

## DIVISION OF OUTREACH, ENGAGEMENT, AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

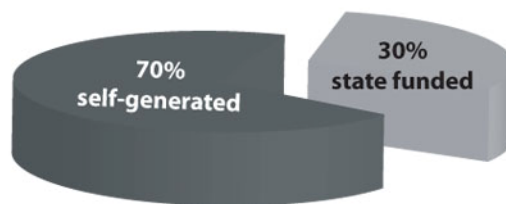
### Connecting NIU to the Region

#### Overview

The Division of Outreach, Engagement & Information Technologies is NIU's entrepreneurial arm, charged with assessing regional needs and developing new programs to meet those needs; leading university activities aimed at regional economic, social and cultural development; and presenting NIU to the world as an institution engaged with its region and contributing to that region's continued prosperity.

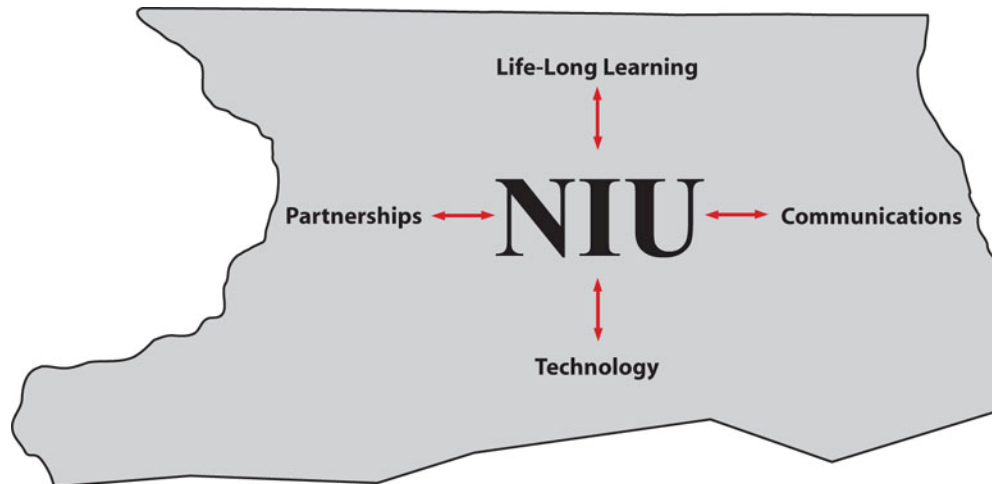
- The Division connects NIU to its region through
  - **OUTREACH AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING opportunities** (credit & non-credit)
  - **ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS** (with business, government, health care and education)
  - **TECHNOLOGY** (on campus, between campuses & throughout the region)
- The Division also connects NIU internally, through partnerships between and among colleges and divisions; through internal communications; and through on- and off-campus technology support services.
- The Division acts as NIU's "front door," connecting individuals and organizations to a wide array of university resources spanning all university colleges and divisions. (The attached special section on Rockford provides one example of many such resources being brought to bear on the most pressing needs of one community.)
- The Division is NIU's most entrepreneurial operation: More than 70% of the Division's budget is self-generated through contracts, grants, sales and service.

#### NIU Division of Outreach, Engagement, and Information Technologies: Creating a model for greater budgetary self-support



## WHY IS CONNECTING NIU TO ITS REGION SO IMPORTANT?

- It fulfills a state mandate that requires public universities to participate in economic, social and cultural development.
- It fulfills part of an unwritten “social contract” with taxpayers that defines public higher education as a “public good.”
- It provides a richer learning environment for students: The northern Illinois region is a “living laboratory.”
- It helps keep NIU’s education and research programs current and relevant.
- It helps NIU protect market share in an increasingly competitive environment.



## Connecting NIU through life-long learning

### Life-long Learning Opportunities

The Division creates, delivers and coordinates delivery of hundreds of off-campus courses serving both undergraduate and graduate students throughout the region. These courses are offered at NIU campuses in Rockford, Hoffman Estates and Naperville; at community colleges throughout the region; at Lorado Taft Field Campus in Oregon, Illinois; and in rented facilities throughout northern Illinois.

#### Credit Courses

- Since the Division's creation in 2000, the number of off-campus credit courses increased from 28,000 credit hours to 40,000 credit hours.



- Off-campus graduate courses coordinated by the Division account for more than a third of NIU's total graduate program offerings (20% of all College of Education graduate offerings alone).
- Off-campus undergraduate enrollment is also expanding, primarily due to new community college partnerships developed by the Division.
- Last year alone, the Division coordinated more than 430 individual credit courses for nearly 6,000 students attending NIU through its three branch campuses.

#### Non-credit Courses

- The Division brings to bear the resources of the entire university to meet the emerging educational needs of the region. Those needs are immediate, fast-changing, and often take the form of quick educational updates and/or professional certification.
- The Division both creates new non-credit courses to meet emerging demands and coordinates conferences for other campus units. Last year the Division helped manage more than 500 non-credit and professional development events for 32,000 participants, including programs specifically created and run by its Outreach unit. Examples of new Outreach-generated offerings this year include LEED and Sustainability Training and Clinical Lab Sciences.
- Other examples of Division-created non-credit programs include
  - Illinois Council on Economic Education (ICEE) classes on the stock market taught at high schools throughout the region
  - Motorcycle Safety courses taught on NIU's main campus and throughout the region
  - Human Resource Management certification programs
  - Association Resource Center training programs and services

## Online Courses

Student demand is driving expansion of online learning activities for on-campus, off-campus, credit and non-credit courses – virtually all NIU students are receiving at least some instruction online, and a growing number are choosing that method of delivery for all their coursework. NIU's increased presence in online course delivery is largely due to the work of instructional designers, artists and programmers in the Division's eLearning Services unit.

Since 2003, the Division has

- produced 75 new online credit courses
- enrolled 7,590 online students
- generated some \$3,900,000 in fees from online course delivery
- garnered nearly \$647,000 in state and federal grants for online course development

## Regional Centers Management

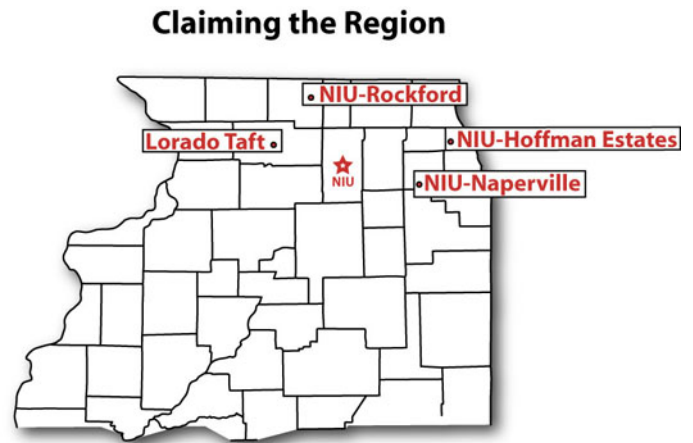
The Division is responsible for all programming and operations of three state-of-the-art educational facilities located in Rockford, Hoffman Estates and Naperville, as well as the beautiful Lorado Taft Field Campus in Oregon, Illinois.

The regional centers' buildings were designed to be "mixed use" facilities, attracting corporate conference business by day and offering classes at night for place-bound, working adults. That model continues to evolve, with adjustments needed to meet the demands of new students and the reality of dwindling corporate travel budgets.

NIU's regional centers are active, vital facilities that play a critical role in "claiming" the region for NIU.

## Community College Collaboration

NIU's service region contains nearly half of all Illinois community colleges, and students who live in those college districts are never far from an NIU campus (see following illustration). With access to baccalaureate programs at a premium and nearly 40% of undergraduates coming to NIU as transfer students, the university has a strong stake in successful relations with area community colleges. The Division continues to be the university's primary advocate for strong university-community college partnerships.

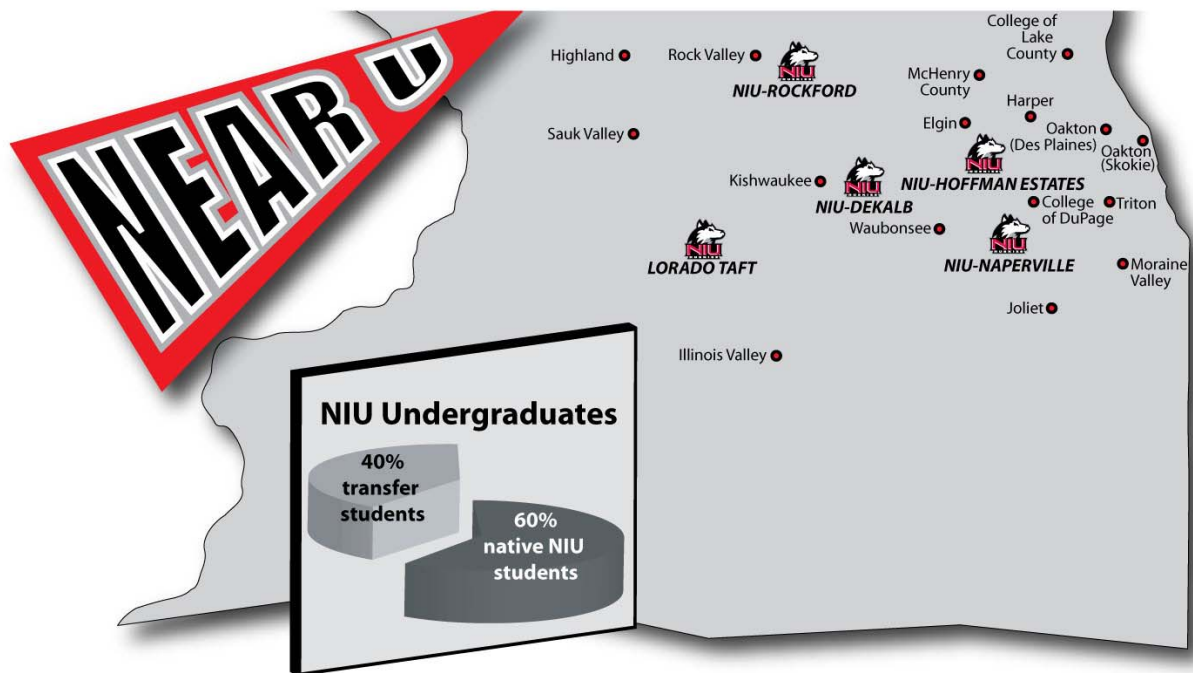


**Last year, nearly 6000 students participated in 430 credit courses at the three regional centers, while more than 10,000 people attended workshops, retreats, and educational programs at Lorado Taft Field Campus.**

Some successful initiatives include

- New Bachelor Science in Applied Management (BSAM): Designed for professionals holding AAS degrees in technical areas, the BSAM degree prepares students for career advancement with management and leadership coursework in technical areas of emphasis. BSAM courses in Public Safety are currently available at Oakton and Harper Colleges; and in Computer Science at NIU Rockford, Oakton, and Kishwaukee Colleges.
- RN-to-BSN degree program: In nine locations throughout the region, NIU nursing instructors teach courses that help practicing Registered Nurses (RNs) upgrade their educational credentials to a bachelor's degree in nursing.
- 3 + 1 Pathways: Four programs at nine locations provide options for students holding AAS technical degrees to complete the baccalaureate in one year on community college campuses – BS in Aviation (Rockford), BS in Industrial Management and Technology, BGS in Health and Human Sciences, and RN to BSN.
- Higher Education Transitions Committee: Representatives from NIU's core curriculum areas, community colleges, and area high schools are working together to improve college readiness and improve success for both entering freshmen and transfer students.

## NIU #1 in Midwest as a destination for community college transfer students



# Connecting NIU through partnerships

## Partnerships

The Division of Outreach, Engagement & Information Technologies is NIU’s “knowledge broker,” bringing a wide array of expertise and skills to bear on the region’s most pressing issues. To that end, Division staff members create partnerships between the university and the region’s most influential institutions: business, government, health care and education.

Division-led partnerships are aimed at improving key quality-of-life factors in our region.

- economic development
- educational attainment
- manufacturing competitiveness
- workforce development
- health care quality & accessibility
- technology access & relevance
- applied research that informs public policy

Division-led NIU partnerships are too numerous to list, but the following are some examples to illustrate key areas of impact:

### Community Collaboration, Inc.



- Partners:** Center for Governmental Studies, Information Technology Services, Winnebago County, City of Rockford, healthcare organizations, and social service agencies
- Purpose:** Coordinate services across multiple providers using shared software to ensure that homeless and other clients receive appropriate, collaborative services
- Promise:** CCI software now used in seven states by 850 professionals who have helped over 12,000 people address barriers to quality of life and education.

### PASCAL



- Partners:** Community College Relations, Center for Governmental Studies, and colleagues in Europe, Africa, and Australia
- Purpose:** NIU serves as the north American node for PASCAL, an international organization that shares research and results from projects in higher education, economic regeneration, and workforce development.
- Promise:** PASCAL’s international conference will be held at NIU Naperville in October 2011, bringing international experts to focus on regional approaches that combine efforts of two-year and four-year institutions.

## Illinois Rural Health Network



- Partners:** Outreach, Engagement, and Information Technologies; 88 healthcare providers; other universities; broadband providers
- Purpose:** Connect rural hospitals and clinics throughout Illinois to a lightning-fast broadband network funded by a \$21 million federal grant
- Promise:** Enable healthcare providers to consult with specialists, monitor patients in remote locations, transmit MRI scans in seconds instead of days, improve medical services in rural areas.

## EigerLab



- Partners:** NIU, U of I, Rockford-area industrial and legislative leaders
- Purpose:** Provide a state of the art incubator for manufacturing and other basic industries with leading-edge business and engineering support services to accelerate innovation
- Promise:** Develop entrepreneurial ventures such as the new accelerator program which targets advanced manufacturing, aerospace, and alternative energy commercialization

## P-20 Center (pre-school-through-graduate school initiatives)



- Partners:** NIU, other Illinois colleges & universities, K-12 school districts across the region
- Purpose:** Improve teacher preparation and quality of instruction  
Create seamless transitions from each educational level to the next  
Improve student achievement at all levels  
Support multi-college activities with external partners
- Promise:** Partnership Schools launched in DeKalb and Rockford; \$9 million in federal and state grants obtained for various regional P-20 initiatives; eight districts receiving help to integrate technology in the classroom; NIU and ISBE launched statewide recognition program for high-poverty, high-achieving schools; Division leads innovative P-20 initiatives involving five of NIU's seven colleges.

## Critical Skills Survey

- Partners:** NIU, 10-county consortium in northwest Illinois
- Purpose:** Identified potential skill shortages in key areas to prevent future economic decline, with special emphasis on health care, manufacturing and logistics (warehousing, shipping, etc.)
- Promise:** Armed with NIU data, regional leaders have begun recruitment efforts to shore up weak areas in the region's skilled workforce.

## Economic Development along the Illinois-Wisconsin Border



**Partners:** NIU and five other colleges and universities, economic development agencies, local and state government officials; US Economic Development Administration

**Purpose:** Revitalize the automotive industry in the Rock River Valley through a network of incubators and regional services in six border area counties

**Promise:** Accelerate innovation and position the region to compete successfully in the global marketplace through market diversification, business retention, mapping of business resources, rapid prototyping and clean energy .

### ***Connecting NIU through technology***

#### **Technology**

Connecting NIU to the region it serves requires more than programmatic innovation: it takes circuits and routers, computer chips and fiber optics. The presence of NIU's central technology operation and its national public radio stations in the Division of Outreach, Engagement & Information Technologies is no accident: partnership building, regional course delivery and communications all require strong technological support. Conversely, the Division's fast-paced, entrepreneurial focus provides the perfect outlet for NIU technology staff to stretch, grow and create new applications, as well as new sources of revenue that support an increasingly expensive – and indispensable – university infrastructure. The “connecting division” also connects NIU internally, bringing Internet, phone, wireless and digital printing services to thousands of faculty, staff and students.

#### Connecting NIU Internally

On NIU's main campus and branch campuses, Division technology staff

- support more than 30,000 individual users and 70,000 networked devices (PCs, scanners, printers, etc.)
- provide telecommunications service via 9,500 land lines and hundreds of wireless phones, two-way radios and pagers
- run campus computing labs, managing more than 1,000 PCs and 200 different types of software
- provide Internet connectivity to 3,550 dorm rooms
- support “smart classrooms;” videoconferencing; Blackboard, NIU's online course management system; and installation of Wi-Fi services across the campus
- provide customer support via help desks, virus/security protection, workshops, classes and online training
- developed a web management tool for staff with limited web skills
- provide full-service printing, digital imaging, mailing fulfillment, software distribution and graphic design
- launched “green” initiatives to support more efficient workflows and paper usage
- developed a cloud computing environment to provide all digital services better, faster, cheaper

## Connecting NIU Externally

Outside of NIU, Division technology staff provide connectivity and other support that make possible hundreds of partnerships with communities and institutions. Through its support of partnerships with regional business, industry, health care and manufacturing, Division technology staff not only enhance external partnerships, but also bring the best of private sector innovation back to their work on campus.

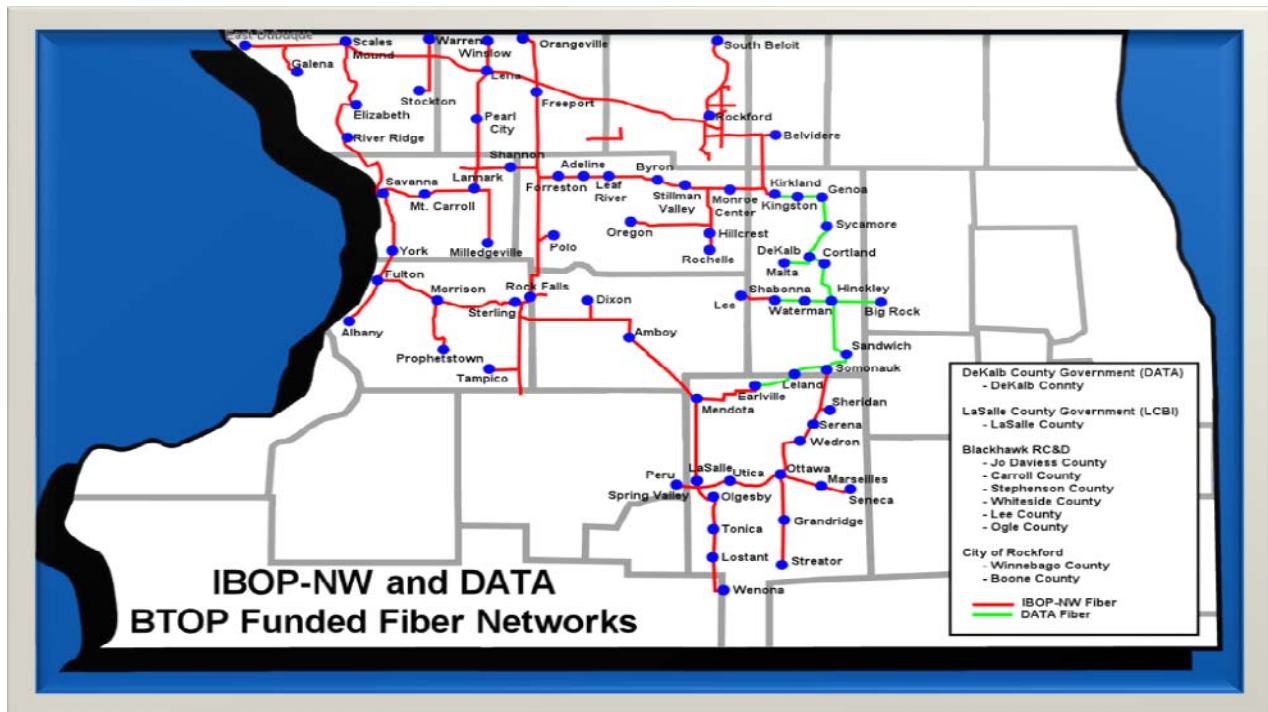
Following are two examples of technology-dependent NIU outreach activities created and managed by Division staff:

### NIUNet – Bridging the Globe



NIUNet started as an initiative to provide high-speed broadband services to NIU's regional centers at a lower cost over fiber-optic cabling. The initiative also included low cost commodity Internet services, Internet 2, and connectivity to federal research labs in northern Illinois. NIUNet greatly increases the capacity for research and collaboration at NIU and around the globe.

Division leaders enhanced the regional value of NIUNet by using its development to forge hundreds of new partnerships with business, industry, healthcare institutions, school, libraries, and municipalities. The NIUNet broadband model allows for low-cost connectivity to Internet service providers and between facilities for NIUNet partners. A shared services model reduces the cost of ownership for all project participants.



Thanks to more than \$130 million in federal, state, and local funding, NIUNet is building high-speed broadband network access across the entire region. Led by the Division, NIU faculty and staff are working with local partners in education, business, government, healthcare, and arts organizations to develop high-powered applications that will fully utilize the high-powered network.

## Illinois Interactive Report Card

Division experts in educational policy and database technology worked together to create a valuable tool for school districts, teachers and parents. The Illinois Interactive Report Card (IIRC) is a free, online tool that allows users to tease meaningful information out of the reams of data available in annual state reports on student performance.

Among the features making IIRC the tool of choice for districts, parents and news media throughout the region are

- side-by-side comparison capabilities (district-to-district, school-to-school, etc.)
- student performance tracking by school, over time, and using demographic break-outs
- longitudinal data that helps identify potential curricular or other problems



Beyond IIRC information available to the general public, the Division now offers a more detailed, password-protected version for purchase by school districts. More than 300 districts around the state are using the enhanced version. Starting in 2011, local districts are subscribing to an innovative service that creates data warehouses customized for local purposes. Superintendents and curriculum directors throughout Illinois consistently report great satisfaction with IIRC's ability to support data-based decision making.

## Public Broadcasting



For more than one million people living west of Naperville in northern Illinois, access to such popular radio programs as "All Things Considered," "A Prairie Home Companion," and the BBC is made possible through NIU's own National Public Radio affiliate, Northern Public Radio (NPR). Two primary stations based in DeKalb feature news and talk (WNIJ) and classical music (WNIU), while three additional "repeater" stations located near Freeport, Dixon and LaSalle-Peru extend NPR's reach into previously unserved parts of the region.

NPR carries both nationally- and locally-produced news and information. WNIJ news staff includes award-winning broadcast journalists whose stories are frequently picked up by the national wire and broadcast across the country. (One such piece inspired a lengthy feature article in *The New Yorker* magazine.) NPR also produces a free reading service for the blind called Northern Illinois Radio Information Service, or NIRIS.

NPR's \$1.6 million annual budget is predominantly self-generated, mostly through listener support. Only 18% comes from NIU sources.

## **NIU IN THE ROCKFORD AREA:** A Case Study on the Impact of NIU Connections

Nowhere is NIU's mission on greater public display than 40 miles northwest of its main campus, in Illinois' third-largest city: Rockford. Virtually every NIU college and dozens of departments offer courses and maintain partnerships in Rockford, and many of those programs are coordinated and/or supported by Division staff. Additionally, some of NIU's most important, innovative and enduring Rockford partnerships are those originating in and exclusively managed by the Division of Outreach, Engagement and Information Technologies.

In late 2009, NIU established the Office for Regional Engagement/Rockford to speed the development of the university's growing complement of engagement activities in the Rockford region. Rena Cotsones, a long-time resident of the Rockford area who served as NIU's Executive Director of Community Relations in DeKalb for 11 years, was appointed Assistant Vice President of Regional Engagement/Rockford and operates out of NIU-Rockford. Assisting Rena in the office is Ann Petta, a native Rockfordian and lifetime resident.

NIU and Rockford are uniquely positioned to learn from one another and help one another by providing real solutions to real problems, while offering rich discovery and learning opportunities of all types for students and faculty. NIU continues to demonstrate its commitment to affecting significant positive change in the region with the creation and implementation of an ambitious engagement agenda.

The Office of Regional Engagement/Rockford is working with college and community leaders in a manner that

- Unites and leverages university and community expertise and resources
- Facilitates mutual discovery and learning
- Fosters positive collaboration
- Encourages creativity
- Inspires action

The six strategic goals of NIU's Rockford Engagement Agenda address three areas of challenge and three areas of strength for the region. University and community stakeholders are collaborating to pursue these goals:

- Increase educational attainment in the Rockford region
- Improve K-12 public school outcomes
- Contribute to the health and wellness of local residents
- Create a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship
- Enhance the community's quality of life
- Position Rockford as an ideal mid-sized international city

The engagement agenda builds on a long-standing foundation of commitment to the region, demonstrated through four principle points of connection: Lifelong Learning, Partnerships, Technology and Engagement. Following are just a few examples of the ways NIU makes a positive difference in the Rockford area.

### **Life-long Learning**

- NIU-Rockford branch campus      Established in 1995, NIU-Rockford has helped more than 4,000 Rockford-area residents earn graduate degrees or finish bachelor's degrees. NIU degree programs in Rockford currently enroll an average 1,750 students annually in 118 courses leading to 8 different bachelor's degrees and 3 master's degrees.
- Bachelor's degree completion programs      Division staff have more than tripled degree program enrollments in Rockford by partnering with Rock Valley

College to offer bachelor's completion programs in Rockford.

Responding to specific calls for more undergraduate business programming, Division leadership obtained a special state appropriation to offer daytime business classes in Rockford.

- Community College collaboration

NIU's cooperative relationship with Rock Valley College allows placebound students to move seamlessly from community college courses to NIU baccalaureate courses – all without leaving Rockford and with the support of RVC and NIU counselors.

## Partnerships

- State of Ingenuity

Working with a unique consortium made up of education and economic development leaders from six counties in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin, NIU obtained a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to develop new executive education programs to assist regional leaders to work more collaboratively for improved effectiveness in municipal government, job creation and small business development.

- Northern Illinois Innovation Partnership

Division staff are working with officials from the Rockford Area Economic Development Council, EIGERLab and the NIU College of Engineering to determine new methods of partnership to foster innovation and entrepreneurship in the region. The group is currently developing a major Partners for Innovation grant proposal, seeking NSF funding to support regional technology commercialization efforts.

- Rockford Public Schools

Division staff have helped bring millions of federal dollars to the Rockford school district. Currently, NIU education faculty are working with the Rockford school district via the IBHE-funded Promoting Achievement through Literacy Skills (PALS) program, in which Rockford high school teachers are learning to integrate literacy instruction into their teaching. This summer, at-risk Rockford youth will have an opportunity for a week-long residential experience at NIU's main campus in DeKalb as they participate in summer camps with a STEM curriculum. NIU leaders are active participants in Alignment Rockford, a public-private partnership working to support the district's strategic plan for improvement, particularly in the high schools.

- Local Manufacturers

Division staff are leading or supporting multiple initiatives aimed at helping Rockford revitalize its economy by retooling its manufacturing base. Those efforts include grant-writing (NIU has brought more than \$10 million to help Rockford capitalize on new Department of Defense initiatives and micromachining technology); ROCK, the Rapid Optimization of Commercial Knowledge initiative, leadership of consortia such as the Illinois Manufacturing Extension Center in Rockford; and coordinating assistance from NIU faculty experts.



- CCI

Community Collaboration, Inc. is a not-for-profit software provider that has developed an online system to coordinate social services in the Rockford area. CCI was founded by Al Barsema, currently a research associate in NIU's Center for Governmental Studies. NIU information technology staff were integral in the programming for this pioneering software. Now operating in seven states and managing more than 90,000 cases, CCI has garnered prestigious national awards for innovation and effectiveness in the social services.

### **Overall Impact**

While it is impossible to list all of NIU's involvement in Rockford or to accurately estimate its impact, the Division of Outreach, Engagement and Information Technologies clearly spends a large percentage of staff time and resources on Rockford-based projects and partnerships. Across divisions, NIU faculty and staff are far more involved in the life of the Rockford community than in any other city.