EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Student Recruitment, Retention, and Success Working Group was charged with identifying a holistic set of measures that will define the size, composition, quality, and success of NIU’s student population over the next decade. Once the working group was assembled, it convened as a large group twice in January 2011, then split off into subgroups for the remainder of January, all of February, and March. The subgroups met individually at least bi-weekly, and the culminating meeting took place on April 11, 2011. At that time, the recommendations of each subgroup were reviewed and finalized.

Illinois demographic trends combined with the bleak fiscal outlook create amplified cause for concern with regard to being competitive in today’s market. Therefore, the proposed targets provide an opportunity for NIU to continue to attract, enroll, and retain an ever-diversifying freshman and transfer population while staying true to our residential mission. The committee supports the evidence it has presented in written and graphic form. The members of the working group were acutely aware of the positives and negatives associated with their recommendations, and their conversation surrounding cost-benefit was lengthy. In the end, concern for the greater good of the institution prevailed in decisions surrounding enrollment.

The working group identified benchmark values and comparison data from comparative institutions in some cases; however, for those indicators where no external data exist, there is value in examining internal measures to gauge our progress over time. Some of the indicators required examination of existing campus policies and procedures, while some will require new resources that include, but are not limited to, increased staffing in specific high-need areas, the implementation and continuation of intervention mechanisms for at-risk students, and increasing scholarship dollars.

Other changes that need to occur will necessitate shifts in the campus climate and culture, which are necessary to reinvigorate the academic energy at NIU. Examples include revitalizing the University Honors Program and integrating the program more seamlessly into campus life; creating and implementing new academic programs (e.g., Criminal Justice); expanding accelerated programs (e.g., combined bachelor’s and master’s programs, such as 3+2, 4+1); and conducting a review of our current advanced placement policy, as well as limited admission and retention policies.
The working group’s recommendations, as they specifically address timely and relevant issues related to the recruitment of qualified and diverse students as well as heightening their chances of success toward graduation upon entering NIU, are critically important to the continued success of our university. Along with those proposed by the other working groups, these recommendations will be essential in enhancing NIU’s social and academic atmosphere.

The group developed benchmarks for three broad topics: student recruitment, academic preparedness of the freshman class, and student success. In particular, specific benchmark goals were established as follows:

**STUDENT RECRUITMENT**

Regarding student recruitment, benchmarks were set for the size of the freshman class, size of transfer class, and geographic recruitment base. Based on the Enrollment Management Strategic Plan, the working group determined that by 2020 the size of the freshman class must grow from 2,705 to 3,393 and the transfer class must increase from 2,294 to 2,693. Additionally, the geographic recruitment base must expand to include central/southern Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Wisconsin. The goal, by 2020, is to have 6% and 8% of students come from central/southern Illinois and out-of-state, respectively. If NIU meets these goals, it will allow the institution to be sustainable in an increasingly competitive environment.

**ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS OF THE FRESHMAN CLASS**

Several indicators measuring the academic preparedness of the freshman class were examined, including the percentage of freshmen graduating in the top 10% and top 25% of their high school class, high school GPA, ACT score—admissions standard, and ACT score—average. The working group believes strongly that creating additional challenges to recruitment, enrollment, and retention (e.g., by raising the ACT admission standard) would hinder the overall well-being of the university. However, effort must be made to improve the academic profile of the freshman class. The goal is to increase the percentage of students graduating in the top 10% and top 25% of their class from 9% and 31% to 20% and 40%, respectively, by 2020. Moreover, the goal is to move the average high school GPA from 3.20 to 3.30 and the average ACT score from 21 to 23.

**STUDENT SUCCESS**

The indicators used to measure student success were degrees per 100 FTE students; the percentage of undergraduates leaving the institution with no degree; the percentage of freshmen who return for a second year; the percentage of students who graduate in four, five, and six years; success rates with at-risk students; and
course completion rates. On many of these measures, NIU performs well. For example, NIU is above the national averages for degrees per 100 FTE students, a nationally accepted benchmark of institutional productivity. Although some courses have lower course completion rates, the overall course completion rate of 91% is strong.

Still, NIU must continue to improve. The goal is to reduce the percentage of undergraduates who leave the institution with no degree by 1.5% per year for the next five years. We also hope to grow freshman retention rates by 10% over the next 10 years (from 75% to 85% by 2020). The goal is for significant increases in four-, five-, and six-year graduation rates as well. By 2020, the goal is to have an 11% difference between predicted vs. obtained graduation rate (the most recent difference was 3.2%). And, reducing the graduation gaps between Caucasians and racial/ethnic minorities and women and men is critical.

To meet these goals, it is essential that NIU as a whole commit to improved student success. Initiatives developed as part of the NIU Great Journeys Strategic Plan must be continued, enhanced, and expanded. All units in the Divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, plus the Graduate School and the College of Law, must be accountable for improving student success. Although accountability will likely remain with the colleges and departments, all programming for students must contribute to student retention and graduation.

MEMBERSHIP

- Brian Hemphill, Vice President, Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, Co-Chair
- Earl Seaver, Vice Provost, Co-Chair
- JD Bowers, Associate Professor, History
- Chuck Downing, Professor, Operations Management and Information Systems
- Dana Gautcher, Director, Student Academic Success
- Missy Gillis, Associate Director of Admissions and Director of Transfer Center
- Denise Hayman, Director, CHANCE
- John Jones, Associate Vice President, Student Affairs
- Justin Larsen, student
- Katherine McCarthy, Associate Vice President, Enrollment Management
- Jenny Parker, Associate Professor, Kinesiology and Physical Education
- Jenesha Penn, Assistant to the Vice President, Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
• Michele Stieren, IT Technical Associate, Division of Research and Graduate Studies
• Laura Vazquez, Associate Professor, Communication
• Kelly Wesener, Assistant Vice President, Student Services

* * *
ISSUE
Size of freshman class

INDICATOR
Number of incoming freshmen

NIU’S BENCHMARK AND COMPARISON TO COMPETITORS
See Table 6.1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois – Urbana-Champaign</td>
<td>6,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple</td>
<td>4,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent State</td>
<td>4,193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Michigan</td>
<td>4,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>3,929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling Green State</td>
<td>3,919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball State</td>
<td>3,859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami (OH)</td>
<td>3,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Michigan</td>
<td>3,386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>3,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois State</td>
<td>3,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois – Chicago</td>
<td>3,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NIU</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,705</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Illinois</td>
<td>2,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Michigan</td>
<td>2,247</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GOAL**

3-YEAR TARGET: 2,900
5-YEAR TARGET: 3,150
BY 2020: 3,393

The economy, state demographics, and aggressive competition will remain challenges in reaching this goal.

**JUSTIFICATION FOR THE GOAL**

To stay true to our mission as a residential institution, NIU must increase the number of full- and first-time enrolled freshmen. Illinois demographic trends combined with the bleak fiscal outlook create amplified cause for concern in regard to being competitive in today’s market. As outlined in the Enrollment Management Strategic Plan, NIU must meet the enrollment target of 25,400. Enrollment at this level allows us to provide optimal services, programs, and resources to current and future students, and to generate necessary revenue.

NIU has made a significant financial commitment to residential students by providing new and refurbished residence halls and facilities. New freshmen will take advantage of these new facilities.
SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW NIU MEETS THE GOAL

To meet this goal, NIU must make a commitment to enhance the number of scholarships that are available to new freshmen. Providing additional financial support for the University Honors Program and integrating the program into campus life is also imperative.

The creation and implementation of new academic programs (e.g., Criminal Justice), expanding accelerated programs (e.g., combined bachelor’s and master’s programs, such as 3+2, 4+1), and a review of our current advanced placement policy, as well as limited admission and retention policies, is necessary to reinvigorate the academic energy at NIU.

Other initiatives that could aid NIU include increasing the scholarship resources to $10 million (doubling our current amount; this figure includes new and renewal scholarship offerings); expanding our geographic recruitment base; aggressively recruiting Latino/a and Asian American students; employing capital-campaign initiatives focused on scholarships and academic infrastructure; and enhancing utilization of alumni and faculty in recruitment efforts.

ORGANIZATIONAL OR POLICY CHANGES REQUIRED

In order to expand our recruitment efforts, NIU needs more staff, especially Admissions recruiters and counselors, in order to meet the suggestions provided above. New academic programs are also essential to add to the academic energy within the institution and better meet the needs of our incoming students.

BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

More scholarship funds are needed to promote enrollment growth from Illinois and out-of-state students. Additional staffing (e.g., Admissions) is critical. Funding to support Academic Affairs in its endeavor to heighten academic rigor and reputation is also essential.

PLANNING DOCUMENTS THAT ADDRESS THE ISSUE

Enrollment Management Strategic Plan

GROUP(S) IN CHARGE OF APPROVING OR IMPLEMENTING THE GOAL

- Academic Affairs
- Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
ISSUE
Size of transfer class

INDICATOR
Number of transfer students admitted in the fall semester

NIU’S BENCHMARK AND COMPARISON TO COMPETITORS
See Table 6.2. Currently, NIU enrolls the largest number of transfer students in Illinois. In 2010, 2,294 transfer students enrolled at NIU, approximately 250 more than at the second and 450 more than at the third largest recruiters of transfers in the state: Southern Illinois University-Carbondale and Illinois State University, respectively.

GOAL
3-YEAR TARGET: 2,350
5-YEAR TARGET: 2,500
BY 2020: 2,693
This 2020 target provides opportunity for NIU to continue to attract, enroll, and retain a significant transfer population while staying true to our residential mission.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE GOAL
With the demographic shifts forecasted for the state of Illinois, it is critical that we maintain an active partnership with community colleges. NIU has a tradition of success in recruiting transfer students. With the growth of community colleges, we are in an excellent position to recruit additional students and enhance our relationships with our community college partners.
SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW NIU MEETS THE GOAL

To improve the campus climate for transfer students, it is essential for NIU to address the following areas:

• Enhance current scholarship dollars focused on transfers, and package scholarships with other opportunities, such as housing.
• Continue to work with Military Student Services to advocate for veteran and active-duty students.
• Establish articulation agreements with out-of-state community colleges to make NIU more attractive to students in other states.
• Increase staffing—in Registration and Records and in the Transfer Center, as outlined in the Enrollment Management Strategic Plan.

ORGANIZATIONAL OR POLICY CHANGES REQUIRED

We suggest that NIU conduct a review of current limited admissions and retention policies and their impact on transfer student recruitment. Additionally, we suggest exploring the full use of MyNIU 9.0 functionality to expedite the transfer credit evaluation process through Captiva, providing a credit evaluation at the time of admission or shortly thereafter.

BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

As outlined in the 2012–2016 Enrollment Management Strategic Plan, in order to continue to compete with other institutions for transfer students, NIU needs to package scholarship funds in a way that is attractive to prospective transfer students.

Staffing is a large portion of the budgetary concerns surrounding transfer student recruitment and retention. As outlined in the 2012-2016 Enrollment Management Strategic Plan, a full-time transfer recruiter and two additional staff members in Registration and Records would allow full utilization of our current systems.

 PLANNING DOCUMENTS THAT ADDRESS THE ISSUE

Enrollment Management Strategic Plan

GROUP(S) IN CHARGE OF APPROVING OR IMPLEMENTING THE GOAL

• Academic Affairs
• Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
ISSUE
Expanding geographic recruitment base

INDICATOR
Percentage of out-of-state students in freshman class

NIU’S BENCHMARK AND COMPARISON TO COMPETITORS
See Table 6.3. NIU’s current primary recruitment efforts are in northern Illinois. Secondary markets include central and southern Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

GOAL
See Table 6.4.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE GOAL
Due to aggressive recruitment by our out-of-state competitors, Illinois has become recognized as a primary exporter of college-bound students. Although northern Illinois will continue to serve as the primary recruitment base for NIU, out-of-state markets as well as central and southern Illinois hold recruitment potential, especially in light of the demographic changes and economic challenges in Illinois. In addition to enhancing campus diversity, these students are also more likely to live within the NIU residential community than are our more local/northern Illinois students.

### Table 6.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>% of Out-of-State Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miami (OH)</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling Green State</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent State**</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio*</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Michigan</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Michigan</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball State*</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois – Urbana-Champaign</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Illinois*</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo**</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toledo***</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIU</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akron*</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Michigan</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois – Chicago</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois State****</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes international students
** Fall 2009 data
*** Fall 2008 data
**** Includes entire undergraduate population

### Table 6.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Central &amp; Southern IL</th>
<th>Out-of-State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-year Target</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-year Target</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By 2020</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW NIU MEETS THE GOAL

- Intentional marketing/branding in central and southern Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Iowa.
- Providing scholarship dollars to bring out-of-state tuition equal to the in-state rate, to double our out-of-state enrollment.
- Our new Springfield-based recruiter will provide a visible and consistent presence in central and southern Illinois while developing relationships with prospective students, families, and school counselors.

ORGANIZATIONAL OR POLICY CHANGES REQUIRED

None

BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

To remain competitive, NIU needs more scholarship funds. The funds must be packaged to attract students and families from the Midwest region.

PLANNING DOCUMENTS THAT ADDRESS THE ISSUE

Enrollment Management Strategic Plan

GROUP(S) IN CHARGE OF APPROVING OR IMPLEMENTING THE GOAL

- Academic Affairs
- Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
ISSUE

Academic preparedness of freshman class

INDICATOR

• Percentage of freshmen graduating in top 10% of their high school class
• Percentage of freshmen graduating in top 25% of their high school class
• Average High School GPA

NIU’S BENCHMARK AND COMPARISON TO COMPETITORS

See Table 6.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>% in Top 10%</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>% in Top 25%</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois – Urbana-Champaign</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>Illinois – Urbana-Champaign</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>Miami (OH)</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois – Chicago</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>Miami (OH)</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>Illinois – Urbana-Champaign</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami (OH)</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>Illinois – Chicago</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>Temple</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling Green State</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>Illinois State</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>Temple</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>Ball State</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Southern Illinois</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>Illinois State</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>Ball State</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball State</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>Central Michigan</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Michigan</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>Central Michigan</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>Western Michigan</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toledo</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Toledo</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>Illinois – Chicago</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent State</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Bowling Green State</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>Bowling Green State</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Michigan</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Western Michigan</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>Kent State</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akron</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>Eastern Michigan</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Michigan</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>Kent State</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>NIU</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois State</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>NIU</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>Eastern Michigan</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Illinois</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Akron</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>Toledo</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIU</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Southern Illinois</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>Akron</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.5
GOAL

See Table 6.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FRESHMAN PREPAREDNESS GOALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Year Target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Year Target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.6

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE GOAL

NIU must continue to enroll high-achieving students who will enrich the academic and student life environment on campus. Enrolling more high-achieving students will aid in the maintenance and enhancement of a culture of excellence at NIU. These students will not only revitalize the reputation of the institution, but will support the recruitment and retention of qualified students. This goal is ambitious, yet attainable, and will place us competitively among our comparison institutions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW NIU MEETS THE GOAL

To meet this goal, NIU must enhance three essential areas of the recruitment and retention efforts: scholarships, academic offerings, and branding and marketing, all of which will heighten visibility and awareness of the NIU student experience.

First, NIU must increase financial resources dedicated to scholarships. To best meet the needs and attract the attention of high-achieving students, NIU must strengthen packaging, awarding, and delivery of scholarships. In an effort to build a comprehensive scholarship program, NIU is piloting an automated awards process for the incoming fall 2011 class. Initial indicators show a significant and positive impact on students’ committing to the institution.

Second, NIU needs to continue to build a quality academic experience for students. This experience will further develop student-faculty research collaborations, internships, and study-abroad opportunities. In addition to ensuring that our academic offerings reflect student interests, NIU should explore new approaches that reflect existing academic strengths such as accelerated academic programs (e.g., 3+2 and 4+1 degree paths). These programs attract more academically focused students, match student interests, and meet the needs of a changing market.

Last, NIU is in the process of developing a new branding and marketing initiative, “Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow.” This brand will bolster the culture
of excellence at NIU as seen by prospective students and their families, and by faculty, staff, current students, alumni, and potential donors.

ORGANIZATIONAL OR POLICY CHANGES REQUIRED
Continual support for fiscal and human resources will be essential in the areas included above.

BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS
Financial allocations in the amount of $10 million should be earmarked for new student and renewal scholarships. Thus, NIU will become more attractive to the high-achieving population of prospective students, and will draw us closer to our comparison institutions with respect to scholarship dollars awarded to entering students.

PLANNING DOCUMENTS THAT ADDRESS THE ISSUE
Enrollment Management Strategic Plan

GROUP(S) IN CHARGE OF APPROVING OR IMPLEMENTING THE GOAL
- Academic Affairs
- Finance and Facilities
- Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
ISSUE
Academic preparedness of freshman class

INDICATOR
ACT Scores – Admissions Standard

NIU’S BENCHMARK AND COMPARISON TO COMPETITORS
See Table 6.7.

GOAL
3-YEAR TARGET: 19
5-YEAR TARGET: 19
BY 2020: 19

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE GOAL
For the past five years, composite ACT scores for incoming NIU freshmen have remained constant, with the majority scoring between 20 and 22. Table 6.8 shows the breakdown for fall 2010 freshmen.

It is important to note that 49.5% of our applicants and 42% of enrolled students score in the range of 19-22. While about 19% of enrolled students score less than 19 and about 22% of enrolled students score 25-36, the majority, or 59%, of students enrolling at NIU consistently score between 19 and 24. In light of what the data reveal, the committee is not proposing a change in current admission standards. NIU would exclude about 1,100 enrolled freshmen if the minimum ACT required for admission were raised to 21.
Evidence in current literature also provided guidance for the committee. According to Sireci, Zanetti, and Berger (2003), “Some traditionally less competitive institutions may suffer declines in enrollment as they increase their levels of selectivity” (pp. 337-338). Regarding the effect of increasing admission standards on student access to higher education, the authors note the societal ramifications of limiting access and equity “for certain pools of students (particularly traditionally underrepresented minorities and individuals from lower socio-economic strata) who are currently able to gain admission into college” (p. 338). While institutions are aggressively competing for high-ability students, they are limiting options for those students from disadvantaged backgrounds with less-impressive academic records, resulting in their falling farther behind. Given ongoing demographic changes in Illinois and our commitment to student access, we would be doing a disservice to the university’s history and mission if we were to consider raising the minimum ACT admission standard.

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW NIU MEETS THE GOAL
With the support of trend data, raising the ACT requirement will not resolve enrollment concerns and would pose additional challenges to recruitment, enrollment, retention, and the overall well-being of the university. Therefore, we advise, instead, that NIU continue to enhance the current services and programs surrounding early intervention and academic support for all students, especially those at-risk and under-prepared.

ORGANIZATIONAL OR POLICY CHANGES REQUIRED
None

BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS
Continue to support Undergraduate Admissions in the recruitment of academically prepared students as well as the Office of Student Academic Success and Academic Advising Center in their current and future retention initiatives.

PLANNING DOCUMENTS THAT ADDRESS THE ISSUE
Enrollment Management Strategic Plan

GROUP(S) IN CHARGE OF APPROVING OR IMPLEMENTING THE GOAL
- Academic Affairs
- Student Affairs and Enrollment Management

ISSUE
Academic preparedness of freshman class

INDICATOR
Average ACT Score

NIU’S BENCHMARK AND COMPARISON TO COMPETITORS
See Table 6.9

GOAL
3-year target: 22
5-year target: 22.5
By 2020: 23

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE GOAL
Aligned with a number of our benchmark institutions with average ACT scores of 21 for new freshmen, our own trend data, along with national statistics, support the increments the committee has proposed. Over the past decade, NIU’s and national trend data indicate an increase of .3 in ACT scores, supporting our ambitious, yet attainable, recommendations. Although other academic measurements may rise as we progress toward our goal to enroll more academically prepared students, we do not believe the average ACT score will increase at the same rate as the GPA or class rank.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois – Urbana-Champaign</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami (OH)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>25*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois – Chicago</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Michigan</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Michigan</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling Green State</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois State</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIU</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent State</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toledo</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Illinois</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akron</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball State</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Michigan</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Only 32% submit ACT scores.

Table 6.9
SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW NIU MEETS THE GOAL

Additional resources dedicated to scholarships, new academic programs, and enhanced marketing will support recruitment and the enrollment of academically prepared and engaged students, positively affecting our ability to maintain and enhance a culture of excellence at NIU. Although we are not recommending a change to the minimum admission criteria regarding ACT scores, we do anticipate that there will be an increase in the incoming freshman class average ACT score over time.

ORGANIZATIONAL OR POLICY CHANGES REQUIRED

None

BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

Continue to support undergraduate recruitment through staffing and scholarship appropriations to enhance the recruitment of high-ability students. Additionally, NIU must continue to work diligently to advocate for and support our students through retention initiatives implemented by the academic colleges/departments, the Office of Student Academic Success, and the Academic Advising Center. Support for marketing and branding is outlined in the Enrollment Management Strategic Plan.

PLANNING DOCUMENTS THAT ADDRESS THE ISSUE

Enrollment Management Strategic Plan

GROUP(S) IN CHARGE OF APPROVING OR IMPLEMENTING THE GOAL

- Academic Affairs
- Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
ISSUE
Student success

INDICATOR
Degrees per 100 FTE students

NIU’S BENCHMARK AND COMPARISON TO COMPETITORS
NIU's benchmark is 29%. Individual institutional data are not available. National and state data are available from publications.

STATE OF ILLINOIS DATA2
- Public Doctoral Institutions = 27%
- Public Research, High Activity = 28%
- Public Research, Very High Activity = 27%

NATIONAL DATA2
- Doctoral Institutions = 24%
- Research High Activity = 24%
- Research Very High Activity = 25%

GOAL
Maintain a degree per 100 FTE rate in excess of the state average at all levels. Maintain a degree per 100 FTE rate in excess of the national average.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE GOAL
Degrees per FTE is a nationally accepted benchmark of institutional productivity. The data includes all degrees earned by all graduates (undergraduate and graduate). This data element reflects the mission of NIU, as it takes into account first-time freshmen as well as transfer and graduate students.

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW NIU MEETS THE GOAL
To meet this goal, all parties at the institution must commit to improved student success. Initiatives started as a part of the NIU Great Journeys Strategic Plan must be continued, enhanced, and expanded. All units in the Division of Academic Affairs, including the Graduate School and the College of Law, must be accountable for improving student success. Although accountability will rest with the colleges and departments, all programming for students must address the direct contribution to student retention and graduation.

ORGANIZATIONAL OR POLICY CHANGES REQUIRED
The institution has the organizational structure to facilitate meeting this goal.

BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS
Support is needed for expanding the use of student success specialists. Support is needed to continue to expand engaged learning opportunities for students, including expansion of themed learning communities.

PLANNING DOCUMENTS THAT ADDRESS THE ISSUE
• Enrollment Management Strategic Plan
• NIU Great Journeys Strategic Plan – Presidential Task Force on Student Success

GROUP(S) IN CHARGE OF APPROVING OR IMPLEMENTING THE GOAL
The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost
ISSUE
Student success

INDICATOR
Percentage of undergraduates leaving the institution with no degree

NIU’S BENCHMARK AND COMPARISON TO COMPETITORS
NIU’s benchmark is 16% per year. Individual institutional data are not available. National and state data are not available.

GOAL
Reduce the percentage of undergraduates leaving with no degree by 1.5% per year for the next five years. Maintain the rate reached in 2015.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE GOAL
Each year approximately 16% of the undergraduates leave the institution with no degree. Approximately one-half of those are students who are in good academic standing and are eligible to enroll in classes. The loss of students negatively impacts all of the measures of success used by the institution. Tracking those who leave and their status at the time of not reenrolling provides information on how programming can be implemented to impact positively student success and degree completion.

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW NIU MEETS THE GOAL
To meet this goal, all parties at the institution must commit to improved student success. Initiatives begun as a part of the NIU Great Journeys Strategic Plan must be continued, enhanced, and expanded. Although accountability will rest with the colleges and departments, the Division of Academic Affairs will be responsible for identifying and implementing programs aimed at improving student persistence to graduation.

ORGANIZATIONAL OR POLICY CHANGES REQUIRED
The institution has the organizational structure to facilitate meeting this goal.

BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS
Support is needed for expanding the use of student success specialists. Support is needed to continue to expand engaged learning opportunities for students, including expansion of themed learning communities.
PLANNING DOCUMENTS THAT ADDRESS THE ISSUE

• Enrollment Management Strategic Plan
• NIU Great Journeys Strategic Plan – Presidential Task Force on Student Success

GROUP(S) IN CHARGE OF APPROVING OR IMPLEMENTING THE GOAL

The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost
ISSUE
Student success

INDICATOR
• 1st-year retention rate
• 4-year graduation rate
• 5-year graduation rate
• 6-year graduation rate
• Predicted graduation rate vs. obtained graduation rate

NIU’S BENCHMARK AND COMPARISON TO COMPETITORS
See Table 6.10. NIU’s predicted vs. obtained graduation rate is +3.2%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>1st-Yr. Retention</th>
<th>4-Yr. Grad.</th>
<th>5-Yr. Grad.</th>
<th>6-Yr. Grad.</th>
<th>Predicted 6-Yr. Grad.</th>
<th>ACT 50% Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miami (OH)</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>68.1%</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
<td>80.7%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>24–29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>23–28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>21–27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>21–26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Michigan</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>20–25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball State</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>20–25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toledo</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>18–24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent State</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>20–25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Michigan</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>20–25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling Green State</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>19–24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Michigan</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>18–24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NIU</strong></td>
<td><strong>75%</strong></td>
<td><strong>23.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>45.6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>51.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>48%</strong></td>
<td><strong>19–24</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois – Chicago</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>21–26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois – Urbana-Champaign</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>26–31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Illinois</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>19–24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois State</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>65.9%</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>22–26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.10
Note: 6-year graduation rates, predicted graduation rates, and ACT profiles for 2008 university data. All data were collected from the Educational Trust and US News & World Report for the same cohort year.
GOAL

See Table 6.11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>3-Year Target</th>
<th>5-Year Target</th>
<th>By 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st-Year Retention</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Year Graduation</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Year Graduation</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Year Graduation</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predicted vs. Obtained Graduation Rate</td>
<td>+6%</td>
<td>+9%</td>
<td>+11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.11

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE GOAL

NIU needs to continue to improve the success of its first-time freshmen. The institution lags behind institutions with similar student characteristics. Increases in success of freshmen will result in the need to recruit fewer first-time freshmen, thereby resulting in greater competition for the openings each fall.

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW NIU MEETS THE GOAL

To meet this goal, all parties at the institution must commit to improved student success. Initiatives begun as a part of the NIU Great Journeys Strategic Plan must be continued, enhanced, and expanded. All units in the Division of Academic Affairs must be accountable for improving student success. Although accountability will rest with the colleges and departments, all programming for students must address the direct contribution to student retention.

ORGANIZATIONAL OR POLICY CHANGES REQUIRED

The institution has the organizational structure to facilitate meeting this goal.

BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

Support is needed for expanding the use of student success specialists. Support is needed to continue to expand engaged learning opportunities for students, including expansion of themed learning communities.

PLANNING DOCUMENTS THAT ADDRESS THE ISSUE

- Enrollment Management Strategic Plan
- NIU Great Journeys Strategic Plan – Presidential Task Force on Student Success
GROUP(S) IN CHARGE OF APPROVING OR IMPLEMENTING THE GOAL

The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost
ISSUE
Student success

INDICATOR
Undergraduate course completion

NIU’S BENCHMARK AND COMPARISON TO COMPETITORS
NIU’s benchmark is 91%. Individual institutional data are not available. National and state data are not available.

GOAL
Maintain an undergraduate course completion rate of 91% or greater. Identify individual courses with lower completion rates and work with faculty to improve student performance.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE GOAL
Credit-hour completion is a reflection of students making progress toward degree attainment. Lowered completion rates reflect the need for repeating courses, poor academic performance, increased time to degree, and a loss in the total number of degrees earned each year. Monitoring overall course completion rates as well as those in challenging courses will assist student persistence toward graduation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW NIU MEETS THE GOAL
To meet this goal, all parties at the institution must commit to improved student success. Initiatives begun as a part of the NIU Great Journeys Strategic Plan must be continued, enhanced, and expanded. Although accountability will rest with the colleges and departments, the Division of Academic Affairs will be responsible for identifying challenging courses where improvements can be made.

Assessment of course completion rates should be determined for certain sub-sets of courses and student groups. For example, completion rates are needed for general education courses, lower division vs. upper division courses, and for different student populations (e.g., transfers vs. native students).

ORGANIZATIONAL OR POLICY CHANGES REQUIRED
The institution has the organizational structure to facilitate meeting this goal.
BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

Support is needed for expanding the use of student success specialists. Support is needed to continue to expand supplemental instruction and peer tutoring in challenging courses. Support is needed for course transformations.3

PLANNING DOCUMENTS THAT ADDRESS THE ISSUE

• Enrollment Management Strategic Plan
• NIU Great Journeys Strategic Plan – Presidential Task Force on Student Success

GROUP(S) IN CHARGE OF APPROVING OR IMPLEMENTING THE GOAL

The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost

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3 “Course transformations” refers to the use of technology to improve student learning. See the National Center for Academic Transformation (http://www.thencat.org/).
ISSUE
Success rate with at-risk students

INDICATOR
Graduation gaps

NIU’S BENCHMARK AND COMPARISON TO COMPETITORS

See Table 6.12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miami (OH)</td>
<td>-15.0%</td>
<td>-5.0%</td>
<td>-11.9%</td>
<td>-10.7%</td>
<td>-4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>-2.4%</td>
<td>-6.9%</td>
<td>-61.7%</td>
<td>+2.5%</td>
<td>-3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple</td>
<td>-2.3%</td>
<td>-1.9%</td>
<td>-66.2%</td>
<td>+2.1%</td>
<td>-6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>-18.2%</td>
<td>-12.1%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>-13.0%</td>
<td>-3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Michigan</td>
<td>-15.3%</td>
<td>-11.8%</td>
<td>-13.1%</td>
<td>-3.8%</td>
<td>-3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball State</td>
<td>-13.6%</td>
<td>-8.6%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>+11.1%</td>
<td>-7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toledo</td>
<td>-25.7%</td>
<td>-20.2%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>+7.5%</td>
<td>-4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent State</td>
<td>-15.5%</td>
<td>-15.7%</td>
<td>-5.1%</td>
<td>+10.2%</td>
<td>-7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Michigan</td>
<td>-4.9%</td>
<td>-5.9%</td>
<td>-13.0%</td>
<td>-15.3%</td>
<td>-6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling Green State</td>
<td>-7.3%</td>
<td>-18.8%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>+1.2%</td>
<td>-8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Michigan</td>
<td>-20.0%</td>
<td>-11.2%</td>
<td>-3.0%</td>
<td>-7.2%</td>
<td>-7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIU</td>
<td>-16.0%</td>
<td>-19.2%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>-4.2%</td>
<td>-4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois – Chicago</td>
<td>-22.4%</td>
<td>-11.6%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>+7.0%</td>
<td>+0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois – Urbana-Champaign</td>
<td>-19.8%</td>
<td>-12.5%</td>
<td>-37.9%</td>
<td>+0.5%</td>
<td>-5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Illinois</td>
<td>-17.6%</td>
<td>-14.3%</td>
<td>-30.6%</td>
<td>-22.8%</td>
<td>-7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois State</td>
<td>-18.8%</td>
<td>-17.2%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>+0.8%</td>
<td>-5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.12

Note: 6-year graduation rates, predicted graduation rates, and ACT profiles for 2008 university data. All data were collected from the Educational Trust.
GOAL
See Table 6.13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>3-Year Target</th>
<th>5-Year Target</th>
<th>By 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black v. Caucasian</td>
<td>-14%</td>
<td>-12%</td>
<td>-10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino v. Caucasian</td>
<td>-16%</td>
<td>-13%</td>
<td>-10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American v. Caucasian</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian v. Caucasian</td>
<td>-3%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male v. Female</td>
<td>-3%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.13

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE GOAL
NIU needs to continue to improve the success of its first-time freshmen. Specifically, the institution needs to reduce the graduation gaps among the various ethnic/racial populations as well as genders. Increases in student success of freshmen will improve the persistence of students who come from underrepresented groups that have traditionally lower completion rates.

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW NIU MEETS THE GOAL
To meet this goal, all parties at the institution must commit to improved student success. Initiatives begun as a part of the NIU Great Journeys Strategic Plan must be continued, enhanced, and expanded. All units in the Division of Academic Affairs must be accountable for improving student success. Although accountability will rest with the colleges and departments, all programming for students must address the direct contribution to student retention. Coordination of efforts of the “cultural support centers” with student success initiatives will be essential.

ORGANIZATIONAL OR POLICY CHANGES REQUIRED
The institution has the organizational structure to facilitate meeting this goal.

BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS
Support is needed for expanding the use of student success specialists. Support is needed to continue to expand engaged learning opportunities for students, including expansion of themed learning communities.
PLANNING DOCUMENTS THAT ADDRESS THE ISSUE

- Enrollment Management Strategic Plan
- NIU Great Journeys Strategic Plan – Presidential Task Force on Student Success

GROUP(S) IN CHARGE OF APPROVING OR IMPLEMENTING THE GOAL

The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost