NIU has thousands of constituents, each of whom rightfully have expectations for both the institution and the new President. To benefit from knowing what these expectations are, President Baker appointed 6 Task Forces to share, discuss and articulate specific areas of expectations. These Task Forces were not charged with delving into university operations, surveying constituents, or developing recommendations on programs or policies. Their engagement was limited to the helpful task of quickly defining “Guiding Expectations” as they are known, in a manner which informs and will support the new President and NIU administration as they advance plans for the institution which will best serve its many constituents.

The assigned focus for each of the six Task Forces was as follows:

1. Ethically Inspired Leadership
2. Strategic focus on growth of academic and research programs
3. Responsible financial management
4. Enrollment growth, quality and diversity
5. Active alumni engagement
6. Robust community partnerships

The 29 Task Force members were chosen primarily from the many Advisory Boards which currently serve NIU’s various colleges and other programs. Members provided a diverse representation including top leaders from both the public and private sector representing a broad range of careers and communities, and both alumni and non-alums of NIU. The Task Forces participated in a full day workshop held at NIU’s Naperville campus on August 2nd, and then continued independent work during the following week to provide their input. Their reports were presented to the Board of Trustees by Task Force members at a Board retreat on August 15th, during which the Trustees also engaged with the Task Force members in dialogue and a productive exchange of ideas and perspectives.

Following is a summary of Guiding Expectations advanced by the Task Forces. The order does not imply any priority. Over the coming weeks these will be considered along with the input of faculty, students and other constituents in developing strategic direction for NIU.

**Ethically Inspired Leadership**

1. Ethically inspired leadership requires the leader to behave and make decisions in an ethical manner. However, ethically inspired leadership is not merely “leading by example.” There is an expectation that ethically inspired
leadership will be a culture of ethics that permeates all levels of the administration and the entire NIU community.

2. There is an expectation that the importance of ethics, i.e., the values system, will continuously and consistently be emphasized to all members of the NIU community through discussions and training.

3. The concepts and terms used to communicate institutional ethics and the specific values that serve as its foundation will be accessible, easily understood by all members of the NIU community, and invoke positive responses.

4. It is expected that institutional values will include – integrity, fairness, respect/trust, excellence, innovation, community, and stewardship.

5. Values will be applied to the decision making process in a transparent manner, and all within the NIU community, especially the leaders, must be accountable for their actions and decisions.

Strategic Focus on Academic and Research Programs

1. Jobs – NIU will elevate its responsibility for student career success by increasing collaboration across departments and disciplines, building corporate partnerships, incorporating internships into departmental responsibilities, and aligning faculty and program accountability with an aspirational goal for student career success.

2. Curriculum – NIU will survey employers and respond to regional market needs by focusing existing programs on identifying and enhancing the unique contributions their graduates can make in today’s markets, and adjusting curriculum capacities to reflect changing market opportunities.

3. Research – NIU will field a nimble research capability which can respond to the needs of private and public enterprises for applied research, which will support the regional economy and provide funding for NIU undergraduate and graduate programs, and serve the needs of both faculty and students.

4. It is expected that NIU will build on its unique opportunity to be a leader in some but not all fields, and make the hard decisions to eliminate programs which are no longer competitive or attractive to students in order to reallocate funds to growth areas.

5. It is expected that the combination of a new President, the State’s financial problems, and the regional, national and world focus on Jobs presents a unique opportunity at this moment in time to grow NIU’s relevance and
reputation as a leader in meeting the needs of students, parents and employers.

**Responsible Financial Management**

1. It is expected that leadership will develop and execute plans which ensure NIU's financial sustainability in light of the changing funding realities, and that NIU's Trustees, Administrators, and Deans' will make tough decisions when necessary for cutbacks in personnel, departments and programs in order to focus on our strengths, grow, and survive long term.

2. An effective, transparent budgeting process will be implemented which will clearly show where money is being spent, and reflects the priorities for the current and future demands of NIU and its students.

3. Ensure that an analysis of staffing is being planned as a percent of the budgeting process, including benchmarking data for like institutions, competition, and aspirant institutions.

4. It is expected that new leadership will revisit the question of enrollment targets and develop an optimum size/capacity plan given existing constraints and potentials, while ensuring cost effective education opportunities for all students.

5. Consider options for differential fees for degree programs with higher costs or demands, and how we are positioned in the marketplace. Also consider options for partnering more with community colleges, and opportunities for privatizing non-essential assets.

**Enrollment Growth, Quality and Diversity**

1. Engage in effectively rebranding NIU to emphasize our unfair competitive advantages. Continue and intensify efforts to effectively address safety issues and perceptions to ensure student safety and positive image. Include the City of DeKalb in our rebranding efforts, promote successful alumni stories, and extend promotional activities for our Graduate Programs.

2. It is expected that NIU will be student centered, aligning resources more effectively with the student at the core, and extending the advising process to work with students before, during and after attendance.
3. Build upon our existing minority programs to achieve a healthy diversity among our student body, supported by strong diversity among our faculty and staff, and broadened to include the many dimensions of diversity.

4. Free up funding to enhance student experience by letting go of legacy programs that don't work, marginal investment/funding, and resistance to change.

5. Build affinities with our large alumni base which engage them in supporting student recruitment, mentoring, internships and other aspects of students becoming enthusiastic members of the NIU family and contributors in their future workplaces and communities.

Active Alumni Engagement

1. It is expected that NIU leadership understands that involvement from alumni must be earned, not expected.

2. That to achieve growth in participation from our substantial alumni base we must develop strategies which are “market driven” – focusing on the needs of the alums, not just the university. In so doing, consider the needs of and connectivity between four groups – “prospective alumni”, “existing students”, “recent alumni”, “experienced alumni.”

3. The effective engagement of alumni is critical to NIU’s success in several areas, including student recruitment, the contribution of mentoring and internship opportunities to achieve student career success, financial support to ensure sustainability and growth of strong programs. This starts with getting more alums to update their information in our databases so that connections can be made.

4. We will do more to tell the stories of our many successful alums, in a manner that validates their involvement and supports our recruitment strategies and branding efforts.

5. The current success of our football program along with the arrival of a new President provides us with a moment-in-time to reinvigorate alumni engagement, with a valid expectation for rapid and substantial increases in active membership and forms of participation.

Robust Community Partnerships

1. It is expected that the NIU Trustees, administration, faculty and staff will have consistent and meaningful engagement with local communities,
resulting in exchange of knowledge and awareness, and the appreciation and promotion of public and private partnerships.

2. NIU leadership will engage with local communities to develop a joint “brand” directed to enhance both the retention and pride of current residents, and the perceptions of NIU’s larger community.

3. It is expected that local business and community leaders will work with NIU to establish internship opportunities for students, which benefit all parties and achieve NIU’s goals for student career success.

4. Leverage regional assets and NIU resources to create centers for economic development, with particular attention to career paying jobs, entrepreneurial incubators, building on NIU’s fiber optic network, and research and applied technology initiatives.

5. Establish a local advisory board to assist NIU leadership, faculty, staff and students in connecting with community needs and opportunities, and aligning agendas.