidy)
- Assessment Services Director (Carolinda Douglass)
- Director, Assessment & Training, Division of Student Affairs (Amy Franklin)
- Student Affairs Graphic Designer (Yuma Nakada)
- General Education Committee
- Executive Director, Housing & Dining (Kelly Wesener) and Staff
- Student Involvement & Leadership Development (Angela Dreesen)
- Undergraduate College Deans and Department Chairs (Council of Deans, Curricular Deans, Advising Deans) (after pilot stage)
- UNIV 101/201 Instructors
- Appropriate University Committees

**Recommended Action Steps and Timeline:**

Initial efforts already are underway to establish a CRE at Northern Illinois University. The CRE emerged as a strong recommendation of the 2005-2007 NIU Task Force on the Comprehensive First-Year Experience (composed of students, faculty, and staff members). The professional staff of Orientation & First-Year Experience has researched the benefits of the CRE and has found thriving programs on many campuses, including the University of South Carolina, Temple University, Appalachian State University, Miami University (OH), Bowling Green State University (OH), the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Gallaudet University, and Ball State University. In a benchmarking study of 50 institutions comparable to NIU, a CRE is located on 18 campuses (approximately one-third of those studied), particularly on those with strong first-year programs and retention rates. A team of graduate students enrolled in CAHE 572 (Assessment in Higher Education) constructed a feasibility study in Fall 2008 to precede the launch of a Common Reading initiative at NIU.

- “Themed Year” decisions held in 2008-2009 academic year (perhaps in response to Erik Peterson’s “Seven Revolutions” Webcast)
- Implementation of pilot program with first-year students (N=3,200) in Fall 2009
- Constitute CRE planning team in Fall 2008
- Seek funding from external and internal sources in Fall 2008
- Select reading in conjunction with Themed Year Committee and plan campus-wide CRE events in Winter 2009

- Meet with stakeholders (English Department/First-Year Composition and COMS 100 coordinators, residence hall staff, UNIV staff), and promote and distribute reading in Summer 2009
- Contract with author or topical expert(s) for appearance at Academic Convocation or a separate event for Fall 2009
- Assess pilot program results from all constituencies as well as learning objectives for students (Fall 2009)
- Determine continuation/expansion for Fall 2010 (Winter 2010)
- Begin cycle for 2010 if program is continued and expands

**Requisites:**

- Formation of a steering committee for selecting the reading and planning activities around the CRE.
- Staffing (administrative staffing provided by Orientation & First-Year Experience).
- Technology support for Web site (provided by Orientation & First-Year Experience).
- Funding for common book or reading (for faculty and student leaders involved with the CRE; if funds are available, books can be purchased for first-year students. Alternative sources of funding could be alumni or corporate donors or partial funding through the new student fee).
- Funding to bring author to campus as a Convocation or fall semester speaker as well as for campus-wide events could be sought at a future date.
- Funding for materials, supplies, postage, facilities, and set-up charges, promotion, and T-shirts (for faculty and student staff participating in the CRE).
- An estimated budget for a CRE serving a first-year class of approximately 3,200 students would be \$20,000 (without providing the book/reading).

**Evaluation Plan:**

**Performance Indicators:**

- Number of colleges, departments, and courses which incorporate the common reading
- Percentage of first-year students, faculty, and staff who can identify the common reading
- Number of extracurricular and community events which incorporate the common reading (in residence halls, in campus-wide programming)
- Feedback from students, faculty, and staff (see sample instruments below)
- Integration of CRE
- Students faculty & staff engage in discussions about the CRE
- Involvement of faculty and staff across university divisions
- Involvement of community partners (e.g., DeKalb Chamber of Commerce, DeKalb Public Library, DeKalb CUSD 428)

**Milestones:**

As indicated in action steps/timeline above.

**Assessment:**

An important question to ask as this initiative is piloted is, "What kind of impact does this intellectual experience have on students and the community, and how can we document it?"

Assessment of the pilot CRE will be based on effective principles and best practices as set forth by Upcraft and Schuh (*Assessment in Student Affairs: A Guide for Practitioners*, Jossey-Bass, 1996). A second source (Ward, 2002) provides the concept of a “Cycle of Intentionality,” in which: a) needs and outcomes are defined; b) learning opportunities take place; and c) outcomes are assessed and redefined. Consultation will be sought from Virginia Cassidy, Carolinda Douglass, and Amy Franklin in developing a comprehensive assessment process.

Both program and student outcomes will be measured using quantitative methods (survey data will be collected from students and faculty via Survey Monkey using yes/no responses, open-ended, and Likert scale formats with drop-down response choices) and qualitative measures (reflective writing using prompts; standardized open-ended interviews; focus groups; observation; and student/faculty comments from Survey Monkey).

As part of a comprehensive assessment plan, four types of outcomes will be measured:

- Program outcomes (e.g., Did all students know about the CRE? How? How many students/faculty/staff read the book? Did students attend events connected with the CRE? Would students/faculty/staff recommend a CRE for next year’s students?)
- Student academic outcomes (e.g., Did the CRE encourage students to read more? Did students participating in the CRE demonstrate higher level critical thinking or writing skills than those who did not participate? Is there a relationship between the CRE and higher first-semester grade point averages or retention from first to second year? Did students who completed the reading want to know more about the theme?)
- Personal development outcomes (e.g., Was there any change in attitudes/behaviors about a theme that was emphasized in the book? Were students more confident during their transition to college as a result of participating in the CRE?)
- Specific forms/measures of development (e.g., Did students who participated in the CRE participate in service learning at higher levels than those who did not participate? Did students who participated demonstrate a better understanding of the mission of NIU? Did participation enhance students’ understanding of the academic expectations of college?)

Examples of potential evaluation/assessment formats are shown below:

#### **One-Minute Reflection** (for students)

1. Did you read (*name of reading/book*)?  
 Yes  No
2. If you read the book, how much did you read?  
 All of it  About 50%  25% or less
3. How do you think reading and discussing (*name of reading/book*) may impact your personal development or interaction with others?

#### **Online Survey Questions** (for students)

1. Were you aware that all first-year students were asked to read (*name of reading/book*) prior to the start of the semester?
2. The primary reason I read (*name of reading/book*) was. . .
3. The primary reason I did not read (*name of book/reading*) was. . .
4. Did you participate in any CRE events? If so, which one(s)?

5. The book/reading is relevant to college students. (Y/N)
6. The book/reading touched on issues important to me. (Y/N)
7. It was a book/reading I could talk about with other students. (Y/N)
8. The book/reading was reasonable in length. (Y/N)
9. The CRE provided a common intellectual activity for my peers and me. (Y/N)
10. Reading this book/essay gave me something to talk about with students and teachers when I came to NIU. (Y/N)
11. The book/reading made me think about ideas I might not have thought about. (Y/N)
12. I would recommend this book to others. (Y/N)
13. I visited the CRE Web site. (Y/N)
14. Are there any books/readings you might suggest that we consider for the next CRE? (Y/N)

### **Online Survey Questions (for faculty)**

1. How many students were in your class or discussion group?
2. What is your estimate of the percentage of students who completed the reading/book? Read part of it?
3. How did you incorporate the reading into class activities? (options provided in a drop-down menu)
4. In your opinion, how successful was the Common Reading Experience in:
  - Capturing student interest?
  - Establishing expectations for academic success in college?
  - Helping students identify their values?
  - Promoting meaningful interaction between students and faculty?
  - Promoting meaningful interaction among students?
5. Should a Common Reading be continued at NIU? (If yes, why so? If no, why not?) (open response)
6. What suggestions can you make for improvement of the CRE? (open response)
7. What books/readings do you suggest for future common readings? (open response)

After the CRE has been established for 2-3 years, external benchmarking should be conducted by using a standardized instrument such as the *First-Year Initiative* survey, the *National Survey of Student Engagement*, or *Your First College Year*.

Best practices for CRE evaluation/assessment models are seen at Bowling Green State University, Temple University, the University of South Carolina, and Appalachian State University.

#### **Priority:**

Immediate; a small-scale pilot program can be conducted for Fall 2008. A fuller program could be considered an intermediate goal as a themed year is developed and its components are put into place.

#### **Conclusion:**

According to the most recent report of the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, the percentage of college graduates deemed proficient in prose literacy has declined from 40 to 31 percent in the past decade. These shortcomings have real-world consequences. Employers repeatedly report that many new graduates hired are not prepared to work, lacking the critical thinking, writing, and problem-solving skills

needed in today's workplaces (as cited in *A National Dialogue: The Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education*, September 2006). While initiatives such as the CRE are intended to assist individuals in becoming successful college students, they also speak to the very real concerns of postgraduate preparation and skill development – issues that deeply impact our service region and, indeed, our world. Although not a panacea, the CRE will benefit by enhancing students' learning experiences, the campus climate, the surrounding community/region, and our global society.

## Strategy 3.3—Develop Approaches to Best Support a Collaborative Learning/Teaching Environment

Concept Proposals

### Survey for Improving Teaching Environments—KEITH MILLIS

**Imperative:** Preserve, strengthen and extend NIU's teaching and learning environment.

**Goal 3:** Actively Engage Students in Their Own Learning

**Champions:** Keith Millis on behalf of the Strategic Planning Curricular Innovations Innovative Instructional Technology, subgroup, April 25, 2008. We suggest that the Committee for the Improvement of Undergraduate Education (CIUE) take up this goal.

**Strategy 3.3:** Develop Approaches to best support a collaborative learning/teaching environment. There is a need for identifying improvements in teaching environments (e.g., classrooms, work rooms, etc) that will maximize learning and safety at NIU. The goal of this plan is to create and disseminate a survey which will identify such improvements and classrooms that need significant redesigning. This input could be used in more extensive remodeling projects in the future including new buildings and classrooms.

#### 4. Strategies.

The primary strategy is to create a survey that will be given to faculty, staff and students asking for input regarding how classrooms and other works spaces could be improved and then to identify recommendations on the basis of the results.

##### a) Action steps

1. create survey
2. distribute survey
3. analyze results
4. identify recommendations
5. detailed assessments

##### b) Time line

###### Action step 1:

*Create survey.* We suggest that the Committee for the Improvement of Undergraduate Education (CIUE) take up this goal. We suggest that the survey include both general and specific information, by using both closed- and open-ended questions (e.g., *In regards to promoting learning, lighting in classrooms where I teach need improving (circle one: yes or no). If yes, please list room numbers and building, the nature of the problem and if known, a recommended solution*).

This will take 2 semesters of year 1 to complete.

**Action step 2:**

*Survey distribution.* The survey must be delivered via the web. This might be done using SurveyMonkey, a web-based application. It should be directed to all faculty, staff and students. We think it should come from Virginia Cassidy's office. This will occur in the first semester of year 2.

**Action step 3:**

*Analysis.* We are unsure of who will analyze the results, but it should be easy to do. SurveyMonkey enables a frequency distribution of results very easily. The results might be initially segregated by faculty/staff versus students and/or by teaching needs versus safety needs. This will occur during the second semester of year 2

**Action step 4:**

*Initial interpretation and recommendations.* Members of the CUIE will receive the results and discuss the results. They will identify specific recommendations (e.g., room X needs Y). They will then rank order each recommendation on relative need, as defined by the number of respondents who mentioned it. This will occur during the second semester of year 2.

**Action step 5:**

*Detailed assessments.* The office of procurements will estimate the cost of each recommendation. This information will be passed to another committee, perhaps the CUIE, who will rate the perceived impact that each recommendation will have on learning and student/faculty needs. This can be partly addressed by determining the number of students/classes the given recommendation would impact. A final list will be finalized taking budget and need into consideration. This will occur during the summer months of year 2.

**6. Evaluation Plan.**

- a) **Milestones.** Each action step should be monitored, and occur according to the time lines above.
- b) **Performance indicators.**  
Once detailed assessments are approved, then the university will document when each recommendation is implemented.
- c) **Summary process**  
The university may also use a similar survey methodology to seek input from faculty, staff and students sometime in the future to assess whether their needs regarding learning spaces have been met.

**7. Supporting Documentation.**

N/A

## Develop an E-Object Repository—Kai Rush and Keith Millis

**Imperative:** Preserve, strengthen and extend NIU’s teaching and learning environment.

**Goal:** Actively Engage Students in Their Own Learning

**Champions:** Amanda Durik (Psychology), WeiChen Hung (Educational Technology, Research, and Assessment), Aline Click (ELearning division) and Murali Krishnamurthi

**Strategy:** 3.3 Develop an E-Object Repository to make available different teaching/learning supplements and resources and to familiarize NIU faculty and instructors with these materials in order to extend their current curriculum and teaching methods.

**This proposal is part (“Goal3”) of a larger proposal for a “Learning and Teaching Emporium” championed by Kai Rush and Keith Millis.**

**Action Step:** Create a collaborative, self -sustaining knowledge network of on-line and classroom instructional tools targeted at extending and sustaining high quality teaching and learning among faculty and staff at NIU.

**Rationale:** NIU has implemented various technology systems to host teaching and learning materials (e.g., Blackboard’s Content Collection, Adobe’s Acrobat Connect, Microsoft’s SharePoint). Consequently, faculty and instructors have already developed and stored a great number of potential reusable learning and instructional materials in these systems and they may be willing to share and collaborate with other community members to further enhance students’ learning experience and sharpen core competencies. But to reunite and redistribute these best practice materials, it is necessary to develop a set of core protocols in order to make the materials that are/will be stored in these systems searchable and reusable.

**Timeline:**

- 1 Fall 2008 – Spring 2009: Establish a task force and collaborate with NIU libraries, the eLearning division, and the Faculty Development office to evaluate current systems and develop a set of metadata that will be used to organize and manage existing and future interdisciplinary e- objects.
- 2 Fall2009 –Spring2010:Amass existing e-objects from faculty and free online venues, considering quality and intellectual property.
- 3 Spring 2010 – Spring 2011: Test the e-repository system by conducting focus groups and developing a survey to identify key issues in the usability and operability of the e-repository system
- 4 Fall 2011 – Spring 2012: Establish a recognition/reward plan to encourage faculty and staff to contribute to, use, and evaluate e-objects.
- 5 Fall 2012 – Spring 2013: Conduct campus wide workshops for using and developing e-objects and acquire continuing funding

**Requisites:**

Requisites	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Release time or stipends	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Student workers	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Metadata development	\$10,000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
SCORM development	\$2,000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Repository customization	\$10,000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
e-object prototypes	n/a	\$5,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
e-objects integration cost	n/a	\$2,500	n/a	n/a	n/a
Meeting and communication	n/a	\$2,500	\$2,500	n/a	n/a
Seminar workshop	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$2,500	\$2,500
Stipend for 10 change agents	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$10,000	n/a

**Evaluation Plan:** There will be three key milestones for Goal 3's evaluation plan in order to produce the proposed project's deliverables and investigate their effectiveness. The following table presents detailed information about these three milestone evaluations:

Milestone	Methods or Instruments	Performance indicators
Years 1 – 2: Development of the e repository	Expert appraisal checklist (75 yes/no questions divided into 3 main constructs: instructional features, interface & orientation, and technical accuracy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•A list of system recommendations based on the expert appraisal</li> <li>•System must have at least an 80 percent acceptance and technical accuracy rate before pilot test</li> </ul>
Years 2 – 3 Pilot study of the e-repository	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance evaluation on system operability – how the e-objects are populated, retrieved, used, and updated</li> <li>• Focus group study</li> <li>• Survey development—a brief survey will be developed for use by faculty using the e-repository to provide ongoing feedback regarding its utility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attain at least 80% of the navigational searching tasks and information searching tasks within the repository system.</li> <li>• Recommendations generated by focus group to improve system interface</li> <li>• After an initial baseline measure, improvement in survey ratings across time will indicate positive change whereas declines in survey ratings across time will indicate negative changes. This will provide information about whether ongoing changes are beneficial.</li> </ul>
Years 4 – 5 Dissemination of the e-repository • Implementation of the recognition/reward plan • Development of grant proposals for external funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•A survey of seminar workshop attendees' perception of the repository system (60 five point Likert scale questions divided into 4 constructs)</li> <li>•Development of the recognition/reward plan</li> <li>•Development of grant proposals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations generated by the perception survey to improve system use.</li> <li>• Approval of the recognition/reward plan</li> <li>• Submission of 2 grant proposals</li> </ul>

**Summary Process:**

Outcomes of this proposed system, including the results of the usability and system performance assessments, will be compiled, analyzed, and shared with all stakeholders. In addition, evaluation reports documenting the outcomes will be prepared and submitted to the provost and college dean offices for review and recommendation.

**Priority: High**

As NIU has already made considerable technology investment in hosting faculty and instructor's learning and teaching materials, it is critical that NIU moves to the next level in online and distance education by integrating support and services and establishing core knowledge base at the institutional level to advance learning environments with state of the art technology and deal with the competition from online universities.

**Diversity:** This e-object repository will promote diversity by a) encouraging full participation in learning of students with different life circumstances by offering around the clock access to online learning opportunities, b) expanding students' literacy of technology and the learning opportunities it offers, and c) encouraging diversity in perspectives among faculty through sharing of teaching technologies across multiple disciplines.

**Examine the opportunities to incorporate online/blended course collaboration (WIMBA) into various educational experiences on or off campus—Murali Krishnamurthi**

**Imperative:** Preserve, strengthen and extend NIU's teaching and learning environment.

**Goal 3:** Actively Engage Students in Their Own Learning

**Champions:** The primary units for championing strategy 3.3 are Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center and Information Technology Services. Ultimately, faculty who teach online or use online technologies will champion this effort by promoting collaborative learning in their courses.

**Strategy:** 3.3 Develop Approaches to best support a collaborative learning/teaching environment

**Action Step:** (a) Examine the opportunities to incorporate online/blended course collaboration into various educational experiences on or off campus.

**Rationale:** The text-based virtual classroom currently available in Blackboard is limited in its usability for collaborative teaching and learning. An effective collaboration environment requires live audio, video, application sharing, instant polling, and collaborative group work, and such an environment can engage students and promote active learning.

**Timeline:** (i) March 2008: Acquire a pilot license 6 months for a collaborative learning environment (WIMBA) for use in online and blended courses and integrate it with Blackboard learning system.

(ii) March – April 2008: Train and help faculty use the collaborative learning environment (WIMBA).

(iii) April-May 2008: Obtain feedback from faculty users of the collaborative learning environment (WIMBA).

(iv) May - June 2008: Based on faculty users' feedback, acquire an annual unlimited site license for the collaborative learning environment (WIMBA).

(v) July-August 2008: Integrate obtained license with Blackboard and begin full-fledged training and support for faculty to use the collaborative learning environment in their blended and online courses.

**Requisites:** (i) Pilot license for WIMBA – \$6000 (acquired already by Provost's Office)

(ii) ITS personnel for integrating the pilot WIMBA software with Blackboard – no additional personnel requested at this time.

(iii) Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center personnel for training and helping faculty use the pilot WIMBA online collaborative learning environment – no additional personnel requested at this time.

- (iv) Unlimited annual site license hosting for WIMBA \$21,150. The software is hosted by WIMBA and NIU does not have to acquire hardware or install the software locally. License includes technical support. Additional Voice Tools (annual unlimited license) \$11,125.
- (v) Phone support for students to listen to the audio by phone in case of a lost or lack of internet connection - \$600 annually for NIUTel

**Evaluation Plan:** Evaluation of the success of the proposed strategy will involve collecting quantitative and qualitative data on the use of the collaborative teaching and learning environment and analyzing the data to verify the successful accomplishment of the goal.

- Performance Indicators:**
- (i) Number of faculty who attend WIMBA demonstration and training each semester
  - (ii) Number of online, blended and web-enhanced courses that use WIMBA for collaboration each semester
  - (iii) Number of students enrolled in courses that use WIMBA each semester
  - (iv) Feedback obtained each semester from faculty who use WIMBA for collaborative teaching and learning

- Milestone:**
- (i) March 2008 – Acquire and integrate pilot license for WIMBA – Completed
  - (ii) March – April 2008: Demonstrate WIMBA and begin offering training for faculty – Began on time and continuing as planned.
  - (iii) June 2008 – Acquire annual unlimited site license for WIMBA and integrate with Blackboard
  - (iv) August 2008 – Begin offering full fledged training and support for WIMBA
  - (v) December 2008, May 2009 – Obtain feedback from faculty users and evaluate progress in online collaboration in teaching and learning

**Summary Process:** At the end of each semester of use of WIMBA during the license period, faculty users will be requested to provide feedback on their use of WIMBA for collaborative teaching and learning and online, and the feedback will be analyzed along with trends and patterns in number of courses, number of faculty and number of students who use WIMBA each semester to evaluate the effectiveness of the collaborative teaching and learning environment and its impact on engaging students actively in their own learning.

**Priority: Immediate**

As a pilot license for WIMBA has already been acquired and integrated successfully with Blackboard and faculty are being trained to use it in their courses, the proposed strategy can be implemented immediately by acquiring an annual site license for WIMBA and continuing the effort. For the goal to be successful, it is critical the license is continued so that faculty already using the software can continue their efforts in promoting a collaborative teaching and learning environment.

**Diversity:** Online collaborative learning environments are especially known for enhancing interactions among diverse learners who may not interact freely in a face-to-face classroom environment. Collaborative learning environments such as WIMBA also provide accessibility to education to place-bound students or learners with particular disabilities.

## NIU Experiential Learning Consortium—OMAR GHAYEB

### Champions

- **College of Engineering and Engineering Technologies** - Omar Ghayeb, ISYE Department Chair,
- **College of Business** - Jane Mall, Director, Experiential Learning Center and Amy Buhrow, Outreach Specialist
- **College of Liberal Arts & Sciences** - Philip Eubanks, Acting Chair, Department of English
- **College of Health and Human Sciences** – Contact TBD
- **College of Visual and Performing Arts** – Contact TBD
- **College of Law** – Contact TBD
- **College of Education** – Contact TBD

### Proposed Concept and the NIU Imperatives

In response to NIU's strategic plan and to offer our students a more complete learning environment for all types of learners than the traditional lecture format, we propose to establish the "**NIU Experiential Learning Consortium.**" The proposed Consortium builds on current initiatives on experiential learning in different colleges at NIU. For example, the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology offers all its students to work in teams through the senior design projects. The College of Business has its own Experiential Learning Center that provides students from all majors across the college the opportunity to work as teams of junior consultants. Guided by a faculty coach, each team solves real world business issues for non-profit and for profit organizations. The English Department has an active internship program, which includes Professional Writing Partnerships for aspiring technical and professional writers. The Consortium will integrate all these individual efforts and facilitates experiential learning that complements the NIU curriculum to enrich students' academic programs and help students to develop higher-order skills. The consortium will share best practices and establish a way to communicate to students the team based, experiential learning opportunities from other colleges.

Three of NIU's new strategic imperatives are furthered by this proposal: Most obviously, this innovation in experiential learning can play a part in both strengthening and extending the learning environment because of the nature of the learning experiences students will have and because the experiences reach beyond the campus. Likewise, these compelling and potentially transformational learning experiences can play a part in making NIU a first choice for its many constituencies. Less obvious, perhaps, is that the proposal furthers the goal of strengthening and extending NIU's role as a regional/global portal. A great number of industries and businesses in the northern Illinois region have become points of contact for enterprises around the globe that students (and their professors) will very likely come to see and contribute to NIU's global links in the normal course of their projects.

## **Goals and Objectives of the NIU Experiential Learning Consortium:**

- Serve as a vehicle of collaboration among different colleges at NIU to enhance students' learning and to assist community organizations and industry in addressing critical issues utilizing a multi-disciplinary, team based approach
- Create and facilitate team based experiential learning opportunities that complements the NIU curriculum to enrich students' academic programs and guide students in the process of developing the following skills: team building, communication (all aspects), professionalism, business management s, real world problem solving, multi-functional, time management, global cultural competencies, awareness to ethics, brainstorming, and critical thinking.
- Provide students with the opportunity to start research (applied research) in early stage of their life, which prepare students for a lifelong learning.
- Enable students to connect with the world beyond the campus while still enrolled in educational programs.
- Establish a partnership program designed to increase the involvement of faculty members and students in community-based learning.
- Develop tools to identify, describe, and evaluate outcomes of experiential learning experiences (opportunity for research in learning pedagogy).
- Develop a “bank” of case studies and research articles based on the experiences and results of the projects that can be used in other senior level courses.

## **Relationship to the Curricular Innovations Task Force Goals**

The proposed initiative is critical to achieving the third goal of the Student Success and Curricular Innovations Task Force that is, to improve upon and maintain high quality learning for students at NIU. Learning is the process of creating knowledge. Many scholars recommend the application of research from what has been called “the new science of learning”. This research focuses on experiential learning as an important component to improve the learning process in higher education.

Therefore, the proposed initiative fits under various strategies of the third goal. Obviously experiential learning, especially interdisciplinary one, fosters a culture that is challenging, authentic, integrative and interdisciplinary in nature that results in engaged learners and critical thinkers (*Strategies 3 and 5*). One of the objectives of the proposed initiative is to develop a “bank” of case studies and research articles based on the experiences and results of the projects that can be used in other senior level courses, which will enrich and support a collaborative teaching and learning environment among participating colleges and units at NIU (*Strategy 4*)

**Tasks/Action**

Timeline	Tasks	Resources
<p><b>Phase I- Year one</b></p>	<p>Identify colleges and units that have an interest in project based experiential learning capstone activities that involve a team based approach to solving real world organizational issues and challenges.</p>	<p>5% release time for the champions (Omar Ghrayeb, Jane Mall, Philip Eubanks, and Amy Buhrow)</p> <p>Two champions visiting one other university Experiential Learning Consortium @ \$2000 each.</p> <p>Two Champions attend a conference about experience based learning @ \$2000 each.</p>
	<p>Research other experiential learning type consortiums at other universities and attend experiential learning conferences.</p>	
	<p>Develop an organizational chart and communication channel for the NIU Experiential Learning Consortium with the colleges and units that have expressed interest in participation in the consortium.</p>	
	<p>A process and policy for engagement and partnership with the colleges and units will be developed.</p>	
	<p>Once these steps are completed, another proposal will be completed that will identify the resources needed to successfully implement the NIU Experiential Learning Consortium.</p>	
<p><b>Phase II - Years 2 3</b></p>	<p>The NIU Experiential Learning Consortium concept will be fully implemented</p>	<p>TBD</p>
	<p>Assessments/evaluations will be developed to measure the goals and objectives listed above in this proposal.</p>	
	<p>Based on assessment results, modify organizational Chart and policy of Engagement as needed.</p>	
	<p>Develop Marketing material and publications to advertise the Consortium and develop partnerships with outside constituents.</p>	
<p><b>Phase III - After year 3</b></p>	<p>The NIU Experiential Learning Consortium continues its operation</p>	<p>TBD</p>
	<p>Annual assessment will be conducted</p>	
	<p>Active marketing and outreach plans are implemented.</p>	

## **Evaluation Plan**

At the End of Phase I (Year One), a report detailing the consortium organizational chart, policies and procedures for engagement among participating colleges will be developed. Also, a proposal outlining the required resources for phase II will be developed. In year two, the NIU Experiential Learning Consortium concept will be fully implemented and assessments/evaluations will be developed to measure the goals and objectives listed above in this proposal.

## Enriching Academic Community, General Education Assessment, and Reflective Learning through Longitudinal Student Electronic Portfolios—Michael Day

1. **GOALS.** This proposal seeks to preserve, strengthen, and extend NIU’s teaching and learning environment, as well as improve retention, assessment, and the general education curriculum by instituting a longitudinal and reflective general education electronic portfolio. The process would begin in First-Year Composition and culminate in a senior capstone experience. It would not move forward until the General Education Committee determines that the timing is appropriate, and it is intended to complement and work with, not supplant other Student Success and Curricular Innovation proposals.

*Explanation.* Several compelling issues indicate that a reflective general education portfolio should become a key part of NIU’s strategic plan:

- In response to the perceived lack of coherence in general education goals, many colleges and universities have asked students to collect, select, and reflect on their academic work in portfolios. Over time, these portfolios become a physical record of learning, growth, and connection-making. Longitudinal student portfolios provide a vehicle for written self-evaluation as much as they provide material for assessment at class, program, and institutional levels.
- Portfolios provide a touchstone for discussion of learning among students, faculty, and administrators. In a portfolio-based campus learning network, many faculty members also keep portfolios to record their progress as reflective teachers and provide material for annual evaluations.
- Through their potential to be shared, and to be repurposed for different readers, portfolios emphasize the power of written reflection, tied to evidence, to describe learning, growth, and connection-making for multiple audiences: self, peers, teachers, colleagues, family, friends, and employers, among others.
- Many of NIU’s various programs and departments have been using some form of paper or electronic portfolio for years. In 2004, NIU became a charter member of the [Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research](#)<sup>1</sup>, and the entire university community came together to host the exciting and productive [Conference on Portfolio Integration: Connecting Learning and Assessment](#)<sup>2</sup> in March 2005. In general, NIU embraced portfolio learning, and seemed poised to make the jump to an integrated, longitudinal approach that would help students evaluate their progress and make connections over the course of their college years. It is now 2008, and we have not seen a coordinated move to connect the various portfolio projects across campus to integrate student learning and assessment in general education.
- Electronic portfolios have many advantages over print portfolios; they save space, allow for private/public customization, and offer the ease of reproducing, sharing and disseminating digital information. Further, students can simply connect claims and reflections to evidence through hypertext links. They can demonstrate learning not just through text and graphics that can be printed on paper; but also through any media form that can be digitized, including audio,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ncepr.org>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.niu.edu/facdev/conference/portfolio/>

video, web pages, and more. Readers, including teachers and peers, can use electronic tools to comment on portfolios, regardless of their physical location, and researchers can easily perform quantitative data analysis on digital portfolios. Finally, electronic portfolios can be repurposed for a variety of academic and job search purposes.

- The key advantage of electronic portfolios is their ability to link students, faculty, and other stakeholders in a campus learning web. If 95% of students have a Facebook page and are accustomed to creating and maintaining their social identities online; why not use the electronic portfolio to give them a place to create and maintain their *academic* identities? By connecting and reflecting on general education outcomes in a longitudinal electronic portfolio, students then integrate these outcomes into their major study while expanding their electronic media skills.
- Both Portland State University and LaGuardia Community College have improved retention and graduation rates through the increased student engagement fostered by electronic portfolios<sup>3</sup>, and schools such as Rose Hulman Institute of Technology, Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis, and the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, have pioneered campus-wide electronic portfolio programs to foster authentic assessment, student engagement, and connection among academic outcomes. Within our state, Illinois State University has already made a longitudinal artifact portfolio a central component of its general education assessment.
- As part of strategic planning, NIU is already developing plans for rethinking general education and considering developing a *Center for Engaged Learning*. A working electronic portfolio program assessment is already in place in the First-Year Composition Program, which reaches nearly all students who begin higher education at NIU, and a proposal for an Undergraduate Writing Program is also being submitted. The electronic portfolio project would complement and augment such efforts by employing best practices in authentic assessment across the NIU student's academic career.

In sum, this program will build upon current efforts at NIU and other U.S. colleges and universities; it will bring together curriculum and assessment centered on general education goals and outcomes.

2. **CHAMPIONS & STAKEHOLDERS.** The following list of individuals and units will be actively engaged in the establishing the General Education Reflective Electronic Portfolio. After the title, each partner's expertise and role is listed:

- *General Education Committee*  
Expertise: Plans and oversees goals, outcomes, curriculum, and assessment of general education requirements  
  
Role: Plan integration of electronic portfolio into general education classes and the majors, advise on assessment rubric
- *Computer Facilities Advisory Committee*  
Expertise: Advises the associate vice president for Information Technology Services in matters of computing and networking policy; reviews and make recommendations about

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[http://portfolio.pdx.edu/Portfolio/Institutional\\_Effectiveness/Statistical\\_Look/view?p=Retention\\_Graduation\\_Rates](http://portfolio.pdx.edu/Portfolio/Institutional_Effectiveness/Statistical_Look/view?p=Retention_Graduation_Rates)

major changes, deletions, and new technologies that have a broad effect on campus information technology practices

Role: Advise on technology choices and integration with existing technologies

- *Director of the Office of Faculty Development and Instructional Design*

Expertise: Sponsors frequent faculty workshops relevant to technology, pedagogy, and assignments; develops online campus resources that support general education and writing instruction

Role: Advise on technology choices, integration with existing technologies, faculty buy-in, and faculty development workshops for those involved

- *Assessment Coordinator*

Expertise: Consults with faculty on development of assessment in academic units and programs, coordinates the University Writing Project

Role: Advise on integrating electronic portfolio with current assessments, planning benchmarks and data collection, and developing a sustainable, long-term general education assessment plan

- *Director of First-Year Composition*

Expertise: Trains and supervises writing instructors, coordinates large-scale programmatic assessment, developed existing First-Year Composition electronic portfolio, member of Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research

Role: Integrate existing First-Year Composition electronic portfolio with proposed longitudinal electronic portfolio

- *Coordinator of Networked Writing and Research, English Department*

Expertise: Knowledge of technological solutions for writing intensive curriculum, developed existing First-Year Composition electronic portfolio, member of Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research

Role: Advise on technology choices, help integrate existing First-Year Composition electronic portfolio with proposed longitudinal electronic portfolio

- *Coordinator of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)*

Expertise: Developed NIU program in WAC, member of Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research

Role: Advise on integrating Reflective General Education Electronic Portfolio with Undergraduate Writing Program

- *Coordinator of General Education Electronic Portfolio(new position)*

Expertise: Knowledge of general education goals, electronic portfolio pedagogy and assessment

Role: Works with General Education Committee in early stages to plan implementation and research various options, later coordinates the work of all units and stakeholders involved through consulting and workshops

- *Two Graduate Assistants*

Expertise: Experience and interest in electronic tools for curriculum and assessment

Role: Support the work of the Coordinator with class visits, consulting, and workshops for faculty and students

Support from the following committees and university administrators will be necessary:

- *University Assessment Panel*

Expertise: Provides oversight for assessment activities at NIU; played a key historical role in supporting portfolio learning at NIU through the 2005 Portfolio Conference

Role: Make recommendations for the design and benchmarks of electronic portfolio assessment

- *Vice Provost*

Expertise: Coordinates committees and activities that relate to the undergraduate curriculum, to academic standards, and generally to the undergraduate educational experience and academic environment; jointly oversees assessment initiatives for undergraduate programs

Role: Advocate for university-wide coordination and funding of electronic portfolio initiative

- *Vice Provost for Academic Planning and Development*

Expertise: Oversees assessment and accreditation activities at NIU; played a key role in supporting electronic portfolio development in First-Year Composition;

Role: Support assessment of general education courses through continued funding of the University Writing Project and projected funding for general education electronic portfolios; coordinate electronic portfolio's role in accreditation reviews

### 3. **IMPERATIVES.**

A. To preserve, strengthen, and extend NIU's teaching and learning environment, the General Education Reflective Electronic Portfolio will:

- Support the revision and redeployment of general education outcomes in all academic courses and programs through cross-campus and interdepartmental dialogue
- Recognize and encourage faculty efforts to develop courses that increase upper-level awareness of general education outcomes
- Provide opportunities for professional development of faculty and instructional staff in the most effective methods of general education instruction
- Develop and support more systematic methods of assessing student general education learning outcomes university-wide
- Coordinate programs, services, and assessment of general education
- Encourage development of capstone courses specific to the disciplinary majors which include longitudinal electronic portfolios

B. To increase student retention and academic success at NIU, the General Education Reflective Electronic Portfolio will:

- Provide students with an ongoing record of their own learning that inspires pride and can be shared with family and friends
- Help students make connections between their individual classes, general education outcomes, life skills, and future careers

C. To actively engage NIU students in their own learning, the General Education Reflective Electronic Portfolio will:

- Improve upon NIU's high quality learning and assessment by making general education learning outcomes more explicit (and something students and faculty discuss) through electronic portfolio curriculum and pedagogy.
- Support a collegial environment for teaching and learning by making student electronic portfolios the focus for dialogue among instructors and students on how learning evolves longitudinally at NIU.
- Create learning environments that incorporate best practices in state-of-the-art technology by encouraging multi-media portfolios that make the fullest use of computer and network capabilities.
- Highlight student achievement and make it more transparent to internal and external audiences by showcasing views of excellent student electronic portfolios on the web.
- Increase faculty/staff awareness of general education outcomes beyond course content by emphasizing the longitudinal, cross-disciplinary aspects of electronic portfolios, to help faculty, staff, and students CONNECT aspects of their NIU learning to life, citizenship and career.

4. **STRATEGIES.** The General Education Reflective Electronic Portfolio will be a long-term project that must be phased in through a four-year plan. Please note that Academic Year One will not begin until and unless the General Education Committee has decided that it is ready to implement electronic portfolios. The time line and strategies are indicated below:

**Fall, Academic Year 1:**

- A. Action steps: Establish a General Education Electronic Portfolio Task Force composed of 6 to 8 members from across campus to:
1. Interview candidates and appoint a coordinator
  2. Assess need for additional staff
  3. Investigate software solutions
  4. Select two graduate assistants to begin in spring 09
  5. Contact stakeholders across campus for input and support
  6. Coordinate efforts with existing First-Year Composition Electronic Portfolio Initiative
  7. Develop tentative list of courses for fall 09 electronic portfolio integration
    - o Requisites: Approval from University Council, General Education Committee, and above-named university administrators and committees; Task Force meets once a week for 1-2 hours
    - o Rationale: Task Force must receive official recognition from University Council, standing committees, and administrators

**Spring, Academic Year 1:**

- B. Action Steps: General Education Electronic Portfolio Task Force will continue planning for Fall 09 implementation, including:
1. Choose a platform for electronic portfolios and begin integration with existing technologies
  2. Firm up list of courses integrating electronic portfolio for Fall 09
  3. Develop incentives for participating students and faculty
  4. Hold workshops for participating faculty
  5. Develop general education assessment benchmarks and evaluation instruments for sophomore level courses
    - Requisites: Coordinator salary or release time; two GA stipends; 20 hours Faculty Development staff time; 40 hours ITS programmer time; Task Force meets approximately every week for 1-2 hours
    - Rationale: Coordinator, Faculty Development and ITS staff, and GAs need paid time dedicated to initiative; Task Force will advise

**Academic Year 2:**

- C. Action steps: Begin first year of sophomore level electronic portfolio initiative; begin in-depth planning for junior year level electronic portfolio initiative; hold workshops for participating faculty; develop general education assessment benchmarks and evaluation instruments for junior level courses
- Requisites: Coordinator salary or release time; two GA stipends; 20 hours Faculty Development staff time; 40 hours ITS programmer time; Task Force meets approximately every other week for 1-2 hours
  - Rationale: Coordinator, Faculty Development and ITS staff, and GAs need paid time dedicated to initiative; Task Force will advise
  - Rationale: Program implementation

**Summer, Academic Year 2:**

- D. Action step: Assess outcomes, collect sophomore year assessment data from General Education Electronic Portfolio

- Requisites: Clerical and technological support, Coordinator and GA salary or stipend
- Rationale: Program assessment

**Academic Year 3:**

- E. Action steps: Begin first year of junior level electronic portfolio initiative; begin in-depth planning for senior year level electronic portfolio initiative, including capstone class; hold workshops for participating faculty; develop general education assessment benchmarks and evaluation instruments for senior level capstone courses
- Requisites: Coordinator salary or release time; two GA stipends; 20 hours Faculty Development staff time; 40 hours ITS programmer time; Task Force meets approximately every other week for 1-2 hours
  - Rationale: Coordinator, Faculty Development and ITS staff, and GAs need paid time dedicated to initiative; Task Force will advise
  - Rationale: Program implementation

**Summer, Academic Year 3:**

- F. Action step: Assess outcomes, collect junior year assessment data from General Education Electronic Portfolio
- Requisites: Clerical and technological support, coordinator and GA salary or stipend
  - Rationale: Program assessment

**Academic Year 4:**

- G. Action steps: Begin first year of senior level electronic portfolio initiative, including capstone class; hold workshops for participating faculty; develop final assessment instruments for senior level capstone courses
- Requisites: Coordinator salary or release time; two GA stipends; 20 hours Faculty Development staff time; 40 hours ITS programmer time; Task Force meets approximately every other week for 1-2 hours
  - Rationale: Coordinator, Faculty Development and ITS staff, and GAs need paid time dedicated to initiative; Task Force will advise
  - Rationale: Program implementation

**Summer, Academic Year 4:**

- H. Action step: Assess outcomes, collect assessment data from senior year General Education Electronic Portfolio, compile report; disseminate report to Vice Provost, Vice Provost for Academic Planning and Development, Council of Deans, departments and academic programs
- Requisites: Clerical and technological support, coordinator and GA salary or stipend
  - Rationale: Program assessment

**Academic Year 5 and afterward:**

- I. **Action step:** Continue program development and outcomes assessment
    - o **Requisites:** Committee work (approx. 4 meetings/ 6 hrs. per semester)
    - o **Rationale:** Program maintenance, general education assessment
  - J. **Action step:** Serve as ongoing clearinghouse for information about electronic portfolio workshops, consultation, and other services that support the development and implementation of General Education Electronic Portfolios
    - o **Requisites:** Committee work (approx. 4 meetings/ 6 hrs. per semester)
    - o **Rationale:** Program maintenance
  - K. **Action step:** Encourage ongoing faculty leadership and professional development in teaching and learning through electronic portfolios
    - o **Requisites:** Committee work (approx. 4 meetings/ 6 hrs. per semester)
    - o **Rationale:** Program maintenance
5. **DIVERSITY.** As documented at [LaGuardia Community College](#)<sup>4</sup>, the above strategies will enhance the diversity of the university community, primarily through higher retention and graduate rates of at-risk and underrepresented minority students, by:
- Encouraging students from diverse backgrounds to make connections between their home cultures and their learning
  - Engaging students from diverse backgrounds in their learning by helping them see connections and continuities among NIU classes and experiences
  - Engaging students from diverse backgrounds in their learning by helping them find patterns in their learning that will lead to future careers or experiences
6. **EVALUATION PLAN.** Assessment of the General Education Electronic Portfolio will include the following milestones, performance indicators, and summary process:
- A. **Milestones.** The following steps in the process of implementation, when completed, will track progress towards achieving the General Education Electronic Portfolio goals:
    - Academic year 1, Fall:** Assemble Task Force, hire coordinator and GAs, identify and prepare software platform, identify and hold workshops for faculty, survey attitudes of First-Year Composition students who used electronic portfolios
    - **Academic year 2, Summer:** Assess the first group of sophomore students. Data from previous First-Year Composition electronic portfolio assessments will be compared. Survey attitudes of sophomore students who used electronic portfolios
    - **Academic year 3, Summer:** Assess the first group of junior students. Data from previous First-year Composition and sophomore electronic portfolio assessments will be compared. Survey attitudes of junior students who used electronic portfolios
    - **Academic year 4, Summer:** Assess the first group of senior capstone students. Data from previous First-Year Composition, sophomore, and junior electronic portfolio assessments will be compared. Survey attitudes of senior students who used electronic portfolios
    - **Ongoing:** Assessments and attitude surveys for each level, as listed above

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<sup>4</sup> [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa4115/is\\_200507/ai\\_n15705194/pg\\_1](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa4115/is_200507/ai_n15705194/pg_1)

- B. *Performance indicators.* Below are the kinds of numerical quantities that will show progress toward program goals:
- Scores of electronic portfolios from each of the six colleges annually, based on General Education Outcomes rubric
  - Results of quantitative surveys of student attitudes and satisfaction
  - Retention levels and graduation rates of affected students
  - Faculty evaluations of relevant workshops
- C. *Summary process.* Annually, beginning the third academic year of program implementation, the General Education Electronic Portfolio Task Force will read surveys, review assessment results, and recommend any action that needs to be taken to improve the initiative, based on previous year's reports about the above performance indicators. The Committee will also take reasonable action on feedback or recommendations from champions and stakeholders who receive the annual reports.

7. **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**. To be attached.

## Strategy 3. 4—Advance Learning Environments with State-of-the-Art Technology

### Concept Proposals

NIU Student and Faculty Success Web Presence

Huskie Pride—Laura Vazquez

#### Goals

- The goal of this project is to create a Huskie identity that is organized around the artistry and scholarship produced by faculty and students across the university. Because of the ubiquitous nature of the Internet for the dissemination of information, it is recommended that this be a web presence that is somewhat unique in design and content.

#### Rationale:

- This concept paper is intended to request support for the creation of a centrally based website that would be used to brand and promote the Huskie identity for students and faculty. We feel that it is essential for the NIU community to promote the work of its constituents in a manner that is immediately available to web-site visitors who may be unfamiliar with NIU's organizational structure. To accommodate the breadth of scholarship and research work produced at NIU, this site will need to be a multi-media repository of student work that might include
  - photographs
  - slide shows
  - powerpoint presentations
  - podcasts,
  - video and audio projects
  - text files

While some of this material is already on the NIU site, the information can be difficult to locate without knowledge of appropriate search terms. The NI YOU profiles are a step in the right direction, but currently they are limited to text and have a "questionnaire" feel to them. The purpose of a Huskie Pride Site is to showcase the outstanding work that is produced by individual students, student groups or by student/faculty partnerships. The proposed Huskie Pride site would be linked to NIU's homepage and have direct links to the various multi-media products. In addition this site would attract alums by providing Huskie electronic enhancements such as:

- Ringtones for Cell phones (e.g., Huskie bark)
- Huskie images for Cell phones (regularly updated from event photos)
- Huskie images for screensavers (regularly updated from event photos)

This Huskie Pride site could be an excellent repository for information that highlights student/faculty research partnerships, honor capstones and capstone projects in general. It would draw visitors to the NIU site as students who are featured there would want to promote

visitors via web 2.0 sites like Facebook and MySpace. A central repository would prevent visitors from needing to search individual departments for such information. This multi-media repository could also be incorporated into the NI YOU profile page with links to the products. In any case, visitors to NIU's website will be able to directly experience the kinds of projects that our students and faculty create.

Through their departments the individual faculty members or students, who are responsible for producing the material would need a web designer who would perhaps format or arrange the work for easy viewing and proper linking. This program would need to be marketed to faculty and students so as to promote their participation in the Huskie Pride Site. The site would need to maintain an archive so that visitors could return to see work done in the previous years.

Such a site could also include quotes from students about their experience while completing their capstone projects and/or working closely with the faculty who guided them. For undergraduates, this would highlight the accessibility of faculty members for work with students. For graduate students, it would provide an opportunity for sharing research ideas with a larger community of scholars without needing to prepare or host their own website.

In an era where funding is becoming increasingly difficult for higher education, it seems critical that we remind the public of the excellent scholarship being produced at NIU. At the same time, this kind of site can also encourage students interested in academic performance to consider NIU as a community that supports and fosters student scholarship at all levels.

**Champions:**

- Site Coordinator: this position could be held by a faculty member who could receive a course reduction or summer month to devote to this project
- NIU has web designers in public affairs who could create and structure the site though additional server space to host the site may need to be acquired. Perhaps the next most difficult task is to encourage student and faculty participation. Participation and support would need to be solicited at the department level.
- Deans: As envisioned this site would need to carry content beyond the faculty members and students who may be featured in public affairs notices. Gaining some participation from every department in every college at NIU should be the goal.
- The Honors Program Director would be a participant in organizing content for this site as many students produce honors capstone projects. URAP participants are another important constituency for this site as are any faculty who actively engage with students in the pursuit of research or artistry. This site should also include work done by student organizations on campus. Besides honors and capstone projects mentioned above, many faculty require the production of final course projects that are reflective of a student's high academic achievement

but lack a way to display this work. This site would provide such an outlet.

**Timeline:**

Fall 2008:

- Solicit input and support from Deans and Chairs

Spring 2009

- Organize materials to be disseminated notifying faculty and students as to how to participate. The various departments will need to determine which projects it wishes to promote.
- Gather materials for the website

Summer 2009

- Design initial website prominently linked on the NIU homepage

Fall 2009

- Launch Site

Fall 2010

- Assess site impact and report to Provost's office

**Potential Cost impact:**

1. A summer month to work with web designers to create a visual presence that is both in keeping with the NIU design template and appealing to the tech-savvy potential students who will be attracted to the site. During this period, this individual would contact faculty members across the university to encourage their contributions to this site and establish a schedule for the acquisition of contributions.
2. This individual would also need one course release time during 2008/09 and Fall 2010 to oversee the acquisition and production of video to be used to document student performances and capstone projects and to file a report assessing the value of the site. This could be done in collaboration with undergraduates familiar with their cohort and simultaneously become an enhanced learning opportunity.

**Assessment Method:**

A link to email the designer would allow a way to monitor site issues. A link to the various department chairs or their designees would allow chairs to monitor peoples' responses to the content on the site that represents their faculty and students. Additionally using tracking devices, NIU could monitor the number of visitors to various areas within the site determining the total number of visitors in any given period. This would allow analysis of the value of the site as a promotional tool. Disinterest from the public after a one year run would determine the value of continuing the site.

## **Enhance Support for Increasing the number of On-Line and Blended Courses and Programs Offered at NIU across all Colleges—Kai Rush and Keith Millis**

**Imperative:** Preserve, strengthen and extend NIU's teaching and learning environment.

**Goal 3:** Actively Engage Students in Their Own Learning

**Champions:** Kathy Wright (CLAS External Programming), Kai Rush (CSCI), and Murali Krishnamurthi

**Strategy:** 3.4—Advance learning environments with state-of-the-art technology

**This proposal is part (“Goal 1”) of a larger proposal for a “Learning and Teaching Emporium” championed by Kai Rush and Keith Millis.**

**Action Step:** (d) Enhance support for increasing the number online and blended courses/programs offered at NIU across all colleges

### **Rationale:**

NIU has made considerable progress on online teaching and learning during the past decade, but to advance learning environments and engage students in their own learning, it is necessary to move the institution to the next level. This proposal seeks to establish an integrated approach for promoting online and blended courses and programs offered across colleges.

### **Timelines:**

- (i) **Fall 2008:** Establish a task force on online teaching and learning to review existing infrastructure, policies (faculty incentives, academic policies and procedures manual, course ownership, etc.), develop new policies (rewards and recognition for tenure, promotion and merit, etc) and to develop mechanisms to provide ongoing support for online teaching and learning. This task force should consist of representatives, such as directors of external programming, from each of the college.
- (ii) **Spring 2009:** Assign a senior leader, reporting to the Provost, who is knowledgeable and experienced in online teaching and learning to spearhead the effort. This senior leader should advocate/coordinate all online teaching efforts across the seven colleges. He/she should provide support to the deans of academic and faculty regarding matters related to online teaching and learning.
- (iii) **Spring Fall 2009:** Develop a long term plan for supporting existing online course delivery systems as well as exploring and acquiring new online technologies to keep current.
- (iv) **Fall 2009:** Develop intensive training and development programs and incentive strategies for faculty who wish to develop and teach an online course for the first time, as well as for those who wish to teach a colleague's an existing online course, following original delivery's “first right of refusal.”
- (v) **Fall 2009:** Establish a mechanism for assessing the quality and impact of online teaching and learning.

- (vi) **Spring 2010:** Establish centralized support for assisting academic units with analyzing the demand for online courses (both on campus and elsewhere) and developing marketing strategies for promoting online courses and programs, and streamline support services for students enrolled in online courses.
- (vii) **Fall 2010-Spring 2012:** Analyze, develop and allocate space and facilities needed for online course development, training, and a computer based testing center.

**Action Step Responsibility:**

The assigned senior leader appointed to spearhead the effort and the task force established for online teaching and learning are expected to coordinate the responsibilities for Action Step 3, strategy 3.4 of the Task Force.

**Requisites:**

- (i) Release time or stipends for those with major responsibilities in the proposed task force for online teaching and learning (time line (i), Fall 2008).
- (ii) Consider new personnel line for the proposed senior leadership position (time line (ii), Spring 2009).
- (iii) Resources needed for action step mentioned in time line (iii), Spring to Fall 2009, are being proposed by ITS as part of a proposal titled, "Access anytime anywhere" and being submitted to Vice President for Administration.
- (iv) Personnel lines for at least 2 instructional designers, 2 course developers, 2 multimedia specialists, and four Graduate Assistants (time line (iv), Fall 2009) ; Stipends and development resources for faculty developing and teaching new online courses, accommodating 30 faculty per year.
- (v) Online course evaluation system software and stipends for assessment experts (time line (v), Fall 2009).
- (vi) Personnel lines for at least a marketing director and a staff person knowledgeable in demand analysis for online courses and developing marketing plans; Task force's assistance in coordinating student support services (time line (vi), Spring 2010).
- (vii) Computer based multipurpose testing facility with suitable furniture and work stations for at least 50 students to take the tests at any time, staff offices and their workstations and furniture, printers, server, testing software, and networking support.

**Evaluation Plan:**

Evaluation of the success of the proposed strategy will involve collecting quantitative and qualitative data on the successful completion and outcomes of the proposed action steps.

**Performance Indicators:**

- (i) New or revised policies on online course ownership, development incentives, faculty rewards and dissemination of these policies.
- (ii) Number of new online courses developed/delivered.
- (iii) Number of faculty teaching/developing online or blended courses.
- (iv) Student enrollment in online or blended courses.
- (v) Acquisition of new online course delivery systems and their use.

- (vi) Number of classes and students who use the multipurpose testing facility.
- (vii) Students' feedback on the quality of online courses.

**Milestones:**

- (i) Fall 2008: Establishment of a task force on online teaching and learning.
- (ii) Spring 2009: Appoint a highly committed senior leader, reporting to the provost, who will advocate and coordinate all online teaching and learning efforts across the colleges.
- (iii) Fall 2009: Development of training programs and incentives for faculty.
- (iv) Spring 2010: Marketing of new online courses and programs.
- (v) Fall 2010: Delivery of new online courses and programs.
- (vi) Fall 2012: New facility for computer based testing and space allocation for online course development and training of faculty.

**Summary Process:**

The task force established for online teaching and learning and the senior leader appointed for spearheading the effort will obtain data on the performance indicators and student and feedback, and analyze the results to evaluate if the proposed strategies are being met and the overall goal is being accomplished.

**Priority: High**

As NIU has already made considerable investment in online teaching and learning, it is critical that NIU moves to the next level in online and distance education by integrating support and services and establishing cohesive plans at the institutional level to advance learning environments with state of the art technology and deal with the competition from online universities. In addition, a robust curriculum of online courses at NIU may alleviate classroom space shortages resulting from the February 14<sup>th</sup> incident at Cole Hall.

**Diversity:** Online and blended courses provide more voice to a diverse student body that may not actively participate in face to face classes and engage students actively in their own learning. State of the art technologies provide accessibility to education for students with disabilities and place bound students



## A Computer-Based Tutoring System—Kai Rush and Keith Millis

**Imperative:** Preserve, strengthen and extend NIU's teaching and learning environment.

Research has clearly indicated that tutors, including both human tutors and computer-based tutors, lead to learning gains compared with classroom controls. Computer-based tutors do have some advantage over human tutors. First, many human tutors are peers, such as students majoring in the subject. Research has shown that these types of tutors result in effect sizes around .40 (Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik, 1982) which correspond roughly to one-half of a letter grade. Computer-based tutors that we intend on building tend to result in effect sizes between .40 and 1.00 (Graesser, et al., 2005). Skilled human tutors do better than peer-tutoring, but there is a lack of data regarding their effectiveness (Bloom, 1987). We conjecture that the human tutors at NIU's ACCESS probably result in effect sizes between 0.4 and 1.0. Second, human tutors need to be trained, and in the case of peer tutoring at the University level, tutors need to be replaced as they graduate. Computer-based tutors, once implemented, never need to be replaced. Third, peer tutors at NIU are only available during office hours, whereas computer-based tutors are available at all hours via the Web.

What are computer tutors like? The ones we propose will have a life-like animated "talking head." These talking heads will hold Socratic dialogs with the student by posing questions and problems to the student (the student wears headphones); the student responds by typing in a response. The talking head guide the student towards a deep and complete answer by giving hints (e.g., "Think about measurements.") and specific prompts (e.g., "Psychologists often specify a construct by using an operational what?" Answer = definition.) in an intelligent fashion that approximates scaffolding performed by human tutors. Students find interacting with such tutors to be *very engaging*.

We envision that our computer-based tutors will complement the excellent tutoring which is available via NIU's ACCESS program. According to Shevawn Eaton, the ACCESS Director, fifty-one percent of students who received tutoring during the 2006-2007 academic year did so for math courses. These are traditionally very tough courses. The remaining 49% were scattered across other CLAS courses. The tutors that we propose building will primarily be non-math courses, such as chemistry, psychology, computer-science, geology, etc. Therefore, between ACCESS and the availability of computer-based tutors, NIU will be offering students a variety of tutoring options which will set it apart from other colleges and universities.

We acknowledge that building, testing and implementing computer-based tutors at NIU compromise a far-reaching goal, one that will necessarily go beyond an initial 5-year plan. The purpose of this proposal is to offer a "proof of concept" – to test whether such a plan is feasible and sustainable at NIU. By the end of 5 years, we should know whether the plan is sustainable, and valued by students and faculty. It should be noted that each subsequent tutor that we will build will take well under 5 years.

**Goal 3: Actively Engage Students in Their Own Learning**

**Champions:** Anne Britt (psychology), Reva Freedman (computer science), Joe Magliano (psychology), Keith Millis (Owner, psychology), Patricia Wallace (psychology), Katja Wiemer (psychology), Robert Zerwekh (computer science). Together, we have brought in over 2.5 million dollars from external funding over the last 3 years building intelligent computerized tutors.

**Strategy:** 3.4 Advance Learning Environments with State-of-the-art technology.

**This proposal represents the goal to provide students with a computer-based tutoring system at NIU. This proposal is part (“Goal 2”) of a larger proposal for a “Learning and Teaching Emporium” championed by Kai Rush and Keith Millis.**

**Action step:** Acquire server, software, programming support.

**Rationale:** This strategy will provide the necessary hardware and software to build and implement the computer tutors. Tutors are complicated programs that require fine-tuning and learning time.

**Time Line:** Fall, 2008 – Spring, 2009

**Requisites:** Server acquisition & maintenance (\$7,000)

Acquire infrastructure software (\$30,000 max, negotiable)

Sinking tutor with network (one 9 month Graduate RA, \$11,523.32; 2 months faculty summer salary. Approx. \$15,000)

**Action step:** Acquire tutor information for prototype.

**Rationale:** We will build a tutor for a single NIU course, most likely Introduction to Psychology. This step will allow us to see whether our proposed method will work, and whether it will meet the needs of the faculty and students. It will also provide the basis for writing a large external grant.

We will offer an upper division course in which students will help create content for the tutor. Much of the content in the tutors that we will build includes “problems” and “answers.” Problems are like word problems or essay questions that are posed to the student. Answers indicate ideal answers to the problem. It is the tutor’s job to present the problem and guide the student in forming a complete answer using hints, prompts

and other types of feedback (much like a human tutor). Students in the course will learn the content and will know what problems will be of interest to other students

**Time Line:** Fall, 2009 – Spring, 2010

**Requisites:** Identify course content to be covered by tutor (consult with instructor, \$3,500; one 9 month Graduate RA, \$11,523.32).

Establish an Intelligent Tutor Seminar (one 9 month Graduate RA, \$11,523.32; 2 months faculty summer salary. Approx. \$15,000)

**Action step:** Finish and pilot test prototype.

**Rationale:** We need to verify that the tutor runs smoothly and that bugs are identified and fixed.

**Time Line:** Fall, 2010 – Spring, 2011

**Requisites:** Incorporate problems from the ITS course into the Tutor program (2 year-long Graduate RA's \$30,728.64)

Create survey of tutor responsiveness, likeability, usability, and information covered by the tutor (same RA's as above)

Useability and Pilot Testing (same RA's as above; 3 months faculty summer salary. Approx. \$24,000)

**Action Step:** Test prototype in a course.

**Rationale:** We need to assess the learning gains from interacting with the tutor and the perceptions of students and faculty.

**Time line:** Fall, 2011 – Spring, 2012

**Requisites:** Place tutor in sections of Psychology 102 in a quasi-experimental design (2 year long graduate RAs, \$30,728.64; permission from psychology department & IRB approval) Analyze data (1 Graduate RA cost included above; 2 months faculty summer salary. Approx. \$15,000)

**Action step:** Acquire continuing funding

**Rationale:** Our proposal rests on the ability to acquire external funding for building future tutors. The grant will propose building tutors for several courses at NIU.

**Time line:** Fall, 2012

**Requisites:** A course-buy out for the PI (\$10,000) or 2 months summer salary.(\$15,00)

## Diversity

We think that having computerized tutors will increase the engagement of all students, and will help improve low performing students. Computerized tutors have been shown to be especially effective with students who need help with a course (Koedinger et al., 1997; Rosé et al., 2002).

## Evaluation Plan

- **Milestones:** The key milestones will be writing problems for the tutor (year 2), finishing the prototype (year 3), and incorporating it into the course and see its effect (year 4). We write technical reports detailing each of these milestones.
- **Performance Indicators:** We will track which students use the tutor and for what duration. This will tell us something about its use. This information will also be used in data analysis regarding the tutor's effectiveness by associating these data with measures of student achievement (such as test grades). We will also survey the students that use the tutor on its appeal and perceived usefulness.
- **A Summary process:** We will need to integrate various findings, including the effects of the tutor on student grades, both students' and instructor attitudes toward the tutor, and the "cost" of keeping the tutor (documenting any problems with the tutor once it is built).

## Documentation

May 13, 2008

Dear Colleagues;

Anne Britt, Reva Freedman, Joe Magliano, Keith Millis, M Cecil Smith, Patricia Wallace, Katja Wiemer, and Robert Zerwekh have communicated their intention to develop a tutoring system with the intent of providing students with a computer-based tutoring system at NIU. They are targeting the Introductory Psychology course, PSYC 102, for implementation of this tutoring system. They are proposing to include a pilot test in some sections of Psych 102 in approximately 3 years, with the intent of integrating a full implementation in subsequent years. **I enthusiastically support this project.**

Because of its size (typical enrollments of 1700 in the autumn, 1300 in the spring), the students who enroll in PSYC 102 reflect the nature of the freshman classes who enroll in NIU. It is obvious that many of these freshmen are simply not prepared to learn and perform at a college level. For example, in the autumn semester of 2008, the average GPA for the course was under 2.0. In numerous recent semesters, 30% or more of the students who have taken the course have not earned a passing grade. Especially worrisome is that the material presented in PSYC 102 is not “rocket science,” hence, one wonders what the prospects of such students are in other courses that are likely far more difficult than Introductory Psychology (notably Mathematics and the Physical Sciences).

Accordingly, any tutoring system that can work toward improving the performance of students in the course would be welcome.

This project holds the promise of developing such a system. Many of the principals on the project are individuals who have had much prior experience in the development of such systems. Moreover, because the team’s expertise includes the study of thinking and learning, the team should be able to apply cutting-edge ideas to the development of such systems. The inclusion of computer-science expertise is also encouraging, suggesting that the technological expertise necessary to implement a sophisticated and effective tutorial product is available to the team.

Such a system would be especially attractive given the increasing use of computer technology in the course. In addition to a course website, the course also makes use of resources provided by the textbook publisher. These resources provide practice questions and quizzes, as well as the opportunity to engage in simulations of classic experiments in psychology. A tutorial program could easily be integrated into this armamentarium of computer resources, if it could easily be accessed from the course web page.

In short, given the nature of the course, and how it is developing, it is easy to imagine how a tutorial system could be incorporated into the course. Given poor recent student performance in the course, any system that would increase student learning and performance would be most welcome.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John J. Skowronski".

John J. Skowronski  
Presidential Research Professor, 2008-2012  
Coordinator, Psychology 102

Keith Millis wrote the strategic proposal so he is on board.

From Anne Britt:

I am writing this letter to convey my interest and support for the

proposal to Preserve, strengthen and extend NIU's teaching and learning environment. I understand the aware of the goals and strategies of the proposal. As a champion of this proposal, I will contribute to goals and strategies.

thanks  
--britt

**From Reva Freedman:**

Yes, I am willing to be listed as a champion of this proposal.  
Reva

**From Joe Magliano:**

Dear Keith,

I'm am writing to provide a statement of commitment regarding the Strategic Planning proposal to develop an E-Object Repository of technology based learning tools. I understand that one proposal is to develop an intelligent tutoring system to support an existing course. As you know, I have been collaborating with you and other psychology faculty on developing ARIES, a tutor to promote the developing of scientific inquiry. As such, I have the background and experience to support this project.

Sincerely,  
Joe Magliano

**From Katja Weimer:**

Hi Keith,

I am happy to be listed as a champion for this proposal!

- Katja

**From Robert Zerwekh:**

I'm on board, Keith.

**From Patricia Wallace:**

Keith,

I am excited to be part of your proposal.

Patty

**From M Cecil Smith:**

Dear Keith,

I am board with the project.

Cecil

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## **Strategy 3.5—Integrate Courses, Extra-Curricular Activities, and Programming Around A “Campus Theme”**

### **Concept Proposals**

#### **Themed Year Initiative—Kafer/McCord**

##### **1. Goals – Establish a “Themed Year’ program at NIU**

The Task Force recommends that NIU commit to a “Themed Year” initiative that engages the entire university community and the external community in a wide range of activities that collectively enrich the intellectual impact of the university and the level of engagement among its various stake holders. Such an undertaking will of necessity be complex involving new and expanded systems and processes and human and financial resources.

##### **2. Champions**

The Task Force, Deans of Liberal Arts and Sciences/Visual & Performing Arts

##### **3. Imperatives**

This goal will address Imperative 1: Preserve, Strengthen, and Extend NIU’s Teaching and Learning Environment and Imperative 4: Make NIU an institution of “First Choice” for faculty, students, and staff.

##### **4. Strategy**

Benchmark existing themed year programs and develop recommendations for implementation at NIU

a)Action steps:

Thematic initiatives in the academy are not new and many institutions have utilized them in various ways. Because the task force envisions a program that is bold and comprehensive in scope, it is recommended that the institution initially invest in benchmarking successful programs at other institutions in order to develop a white paper that presents a plan of action for NIU. To accomplish this, the task force recommends that a team of four faculty members be formed and provided with appropriate financial support to research existing programs and visit select institutions and their communities to conduct in depth interviews with those involved with themed year initiatives. Because the task force feels that any themed year initiative at NIU should embrace the general education curriculum, it is recommended that the proposed team include a faculty member from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and a faculty member from the College of Visual & Performing arts, both of whom have experience teaching general education courses. These two faculty could be members of the task force, or not, and should be selected in consultation with the college deans.

b) Timeline:

One year

c) Requisites:

The following budget is requested from strategic planning funds in support of the proposed initiative:

**Personnel:**

Faculty release time or overload stipends for the academic year, \$7,000 per individual

<b>Sub-total personnel</b>	<b>\$28,000</b>
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**Non-personnel:**

Travel support for the team, including auto/airfare x 5 trips	\$10,000
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Per diem x 5 trips, out of state, 3 days each	\$ 1,920
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Lodging x 5 trips, out of state, 2 nights each @ \$100	\$ 4,000
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<b>Sub-total non-personnel</b>	<b>\$15,920</b>
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<b>Grand total</b>	<b>\$43,920</b>
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d) Rationale:

Completion of this strategy will position NIU for implementation of a program that is based on best practice and designed specifically to build on institutional strengths access and opportunities.

**5. Diversity**

Any theme identified will be broad enough to embrace diversity in multiple ways

**6. Evaluation plan**

- a. Milestones
  - Formation of the research team
  - Travel to select institutions
- a. Performance indicators
  - Success in identifying benchmark programs
- b. Summary process
  - White paper delivered to the Provost

### **Supporting Documentation**

This proposal was developed with the knowledge and support of the champions listed above.

## **Strategy 4.2—Provide Faculty and Staff with Needed Resources and Support to Create New Curriculum and Enhance Teaching Methods**

### Concept Proposals

#### Instructional Improvement Release Time—Laura Vazquez

##### Goals:

The goal of this proposal is to encourage and provide release time for faculty to improve and enhance their pedagogy.

Though NIU is a Research 1 institution a faculty member is typically evaluated on an equivalent investment in teaching and research. Though faculty are granted sabbaticals to enhance their research, they are never given release time to improve or enhance their teaching, a practice that suggests an emphasis of one over the other.

While exploring the issue of student retention, campus climate and scholarship, it has become apparent that there is a need for this kind of opportunity in terms of faculty development. Faculty members are not encouraged or given an opportunity to enhance their pedagogy, improve their curricula or re-design their teaching methods. This weakness is particularly apparent in the use of technology that changes at a very rapid rate leaving many faculty members struggling to incorporate it into their teaching let alone explore the full use of technology in alternative delivery methodologies in the classroom. Faculty members who teach full loads continually are forced to rely on “tried and true” practices. Our student population, however, is changing rapidly and our delivery methods tend not to keep pace with our students’ needs. While there are many opportunities at NIU to improve one’s teaching, there is simply no time to do so with a full teaching load. This is not a situation that can be remedied by stipends.

This proposal is to grant is to fund a one course release-time every 3 years to faculty members who desire to improve undergraduate teaching. These release grants could be based on a faculty member’s proposal to complete workshops designed to

- enhance course delivery
- improve classroom climate
- improve teaching to a diverse classroom
- explore student accessibility issues

- develop research projects utilizing undergraduate students
- explore the use of technology in teaching

In other colleges, faculty release time could be allowed to address some other aspect of content delivery that is appropriate to that college or department.

#### Potential Cost impact:

In order to effectively implement this proposal, there are two aspects that would have a financial impact on the university.

1. All first year faculty members would be granted a one course teaching reduction their first year to attend various workshops on teaching and the use of technology. This would require working in conjunction with faculty development to assure that these workshops are offered at a time that is convenient for most faculty. Alternate individualized training sessions could be arranged to negotiate time conflicts and individual needs. Workshops should include classroom technology, blended course and on-line teaching technology and pedagogy. This would assure that new faculty are familiar with the technology that is available at NIU as well as familiarize them with its implementation. (2009-10)
2. Faculty members ranked at the assistant and associate level would be invited to submit proposals for instructional improvement release time. Each college would be encouraged to select 2 proposals to fund the first year of the program (2009-10).

#### Expected Outcomes:

A faculty member who was granted a teaching release would be required to submit a short (1 – 2 page) proposal outlining the kinds of workshops or course alterations they propose to explore. These could be vetted through departments (like the research and artistry grants offered by the graduate school or research sabbaticals) and the passed along to the college for prioritization. This would allow a department an opportunity to control the number of faculty granted release time in any given semester.

Once the release time is completed, the faculty member would submit a report on what they believe they accomplished. However, in order to address the need to continue to improve teaching, tenured faculty members would also be required to mentor an instructor(s), or teaching assistant in their department to help them enhance instructional strategies at all levels. This kind of one-on-one mentorship would multiply the benefits of the work done during the teaching leave impacting other levels of personnel responsible for course delivery.

To evaluate the success of such a program, faculty members who receive such release time might be required to report to their chair or dean using FSRs stating how their time was used, which courses or delivery systems were modified and how they believe those modifications will improve their undergraduate teaching. They would submit a statement of pedagogy that would reflect these changes. These statements could be attached to a faculty member's for annual submission to their college. Annual Faculty Service Reports or Instructor Evaluations then could be used to track the faculty member's progress in the area of teaching improvement.

NIU's commitment to undergraduate teaching excellence is an important component of student satisfaction and retention. While this proposal is similar to the CIUE grants, it would not require a faculty member to commit to using their summer, a time often reserved for in-depth research. Also, it would allow a faculty member the opportunity to attend workshops and lectures during the school year which is when they typically occur. If there is additional funding for this program, faculty members could be encouraged to visit other institutions where improvements and transformation regarding teaching are utilized. In an era where funding is becoming increasingly difficult for higher education, it seems critical that we insist on the importance of investing our energy and resources not just in the improvement of research but also in the improvement of undergraduate education