

Assurance Argument
Northern Illinois University

6/15/2018

1 - Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

Argument

1.A.1

The mission of Northern Illinois University (NIU) is "to promote excellence and engagement in teaching and learning, research and scholarship, creativity and artistry, and outreach and service." NIU's [Statement of Vision and Mission](#) reflects institutional goals and aspirations and recognizes in its statement of values the ways in which NIU serves its many constituents. The mission is current in its articulation of the university as it functions today as well as in its goals and plans for the coming years.

In AY2011-2012, faculty, staff, students, and the [Board of Trustees \(BOT\) adopted a revised Statement of Vision and Mission](#) in accordance with the university's value of "a [system of shared governance](#) that incorporates input from faculty, staff, and students in decision- and policy-making." Through an inclusive mission revision process that drew from all corners of the university community, NIU strengthened its commitment to transparent governance and reinforced its commitment to the university's culture of engagement. To further foster transparency and understanding of the new statement among community members, external stakeholders, and the public, the statement is linked on the main [NIU website](#) and on the [At-a-Glance](#) page. Posters articulating the mission are visible in major campus buildings and offices infusing the mission into the daily experiences of faculty, staff, and students. NIU's [2014 Comprehensive Self-Study](#) presents, at some length, [the process for revision and approval of the new statement](#).

[The Statement of Vision and Mission](#) articulates core values that capture the university's commitment to diversity, access, engagement, research and artistry, student success, technology, shared governance, and public purpose. These core values permeate the everyday life of NIU as the university community strives to live its [mission](#).

1.A.2

As a comprehensive doctoral university offering degrees from the baccalaureate to the doctorate with

a [Carnegie Classification of R2: Doctoral Universities - Higher Research Activity](#), NIU's commitment is to promote excellence and engagement in its educational mission and to promote the advancement of knowledge as a distinct institutional vision. NIU is distinctive not only in the variety of activities in which it engages, but also in the ways in which those activities intersect and reinforce one another. NIU's undergraduate, graduate, and law programs are designed to underpin the university value to provide "access for a broad spectrum of students to high quality undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs that prepare them to be lifelong learners and productive, socially conscious citizens." [Academic programs are housed in the seven colleges under the oversight of the Division of Academic Affairs and the Graduate School](#). These units collaborate with academic and student affairs support services, such as Student Involvement and Leadership Development ([SILD](#)) and the Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning ([OSEEL](#)) to promote excellence and engagement in teaching and learning for students at all levels. Through experiential learning, internships, engagement, and opportunities and events such as [Global NIU](#), students, staff, and faculty serve both [regionally](#) and [globally](#).

Both the [Division of Student Affairs](#) and the [Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs](#) provide co-curricular opportunities and critical services beyond the classroom that facilitate student success and retention. Support for student engagement in research, scholarship, and artistry is evidenced in undergraduate research initiatives, graduate teaching and research assistantships, and service and internship opportunities.

NIU's enrollment profile is consistent with its mission and the university value to maintain "a community of diverse people, ideas, services, and scholarly endeavors in a climate of respect for the intrinsic dignity of each individual." In Fall 2016, NIU students [ranged in age from 17 to 74](#), with a mean age of 22.5 years for undergraduates, 31.9 years for graduate students, and 27.6 years for law students. At that same time, 56.5% of NIU [undergraduate students](#) were White, Non-Hispanic; 15.8% were Black, Non-Hispanic; and 16.8% were Hispanic. [Graduate students](#) were 62.4% White, Non-Hispanic; 5.6% were Black, Non-Hispanic; and 6.5% were Hispanic. A substantial number of graduate students (18.6%) were international non-resident students. In the [College of Law](#), 72.7% of students were White, Non-Hispanic; 10.6% were Black, Non-Hispanic; and 9.4% were Hispanic.

[Changes in enrollment](#) since 2014 have included a decrease in new student enrollments of freshmen, transfer students, and graduate students. Freshmen account for the largest change with 27% fewer in 2017 than in 2014. New transfer student enrollments saw a less precipitous decrease (7%) and new graduate student enrollments decreased by 9%. The College of Law, however, has seen an increase of 16% in this same time period.

1.A.3

As noted in the 2014 HLC review, NIU faced an opportunity for improvement in aligning planning and budgeting priorities with its mission. Details of progress in this area are discussed in Criterion 5. In 2015, the institution began an in-depth and thorough self-examination process and the [outcomes](#) of this Program Prioritization process are now being implemented [across campus](#). Recent initiatives and future planning will be informed by outcomes and implementation of the Program Prioritization process and the implementation of the [FY2018 Presidential Goals](#). The Acting President provides ongoing comprehensive updates on the progress of Program Prioritization including an updated report expected in June 2018.

[Recent initiatives](#) reflect many of the core values of the NIU Mission, encompassing five themes that have been a particular focus for NIU since the 2014 visit:

- [Program Prioritization](#): NIU is committed to advancing the utility of the outcomes of this systemic multi-year self-evaluation process whose core is “to build a strong foundation for maintaining and improving the quality of academic and administrative programs across NIU, by assuring that our programs reflect our institutional mission and strategic goals”
- Transparency: NIU is committed to enhancing openness within the university community by providing transparency in areas such as [budgeting processes](#), policies for [students](#) and for [employees](#)
- Diversity: NIU is committed to increasing diversity with high level diversity offices and associated activities that permeate the campus climate, including the Office of Academic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion ([ADEI](#)) and with the Office of Affirmative Action and Equity Compliance ([AAEC](#))
- NIU Progressive Learning Undergraduate Studies ([NIU PLUS](#)): NIU is committed to ensuring all undergraduate students receive a rich general education experience and has established a three-pronged approach to accomplish this: [Academics PLUS](#), [Engage PLUS](#), and [Jobs PLUS](#)
- Engagement: NIU is committed to providing students, faculty, and staff engagement opportunities within the community and across the region, and through [experiential learning and high impact educational practices](#) aligned with NIU’s student learning outcomes

These five themes emerged amidst a budget crisis in the State of Illinois. Beginning in July 1, 2015, Illinois was completely without a state budget for FY2016 and FY2017 and was granted only a partial budget for FY2018. With over 700 days without a state budget, NIU experienced a decrease in the state’s fiscal commitment of over \$160 million (see Criterion 5). This difficult fiscal environment has created challenges for NIU but has not dissuaded NIU from enthusiastically pursuing mission-related initiatives outlined in the five themes above.

Another contextual component for NIU since the 2014 HLC site visit has been the change in presidential leadership with the resignation of President Doug Baker in June of 2017 (the end of his fourth year of a five year term) and the subsequent naming of [Acting President Lisa Freeman](#). Dr. Freeman’s two-year appointment has been accompanied by the [2017-2018 presidential goals](#), approved by the BOT in Fall 2017, which reinforce the five themes with defined goals and metrics. Further, Acting President Freeman and her [Senior Leadership](#) team have worked to promote transparency within each of the goals:

- [Grow Student Enrollment and Success](#)
- [Enhance Fiscal Sustainability of NIU](#)
- [Implement Program Prioritization](#)
- [Foster an Organizational Culture that is Ethical and Accountable](#)
- [Increase Capacity for Research, Innovation and Regional Engagement](#)
- [Increase Student Satisfaction and Engagement](#)

Sources

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- DIV ACADEMIC AFFAIRS_Office of Academic Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion_Office of Academic Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Website
- DIV ACADEMIC AFFAIRS_Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning Website
- DIV ACADEMIC AFFAIRS_Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning_OSEEL Engaged Learning Booklet
- DIV ACADEMIC AFFAIRS_The Graduate School_The Graduate School Website
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- NIU_Program Prioritization_Program Prioritization Website
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- OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT_NIU President Website
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1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Argument

1.B.1

NIU's public articulation of [its mission](#) is integrated throughout the university's campus life, digital presence, and printed media, from [Mission](#), NIU's official husky dog mascot, to the [mission cards](#) presented to new employees. NIU's Statement of Vision and Mission is published on the main NIU website and is linked from various university web pages. Colleges, divisions, and programs within the university have developed mission statements for their units that are consistent with the [university mission](#). The Statement of Vision and Mission also articulates core values that capture NIU's commitment to diversity, access, engagement, research and artistry, student success, technology, shared governance, and public purpose.

The NIU community has been intensely involved in the process of Program Prioritization. A recent [progress report](#) and [senior leadership presentation](#) detail how Program Prioritization has provided a foundation for future planning and for ensuring that the university remains strong and student-centered in alignment with the university value of "student success supported through academic and co-curricular programming and activities."

1.B.2

Evidence supporting NIU's value of "engaged teaching and learning that evolves from the synergy of research, artistry and service" comes in many forms. The university employs highly qualified faculty and staff in academic, support and administrative roles. Student employees and graduate assistants enhance and complete NIU's employee ranks and serve as important members of departments and units across the university. NIU's commitment to teaching and learning is further seen in its investment in pedagogical infrastructure, demonstrating NIU's value of "the application of current technology in enhancing and broadening all institutional endeavors." In alignment with this value, all students, whether on campus, off-campus, or online have access to current instructional technologies including Blackboard, AnywhereApps, email and messaging, AnywherePrints, and smart classrooms. (See Criterion 3 for additional details.)

The research and scholarship activities of the university underpin the university value, "research and artistry in creating, transmitting, expanding, and applying knowledge." Expectations for faculty scholarship are articulated at the college and department/school level, and scholarly activity is a

requirement for tenure and promotion. The [Division of Research and Innovative Partnerships](#) encourages faculty to meet academic and professional requirements through a number of initiatives including training and support through the [PI Academy](#) and [Research and Artistry Grants](#); support for external grants and leveraging of innovation through [Sponsored Programs Administration](#) and the [Technology Transfer Office](#), as well as sharing scholarship regionally, nationally, and internationally through opportunities for faculty travel and collaborations such as [Innovation Ecosystems](#) and the [Engaged Learning, Teaching and Scholarship Conference](#). This aspect of NIU's mission is reflected in two of the Acting President's FY2018 goals: to [increase capacity for research, innovation and regional engagement](#) and to [increase student satisfaction and engagement](#).

The Division of Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development ([OERD](#)), through its [numerous activities](#) and [extensive interaction with partners](#), helps the institution translate and match regional needs and opportunities to university expertise and resources. This is but one way in which NIU demonstrates the university value of "commitment to a public purpose addressing regional, state, national, and global challenges and opportunities."

1.B.3

NIU's mission articulates the university's value of "a community of diverse people, ideas, services, and scholarly endeavors in a climate of respect for the intrinsic dignity of each individual" and "access to the institution for a broad spectrum of students, preparing them to be lifelong learners and productive, socially conscious citizens." In alignment with these values, NIU's recruitment and admission programs, extensive financial aid advising and support, and targeted graduate fellowships and awards demonstrate NIU's student-centered approach. Numerous academic and student support programs meet the needs of a diverse student body including off-campus, veteran, nontraditional, and place-bound students. The university's online programs and regional campuses in Hoffman Estates, Rockford, and Naperville provide convenient access to students seeking to complete degrees or earn advanced degrees. NIU has long provided academic opportunities to a range of students through initiatives such as:

- The Counseling, Help, and Assistance Necessary for a College Education ([CHANCE](#)) Program
- [Military and Post-Traditional Student Services](#)
- The [University Honors Program](#)
- Graduate [assistantships](#) and [fellowships](#)
- The [academic success program](#) in the College of Law
- [Articulation with Illinois community colleges](#) under the Illinois Articulation Initiative
- [Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning](#)
- The College of Business [Passport Program](#)

Sources

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- OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT_FY 18 Presidential Goals - Goal 5
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1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Argument

1.C.1

NIU is a multicultural community that cultivates, promotes, and celebrates diversity broadly, including but not limited to ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, ability, LGBTQ identification, and age. Approximately one-third of NIU's students come from [diverse ethnic backgrounds](#). The student body also includes [more than 1,000 international students](#) and has a long tradition of serving [non-traditional students](#). Although NIU's [faculty is less diverse](#) than the student body, [concerted efforts](#) are under way to diversify the faculty.

NIU's role in a [multicultural society](#) extends to the research and scholarship, creativity and artistry of our faculty, staff, and students. Some of the resources and services that address NIU's multicultural role include:

- [Presidential Commissions](#) that advise the administration on matters related to minorities, women, people with disabilities, and sexual orientation and gender identity. Some of these have been in existence for over 30 years
- [Campus resource centers](#) that address the needs of the NIU community through information, support, and co-curricular programming
- Development through [Global NIU](#) of graduates with a global perspective supported through internationally oriented curricula, study abroad opportunities, international training programs, and interdisciplinary centers for international studies
- [Military and Post-Traditional Student Services](#) whose focus is on students who live off campus, commute, have children, are military students, and/or are over the age of 24
- [SILD](#) which provides oversight for a number of student organizations

NIU evaluates its commitment to multiculturalism through regular assessment of activities and programs. Examples include (and are further described in Criteria 3 and 4):

- The program review process that includes explicit discussion of programmatic measures of diversity in faculty and student demographics and in course work
- Goals of the general education program, [Academics PLUS](#), which are designed to help students develop an appreciation of multiculturalism and cultural diversity through [Academics PLUS course offerings](#)
- [Annual resource center reports](#) from centers serving diverse populations

1.C.2

Since the 2014 HLC review, NIU has been particularly active in building on existing and new

initiatives to celebrate diversity, to prepare students for a global workforce, and to enrich the lives of all who live, study, and work at the university. A Diversity and Inclusion Task Force was convened in May 2014 and was charged with exploring issues that pertain to diversity and inclusion at NIU. Their report, [issued in Fall 2014](#) laid the groundwork for the hiring of [NIU's first Chief Diversity Officer](#).

With the creation of the position of Chief Diversity Officer and the reorganization of diversity efforts under the Office of Academic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion ([ADEI](#)), NIU has moved forward in making lasting institutional changes by coordinating existing and providing [many new opportunities](#) to engage in discussion and training:

- Nationally recognized [Diversity Dialogues](#) that provide monthly forums for members of the university community to talk openly and honestly on complex and important diversity topics
- Individual [Conversations on Diversity+Equity](#) workshops on request
- [Breaking Barriers](#) support group providing resources for first-generation college students
- [“De Mujer a Mujer”](#) Latina Assistance Program providing academic support designed to increase the retention and graduation rates of Latinas
- [Mandatory Title IX/Sexual Misconduct and Affirmative Action](#) training for new and continuing employees
- Monthly community-sponsored [Beloved Community Dinners](#), bringing together area residents and the NIU community for discussion of topics such as police relations with the minority community and undocumented student support
- [Social Justice Summer Camp for Educators](#) to investigate multicultural and social justice education
- [SHARE Survey](#) designed to better understand the experiences and needs of NIU students related to sexual harassment, assault, and relationships
- [ADA accommodations](#)
- College of Law's [embracing diversity series](#)
- [UNIV 101 Common Read](#)
- [Northern Pact](#) instilling a commitment in NIU students to be purposeful, just, caring, open, disciplined, and celebrative

NIU fosters intercultural competency and engagement among all members of the campus community and beyond with various curricular programs. Diversity is addressed throughout the undergraduate curriculum beginning with the requirement of general education courses to address diversity content. In AY2016-2017, NIU undertook a campus-wide review of undergraduate curricular and co-curricular offerings to identify courses that met the [baccalaureate human diversity requirement](#). Students must complete this requirement either through a designated human diversity course or a non-course-based (co-curricular) experience. Human diversity is defined as gender, ability, race/ethnicity, citizenship, wealth/material resources, religion, age, and sexual orientation. Satisfactory completion of this requirement includes an analysis of power and addresses people's differing access to resources/opportunities in the present or past. The development and ongoing implementation of this requirement exemplifies the spirit of shared governance that is one of NIU's core values: in addition to an advisory committee that drafted the requirement, the Faculty Senate and University Council ratified it, and individual units proposed courses or experiences to be approved by the different academic colleges in 2017. The 2017-2018 undergraduate catalog lists [the courses](#) approved by various colleges to meet this requirement.

The [Committee for Academic Equity and Inclusive Excellence](#) was established in 2017 to consolidate oversight of curricular initiatives. This committee identifies academic achievement gaps, including those among students from underserved populations; implements effective, sustainable, and measurable intervention strategies to ensure equity for all students; monitors the implementation of

the human diversity degree requirement; promotes multicultural curriculum transformation in partnership with OSEEL and academic diversity centers; supports collaboration between academic centers' minors and certificates; and provides opportunities for faculty participation in academic diversity programs and initiatives.

These programs and resources are complemented by those of [AAEC](#) within Human Resource Services ([HRS](#)). This unit promotes the NIU mission through the creation of a campus environment that represents a community of diverse ideas, people and services; is free from unfair, unequal and/or discriminatory treatment; complies with labor and employment laws, and encourages training and education as an opportunity to learn and prevent discriminatory treatment. AAEC oversees affirmative action recruitment, [Title IX compliance](#), [ADA accommodations](#), and [collective bargaining and contract administration for all unions](#) at NIU. These functions are essential to NIU's strategic mission and operations, are required by law, and result in a fair and equitable climate. To strengthen this relationship, and put greater focus on active promotion of diversity rather than a focus on compliance, the affirmative action and training functions of AAEC are in the process of transferring from HRS to ADEI.

Sources

- DIV ACADEMIC AFFAIRS_2017-2018 Undergraduate Catalog_Human Diversity Baccalaureate Requirement
- DIV ACADEMIC AFFAIRS_Center for Black Studies_Talented Tenth
- DIV ACADEMIC AFFAIRS_College of Law_Embracing Diversity Series
- DIV ACADEMIC AFFAIRS_Department of Curriculum and Instruction_Social Justice Summer Camp
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- DIV ACADEMIC AFFAIRS_First and Second Year Experience_Common Reading Experience
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- OFFICE OF THE EVP AND PROVOST_Affirmative Action and Equity Compliance_Title IX
- OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT_Presidential Commissions

1.D - Core Component 1.D

The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Argument

1.D.1

Education is NIU's primary purpose, and the university community undertakes the opportunities and challenges of this public obligation with a focus on its core mission to advance knowledge by contributing to the development of an educated citizenry, by pursuing answers to new questions, and by collaborating and sharing knowledge for the greater public good. This is demonstrated through NIU's impact within the [local and regional community](#) and within the [global community](#).

NIU [graduates contribute](#) to a variety of sectors through their employment in businesses, health agencies, K-12 schools, professional firms, non-profits, and government agencies.

NIU's instructional mission and the development and sharing of knowledge are the primary drivers of the institution. NIU understands that its mission is accomplished in an atmosphere of support for the teaching, research and artistry, outreach and engagement that are the hallmarks of a comprehensive university education. Through NIU's course offerings and place-based public engagement activities, the university provides counsel, collaboration, services, and support to stakeholders throughout the region. Criterion 3 includes extensive discussion of how NIU's academic programs, particularly its general education program, Academics PLUS, a core component of NIU PLUS, reflects a commitment to education for the public good. NIU's long-standing commitment to [supporting nontraditional students](#) across its service region is specifically addressed by a number of options for working adults seeking degrees, certificates, or other educational credentials, either online, on campus or at one of three regional centers.

1.D.2

As a public university, NIU does not have investors, a parent organization, or external interests to compete with the university's educational role.

1.D.3

NIU's faculty and staff are [committed to public and professional service](#) and are encouraged to participate in opportunities from local to international settings to serve in academic and organizational advisement, mentoring, and other student-oriented service. OERD has initiated and [coordinates a wide range of university/stakeholder collaborations](#), provides centralized support for numerous outreach activities of the seven colleges and collaborates with various university units to deliver non-

credit programs and regional development activities. The division's programming is consistent with the university's core values of access, engagement, and public purpose, and its mission contributes to the university's ability to capitalize on its unique location in a "global region" - one of the few areas in the US that impacts international economics, politics, and the arts. This unique location allows NIU to operate on a global stage, sharing teaching and learning, advanced technologies, research, cultural artistry, and technical expertise, while building relationships with local and regional communities.

Examples of the numerous roles OERD serves throughout the region include the following:

- [Center for P-20 Engagement](#), which is recognized by the state for its coordinated work in more than two dozen multi-college initiatives, partnerships, and projects with external partners
- [Civic Leadership Academy](#), which was created in 2004 by the Center for Governmental Studies as a leadership skills development program for elected and appointed leaders and managers in government and nonprofit agencies. [150 workshops](#) have been offered with total enrollment of over 2,050 attendees
- [Digital Convergence Lab](#), which brings new media technologies to the attention of the campus community, supports their use, and engages in research and development activities leading to the creation of innovative applications and tools
- [eLearning Services](#), which helps NIU faculty and instructors develop online non-credit courses and programs that speak to the workforce development and life-long learning need of the northern Illinois region
- [Continuing Professional Education](#), which offers non-credit courses that provide credentials and certifications necessary for workplace advancement
- [Center for Child Welfare and Education](#), which promotes academic success and social competence in school for children educationally at risk
- [Center for Economic Education](#), which provides K-12 teacher workshops and sponsors student activities designed to develop competencies in financial literacy while also improving achievements in reading and mathematics
- [Lorado Taft Field Campus](#), which offers residential outdoor education programs for elementary and middle-school students from throughout the northern Illinois region
- [Northern Public Radio](#), whose programs reach listeners throughout southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois along with a national and international audience via the web stream
- [STEM Outreach](#), which increases science, technology, engineering, and mathematics literacy through school programs, public lectures, camps, workshops, and the overwhelmingly popular annual [STEMFest](#)

NIU's [strong commitment](#) to its outreach and engagement roles and to the northern Illinois region is demonstrated in many ways throughout the institution. Program Prioritization has generated considerable reflection on the ways in which NIU fulfills those roles and has led to several [significant organizational changes](#) designed to increase the integration of the outreach and engagement agenda with other aspects of NIU activities. OERD provides institutional leadership in [increasing the number of university partnerships](#). The division's central administrative functions now encompass increased responsibility for non-credit activities. For example, OERD has been charged with [coordinating conference and event management](#) functions across the university. Likewise, programming directed at non-credit training programs is now being centralized by the [Continuing Professional Education Office](#) in OERD. Reciprocally, to allow OERD to focus on its goals, and to better align responsibilities and capacities, other components that have been lodged within OERD have been transferred to other divisions. For example, marketing functions now reside in the Division of Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications and support for [online and off-campus for-credit courses](#) and degree programs has been transferred to Academic Affairs.

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1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

Summary

NIU's mission is clear and articulated publicly. The mission has guided NIU as it has experienced leadership changes and operated in an environment of state funding uncertainty. The result, in part, has been the undertaking of an evaluation of all operations through a multi-year Program Prioritization process, optimizing resource allocation with its mission and priorities. In line with its mission, NIU has also improved overall transparency, increased diversity, and provided better opportunities for students in general education, hands-on learning, and career opportunities through NIU PLUS. NIU's primary mission remains to engage and educate students and to respond to the needs of the region.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

Argument

Northern Illinois University's (NIU) financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions are conducted with integrity. The work of the university is overseen by the NIU Board of Trustees (BOT), which is charged with operation, management, control, and maintenance of the university as stated in the [NIU Board of Trustees Bylaws](#), and conducted by the staff and faculty who work to fulfill the mission of the university. [Article VII of the Board of Trustees Bylaws](#) states “The President shall have the authority and responsibility, within the framework of policies established by the Board for the organization, management, direction and general supervision of the University and shall be held accountable by the Board for the effective administration and management of the institution.”

Over the past several years, a number of changes in administration have taken place at the university. The Board saw the university through a change in the presidency in 2017. The Board’s consideration of the university’s best interest and actions taken are seen in the changes made to [processes for hiring a new President](#) after an [OEIG investigation](#), which held NIU's then President responsible for mismanaging NIU resources. In June 2017, President Doug Baker voluntarily resigned and Acting President Lisa Freeman was appointed. As Dr. Freeman was at that time holding the post of Executive Vice President and Provost (EVPP), an Acting EVPP was also [appointed](#). The Acting President has consistently shown her dedication to an [open campus dialogue and transparency in her NIU-focused agenda](#), providing information on all travel and other related expenses she has incurred as Acting President of NIU. The Board made a purposeful decision to hire the Acting President for a two-year period to ensure consistency and stability in the uppermost leadership and to allow time for an inclusive and transparent process of [selecting a new President](#) to unfold. Also since 2014, new deans have been hired per established shared governance processes in the Colleges of Business, Education, Engineering and Engineering Technology, and Visual and Performing Arts. The Colleges of Law and Liberal Arts and Sciences currently have interim and acting deans, respectively.

The NIU Constitution and Bylaws address [personnel processes and procedures](#), committee charges, [appeals processes](#), and [grievance procedures](#). The University Council (UC) [bylaw amendment process](#) was modified by [vote in 2016](#) to “ensure the University Council is able to conduct its business effectively and to enable the University Council to effect change it deems necessary in a timely manner” and in the best interests of the university.

The university maintains policies to cover the professional behavior of faculty, staff, and students. In 2017, the university started the development of a [policy library](#) in order to provide an accessible source where all university policies will be housed. The process is ongoing at this time and an internal

search is underway for a [policy librarian](#) to facilitate the organization of the materials and a website that will provide easy access, for all constituents, to university policies.

NIU's Human Resource Services ([HRS](#)) is committed to recruiting, supporting, and retaining high quality faculty and staff to support the mission of the university and to serve NIU students. Employment opportunities at NIU are posted on the HRS website and applicants submit materials through the [applicant tracking system in PeopleAdmin](#). This system maintains information on all categories of applicants and employees including faculty, supportive professional staff (SPS), civil service, temporary extra help workers, and post-docs. HRS supports search committee processes and [provides resources](#) to committees including guidance on best practices, prohibited employment inquiries, and confidentiality agreements, among others.

Job postings include key information on items including posting types, union/non-union status, primary responsibilities and duties, and minimum qualifications. Examples include recent postings for the [Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies](#) and an [Assistant Professor](#) in the School of Art and Design. Verification of credentials of future employees is also conducted within this system.

To maintain integrity in its academic programs, NIU has a rigorous process of program review, has undertaken a comprehensive [Program Prioritization](#) process, and ensures that members of its instructional corps are well-qualified to teach students enrolled in credit-bearing courses. NIU's [Faculty Credentials Policy](#) establishes the minimum standard for ensuring all instructional faculty and staff are qualified to teach courses to which they are assigned and complies with the Assumed Practices of the HLC. A [Faculty Qualifications Reporting process](#) occurs in OnBase beginning at the department level. These processes are discussed further in Criterion 4.

[Annual ethics training](#) and oversight by the university [ethics officer](#) is ongoing to ensure compliance with state laws and university rules regarding employment. NIU's [Ethics Office](#) supports its commitment to integrity by providing guidelines for complying with NIU policies and for lawful conduct, and by working in conjunction with other campus units to meet standards of ethical behavior. In the years 2014–2017, [7,569; 7,632; 7,083; and 6,674](#) employees (respectively) completed ethics training. In 2017, annual [Title IX compliance training](#) was added for all faculty, staff, and students. Affirmative Action and Equity Compliance monitors the successful completion of the Title IX training: Spring 2016 saw 2,171 employees completing the module; in Spring 2017, 8,860 students and 3,344 employees completed the module; and in Fall 2017 10,219 students completed the module. New students participate in [Haven training](#), an alternative means for students to meet the annual Title IX training requirement. Since the Fall of 2014, 12,753 new students have participated in Haven training. HRS offers information to NIU constituents on [life events](#) and resources to assist in managing these events. HRS also offers trainings in areas such as [management, affirmative action, and customer service](#). Other offices provide additional support, such as [FERPA](#) training offered jointly by Registration and Records and General Counsel, and [Human Subject Research](#) trainings offered by the Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships ([RIPS](#)) that ensure compliance and support integrity across the university.

The university continuously reviews the internal budget process and addresses issues presented by the continuing state fiscal issues in a manner that is thoughtful and works to minimize any negative impact upon students. NIU maintains practices of internal and external audits. These are discussed in Criterion 5. The Executive Budget Committee ([EBC](#)), co-chaired by the Chief Financial Officer and Vice President for Administration and Finance (CFO) and the EVPP, was established following the release of the Program Prioritization Task Force Recommendations in 2016 and performs the following [functions](#):

- Reviews the budget development processes
- Advises EVPP & CFO in preparing their budget recommendations to the President
- Assists in the monitoring of the budget
- Assists in the involvement of the larger NIU community in the budget process

The EBC has worked over the past two years to develop a more public, transparent, and stakeholder involved budget process. A recent [update on the budget](#) from the EBC co-chairs was shared with the campus community.

The CFO, in partnership with the EVPP, and senior administration seek input on budget issues from the faculty and staff through consultation with the [Resources, Space and Budget Committee](#) of the UC. University purchases are made in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. “[Procurement Services and Contract Management](#) is responsible for adhering to all requirements of the [Illinois Procurement Code](#), the Procurement Rules of the Chief Procurement Officer for Public Institutions of Higher Education, Minority and Female Business Enterprise Act, applicable federal/state laws and regulations and University policies and procedures.” [Purchases over specified dollar amounts](#) are sent out for bid requiring several quotes and, when possible, bids are sought from Business Enterprise Program (BEP) qualified vendors. BEP-qualified vendors represent a diverse group in terms of at least a 51% minority, women, or disabled ownership.

The university is committed to compliance and responsible stewardship of institutional resources, including adherence to bond covenants. In response to questions raised about NIU's use of bond proceeds in support of campus activities, NIU pursued a third party review to provide clarification and direction. A [summary of this review](#) can be found on the Division of Administration and Finance website.

NIU's Composite Financial Index (CFI) has fallen within the zone of 0 to 1 during the 2017 and 2018 HLC Institutional Update Reporting. Prior to that, in 2016 (based on 2015 reporting), NIU's CFI was 1.45, and above the zone. Per NIU's Controller's Office, the key contributor to the reduced CFI score has been the ~\$60 million reduction of State appropriations in FY2016. The Net Operating Revenue Ratio which measures NIU's financial performance from operating activities, and the Return on Net Assets measuring the economic return on the use of those assets, have experienced the most direct impact. The university has maintained an aggressive stance on expense control throughout, including tighter controls and evaluation of purchases through a mission critical filter. The receipt of both the FY2017 and FY2018 appropriations helped the Operating Revenue Ratio, but was not enough to offset the loss of State appropriations.

Another issue that has faced NIU is the [Illinois Auditor General Report](#) for FY2017 released in March 2018 that found that NIU had inadequate control over property and equipment. The university takes these findings seriously, and senior leadership is working to address these, in some cases, chronic issues, in a timely manner. In collaboration with the BOT, the Acting President has adopted a number of Presidential Goals, with one specifically focused on [increasing transparency and decreasing critical audit findings](#).

Regarding the audit finding, past practices did not immediately recognize and account for missing assets. Changes were made in FY2017 where all items not found during this inventory cycle were recorded as missing with no carry-over. This resulted in a larger spike of missing items than had been seen in previous years. Moving forward, NIU is formalizing the network of responsible officers and property custodians across campus. These individuals are responsible for ensuring property is properly located, records are updated, and missing/unaccounted investigations are initiated and reported to senior leadership. This reporting allows the leadership to take appropriate and timely

actions to improve accountability for the future. Leveraging this network of personnel across the campus allows Property Control staff to randomly sample inventory to ensure this process is effective in monitoring and accounting for university property.

The results from the FY2018 inventory effort (.10% unaccounted [\$268,787] in FY2018 versus .64% unaccounted [\$1,624,739] in FY2017) demonstrate the effectiveness of the new process which can be executed with fewer Property Control staff and increase the level of accountability for those directly responsible for the property. NIU notes that there is a reasonable expectation that a small percentage of items may go missing or are not found during a specific inventory cycle. NIU recognizes the need to apply an appropriate level of investigation on the unaccounted items so control processes can be reviewed and, if necessary, responsible personnel held accountable.

Auxiliary services, primarily housed within Student Affairs, adhere to a five-year assessment plan and external standards where relevant. For example, [Housing](#), [Dining](#), and the [Student Association](#) use the [Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education](#) for assessing their standard practices.

Athletics oversight is guided by the [NCAA Division I regulations](#).

The [Ombudsperson](#), [Faculty Personnel Advisor](#), [Supportive Professional Staff Personnel Advisor](#), and [Operating Staff Personnel Advisor](#) positions all provide paths and mechanisms for faculty, staff, and students to seek advice and guidance.

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2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Argument

NIU's website and printed materials provide clear and complete information to students and the public. The NIU webpage is compatible with various electronic devices, both desktop and mobile. An [A-Z index](#) provides easy access to department and other area pages within the website. A Quick Links option appears on each page and directs students, faculty, staff, and other users to many of the most frequently visited tools. The [Program Prioritization](#) web pages include reports, narratives and a timeline on maintaining and improving the quality of [academic](#) and [administrative](#) programs. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness ([IE](#)) prepares the annual [Data Book](#), the [Student Profile](#), and an overview of all [accredited programs](#). NIU's [Fast Facts](#) web page summarizes enrollment, student/instructional faculty ratio, academic information, student profile, tuition and fees, history, and governing structure. Mandated [disclosures](#) in compliance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act ([HEOA](#)), the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act and the Student Right to Know Act are updated annually. The NIU homepage [By the Numbers](#) section helps students discover facts such as, the 100+ undergraduate programs, 13:1 student to faculty ratio, and annual undergraduate research participation. Details regarding NIU's [accredited programs](#) and [2018 Assurance Review](#) are found by searching "Higher Learning Commission" on the website. NIU's affiliation with HLC is clearly delineated on [NIU at a Glance](#) and [Accreditation and Affiliation](#) pages.

The [Undergraduate Catalog](#), [Graduate Catalog](#) and [College of Law Student Handbook](#) are published annually online and detail program and course descriptions, admission policies, expenses, faculty credentials, financial aid, graduation requirements and university services as well as identify NIU as a public institution. NIU's [undergraduate degree programs](#) and the [Graduate School](#) web pages also include program descriptions. The [Transfer Admissions](#) page provides information on partnerships with community colleges, transfer admissions requirements, deadlines, and application materials, as well as an FAQ section for students interested in transferring to NIU.

[HRS](#) provides an [Employee Conduct, Accountability and Ethics in the Workplace reference guide](#) summarizing federal, state, and university policies and regulations for NIU employees. [Operating Staff](#) and [SPS](#) handbooks feature policies and procedures for these employment classifications. HRS also publishes NIU's [student employment](#) policies regarding employment types, eligibility requirements, payroll information and expectations.

Institutional Research, within IE, gathers, summarizes, and analyzes data on students, faculty, staff, costs, programs, and policies; these data are available on the [Institutional Research](#) website. NIU has historically participated in the Voluntary System of Accountability ([VSA](#)), which provided information about our student experiences and learning outcomes. As the VSA is in transition, the College Portrait is currently on hold awaiting updates from VSA.

The [Office of the Bursar](#) provides the [NIU Planning and Cost Estimator](#) to estimate tuition, mandatory fees, housing, and other costs. The [Financial Aid and Scholarship Office](#) links to the [NIU Planning and Cost Estimator](#) and [Net Price Calculator](#) from its [What Are My Costs?](#) web page. Students can search for NIU's available scholarships through a campus-wide scholarship application system, [Academic](#)

[Works](#), through which they can apply for multiple scholarships with a single application submitted by a common campus deadline.

Over the past four years, NIU's Division of Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications ([EMMC](#)) has transformed external communications to feature a student-focused point of view, aligning and improving communications at every step of the prospective student's journey. EMMC created an integrated content strategy across all platforms to help segment content to reach key audiences: primarily prospective and current students, with faculty, staff, alumni and families as secondary audiences. Front-page content on the NIU Home Page includes [Huskie Spotlights](#), highlighting student profiles and testimonials, as well as profiles of key faculty and staff. Similarly, the division created the student-run Instagram account, [HuskiesofNIU](#), where each week a current student takes over the account to showcase what life at NIU is like from their perspective. Redesign of the NIU Home Page and interior pages included the addition of "call to action" links throughout, such as "Visit," "Learn More" and "Apply." The [Undergraduate Admissions site](#) was redesigned to provide prospective students with quick, relevant, and easy access to information. A comprehensive campaign was launched that helps students to identify their own values and find academic programs that align with those values. Students also can now peruse easy-to-read [online descriptions of our many undergraduate degree programs](#). The goals of the photography and videography teams have shifted to producing multi-purpose content that contributes to enrollment or retention goals, resulting in higher quality visuals, which are key components in reaching prospective and current students. Additionally, EMMC has updated and personalized customer relationship management content and shifted a large portion of its advertising budget to digital, which is more likely to reach the student audience. The division also heightened efforts to celebrate student accomplishments through published stories, as well as through creation of an [online Dean's List](#). Finally, the division created a new searchable [Experts Guide](#) that has helped successfully increase placement of faculty experts in local and national news, enhancing the institution's national reputation.

NIU presents itself clearly and completely on all platforms including:

- Twice-weekly publication of [NIU Today](#), a daily web publication highlighting campus and other NIU-related items. Faculty, staff, and student recognitions are shared with the NIU community and public. Articles focusing on student events, workshops and trainings for students, staff, and faculty and other upcoming and recently-completed events are conveyed
- [NIU Newsroom](#), providing news about teaching, learning, and discovery and highlighting instances when NIU is in the news
- Integrated [social media](#)
- [Photography and videography](#), where students, faculty, and staff can obtain professional headshots to enhance their professional and online profile
- [Marketing and Creative Services](#) assists with the recruitment of faculty, staff, and students and incorporates [graphic design and production](#) for developing professional and attractive materials for programs, events, and exhibits
- Weekly [Email announcements](#), sent to the campus community identifying upcoming events and relevant deadlines
- [Website support and services](#) for departments using the university's official web templates
- [Northern Now](#), NIU's Alumni Association quarterly e-magazine
- [WNIJ/WNIU Northern Public Radio](#), the broadcasting arm of NIU providing in-depth news and information, serving as an emergency alert, housing a 24-hour classical music service, and offering an information service for print-impaired citizens throughout northern Illinois

University information is provided in compliance with the federal Freedom of Information Act

([FOIA](#)) and [Illinois Public Act 096-0542](#). Complex requests are submitted through the [University Information Requests](#) website, which is regularly updated with links to reports, minutes, reference documents, statistics, data, and resources. From 2014 through 2017, 1,673 [FOIA requests](#) were received. The average turnaround time on a FOIA request is four to five business days, as seen in this [illustrative example](#) of a FOIA request being processed by the university.

NIU publishes the [Annual Safety and Security Report](#) (the Clery Report) online and in print in compliance with the [Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act](#), the [State of Illinois Campus Security Enhancement Act](#) and [Violence Against Women Act](#). This report includes statistics for the previous three years concerning reported crimes that occurred on campus, in off-campus buildings or property owned or controlled by NIU, and on public property within (or immediately adjacent to and accessible from) university property. The report also offers institutional guidance on campus security policies concerning alcohol and drug use, crime prevention, the reporting of crimes, and other matters. The report is sent out to the university community, [posted on the NIU website](#), and presented to the BOT.

In accordance with the HEOA, NIU publishes the [Annual Fire Safety Report](#) online and in print to inform current and prospective students and employees of fire safety programs. The report is actively shared with the campus community via announcements and other mass electronic communication modes. The report contains fire prevention policies and practices, fire safety educational programs, description of fire safety systems in on-campus student housing facilities, emergency evacuation procedures, and fire safety statistics.

All NIU email addresses are automatically enrolled in the [emergency notification system](#) to receive [safety bulletins](#). Students and employees who provide their mobile phone number are automatically registered to receive emergency alert [text messages](#) in addition to emails. Students can register up to two additional contacts, such as their parents, to receive emergency alerts. Those with NIU login credentials can download the Everbridge app to receive emergency notifications.

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2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Argument

2.C.1

NIU's [BOT](#), established in 1996 by an Act of the Illinois General Assembly, consists of [seven members, appointed by the governor](#) to serve six-year terms. Additionally, [one student member](#), elected by the NIU student body, serves a one-year term. The BOT deliberated on, approved, and posted [FY2018 Board priorities](#) and [presidential goals](#) and metrics that illustrate the priorities of the institution, protect its mission, and enhance its reputation. FY2018 was the first year that the BOT has publicly approved and posted BOT priorities and presidential goals. Going forward, it will do so each fiscal year.

2.C.2

The BOT regularly interacts with both internal and external constituencies during its deliberations and is committed to transparency in its actions. The BOT adheres to the [Illinois Open Meetings Act](#), which requires "the Board and its committees [to] perform their duties in open session subject only to the limited exceptions authorized by state law. All reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate and provide balanced responses to requests from communication media and citizens who are interested in the action of the Board." Per BOT [Bylaws Article 3 and Article 4](#), the [BOT must publish all agendas and official meeting minutes](#) at least 48 hours in advance of any meeting to inform the public about [matters before the Board](#) and is required to provide time for [public comment](#) on issues that are to appear before the Board.

Additionally, trustees interact regularly with the President, Board Liaison, committee liaisons, and other vice presidents to discuss university matters. The Board also solicits advice from [shared governance](#) bodies and other university-related groups. For example, in anticipation of the upcoming presidential search, two Board members visited each shared governance group on campus, the Alumni Association Board of Directors, the Foundation Board, and the Council of Deans to solicit feedback on the timing of the presidential search, the presidential search process, and the qualities the campus expects in the new President. The progress in this regard is available on the [Presidential Search](#) website which also posts the membership and mission of the Presidential Search Preparation Committee ([PSPC](#)) and the minutes from the meetings of the [PSPC and its Ad Hoc Work Groups](#). In a spirit of transparency, the draft document of the [Presidential Profile](#) is posted on the website.

2.C.3

Trustees have taken [conflict of interest training](#) and sign conflict of interest [statements](#). They also must attend training required for all trustees at Illinois public institutions that cover [issues related to conflicts of interest](#) and take an [annual ethics test](#). Two trustees were longtime instructors on campus who stepped down from teaching once they were appointed to the BOT. Additionally, trustees recuse themselves from any voting in which they have a conflict of interest. The [BOT bylaws](#) provide explicit information regarding the actions that must be taken if an actual or potential conflict of interest exists.

2.C.4

The [BOT bylaws](#) identify two branches of authority for the university: the President and the UC. For Presidential authority: “The Board authorizes the President to develop institutional policies, implement procedures, and engage the university community in activities which fulfill the purpose of the mission of the university.”

The BOT, through its adoption of the Constitution and Bylaws of NIU, has empowered the University Council ([UC](#)) to:

- Establish the educational and academic policies of the university
- Be concerned with, and participate actively in, decisions made on other matters that may directly affect educational policies for which the UC is primarily responsible
- Act upon reports from designated committees, boards, commissions or councils whose actions affect the educational and academic policies of the university
- Advise on policies regarding academic salaries, sabbatical leaves, leaves without pay, tenure, and promotion. The UC has established a personnel committee which reviews and approves, in accordance with the university bylaws, policy recommendations concerning salary and all recommendations pertaining to tenure, promotions in rank, and sabbatical leaves
- Establish such standing and temporary committees as may be necessary for the discharge of the Council’s responsibilities; define the membership, jurisdiction and authority of such committees; resolve disputes among committees thus established; and act on the reports submitted by such committees
- Advise the President and the vice presidents on policies affecting the quality of student life on campus

The UC is [composed](#) of 31 tenured full-time, regular university faculty members; one faculty representative from the University Libraries elected by that faculty; the president of the Operating Staff Council (OSC) and one other OSC member; the president of the Supportive Professional Staff (SPS) Council and one other SPS member; the president of the Student Association; 15 additional student members; and 11 ex officio members.

The UC has [six standing committees](#) each of which reflects membership of the UC as a whole: Steering Committee; Rules, Governance, and Elections Committee; Academic Policy Committee; University Affairs Committee; University Council Personnel Committee; and Committee on Resources, Space, and Budgets.

Several committees and councils report to the UC. These include the [Academic Planning Council](#), [Baccalaureate Council](#), [Campus Parking Committee](#), [Committee for the Improvement of the Undergraduate Academic Experience](#), [Faculty Senate](#), [General Education Committee](#), [Graduate](#)

[Council](#), [Graduate Council Curriculum Committee](#), [Operating Staff Council](#), [Supportive Professional Staff Council](#), [University Assessment Panel](#), [University Benefits Committee](#), [University Committee on Advanced and Non-Teaching Educator Licensure Programs](#), and the [University Committee on Initial Educator Licensure](#). These committees advise NIU's leadership and staff on many aspects of the day-to-day operations of the institution.

As noted above, the UC has representatives from various campus constituencies. Each constituency also has its own governance body. The [SPS Council](#) provides for communication among the nearly 800 individuals in SPS positions and is a mechanism for communicating the interests and concerns of SPS to other university bodies. The [OSC](#) provides support and a means of communicating interests and concerns of individuals in operating staff positions to other university constituents. The [Faculty Senate](#) “serves as the official voice of the NIU faculty and as the authoritative representative liaison body between the faculty and the University Council, the president of the university, the executive vice president and provost, other vice presidents with respect to their responsibilities affecting the faculty, and the Board of Trustees.”

The [UC Personnel Committee](#) consists of tenured members of the faculty; its “duties are to provide colleges and the faculty with university criteria, current policies, and compliance dates for various personnel actions; to review and formulate recommendations for academic personnel for all proposed changes in university policy pertaining to salary increases, tenure, promotions in rank, and for sabbatical leaves; and to [report](#) such recommendations to the University Council.”

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2.D - Core Component 2.D

The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Argument

NIU is committed to supporting students, faculty, and staff in their rights to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. The university ensures that students are provided the opportunity to discuss openly all matters of public interest in a responsible manner. NIU has clearly established [freedom of expression procedures](#), activity registration forms, and a [bias reporting](#) process, and its [Freedom of Expression policy \(2016\)](#) validates NIU's commitment to open debate and free speech throughout the [campus](#) community.

NIU's [Code of Ethics](#) handbook clearly details the responsibilities of faculty and staff to pursue truth in learning without discrimination, to prevent the exploitation or harassment of students, and to have utmost respect for honest academic conduct ([Faculty Senate Bylaws, Article 9](#)). To ensure that these freedoms are upheld, grievance procedures are delineated in NIU Bylaws, Articles [7](#), [10](#), and [11](#). Faculty obligations and professional ethical standards are outlined in the Statement of Professional Ethics for Faculty in the Academic Policies and Procedures Manual (APPM) ([APPM; Section II. Item 23](#)). Likewise, in 2012, the SPS Council adopted a [Statement of Professional Ethics](#) as did the OSC its [Operating Staff Ethics Statement](#).

The [Employee Conduct, Accountability and Ethics in the Workplace](#) reference guide is made available to all NIU employees, demonstrating NIU's commitment to ethical compliance in the workplace. Each year, every State of Illinois employee is required, per the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act, to complete [ethics training](#) under the oversight of the Office of Executive Inspector General. The Statement on Professional Behavior of Employees University Collegiality Policy ([APPM; Section II. Item 22](#)) offers guidelines for creating greater collaboration among employees and shared governance groups, and outlines expectations for professional relationships among colleagues.

Full academic freedom is granted to faculty in their research and in the publication of such work. The APPM ([APPM; Section I. Item 6](#)), outlines numerous policies addressing intellectual property, patents, copyrights, tangible research property, and the rights and responsibilities of faculty members in regard to their research and artistry materials as well as procedures for handling disputes.

Faculty are expected to be active in research and artistry not only throughout the tenure process, but also throughout their academic careers. In the faculty's pursuit of research and artistry goals, the BOT recognizes the necessity to ensure academic freedom. [Article III, Section 6](#) of the BOT Regulations states that "the Board recognizes a responsibility to establish and maintain policies which encourage freedom of inquiry, discourse, teaching, research and publication, as well as a responsibility to protect members of the faculty and student body against forces within and without the university that threaten academic freedom."

Faculty and staff are recognized for their outstanding scholarship, teaching, and service with several annual awards: [Presidential Teaching Professors](#); [Presidential Engagement Professors](#); [Presidential Research, Scholarship and Artistry Professors](#); [Supportive and Professional Staff Presidential Award](#);

[Outstanding Service Award](#); and [NIU Board of Trustees Professorship](#).

In an ongoing effort to engage students in meaningful dialogue and exchange of ideas, NIU offers multiple opportunities including the [Diversity Dialogue series](#) which provides students with a safe space to participate in civil discourse and to listen and learn about complex and often challenging topics. Other freedom of expression events include student [rallies](#) and [vigils](#). Student Involvement and Leadership Development clarifies for students their rights and responsibilities related to [freedom of expression](#).

In rare cases, individuals may not comply with stated policies and procedures, and NIU responds in those cases. For example, in the Fall of 2017, a group, not having received authorization, began posting material on campus which included a hate speech. As soon as the unauthorized material was discovered, it was removed by university officials. In response to the postings and the possibility of further materials appearing, the Acting President released a [statement](#) addressing the postings indicating that hatred does not align with the principles of NIU, reiterating NIU's commitment to a safe environment and the freedom of expression.

Student and parent expectations are outlined in the six principles of the [Northern Pact](#) established by the Division of Student Affairs in 2008. The Northern Pact reflects the values of the NIU community and serves as a reminder to embrace a culture of connectedness. Students are asked to sign a Pact pledge each fall as a demonstration of their commitment to building a strong, diverse, and celebrative community as well as their pride in being a Huskie. [Scholarship opportunities](#) related to the Northern Pact became available in AY2014-2015 to recognize both incoming and current students who embody and demonstrate the Pact principles. Through the scholarship, the division recognizes the contributions of students who share a vision of service and personal responsibility.

[NIU's Student Code of Conduct](#) outlines NIU's student conduct policies and processes and explains the sanction options for those who admit to or are found responsible for a violation. Academic misconduct is addressed by [Student Conduct](#) within Student Affairs. Student Conduct offers resources for both students and faculty, including [academic integrity tutorials](#) and online [academic misconduct](#) incident reporting. In addition, the APPM outlines the steps necessary for a grade appeal process at both the [undergraduate](#) and [graduate levels](#).

Since 2010, the office has utilized Maxient's Conduct Manager software to maintain all files related to individual student and organizational conduct matters.

The Student Conduct office reports:

- Case information including the number of incident reports filed, the number of cases created from the filed reports, and the number of unique individuals involved in the created cases
- Hearing counts providing specific information on the number and types of hearings held for a given violation
- Sanction counts providing information on the number and types of sanctions issued for a violation

Students and organizations may receive multiple sanctions for a violation. These reports are available for [AY2014-2015](#), [AY2015-2016](#), [AY2016-2017](#), and [AY2017-2018](#).

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2.E - Core Component 2.E

The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, students and staff.

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Argument

2.E.1

The Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships (RIPS) promotes faculty, staff, and student success by facilitating and supporting innovative research, scholarship, and creative activities. To meet the mission of the RIPS office, several entities support research and scholarship at NIU such as Research Compliance, Integrity and Safety ([RCIS](#)); [Sponsored Programs Administration](#); [Technology Transfer Office](#); [NIU Press](#), the academic publishing arm of RIPS; and [Federal Relations](#).

For human subjects research, NIU has established an Institutional Review Board ([IRB](#)) comprised of faculty to review all research involving the use of human subjects following guidelines in accordance with federal regulations; to establish ethical considerations and best practices; and to review and approve research proposals according to [IRB guidelines](#). The research conducted by NIU faculty, staff, and/or students requires IRB approval before the research begins to ensure the health, well-being, and ethical rights of human subjects are protected. In addition, student and faculty researchers can use a short [screening form](#) to determine whether a scholarly activity constitutes research with human subjects requiring IRB oversight.

The [Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee](#) offers similar protections and compliance with regulations in regards to animal research. A third board, the [Institutional Biosafety Committee](#) exists to monitor and approve research involving controlled biological agents. All of these review boards are required by the federal government in order to ensure ethical, responsible research.

RCIS also houses the Laboratory Safety Committee ([LSC](#)), comprised of faculty and staff, which creates a safe research environment for faculty, students, and staff in the laboratory setting. The committee creates and approves policies regarding lab safety, investigates accidents, and gives approval for laboratory projects that carry a large amount of risk.

2.E.2

The [University Writing Center](#) is available to all students and provides guidance in brainstorming, understanding assignments, and drafting and revising work. The unit also assists students with [avoiding plagiarism and maintaining academic integrity](#). [SafeAssign](#), a plagiarism prevention tool, is available through Blackboard to students and faculty. Submitting papers through SafeAssign assists in determining when plagiarism has occurred and can also be used as an educational tool while students are working on a paper in order for the student to see areas where attribution may be missing.

Graduate students undertaking any thesis or dissertation research are required to complete an inquiry [IRB form](#) before the project starts to ensure that students and mentors have considered IRB requirements to monitor compliance. If the screening form reveals that IRB approval is needed, these graduate students undergo [IRB training](#).

As described in Criterion 2.D, [NIU's Student Code of Conduct](#) outlines student conduct policies and processes, and academic misconduct is addressed by Student Conduct. Resources such as [tutorials](#) to understand and [avoid plagiarism](#) are available for students. NIU also encourages faculty to include an [academic integrity statement](#) per NIU's [course syllabus policy](#). Follow-through on complaints is handled by the [Academic Misconduct](#) Hearing Board.

2.E.3

RCIS strengthens the culture and practice of responsible conduct of research at NIU through the [NIU Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#). Faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to adhere to the highest ethical and professional standards as they pursue research and scholarly activities. RCIS offers a variety of training, workshops, and tutorials in the ethical and responsible conduct of research and [NIU policies](#) (e.g., [human subjects](#), [animal research](#), [hazardous materials](#)). Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) [training](#) is also required for researchers.

RCIS also has oversight in regards to [research misconduct](#). NIU's Research Misconduct Policy identifies falsification, fabrication, and plagiarism as research misconduct and holds researchers accountable for their actions. The policy is modeled after federal regulations and is compliant with the federal [Office of Research Integrity](#)'s standards. RCIS also provides an [Authorship Policy](#), helping researchers determine who qualifies for author status on scholarly works, aiding faculty and providing a level of protection to graduate students.

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2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Summary

NIU is committed to integrity in all its functions and has established policies and procedures governing ethical and responsible performance in all university endeavors. NIU's commitment to ethical and transparent behavior is reflected, for example, in recent changes in senior administration, in revised FOIA request responses, in freedom of expression protections, in the collaborative Program Prioritization undertaking, and in corrective actions taken by the BOT to ensure clarity in financial and personnel practices. Access to policies and procedures is provided through the NIU website and is widely communicated both on campus and to constituents elsewhere. The BOT's delegation of operations is supported by an inclusive faculty, staff, and student governance structure through which academic and fiscal priorities are established and oversight of all aspects of the university mission is accomplished.

Sources

There are no sources.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

Argument

3.A.1

Northern Illinois University (NIU) offers courses and programs that are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded through its [45 schools and academic departments](#) offering [24 degrees](#) in a variety of undergraduate and graduate programs. The breadth of programs available to students is reflected in the number of majors, minors, certificates, emphases, and specializations included in the academic catalogs:

[Undergraduate](#)

- 57 undergraduate majors
- 73 undergraduate minors
- 88 emphases
- 6 pre-professional programs
- [38 Certificates of Undergraduate Study](#)

[Graduate](#)

- 69 graduate programs (excluding law)
- 66 specializations
- [79 Certificates of Graduate Study](#)

[Law](#)

- JD
- [6 Certificates in Law](#)

Academic programs are housed within NIU's seven colleges where students are taught, advised, and

engaged in educational experiences by college faculty and staff: [College of Business \(CBUS\)](#), [College of Education \(CEDU\)](#), [College of Engineering and Engineering Technology](#), [College of Health and Human Sciences \(CHHS\)](#), [College of Law \(CLAW\)](#), [College of Liberal Arts and Sciences \(CLAS\)](#), and [College of Visual and Performing Arts](#). In promoting transparency, departments/schools review course offerings, curricula, and handbooks as needed, paying particular attention to the currency of course offerings. [Changes are made](#) at the discretion of faculty and their respective departments/schools and as deemed appropriate by college and university curricular bodies.

To ensure quality and currency in academic programs, all programs are reviewed by the Academic Planning Council ([APC](#)) on an [eight-year cycle](#), with midterm reviews for assessment of student learning outcomes by the University Assessment Panel ([UAP](#)). The APC submits high-level [annual reports](#) on program review findings to the University Council and more in-depth reports to the Board of Trustees (BOT) and the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). The [2014](#), [2015](#), [2016](#), and [2017](#), annual reports include examples of recommendations for programmatic revisions presented to the BOT and IBHE. The UAP assists by reviewing and approving assessment plans for new programs and supporting campus-wide assessment activities in coordination with the [academic program review schedule of the APC](#). All academic programs must maintain assessment plans that include:

- Measurable student learning outcomes ([SLOs](#)) differentiating each program from similar programs
- [Curricular maps](#) identifying how curricular elements correlate with SLOs
- [Curricular maps](#) identifying how curricular elements correlate with baccalaureate outcomes
- Appropriate assessment methods [establishing benchmarks for student performance](#) and/or program level targets
- [Timelines and individuals responsible](#) for implementation of assessment methods

Assessment plans are routinely [evaluated by the UAP](#), and assessment data are benchmarked against programmatic targets for successful student performance. In addition, programs submit [annual assessment updates](#) demonstrating departmental progress toward implementation of assessment plans to which Accreditation, Assessment and Evaluation ([AAE](#)) responds. Aggregated data are analyzed and reported annually ([2017](#), [2016](#), [2015](#), [2014](#)) to several shared governance bodies including the UAP, APC, General Education Committee ([GEC](#)), and Graduate Council for their review (see Criterion 4).

Evidence of NIU's adherence to programmatic rigor and requirements is also assessed by [external reviewers](#) and/or by programmatic and disciplinary [accreditation](#), or endorsements by relevant professional organizations. In addition, the quality and currency of NIU's programs can be demonstrated by the [pass rate of NIU students/graduates](#) on state and national licensure/certification exams.

3.A.2

All [individualized assessment plans](#) articulate program-specific SLOs that differentiate between programs at various levels. Three assessment plans for the [B.S.](#), [M.S.](#), and [Ph.D.](#) programs in Chemistry exemplify this. Assessment of learning outcomes begins with assessments at the individual [course level](#) as stated in [course syllabi](#), which translate to the [program-level SLOs](#).

At the undergraduate level, student learning outcomes for degree programs are aligned with the university's [baccalaureate learning outcomes](#), reflecting skills above and beyond content mastery that are required for success in the current job market. All undergraduate [academic units](#) must demonstrate how these outcomes are achieved within their programs. An example can be seen in the [B.S.Ed.](#)

[Special Education Assessment Plan](#).

In addition to specific requirements in the major (i.e., required/elective courses), the baccalaureate requirements include a minimum of 33 credits in foundational and general education coursework, a 30-hour residency requirement (i.e., 30 of the last 40 credits applied toward the baccalaureate must be completed at NIU), a minimum of 40 semester hours of credit at the 300-400 level, and a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.00.

All [assessment, UAP, program review, and APC materials](#) are stored in NIU's Blackboard system. NIU's Course Activity Documentation (CAD) system, through which instructional faculty report course section information and submit syllabi, complies with credit-hour reporting requirements and is available within [MyNIU Student System](#). The Chair of the Assurance Review Team has been given access to these systems.

NIU courses and programs promote the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills. Course numbering reflects offerings exclusively for undergraduate, graduate, or law credit. Graduate-level courses for which there exists an undergraduate equivalent cannot constitute more than 50% of the hours applied toward a graduate degree, and syllabi for these courses must clearly address the difference in rigor, learning outcomes, and assessment measures for undergraduate and graduate credit.

3.A.3

NIU offers most of its courses via a face-to-face mode, augmented and supported by various teaching-learning technologies that align with teaching pedagogies. In Fall 2017, 5.7% of courses were taught online, including both completely online and blended courses; 3.9% of the courses were offered completely online. Assessment methods and student evaluations are applied in each course at all levels to provide feedback on teaching effectiveness. The Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center ([FDIDC](#)) provides support for faculty ranging from customized training plans to online site development and workshops on best practices. NIU has adopted the [Quality Matters](#) benchmark for online course design to ensure that online courses adhere to consistent standards for content delivery and assessment.

NIU offers consistent [off-campus services](#) including courses and programs offered through various delivery modes. NIU divisions, colleges, and departments or schools provide the oversight for applying consistency, with support from the Divisions of [Academic Affairs](#); Outreach, Engagement, and Regional Development ([OERD](#)); and Information Technology ([DoIT](#)). NIU ensures that goals, outcomes/objectives, and curricula are delivered consistently throughout all of its delivery modes. No matter where a course is taught (at the NIU campus in DeKalb or elsewhere), it has consistent learning goals and holds students accountable to the same academic standards. NIU does not have a separate set of degree programs offered at additional locations. In some cases, such as Psychology 102 courses, there is a [common syllabus](#) for all sections of a single course, whether offered face-to-face or online. Assessment of student learning outcomes is consistent across all modes of delivery, and no differentiation is made on NIU transcripts for NIU courses delivered in non-face-to-face modes. NIU is consistent in applying the same [academic standards](#) to all programs regardless of delivery mode.

NIU's [Credit hour policy](#) is consistent with federal guidelines requiring all academic institutions to collect data related to enrolled-credit-hour definition. The [Course Activity Documentation System \(CAD\)](#) module, available within MyNIU Student System, was first implemented in Fall 2012. CAD provides [auditable data](#) on compliance with NIU's credit hour policy and also serves as a repository

for all course syllabi (see Criterion 4.A).

NIU ensures consistency by following uniform academic standards and processes applied to each program for curricular review, program review, and assessment criteria regardless of mode of delivery. For instance, the [M.S.Ed. in Instructional Technology](#) offers an online mode, while the [B.S. in Accounting](#) is offered face to face; in spite of the modality, both programs undergo the same academic reviews. When the same degree program is offered in varied delivery formats, such as the [Masters in Business Administration program](#) with five delivery formats, the [student learning outcomes](#) for each is the same.

Since the last HLC visit in 2014, NIU embarked on [Program Prioritization](#) which has helped the institution ensure closer alignment of degree programs with NIU's vision, mission, and strategic framework and has promoted data-informed administrative decisions regarding distribution of resources.

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3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

Argument

3.B.1 and 3.B.2

The [NIU Progressive Learning in Undergraduate Studies \(NIU PLUS\)](#) baccalaureate curriculum integrates general education coursework with engaged co-curricular learning, including service learning opportunities, and career preparation. NIU PLUS encourages students to customize their undergraduate experience while intentionally building essential connections across courses, applied learning activities, and professional development training. NIU PLUS helps students attain a sound liberal education and acquire sufficient general knowledge and intellectual versatility to enable them to become informed, resourceful members of society. The program provides a rigorous and thoughtful curriculum that integrates with major studies and builds a foundation for life-long learning, career success, and responsible citizenship. The curriculum, launched in 2016, is comprised of [Academics PLUS](#), [Engage PLUS](#), and [Jobs PLUS](#).

NIU's General Education Program ([Academics PLUS](#)) is designed, in conjunction with major studies and co-curricular learning, to assist students in developing competency in the [eight baccalaureate student learning outcomes](#) (BSLOs). At NIU, the general education goals are synonymous with the BSLOs. Academics PLUS is thoroughly embedded in and integrated with curricula across the university. Students must engage in coursework in [foundational studies](#) and [knowledge domains](#).

Academics PLUS creates considerably more flexibility and course options than the previous [General Education Program](#) which contained 144 courses, the majority of which were housed in a single college. Academics PLUS offers [219 courses across 6 undergraduate colleges, and 37 departments/schools](#). The engagement of all 6 undergraduate colleges has created increased university-wide ownership of the general education curriculum and strengthened the indispensable relationship between major and general education studies.

Prior to 2015, upper division courses comprised only 8% of the 144 general education courses. In Academics PLUS, 35% of the 219 general education courses are upper division, distributing the curriculum across the lifespan of the undergraduate experience and highlighting the importance of general education as a continuous process of learning. Academics PLUS also allows students to count up to 6 credit hours of general education coursework toward major requirements, relieving a burden for high credit load degrees.

In applying for a course to be included in the Academic PLUS curriculum, faculty identify [two BSLOs that their courses address](#) and the proficiency level at which the overall course content addresses each of these BSLOs: beginning, developing, or proficient. An overarching [curriculum map](#) identifies all the approved courses and which two BSLOs are addressed in each. This highlights the purposeful connection between course based outcomes and the BLSOs.

A signature component of Academics PLUS is a set of seven [Pathways](#) that allow students to thematically organize and customize their coursework within the framework of the program. While fulfilling general education requirements through a Pathway is optional, students who elect to do so receive the benefits associated with a focused and integrated course of study. An Academics PLUS Pathway is a body of coursework drawn from all [three knowledge domains](#) that examines a theme from various disciplinary perspectives, coalescing around a set of large questions that are central to the Pathway themes. [All Pathway courses](#) are required to contain collaborative learning activities, and each Pathway contains at least one course from each knowledge domain. Students earn a Pathway Focus transcript designation by successfully completing three courses in a single Pathway.

The [GEC](#), a standing committee of the Baccalaureate Council (BC), oversees Academics PLUS and [is responsible for](#) monitoring and evaluating the program, proposing policies and procedures for program evaluation, advising colleges and departments on continued improvement, and approving or removing courses from the program. In line with these responsibilities, the GEC oversees assessment of the BSLOs and reports regularly to the BC.

3.B.3

Every degree program at NIU engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to a changing environment. At the undergraduate level, all students are held accountable for the [BSLOs](#). At the graduate level and within the CLAW, students are expected to contribute knowledge to their fields. [SLOs](#) for all degree programs are made visible through AAE's website. Evidence of this can be seen in programmatic assessment (discussed in Criterion 4) and in the assessment of the BSLOs.

NIU has adopted a modified a set of the AAC&U Value Rubrics, [NIU's BSLO Rubrics](#), to meet and assess the BSLOs that guide the general education curriculum. These rubrics are optional for faculty use and can be tailored to student work in different disciplines, allow for meaningful aggregation of assessment results across disciplines, and show student development across time. The rubrics assist faculty in providing students with regular feedback on their academic work and their progress toward achieving proficiency in the BSLOs.

Academics PLUS courses are required to [identify two SLOs that their course addresses](#) at a specified level of proficiency. In addition, faculty establish a [Signature Assignment](#) for every course to assess student progress in each BSLO associated with the course. These assignments can include tests, papers, presentations, or any other type of assignment that is intentionally designed or adapted to assess student progress toward a BSLO. The GEC collaborated with faculty to refine individual Signature Assignments and reviewed each assignment submitted for the 219 general education

courses to ensure appropriate assessment of the BSLOs.

NIU's assessment of the Academics PLUS program assists faculty in providing students with regular feedback on their academic work, helps students assess their own progress, encourages assessment of authentic student artifacts from coursework as a routine part of the teaching/learning process, documents student achievement, and provides data that is usable for multiple decision-making and reporting purposes. NIU is developing a long-term data management system which will include a database to store all general education [assessment data and a guidebook](#) to explain data processing procedures. The easy-to-use online assessment tool will simplify both the assessment and reporting processes. Faculty will be strongly encouraged to adopt the online Blackboard assessment process to provide the GEC with the required assessment data. However, some may use their own assessment tools, as traditionally has been common practice.

3.B.4

NIU has a long tradition of providing access and opportunity for students from underserved populations (Pell-eligible, students of color, first-generation college bound) who come to college to achieve their personal and career goals, and also to make a difference in their families, communities, states, and nations. [Based on 2012-2016 fall cohorts](#), students from underserved populations collectively comprise 70% of NIU's student body: in [Fall 2017](#), 45% students of color, 43% low-income, and 52% first generation. The diversity of the student body is one of NIU's greatest strengths and represents an indispensable dimension of academic and cultural excellence. Recognizing this, senior leadership has invested in creating an environment that fosters equal outcomes for all admitted NIU students, where students feel welcomed and included and can see themselves thriving and growing academically, personally, and professionally. One fiscal and strategic investment is the addition of a full-time [Chief Diversity Officer](#) to help NIU in many aspects of [its diversity agenda](#), including developing a more systematic way of identifying equity gaps and solutions for reducing these gaps.

In 2015, NIU began identifying strategies to address parity and achieve equity through the critical evaluation of institutional barriers, policies, practices, or pedagogies that might impede success for all students. To achieve equal outcomes for all students and create a campus climate based on the principles of equity-mindedness, NIU launched large-scale initiatives that center around [access, academic equity, inclusion, and professional development and training](#). Objectives for these initiatives include:

- Identifying and eliminating academic equity gaps for students from underserved populations at the course level, in year-to-year persistence, and in graduation rates
- Identifying and implementing effective, sustainable, and measurable intervention strategies to ensure equity for all students. In Fall 2017, each college was charged with creating an [Equity Team](#) to develop a [College Action Plan](#) to address academic equity and issues surrounding inclusion and access
- Creating an enduring campus culture founded on [equity-mindedness](#)

Beginning in Fall 2017, in compliance with [IL Public Act 87-581](#), all NIU undergraduates have been required to satisfy the [Human Diversity baccalaureate degree requirement](#) either through a designated human diversity course, or a designated non-course based experience. To date, 126 courses have been approved as human diversity offerings, 36 of which are part of Academics PLUS. NIU's Human Diversity baccalaureate degree requirement reaffirms the university's commitment to human diversity

and its belief that inclusion, academic equity, and diversity represent indispensable dimensions of excellence. This requirement ensures that every student will have the opportunity to develop the cultural competency and awareness of social justice necessary to participate meaningfully in a multicultural and global society.

3.B.5

The strategic framework for NIU prioritizes research, engagement, teaching, and scholarship. NIU is classified as [R2: Doctoral University: Higher Research Activity](#).

NIU addresses complex, real-world challenges head-on with interdisciplinary, forward-thinking research, ranging from understanding cancer to protecting the environment to unraveling the mysteries of the universe. NIU's research expertise spans the globe in a wide variety of fields, including the sciences, humanities, arts, business, engineering, education, and health.

Faculty in all colleges engage in programs of scholarship and artistry that garner [national and international reputations](#). Examples include:

- [Brianno Coller](#) (Mechanical Engineering) was named the 2015 Illinois Professor of the Year
- [Dan Gebo](#) (joint appointment: Anthropology and Biology) was named the 2014 Illinois Professor of the Year
- [Jeff Einboden](#) (English) was named a Fellow by the [American Council of Learned Societies](#)
- [Valerie Garver](#) (History) received a prestigious research award from the [School of Historical Studies of the Institute for Advanced Study](#)
- [Valia Allori](#) (Philosophy) received a [National Humanities Center](#) Fellowship serving at the Center during AY2017-2018

Faculty and staff across campus have been recognized as [exemplars in engaged and experiential learning](#), and 2018 marked the first campus-wide celebration of [engaged learning, teaching and scholarship](#). Under the encouragement and supervision of faculty, NIU students at all levels have ample opportunities to participate in clinical and/or internship experiences in [CLAS](#), [CLAW](#), [CEDU](#), and [CHHS](#); [engage in collaborative and independent research](#); or create academic or artistic portfolios.

NIU is distinctive in engaging students in undergraduate research experiences from as early as freshmen year. The NIU [Research Rookies](#) program pairs undergraduate first-year, sophomore, and first-semester transfer students with [faculty mentors](#) in an area of interest to conduct a small-scale research project. The inaugural 2010 cohort was 17 students; since then, Research Rookies [student cohorts](#) have ranged from 31-50 students, including 7-10 returning as peer mentors. On average, there are 35 NIU [faculty mentors](#) participating each academic year. Recent research topics can be found in the [Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day Program](#).

The Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships ([RIPS](#)) supports research, artistry, and entrepreneurship by promoting professional development of faculty and graduate students, supporting the submission of grants and contracts, and pursuing connections that accelerate the creation, integration, and application of new knowledge. In 2017, 112 faculty and staff secured 307 awards totaling \$25.9 million in external funding. Overall, research funding increased 11% in 2017 and funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF) was up 69.92%. These awards provide critical funding to sustain and grow research across many NIU disciplines and provide research training opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students. The caliber and excellence of our diverse programs continues to be evident. In 2017, NIU saw funding from public nonprofit sponsors increase

by 39.48%, supporting a wide range of programs including institutional efforts to preserve and make public NIU's literary resources.

Within RIPS, a number of programs and services provide support and assistance:

- [Sponsored Programs Administration](#) supports faculty, students, and staff in securing and managing sponsored funding for research, instruction, service, and artistry. The office holds multiple [seminars](#) on grants administration and securing external funding
- The [Principal Investigators \(PI\) Academy](#) provides on-going professional development workshops and seminars to help faculty garner external funding by engaging with experts on the key elements of the external funding process. The Academy also facilitates an external mentorship program matching early career faculty with senior mentors from other institutions
- Various [Research and Artistry Grants](#) in the form of opportunity grants supporting activities to attract external funding; facilitation grants supporting research, scholarly, and creative activities; and completion grants culminating active research, creative, or scholarly project of professional significance. Grants can total up to \$15,000 per year
- [Research Methodology Services](#) assists PIs in research design, measurement, data management, analysis, and communication of results
- RIPS also provides [faculty travel support](#) for research and artistry presentations at national and international conferences. Travel support generally exceeds \$100,000 per year

NIU faculty conduct research on all seven continents while also working extensively in the university's own back yard, a dynamic region that includes Chicago, its flourishing suburbs, traditional manufacturing communities, natural prairie lands, and rich northern Illinois farmland.

Some specific examples demonstrating the wide variety of federally-funded research investigations by NIU faculty include:

- [Physics](#) - NSF and US Department of Energy funding to NIU's High Energy Physics program for research conducted on campus as well as at large collaborative experiments at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory and at CERN near Geneva, Switzerland. The research aims to shed light on the building blocks of nature
- [Geography](#) - NSF-funded research to track historically large thunderstorm complexes and try to understand how storms may change in the future under potential climate-change scenarios
- [Biological Sciences](#) - An NSF Faculty Early Career Development Program grant to support bioinformatics research to gain a better understanding of a class of plant and microbe enzymes that produce and breakdown carbohydrates. The research could contribute to the making of lower-cost biofuels, help prevent crop loss due to microbial pathogens, and benefit human health research
- [Environmental Geosciences](#) - NSF-supported exploration of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet grounding zone, considered an important piece of the puzzle for scientists working to predict the effect of climate change on rising seawaters
- [Chemistry](#) - National Institute of Justice-funded research to develop new user-friendly techniques and devices for recovering and visualizing invisible fingerprints in standard police work or covert operations

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- DIV RIPS_Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships_Faculty Travel Support
- DIV RIPS_Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships_Principal Investigator (PI) Academy
- DIV RIPS_Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships_Research and Artistry Grant
- DIV RIPS_Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships_Research Methodology Services
- DIV RIPS_Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships_Sponsored Programs Administration
- DIV RIPS_Sponsored Programs Administration_Seminar Series
- INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY_Dr. Garver Featured at IAS
- NATIONAL HUMANITIES CENTER_Dr. Allori Featured at the National Humanities Center
- NIU_Diversity and Inclusion Task Force Report 2014
- STATE OF ILLINOIS_Illinois Public Act 087-581

3.C - Core Component 3.C

The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
2. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
3. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
4. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

Argument

3.C.1

NIU provides students with a diverse set of high-quality programs and student services. To do so, NIU hires, trains, and provides professional development for a cadre of excellent [faculty](#) and [staff](#). With a [student to faculty ratio of 13:1](#), instruction is delivered by [tenured/tenure-track faculty](#) at all ranks, and a [variety of non-tenure-track teaching roles](#) including instructors, lecturers, and clinical faculty. Low student to faculty ratios promotes curricular and co-curricular engagement across the university. NIU participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) on a three-year cycle; the most recent [NIU NSSE Report from 2015](#) shows that our student-faculty interaction is at or above the median for first-year and senior students when compared to peer schools. [Alumni Survey](#) data consistently show that students are satisfied or highly satisfied with their educational experiences at NIU.

In addition to the formal policies outlined in the [Constitution and Bylaws](#), NIU's Academic Policies and Procedures Manual ([APPM](#)) serves as a comprehensive online resource for information on numerous topics ranging from personnel policies and procedures such as hiring procedures for [SPS](#), to curricular policies such as [curricular approval processes](#), policies specifically relevant to [GAs](#), and to more general policies such as NIU's [policy on intellectual property](#).

3.C.2

While long committed to ensuring that all instructional staff are appropriately qualified, NIU took additional steps to comply with HLC's [clarification to Assumed Practice B.2](#). NIU's compliance process is outlined in a [presentation](#) delivered at the HLC Annual Meeting in April 2018. NIU's [Faculty Credentials Policy](#) outlines clear criteria for teaching qualifications, assuring that all instructional staff are qualified to teach the courses to which they are assigned: minimum

qualifications reflect the degree earned and the allowable exceptions for both undergraduate and graduate teaching, and teaching in the CLAW. In general, the faculty member must have a degree higher than the students they are teaching. The credentials are assessed by Human Resource Services (HRS) upon hiring and by department chairs prior to assigning courses. The university has developed a [Faculty Qualifications Reporting \(FQR\) System](#) maintaining credential information for each member of the instructional corps and allowing for [monitoring and reporting on faculty credentials](#). The FQR system became fully operational in Fall 2017 and underwent an [initial audit](#) in Spring 2018, resulting in a comparative analysis of credentials and course assignment. The next FQR audit is scheduled for Fall 2018.

Graduate Faculty are responsible for advancing the university's mission at the graduate level through research, artistry, pedagogy, and instruction of graduate students. As such, established institutional policies determine membership at different levels, and requirements assure that Graduate Faculty have the credentials and record necessary to fulfill this [mission](#). A departmental-level review of all Graduate Faculty is conducted as part of the eight-year cycle of program review. The function and responsibilities of the Graduate Faculty and the qualifications for Graduate Faculty Membership and review process are published in the [APPM](#).

NIU also ensures a high caliber of instructional faculty through alignment of faculty hiring with Program Prioritization recommendations that link resource allocation with institutional priorities. For example, for FY2018, college deans identified faculty hiring requests in alignment with Program Prioritization rankings. In this example from the [CEDU](#) that year, the Dean explains how each hire aligns with the rankings. The request also specifically addresses all of the eight [Program Prioritization criteria](#) for academic programs. Contribution to Revenue Growth (aligned with criteria 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7); Contribution to Sustainability (aligned with criteria 1, 3, and 5); Contribution to Academic Excellence (aligned with criteria 1, 2, 3, and 8); and Contribution to Risk Management/Compliance (aligned with criteria 4 and 6). In FY2018, faculty searches across the university resulted in 45 successful searches with 15 searches being carried over into the [next cycle](#).

3.C.3

As prescribed by [Article 5](#) and [Article 6](#) of the university's bylaws, NIU evaluates all faculty according to their written approved department/unit-level procedures for merit, tenure, and promotion. Student feedback is solicited for all courses as outlined in the [APPM](#), and this feedback is incorporated into instructional evaluation of all instructional faculty. [Online course evaluations](#) are administered through Testing Services.

A majority of tenured and tenure-track faculty are currently being represented by the United Faculty Alliance (UFA) (CLAW faculty, faculty who are jointly appointed with external entities, and SPS with faculty rank are excluded from the union) during the negotiation of this group's first collective bargaining agreement with NIU; the agreement is expected to address future faculty evaluation mechanisms. Instructors are represented by the University Professionals of Illinois [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#), which defines the procedures for annual performance evaluations of instructors.

3.C.4

The university supports ongoing professional development for faculty and staff, particularly in the area of teaching and learning. The mission of NIU's [award winning FDIDC](#), is to support faculty, staff, and graduate teaching assistants in their teaching effectiveness, technology integration, and scholarship. The FDIDC provides myriad professional development workshops, institutes, and

seminars, free to all members of the instructional corps and schools/departments. A full list of [programs](#) indicates the variety of important pedagogical topics addressed. The center also provides programs for [GAs](#). Online resources for [teaching](#), [technology](#), and [research](#) are also available, including the [Instructional Guide for University Faculty and Teaching Assistants](#).

New faculty are offered services such as the [New Faculty Mentoring Program](#), [Writing Circles](#), and [Classroom Observations](#). Further, the [Teaching Effectiveness Institute](#), offered twice a year, is a signature event for FDIDC that draws both new and continuing faculty.

The FDIDC's [annual reports](#) from 2013 to 2017 note the offering of 640 professional development [programs](#) attended by 7,024 faculty and staff. They also provided 5,103 individual consultations for 783 persons. The investment NIU continues to make in FDIDC allows the university to stretch its professional development budget to reach more faculty and staff with onsite training. This is one way in which NIU has maintained excellent instructional faculty and staff while still effectively responding to an increasingly tighter fiscal climate within the state of Illinois.

3.C.5

Instructional staff are accessible to students through regular office hours required by [university policy](#) and defined at the departmental level. Faculty are encouraged to provide other methods to foster faculty-student interactions through electronic methods as well. The Course Syllabus Policy in the [APPM; Section III. Item 3](#) requires that office hours and other means of accessibility must be clearly defined in each syllabus.

3.C.6

There are three primary [employment classifications](#) for individuals at NIU: faculty, civil service, and SPS. While faculty credentialing at the time of hire and ongoing professional development are outlined above, credentialing of and ongoing professional development of civil service and SPS are also important at NIU. In the case of civil service employees, [testing and credentials assessment](#) are conducted by HRS staff in compliance with the [State Universities Civil Service System](#). Numerous [professional development opportunities](#) are provided through HRS in areas such as facility management, human resources, and project management. Workshops and conferences sponsored by NIU and professional organizations further [support professional development](#). For example, the [Academic Advising Summit](#) brings together academic advisors and academic support staff for a day-long conference to share resources, training, and best practices to improve student advising. DoIT also provides [training](#) for all employees in information and technology skills. NIU has been [recognized](#) for several of their professional development programs.

For SPS, [policies and procedures](#) are clearly outlined on the NIU website and in the SPS handbook. [Credentialing of SPS](#) hires is completed by [search committees](#) and hiring managers who seek these employees. Individual professional development opportunities are facilitated and tracked through the employee's unit per the [APPM; Section II. Item 10](#). Further group professional development opportunities are made available through the [SPS Council's Professional Development Committee](#).

Faculty and SPS are eligible for [sabbatical leaves](#) to engage in research and artistry, scholarly activities, and professional development to keep them current in their fields. Sabbaticals must produce tangible outcomes and may be granted no more frequently than every six years in alignment with [NIU's Guidelines for Sabbatical Leaves](#), and [sabbatical outcomes are reported](#) each year to the [BOT](#).

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3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).
5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Argument

3.D.1

NIU's commitment to all students is reflected in the many offices and services that support student success. Beginning with prospective students in admissions and orientation through to graduation, these services are offered based on the needs of NIU's diverse student population.

NIU's [Cultural Centers](#) provide a community of support for a diverse student body:

- Center for Black Studies ([CBS](#)) advocates on behalf of Black students and supports the university's commitment to multiculturalism and diversity
- Latino Resource Center ([LRC](#)) promotes a social justice agenda and offers mentoring programs, leadership programs, peer support groups, and academic advancement programs
- Asian American Resource Center ([AARC](#)) advocates for the unique needs of Asian American students, promotes cultural competencies, develops collaborations for engaged learning, and serves 18 Asian-interest organizations
- Gender and Sexuality Resource Center ([GSRC](#)) provides safe spaces and campus education, programming on compliance, mental health support, and campus events for women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer-spectrum (LGBTQ+) students
- Disability Resource Center ([DRC](#)) oversees accommodations for students with disabilities and students covered under Title IX, to uphold their right to equal evaluation in classrooms. The DRC infuses diversity into the university culture by educating all students, faculty, and staff about disability trends, etiquette, and issues
- Military and Post-Traditional Student Services ([MPTSS](#)) provides a central location for NIU student veterans and post-traditional students to enhance academic success from orientation to graduation. In 2015, NIU was [recognized](#) for best practices for military and veteran services

NIU supports students in their academic endeavors through a variety of student services from paying for their college experience to seeking employment after graduation:

- Financial Aid and Scholarship Office ([FASO](#)) is critical to recruitment and retention of talented

and deserving students. Scholarships diversify NIU's student population by providing financial assistance to academically talented students as well as those that have financial needs. [Approximately 80%](#) of NIU's students received some form of financial assistance, totaling over [\\$235 million](#) in grants, scholarships, student loans, federal work-study, waivers, and employment-based awards. For FY2017, institutional undergraduate scholarship expenditures, excluding athletic and foundation funded scholarships, was [\\$16.4 million](#)

- [Housing & Residential Services](#) promotes respect, individuality, and personal responsibility through facilities, programs, and the collaborative efforts of staff, student leaders, and campus partners. In collaboration with academic partners, Housing and Residential Services offers [six residential Living Learning Communities and six Special Interest Communities](#) giving students with shared interests hands-on learning experiences in a supportive community of peers
- Licensed psychologists, social workers, and counselors in Counseling and Consultation Services ([CCS](#)) provide free, confidential individual and group therapy, walk-in appointments, substance use and anger assessments, advocacy services, crisis response, and 24-hour on-call services. CCS helps students address personal challenges in order to develop the skills, abilities, and knowledge to empower them to take full advantage of their college experience
- University Recreation and Wellness ([URW](#)) serves the campus and local community by promoting and advancing healthy lifestyles through educational programs, participation opportunities, and support services. By providing inclusive recreation and educational experiences, URW fosters community cohesiveness and facilitates engagement, leadership, development, and collaboration. There are [six facility](#) locations offering group classes, nutrition coaching, personal training, and outdoor recreation activities. [Total program participation](#) increased 10.45% from FY2011 to FY2016, during which time 1,129 events were offered for student engagement
- Health Services ([HS](#)), supports student wellness and serves as the compliance office for the State of Illinois pre-enrollment immunization requirements, fulfills a public health role on campus in conjunction with the DeKalb County Health Department, maintains administration of the [Student Health Insurance plan](#), and provides sports medicine services for Intercollegiate Athletics. HS also supports the [Student Health Advisory Council](#) which presents students' ideas and concerns regarding health care to HS administration
- [Career Services](#) provides resources to help students effectively explore connections between academic programs and careers; identify interests and skills that relate to careers; and support students in their career decision-making. Resources for students include the [What Can I Do With My Major?](#); [career testing/assessment](#); and [exploring and applying to graduate schools](#). Career Services also helps students with the [Huskies Get Hired](#) system where internship and job openings for NIU students are posted by employers

3.D.2

Services are in place at NIU to assist students in registering for appropriate coursework and programs as they enter NIU and for advising throughout their academic careers.

All students are required to attend [new student orientation](#) where they meet with their academic advisors and select courses. The [Office of Orientation and Family Connections](#) and the [CHANCE](#) program have integrated efforts to ensure that [all staff involved in orientation are trained in cultural competency](#). The Division of International Affairs offers an [orientation](#) to meet the specific needs of NIU's international student population as well.

[Testing Services](#) provides comprehensive placement, proficiency, qualifying, and core competency testing services, whereby students can earn credit or placement without credit. Placement exams are taken prior to first-semester registration and help students select courses that correspond to their

respective levels of achievement.

NIU recognizes the needs of and offers additional services for honors students, student athletes, and students who do not necessarily meet traditional admissions standards:

- University Honors Program ([Honors](#)) promotes strong academics, public service, civic engagement, and sustained alumni connections, and prepares students to thrive in a dynamic, global society. Honors integrates curricular and co-curricular High Impact Practices, such as research, study abroad, engaged learning, and internships
- Student Athlete Academic Support Services ([SAASS](#)) provides comprehensive academic support to 400+ Division I Student Athletes. This support includes academic coaching, tutoring, mentoring, study tables, life skills/community service, academic plans for student success, and cross campus collaboration. NIU [athlete graduation rates](#) consistently rank among the highest in the MAC
- The McKinley Deacon Davis CHANCE Program ([CHANCE](#)) is a campus-wide initiative that has been in place for 49 years providing critical support for students who do not meet traditional admissions standards, but have the potential to succeed at NIU. CHANCE staff identify, recruit, admit, and assist students who show promise of college success despite limited preparation and resources. The program provides academic support and monitoring, personal, career, and financial aid counseling, and follow-up services throughout the student's undergraduate career

NIU provides for extensive resources for learning and support at all levels:

- [First- and Second-Year Experience](#) provides student-focused programs, courses, and collaborative partnerships with faculty and staff supporting academic achievement and student success during the critical first and second years of study
- The Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning ([OSEEL](#)) guides graduate and undergraduate students in learning about and practicing research. OSEEL supports student research and artistry projects through [Research Rookies](#), the Student Engagement Fund ([SEF](#)), the Research, Engagement and Academic Diversity ([READ](#)) grant, and the [Service Learning Faculty Fellows Program](#). SEF grants can total up to \$60,000 per year, [READ grants can total up to \\$25,000 per year, and overall OSEEL funding generally exceeds \\$100,000 per year](#)
- Research engagement opportunities are also provided through the CBUS Experiential Learning Center ([ELC](#)), the [PROMISE Scholars](#), the [EYE Grant](#), and the [McKearn Fellowship](#)
- [Study Abroad](#) offers global opportunities in [75 countries](#) and experiences range from [for-credit experiences to co-curricular experiences to internships](#)
- [ACCESS](#) provides tutoring, academic coaching, and other supports for 2,000 students annually, assisting students in building academic skills and promoting academic adjustment, thereby improving academic success, retention, and graduation rates. Student tutors for more than 200 courses provide appointment tutoring and maintain three walk-in tutoring centers. [ACCESS/SI](#) and [ACCESS/A+](#) provide enhanced tutoring and individual/group academic coaching; three professional reading specialists assess students' reading and study skills and promote activities and methods to enhance academic skills
- The University Writing Center ([UWC](#)) engages undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff, and alumni in collaborative, process-oriented discussions of their writing skills. Clients invent, research, revise, and complete written communications for multiple disciplines, genres, and literacies. As an integral component of the NIU PLUS program, UWC staff support upper-level writing-infused courses, provide discipline-specific workshops, and serve on an advisory committee regarding writing-infused courses

- In 2016, the Graduate Career and Professional Development ([GCPD](#)) office began offering centralized access to graduate career and professional development resources, using real-time labor market analytics to capture shifting occupations and career-related skills at the master's and doctoral levels. Graduate students identify occupations of interest, create a core list of skills around various criteria, and develop an [Individual Development Plan](#) and an action plan to obtain necessary skills. GCPD also provides one-on-one advising on action plans and training resources outside the students' curriculum. These opportunities for students are a key driver of recruitment and support

Fourteen NIU undergraduate academic programs have additional admission criteria ([Limited Admission](#)), designed to evaluate specific skills/competencies to support students' preparation before beginning their programs. All graduate students must meet [minimum standards](#) for admission as well as programmatic admission requirements. NIU also supports student preparation with Educator Licensure Programs through [Common Requirements for Educator Licensure](#).

3.D.3

NIU's Academic Advisors are instrumental in guiding students toward appropriate courses and ensuring that students are taking course-loads that foster their potential for success.

The Academic Advising Center ([AAC](#)) focuses on students who are undecided about their major, seeking alternative majors, reassessing their current academic situation, or have not declared a specific college affiliation. Because these student populations may be at greater academic risk, the AAC provides highly individualized developmental advising. The AAC functions holistically, addressing academics, life skills, and self-advocacy and collaborating with colleges and academic support units across the university. The AAC promotes professional development opportunities for NIU advisors and academic support staff through the [Academic Advising Summit](#), the [Advising Matters Campaign](#), and access to advising webinars through the National Association for Academic Advising.

In March 2015, NIU underwent an external review by the [National Academic Advising Association](#). Their findings identified both strengths:

- NIU is poised to make improvements
- Staff care, are student-centered, and want to provide the highest quality advising
- Individuals charged with advising are well-regarded, and communication is strong among the academic advising reporting structures
- Mission, vision, and goal statements are clearly articulated
- The AAC is a central resource for the university

and challenges:

- Lack of a robust student record system and antiquated paper systems
- Staffing inconsistencies related to advisor-to-student ratio
- Lack of strategic and comprehensive advisor training and development
- Strong need for more collaboration with other campus units
- Lack of advising reward/recognition and a need to increase transfer student resources

The results of this report, along with those of [Program Prioritization](#) led to a [complex conversation](#) focused on advising. The data and justifications provided by each [academic advising](#) unit led to the following recommendations:

- Hire additional full-time professional advising staff
- Increase use of the [Student Success Collaborative](#) to increase information sharing
- Develop a process for recognizing and rewarding outstanding advising

Another way that NIU further assists incoming students is through services for transfer students. With over 50% of NIU's students holding credit from other institutions, [Transfer Admissions](#) provides important services: evaluating [transfer credit](#), especially in alignment with the [Illinois Articulation Initiative Core Curriculum](#); offering a [guaranteed admission program](#); and establishing [Community College Service Centers](#).

NIU's first [Director of Community College Partnerships](#) was hired in 2017 with the mandate to deepen relationships with 2-year institutions by increasing the number of transfer agreements, creating cost-efficient transfer pathways, and augmenting enrollment, recruitment, and retention efforts at NIU. The results of Program Prioritization indicated that NIU "did not have an efficient method or infrastructure for establishing partnerships with community college partners and a single point of contact was needed." This renewed focus on 2-year institutions has resulted in the establishment of nearly 40 new transfer agreements with 15 institutions statewide. NIU has also worked collaboratively with community colleges on creative solutions to state-wide issues, such as the shortage of nurses in Illinois. For example, [NIU has partnered with Kishwaukee College \(KC\)](#) on a creative nursing degree completion program where students take classes simultaneously at both institutions. The trend in healthcare is to employ more nurses with a B.S. in Nursing, and this agreement will allow more of NIU students to achieve that goal in a time- and cost-efficient manner. As part of this partnership, KC facilitates students' clinical experiences, and students will be able to sit for the [National Council Licensure Examination](#) after successfully completing the KC portion of the program.

3.D.4

NIU provides students and faculty with the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning:

- [RIPS](#) encourages research, scholarship, artistry, and entrepreneurship across the university, contributing to NIU's success as a student-centered, public research university. RIPS provides resources for faculty that support scholarship and professional development, coordinates [13 centers and institutes](#) serving as interdisciplinary hubs for scholarship and practice, and oversees primary [support programs](#) for faculty and student research development: [Research Compliance, Integrity and Safety](#); [Sponsored Programs Administration](#); and the [Technology Transfer Office](#)
- In [OSEEL](#)'s Service-Learning Faculty Fellows Program exemplary faculty serve as ambassadors for service-learning pedagogy. The [program](#) accelerates the work of faculty eager to learn how to integrate or enhance academic service-learning within their curricula. The annual [Service-Learning Institute](#) provides professional development around select service-learning and community engagement topics, and [OSEEL provides funding](#) for faculty research and artistry projects in which undergraduates can serve as research assistants. OSEEL also sponsors the cost of the institutional membership for the Council on Undergraduate Research, ([CUR](#)) allowing any faculty, staff, or student free CUR membership
- [DoIT](#) provides technological infrastructure and [supports academic technologies](#) for [faculty](#), [staff](#), and [students](#), including [technology labs and classrooms](#)
- [FDIDC](#) provides essential support for faculty, instructors, and teaching assistants on using technology in their teaching through professional development workshops, individual and group consultations, and online resources

- [University Libraries](#) is comprised of Founders Memorial Library and two campus branch libraries: the [Music Library](#) and [Faraday Library](#), providing access to print and electronic resources, including 2.5 million print items, over 300 databases, 81,000 online journals, and 590,000 e-books. The Libraries' digital initiatives include a Council on Library and Information Resources ([CLIR](#)) grant to digitize the Libraries' [House of Beadle and Adams' nickel and dime novels](#), one of the largest such collections in the US. Another grant through the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences supports [Preserving Digital Objects With Restricted Resources](#), an initiative supporting the digitization efforts of institutions lacking the resources to do it alone. The Libraries also host NIU's institutional repository, the [Huskie Commons](#), with more than 4,300 items representing the scholarship of faculty and students. Other distinctive digital collections include the [Southeast Asia Collection](#), the [Regional History Collection](#), and the [University Archives](#)
- Computer terminals are available for students, staff, faculty, and the public to access library resources, and there is an extensive [interlibrary loan system](#). Librarians coordinate with faculty to deliver bibliographic instruction customized to the needs of individual classes. Since 2013, there have been over 1,330 such sessions. [Learning Resource Centers](#) are located at each of NIU's off-campus centers in Naperville, Hoffman Estates, and Rockford. The David C. Shapiro Memorial [Law Library](#), located within the CLAW, houses a collection surpassing 250,000 volumes and provides interlibrary loan in addition to [research services](#), [off-campus database access](#), [Basic Legal Research Guides](#) and [Sample Bluebook Citations](#)
- NIU coordinates clinical practice sites for students pursuing degrees or certifications in education, counseling, or health and human services. For example, [CEDU](#) partners with 40 Illinois school districts, out-of-state districts, and international educators to provide students with experience in different field settings. [CHHS](#) has over 400 affiliation agreements with health and human service organizations
- Museum spaces and collections provide enriched learning experiences, and [Museum Collections NIU](#) is home to several unique museum spaces and collections. The [Pick Museum of Anthropology](#) serves as a teaching museum and provides opportunities for collection research, exhibition curation, and enriched curricula. The permanent collection includes approximately 10,000 ethnographic objects and 12,000 archaeological artifacts, and specializes in the cultures of Southeast Asia, Native America, Oceania, Latin America, and Africa. Exhibits have been recognized with [numerous awards and grants](#). With over 2,500 art objects, the NIU [Art Museum](#) fosters appreciation of art and visual culture's capacity to communicate the diversity of the human experience, serving dual roles: to contribute significantly to NIU's educational curriculum and to provide opportunities for art education and cultural enrichment through public outreach. NIU is also home to the [Jack Olson Gallery](#), which brings exhibitions to the campus and provides a venue for the creative efforts of NIU's faculty and students, and the Burma Art Collection, which consists of manuscripts, lacquerware, sculptures, and other works of art relating to Burma. The [Blackwell History of Education Museum](#) acquires and preserves artifacts and printed materials representing the history of American education. The Blackwell currently holds over 10,000 textbooks from the 1700s onward, with some as old as 500 years. Numerous artifacts, including battledores, samplers, student work samples, and the Association of Educational Communications and Technology Archives trace the development and use of technology in teaching. The [Milan Township District #83 One-Room Schoolhouse](#), a reconstructed one-room school, containing late 19th century and early 20th century country school artifacts, is often used for educational field trips by NIU students and local schools
- Performance spaces for the School of Music and the School of Theater and Dance are primarily the [Boutell Memorial Concert Hall](#) and Recital Hall in the Music Building, and newly renovated spaces in the [Stevens Building](#). The “new” 106,000 square foot Stevens Building

opened in May 2018 providing 55% more space than the original building. The building has several new features for education and performance: a 200-seat state-of-the-art black box theater, a vastly-expanded scene shop, a revitalized O'Connell Theatre, and a 330-seat lecture hall which can be reconfigured into up to three smaller lecture spaces. The School of Music also provides [live webcasts](#) for many of its performances

3.D.5

NIU provides students with guidance in the effective use of research and information resources. Librarians provide classes with direct instruction in the use of the library as part of basic library orientation and, for upper-level classes, in-depth instruction related to materials in particular subject areas. The library offers [UNIV 105, "Introduction to Library and Information Research,"](#) a one-credit information literacy course that covers skills for locating, evaluating, and using all types of resources with emphasis on the social value and role of quality information as well as the legal and ethical uses of information. Since its inception in 2012, there have been [28 offerings of this course](#).

[Academic integrity tutorials](#) are available online to support students' awareness of academic integrity and to offer strategies for students to protect themselves from academic dishonesty situations. Among these is the tutorial on [cheating, falsification, fabrication and sabotage](#) and the tutorial on [plagiarism](#). [Course syllabus policy](#) requires faculty and instructional staff to review these processes at the course section level.

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3.E - Core Component 3.E

The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

Argument

3.E.1 and 3.E.2

NIU's co-curricular programs contribute to the educational experience of its students and are well suited to its mission. Further, the contributions made reflect the various aspects of the mission as defined, most notably in two of the university's values: diversity and student success:

(1) NIU values a community of diverse people, ideas, services, and scholarly endeavors in a climate of respect for the intrinsic dignity of each individual.

The university creates an environment that celebrates diversity to prepare students for a global workforce and to enrich the lives of all who live, study, and work here. [ADEI](#) is an integral part of this NIU student experience, focusing on helping a diverse student population succeed in their educational goals, find supportive communities, and graduate with the skills and experience needed to coexist with people from all backgrounds. With an "equity in action" focus, the goal of ADEI is to make lasting changes and to encourage students to help create a more welcoming environment. This goal is operationalized through the [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion 3-year plan](#).

ADEI provides a resource for students and members of the NIU community to [report incidents of bias and discrimination](#). The office serves as a conduit for referrals to other campus departments and resources that support students' educational experiences, including [CCS](#), [DRC](#), [Black Faculty and Staff Association](#), as well as [Scholarships](#), [Freedom of Expression at NIU](#), and the [Undocumented Students Resource Guide](#). [Incident reports](#) are reviewed by the Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) to determine action steps and potential resolutions for each incident. If BIRT detects recurring themes, ADEI and BIRT make recommendations to work with the relevant unit, to implement customized workshops, or to facilitate conflict resolution or restorative justice.

NIU's Cultural Centers, described in Criterion 3.D, provide students with opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue, connect in welcoming communities, and advocate on behalf of themselves or for societal change. Examples of these include:

- [AARC](#) collaborated with 57 academic departments, student organizations, community partners, and alumni to foster advocacy efforts, cultural education, student leadership development, and community building
- [LRC](#) promotes social justice and serves as a liaison among students, administration, and advocates on issues related to funding, academic advising, and leadership opportunities. The LRC collaborates with staff, colleagues, and students on program initiatives such as

[MAS/FRESH](#), [De Mujer a Mujer](#), and [Huskie Service Scholars](#) and implements and supports recruitment and retention efforts

- [DRC](#) provided accommodations to [995 students in FY2017](#) with a focus on developing students' self-advocacy skills and demonstrating their knowledge of course materials in a barrier-reduced environment. The DRC assists students with targeted, equitable access to academic coursework and technology, campus activities and programs, housing and dining, and student organizations
- [GSRC](#) supports a recruitment/retention effort, the [LGBTQA Living-Learning Community](#) in New Hall. The GSRC facilitates workshops in partnership with NIU Intercollegiate Athletics and NIU Police and Public Safety with the goal of supporting students through well-trained staff as allies. [LGBTQ+ trainings](#) in FY2017 included approximately 300 individuals from 15 departments, with an overall programming attendance total of 880
- [MPTSS](#) serves as a central resource center for non-traditional students and incoming student veterans (VA) by enhancing their learning environment and developing a culture of inclusion. In FY2017, MPTSS certified 1,104 VA enrollments, and attendance in post-traditional student programs was 675 students
- [CBS](#) established nearly 48 years ago is one of the oldest cultural centers on campus. The center has a significant [research and scholarship](#) component and offers a [minor in Black Studies](#)

Another important unit for advocacy among students is Students' Legal Assistance ([SLA](#)), providing free advice and consultation, legal advocacy, and in appropriate cases, court representation. SLA also provides specialized services for undocumented students through their [DACA Resources](#) page.

NIU also supports five [Presidential Commissions](#) to ensure a welcoming climate for all at NIU. These include the [Presidential Commission on the Status of Minorities](#), [Presidential Commission on the Status of Women](#), [Presidential Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities](#), [Presidential Commission on Sexual Orientation and Gender](#), and the newest commission, the [Presidential Commission on Interfaith Initiatives](#). These commissions report directly to the President and serve important advisory roles on issues and concerns related to each of the commissions topics.

(2) NIU values student success supported through academic and co-curricular programming and activities.

NIU strives to connect curricular and co-curricular experiences for students through [NIU PLUS](#), an integrated, [nationally-recognized](#) program that encourages students to customize their undergraduate experience by pursuing any of three programs: focus on an interdisciplinary pathway as part of their general education coursework ([Academics PLUS](#)), document non-credit bearing, hands-on learning experiences on their academic transcript ([Engage PLUS](#)), and/or engage in professional skill development workshops ([Jobs PLUS](#)). Engage PLUS provides an avenue for students to earn transcript documentation for co-curricular experiences in any of six categories including Artistry, Career-Related Work Experiences, Experiential Learning, Leadership, Service-Learning and Undergraduate Research. [Jobs PLUS workshops](#) are hosted each semester and include topics such as conflict resolution, leadership, and working with teams. [All students can attend](#) these workshops and if an off-campus or on-campus employer is a Jobs PLUS partner, students can attend on their [paid work time](#).

As discussed in Criterion 3.D, a number of academic departments and student services units provide co-curricular opportunities including [The Living Learning Communities and Special Interest Communities](#), [Research Rookies](#), and [global internships](#).

[Student Involvement and Leadership Development](#) provides support for more than 300 student

organizations and connects students to the [HuskieLink CRM system](#) to enhance engagement. Students get involved in a [variety of experiences](#) meeting their diverse needs and aligning with NIU's institutional value of creating a climate of respect in a community of diverse individuals.

NIU Career Services contributes to the educational experience of all students through the integration of career success planning, (e.g., the [Academic Advising Career Success Map](#)), as well as directly serving 4,000+ students annually through career fairs and on-campus interviews.

The NIU CBUS [ELC](#) connects teams of students with executives for a 16-week collaboration. These students, acting as project consultants, help solve cross-functional business problems, developing project management, communication, presentation, team building, and leadership skills. The ELC creates unique real-world educational experiences for the students and provides valuable research, fresh ideas, and recommendations to sponsoring organizations. Since 2000, the [ELC has completed 167 projects](#) for 88 unique sponsors.

All undergraduate students are eligible to participate in [Community Engagement Showcases](#) to display research completed through community-based and capstone projects, internships, service related study abroad, independent study, [Student Engagement Fund](#), [Huskie Service Scholars](#), [NIU Service Leaders](#), [Huskie Alternative Breaks](#), the CBUS ELC, or any other related community engagement projects. In addition, OSEEL hosts the [Annual Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day](#) to showcase and celebrate the outstanding research and artistry projects undergraduate students have participated in throughout the year.

Graduates' educational experiences are assessed in the annual survey of recent graduates/new alumni. [Recent trends](#) from baccalaureate alumni survey indicate a consistently high level of satisfaction with educational experiences within their major.

NIU offers numerous opportunities for service learning and volunteering including the [Huskie Student Food Pantry](#) and the [Communiversy Gardens](#). The not-for-profit Huskie Student Food Pantry is a source of good nutrition, experiential learning, and service for the NIU community. By relieving NIU students of some measure of food insecurity, the Pantry allows students to focus on educational priorities. Fresh produce harvested from the Communiversy Gardens supplements donated food items from local businesses.

NIU also runs programs such as [Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week](#) and [NIU Cares Day](#), that help recruit and retain students at NIU. NIU engages with the community through the [Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies](#) and [service learning opportunities](#), and connects with the community via [Arts and Culture](#), community development, and community education.

The [FY2018 Presidential Goal](#) to "increase student satisfaction and student engagement" is yet another way that NIU contributes to enriched student educational experiences. A [task force](#) has been charged with developing a strategic assessment plan for engagement and student satisfaction, monitoring continuous improvement, and ensuring accessibility and monitoring of these assessment data. The outcome of this work will provide an institutional plan for measuring the effectiveness of high impact practices such as undergraduate research, internships, and service-learning to ensure continual alignment with the mission of the university and to better track the number and quality of co-curricular experiences. Progress to date is outlined in this [early task force update](#).

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3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Summary

NIU provides high quality educational programs appropriate to its mission, to its institutional priorities, and to higher education generally and monitors its effectiveness through a robust assessment program that includes state-mandated program review. Intellectual inquiry is an important component of NIU's mission, and faculty credentials and performance are regularly evaluated. Numerous and diverse opportunities are available for faculty and staff professional development and instructional improvement. Students appreciate NIU's commitment to an enriched, active learning environment, community engagement, and student support as lived out in programs developed through both academic and student affairs. NIU's educational mission and students' educational experiences are well supported with extensive curricular and co-curricular opportunities for students at all levels through individual colleges, NIU PLUS, OSEEL, the Graduate School, and other units. NIU values diversity and educational access and supports students holistically through advising, service learning, safe spaces, and outreach efforts, benefiting the region, the community, and all NIU constituents.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Argument

Northern Illinois University (NIU) has regular processes to monitor and continuously improve the quality of its educational programs. These processes include cyclical academic program reviews, annual monitoring of achievement of student learning outcomes, discipline-specific accreditation and external reviews, monitoring of licensure and certification exam pass rates, standardized internal and external processes for approving and implementing new programs, adherence to faculty credentials policy for course delivery, standardized articulation agreements with community colleges, and alumni career success tracking. Most recently, in 2015-2016, a comprehensive Program Prioritization review of all academic and administrative programs was conducted to evaluate the quality and alignment of programs to NIU's institutional mission and strategic goals.

4.A.1

NIU's [Program Prioritization](#) initiative was a campus-wide, comprehensive, data-informed study of all academic and administrative programs. It was initiated in Spring 2015 to better align resources with institutional priorities, strengthen the overall program portfolio, and provide the highest possible

value to students and other stakeholders.

Each academic program provided a [comprehensive program narrative](#) addressing [eight criteria](#):

- Quality of faculty and faculty outcomes
- Quality of students and student outcomes
- Financial efficiency
- Importance to the university mission
- Program potential
- External demand
- Internal demand
- Contribution to diversity

Program narratives were evaluated by a [task force](#) of faculty and instructors using a standardized [rubric](#). The task force then placed each of the programs into [one of five categories](#):

- Candidate for enhanced resources
- Continue with no change in resources
- Continue with reduced resources
- Requires transformation
- Subject to additional review; candidate for phase out

The [task force offered guidance](#) for continuing data-informed analyses of programs and for integrating prioritization into the university's regular planning, budget, and assessment activities.

Every academic unit on campus responded to the [task force category recommendations](#) through [action planning](#). Examples include [Undergraduate Academic Affairs](#), the [College of Business](#), and the [College of Liberal Arts and Sciences \(CLAS\)](#). While some units [proposed no action](#), some responded with [multiple proposed action steps](#); for other units, [action steps involved multiple units](#). The latter was particularly true for those programs that were connected to [complex conversations](#) – discussions about programs that cut across unit or division lines. This resulted in a [rich mix of proposals](#) that were responsive to, and informed by, the task force recommendations.

In alignment with NIU's value of transparency, the university community has regularly been made aware of progress linked to Program Prioritization through a series of Presidential Progress Reports in [November 2016](#), [May 2017](#), and June 2018. Each of these reports outlines numerous steps taken toward implementing task force recommendations, including investing in hiring tenure-track faculty to protect and enhance many of our academic programs. In addition, using established curricular processes, NIU faculty have [eliminated a number of academic programs](#) with diminished ability to address student and societal needs and have also proposed new academic programs aligned with the university's mission and commitment to providing students with an excellent, engaging, and affordable educational experience. Examples of these are reflected in recent [agenda items](#) on the Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee of the Board of Trustees (BOT).

Program Prioritization provided a framework to rethink programs to improve quality, efficiency, and purpose. It has also moved NIU toward a more transparent, data-informed culture supported by a new unit, the [Office of Institutional Effectiveness \(IE\)](#), created in January 2017 through the grouping of existing units resulting in four areas: [Academic Planning](#); [Accreditation, Assessment and Evaluation \(AAE\)](#); [Decision Support and Analysis \(DSA\)](#); and [Institutional Research \(IR\)](#), under a single unified structure. This enabled the development of [NIUReports](#), a central repository including recruitment/admissions, retention and enrollment/registration data, and the implementation of

a [project management approach](#) (see Criterion 5.D). Consequently, the university community is more systematically using institutional data to inform their consultation and decision-making processes as shown in these examples: a charter for the [HLC 4-year Assurance Argument](#) and a small specified project for the [University Libraries](#). In a rapidly-changing environment characterized by decreased support for public higher education, systematizing and enhancing data-informed decision-making practices will allow NIU to be more responsive to external realities and more accountable to all stakeholders.

NIU also has a well-established [cycle of program review](#) that is distinct from the Program Prioritization process. The Academic Planning Council (APC) works with the Executive Vice President and Provost (EVPP) and the Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness who oversees [IE](#), to review academic programs and centers. Departments prepare in-depth self-study documents, incorporating information on numerous programmatic aspects that focus on program quality and viability. These include:

- Quality of faculty as indicated by faculty achievements and recognition, benchmarked against faculty from other institutions
- Quality of students and student outcomes such as student and alumni perceptions; student recruitment, retention, persistence, and completion; assessment of student learning outcomes; and student engagement
- Financial efficiency, benchmarked against other institutions, and mission alignment
- Program potential
- Internal and external program demand
- Program contribution to diversity

The program review self study documents are appraised by the EVPP's staff and by faculty representatives on the APC, as illustrated in a recent [Department of Economics report](#) and [feedback](#). The [findings, recommendations, and actions](#) that result from the university's review of programs are reported to the departments, colleges, the BOT, and the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) on an annual basis. Following Program Prioritization, in 2016, the APC streamlined the process of program review significantly as illustrated in this recent example from the Department of Computer Science, where APC utilized the [Program Prioritization narrative](#) as the foundation of the report, supplemented by [data dashboards](#) and a [brief template of questions](#) for department programs. The [review report from the APC](#) remained similar to what had been done in the past. Beginning in 2015-2016, all materials associated with program review have been stored in Blackboard to which APC members, program representatives, and the 2018 Assurance Review HLC Team Chair have access.

Historically, all academic programs at NIU have been reviewed every eight years per the requirements of the IBHE. In 2013, a task force was charged with benchmarking best practices and innovative strategies for recommending a more efficient, effective, and better aligned program review process. As a result of recommendations from the [Program Review Process Improvement Task Force](#), of direct communication with every accredited program at NIU, and with [approval from the IBHE](#), a new [schedule](#) was developed to better align with accreditation cycles for programs with disciplinary and/or college accreditation. In the new arrangement, an accredited program's self-study review by an accrediting body precedes the university's program review by about one year; thus, accreditation feedback provides valuable external review of the program's overall quality and strategic plan. This information is incorporated into the program review process following the university schedule. Over the last two years, affected programs have noted this aligned process to be less cumbersome and more actionable for continuous quality improvement and strategic planning at the programmatic level. The default [review schedule](#) for programs that do not have disciplinary and/or college accreditation

remains every eight years.

Another important change in NIU's program review process is the alignment of external reviews with program reviews. Historically, NIU has used external review for all academic units with a terminal doctoral degree not subject to discipline-specific accreditation. The external review process is now embedded within the program review process for these units. The [external review process](#) begins with collaboration between the program chair/director and staff from DSA, to review the process and jointly select appropriate external reviewers. Typically, two to three external reviewers are selected for each external review as exemplified in a recent example from the Department of Geology and Environmental Geosciences. Preparatory materials made available to external reviewers include: [assessment data](#), Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog documentation; data and reporting posted on the [Program Review Dashboard](#), [NIU IPEDS peer list](#), [Program Prioritization narratives](#) and the [external review itinerary](#). Following their onsite visit, the external reviewers [provide substantive commentary and feedback](#) on the academic unit and its degree programs, relative to disciplinary norms and standards. The external review processes provide the academic unit, college, and various central administrative units, as well as APC, the opportunity to review and strategically plan resource allocation at the programmatic level for the viability and continued quality of NIU's degree programs.

4.A.2

NIU follows the best practices of accreditation commissions and state agencies when accepting transfer credit into undergraduate degree programs. The [Undergraduate Catalog](#) and Academic Policies and Procedures Manual ([APPM](#)) outline policies governing the transcription of credit through various means. NIU's [Registration and Records](#) and [Admissions](#) offices implement these policies. NIU provides a variety of opportunities for students to obtain college [credit by examination](#). Credit may be awarded through the Advanced Placement Program, the College-Level Examination Program, the Defense Activities for Non-Traditional Educational Support program, and other NIU proficiency examinations. Credit for [military educational experience](#) may be granted based on [recommendations by the American Council on Education](#). The Graduate School does not award credit for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning.

NIU participates in the [Illinois Articulation Initiative](#), which fosters efficient institutional practice for evaluating transfer from [Illinois community colleges](#). As part of our commitment to the region and to broad academic access, NIU admits a large number of students who have completed general education requirements at Illinois community colleges participating in the Illinois Articulation Initiative. Students entering with an Associate in Arts or an Associate in Science degree from one of these institutions are enrolled as juniors with all general education requirements completed. [Approximately 72%](#) of the Fall 2016 transfer students come from two-year Illinois public colleges covered by the Illinois Articulation Initiative. In 2017, a renewed focus on 2-year institutions resulted in 40 new transfer agreements with 15 institutions statewide and new collaborations with community colleges on creative solutions to state-wide issues.

4.A.3

NIU also employs the transfer credit practices established by the [American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers](#) as a guide for interpreting the transferability of courses from other institutions. NIU accepts transfer credit from post-secondary accredited institutions, with departments maintaining oversight of specific course equivalencies. Provisions and rules explaining the acceptance of credit, transfer grades, repeated courses, concurrent enrollment, and senior standing can be found in the [Undergraduate Catalog](#).

The Graduate School publishes its [policy on transfer credits](#) in the Graduate Catalog. While the Graduate School limits the [number of credit hours](#) that can be transferred, it is the responsibility of individual departments to review and approve transfer course work for credit toward a graduate degree at NIU.

The College of Law follows a transfer [policy](#) requiring students accepted for transfer into the second year of the program to have successfully completed the first year at an American Bar Association (ABA) accredited institution, following ABA Standards on Legal Education.

4.A.4

The oversight of academic programs and authority over prerequisites, course-level and programmatic rigor, and learning expectations are evidenced in the multi-level process of curricular decision-making. Departments/schools, colleges, and governing councils all play a role in developing and maintaining rigorous programs of study. [Processes regarding curricular changes](#) are documented in the [relevant section](#) of the APPM.

Maintenance of rigor for individual courses is conducted through the [curricular process](#), which requires all new course submissions to include a draft syllabus that includes student learning outcomes. Every semester, syllabi are submitted in the [course activity documentation system \(CAD\)](#) designed to ensure compliance with NIU's [credit hour policy](#) and [course syllabus policy](#). The [CAD module](#) was initiated in Fall 2012 as a mandatory reporting practice to be conducted by all units offering course sections in any modality. CAD continues to provide auditable data in terms of course syllabi and in-and-out-of-class planned activities, for every NIU course offered, across all modalities. Current exceptions include Study Abroad courses and non-credit bearing course sections. In Spring 2018, an audit was conducted on sample syllabi in the CAD system to evaluate adherence to NIU's course syllabus policy. The [CAD audit report](#) was shared with the colleges to further improve their measures of compliance with suggested standards within the course syllabus policy. The next CAD audit is scheduled for Spring 2019.

Any curricular changes, once approved, are incorporated into the online student information system, [MyNIU](#), and the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs are based on a standard publication schedule. MyNIU enforces prerequisites and co-requisites through the [registration process](#). Program substitutions and waivers are controlled by departments/schools; college-level substitutions and waivers are controlled by college offices; and university substitutions and waivers are controlled by the Vice Provost or the Dean of the Graduate School. While the majority of program requirement changes are in the form of substituting a previously-taken course for an NIU requirement, mechanisms are also in place for limited granting of [credit by examination](#), [proficiency credit](#), and [military experience credit](#), as noted above.

NIU ensures that members of its instructional corps are well-qualified to teach students enrolled in credit-bearing courses. NIU's [Faculty Credentials Policy](#) establishes minimum qualification standards and complies with the Assumed Practices of the HLC. Operationally, the [Faculty Qualifications Reporting \(FQR\) process](#) begins [within OnBase](#), a content management application at the department level, followed by college level verification. The Division of Academic Affairs conducted its first audit of the FQR system in Spring 2018 and found an overall high level of compliance with the standards of the Faculty Credentials Policy. These results were shared with the colleges for follow-up actions, as needed. The next FQR audit is scheduled for Fall 2018.

NIU does not offer dual credit courses but is in active exploration of dual credit opportunities with several school districts and community college partners.

4.A.5

Several programs and centers at NIU are accredited by a total of 28 [disciplinary/programmatic accrediting agencies](#). The Division of Academic Affairs oversees all specialized accreditation. Following established processes, the Office of the Provost reviews all annual, interim, and self-study documents submitted by units to any accrediting agency. [This process](#) ensures quality checks and ongoing communication between central administration and program level administration in regards to the strengths and needs of each discipline specific accredited program.

The Office of [Educator Licensure and Preparation](#) is responsible for university-wide oversight and implementation of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation ([CAEP](#)) continuing accreditation and [Illinois State Board of Education](#) continuing approval. In May 2018, NIU became the first Illinois public institution of higher education to receive [full CAEP accreditation](#) for initial licensure programs effective through Spring 2025.

4.A.6

Certification and licensure requirements for professional degree candidates require students to pass the appropriate content area licensure examinations. From 2013 to 2016, over 4,000 students sat for licensure examinations in forty different fields of practice, including law, accountancy, speech-language pathology, nursing, and various teaching certifications. Overall, NIU [pass rates](#) meet or exceed national and/or state pass rates.

Each academic year, NIU surveys graduates from the previous academic year. The [alumni survey](#) seeks information about their NIU experience, post graduate education, and current employment status. Alumni survey data are reported annually by AAE. [Summary data](#) are publicly available and program data ([Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate](#)) are available through secure login for faculty, staff, and administrators. These data are [incorporated into program review](#) and other [assessment initiatives](#).

[Trends in employment](#) as reported over the past five years indicate that alumni are particularly well-served in the job market. [Recent undergraduate data](#) show that 70% of Fall 2014/Spring 2015 graduates secured employment within six months of graduation. Seventy-six percent agree or strongly agree they are satisfied in their current job. Seventy-seven percent are employed in a related or closely related field to their bachelor's degree. At the [graduate level](#), 73% of 2015 graduates secured employment within six months of graduation. Seventy-eight percent agree or strongly agree that they are satisfied in their current job. Ninety-three percent are employed in a related or closely related field to their degree.

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4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Argument

4.B.1

At NIU, assessment of student learning outcomes (SLOs) is an expectation and requirement included in our comprehensive program reviews, external reviews, disciplinary and programmatic accreditation reviews, assessment of co-curricular activities, and general education review. NIU has [General Education/Baccalaureate learning goals and outcomes](#), [graduate learning expectations](#), and [SLOs for each academic degree program](#). [Departments in the Division of Student Affairs](#) and [academic support units](#) in the Division of Academic Affairs also articulate SLOs and unit goals within their assessment plans.

Housed in IE, [AAE](#) promotes and supports assessment efforts across campus. AAE staff provide guidelines and templates for developing assessment plans and evaluating program-level student learning for academic degree programs and academic support units. This information is articulated in [academic degree programs assessment resources](#) on the assessment website. Through ongoing continuous improvement efforts, these resources have been regularly updated since the 2014 HLC site visit and include updated [guidelines templates](#) and [sample assessment plans](#). Also available are [detailed rubrics](#) listing the elements of effective assessment as criteria for student performance. Schedules for the review of [academic degree program](#) and [academic support unit assessment cycles](#) are also available on the IE website.

Academic degree programs develop and submit [assessment plans](#) that include essential information such as learning outcomes, alignment to baccalaureate learning outcomes, assessment method descriptions, curriculum maps, and assessment methods-by-outcomes matrices. The [University Assessment Panel \(UAP\)](#) provides [feedback](#) based on best practices in assessment to each plan submitted for its review; academic programs submit an [annual assessment update](#) and receive [feedback](#). These annual processes ensure programs are collecting data each academic year to inform their SLOs. Participation in this process is at or near 100% each year. Faculty and other instructional staff are deeply involved in these processes within their departments. The University Annual Assessment Updates ([2014](#), [2015](#), [2016](#), and [2017](#)), available on the [assessment webpage](#), discusses the health of the assessment processes.

In addition to the annual monitoring of SLOs for each academic degree program, on a schedule of every eight years, the academic programs submit aggregate data on SLOs as part of their mid-status

review. This review is conducted by the UAP. [The mid-status review](#) occurs at the midpoint of each degree program's program review cycle. During the mid-status review, members of the UAP provide [consultative peer feedback](#) to programs on ways to further strengthen their assessment of SLOs and the use of data for continuous programmatic improvements. This feedback helps academic programs make use of shared best practices in honing their SLOs and assessment methods, and in using data to close the loop toward continuous quality improvement. Ultimately, the mid-status review helps each academic degree program to further solidify its assessment of SLOs ahead of program review.

4.B.2

All academic support units in the Division of Academic Affairs submit their [assessment plans](#) for UAP review. Included within these assessment plans are the unit's goals and objectives, assessment method descriptions, and assessment matrix. Academic support units are increasingly encouraged to include operational goals, objectives, and learning goals in their assessment plans when it is appropriate to do so.

The Academic Affairs support units aggregate data and submit a report to AAE for review by the UAP approximately every five years. Much like the status reports produced by academic degree programs, [reports from academic support units](#) include aggregated data from multiple years, a detailed breakdown of goals and objectives, target performance, results, and decisions and actions taken in response to results. The UAP provides programs with [feedback](#) to help them continue on their path of assessing SLOs and their support unit's contribution to the university mission.

The Division of Student Affairs, as part of its systematic assessment process, requires departments to incorporate learning and/or program effectiveness outcomes in all assessment activities. Prior to AY2014-2015, units within Student Affairs submitted 5-year assessment reports to the UAP for review. However, with the creation of the [Student Affairs Assessment Council \(SAAC\) in AY2014-2015](#), the review of the assessment reports shifted from the UAP to the SAAC. Because the SAAC membership consists primarily of Student Affairs peers, this group is able to provide especially relevant feedback to these units.

Student Affairs departments report their progress on meeting the specified outcomes in both [annual reports](#) submitted to the division and [5-year assessment](#) summary reports submitted to the SAAC. The SAAC provides [formative feedback](#) to the departments and has so far reviewed 11 departments. The [2018-2022 assessment strategy schedule](#) is shared widely with all SA units.

4.B.3

NIU has a mature university-wide assessment system that capitalizes on faculty and staff involvement in collecting SLOs data to inform curricular and programmatic changes. UAP and AAE involvement in this well-established assessment structure supports continuous improvement and learning at the unit level by providing programmatic feedback on an annual basis, encouraging internal consultations on assessment practices, and celebrating evidence-based best practices through an annual Assessment Expo event.

NIU recently celebrated the [10th Annual Assessment Expo in 2017](#), providing a forum for units across campus to share best practices on a variety of assessment topics: [General Education Assessment Plan](#), [Senior Writing Performance](#), [External Validation of Internal Assessment Results](#), [Faculty Collaboration in Making Assessment Decisions](#), [Navigating Challenges in Implementing Assessment Plans](#) and [Collecting Effective Student Learning Outcome Data for](#)

[Program Improvement. Evaluation of the Assessment Expo](#) is shared with UAP members following the event. In 2018, the Expo will invite select programs to share their best practices in assessment of experiential learning, with a focus on ways to manage SLOs data collection and analysis.

[AAE supports local assessment processes](#) and manages university-wide assessment projects, such as the [University Writing Project](#), an in-house assessment of student writing that uses course-embedded assignments to assess writing performance of juniors and seniors from across the university. The rubric is aligned with the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) VALUE Rubrics of Written Communication and Critical Thinking. Each year, the [university-level writing performance](#) outcomes are posted on the assessment webpage, and individualized reports are sent to the departments and course instructors participating in the project. These results are also shared with the General Education Committee (GEC) to inform their discussions on writing outcomes for NIU graduates.

As part of the assessment cycle, AAE also collects data on [alumni experiences and outcomes](#). Specifically, graduated students' degree satisfaction, employment opportunities, career advancements, and perceptions of academic and co-curricular support while at NIU are assessed through a one-year out [Alumni Survey](#).

Accredited programs such as [those in CBUS](#) also engage in assessment aligned with their specialized accrediting bodies. As part of an [established process](#), all material such as annual updates, self-study, interim reports, or progress reports to be submitted to any external programmatic/disciplinary accrediting agency are reviewed by the Office of the Provost prior to their external submission. This model allows for quality checks and ongoing communication between central administration and program level administration in regards to the strengths and needs of our discipline specific accredited programs.

Improvements to student learning occur at the program level based on direct and indirect assessment data. For example:

- Based on [assessment results](#), the B.S.Ed. in Elementary Education program observed the need to improve SLOs in content knowledge and candidate impact on student learning. Curricular changes were made to address content knowledge in the social sciences area. Courses were added in government, geography, economics, mathematics, and three science areas. The program increased the number of hours candidates spent in the field and began to include field guides to improve candidates' impact on student learning
- Concerns over student performance on their first two SLOs led the [M.A. in Sociology program](#) to develop an additional course requirement covering research process in sociology. This course addresses weaknesses in student content mastery in this area as demonstrated by responses to the methods section of the comprehensive exam and difficulty in formulating viable thesis projects. As a result of the implementation of this course, the program expects improvements in methodology performance on the exam as well as improvements in design elements in the thesis

4.B.4

As a centralized function, AAE has helped to ensure assessment processes, and methodologies are of high quality, reflect sound assessment practices, and involve substantial participation of faculty and staff. AAE provides [workshops](#) and [individualized consultations](#) to academic degree programs and academic support units. Academic degree programs often report [faculty discussions](#) of assessment results as part of their Annual Assessment Update reporting. AAE summarizes program feedback at

the institutional level in an annual report shared with the UAP, APC, and GEC and made [available to the university](#). The university celebrates institutional assessment exemplars from annual reports each year at the [Annual Assessment Expo](#). The reporting, celebrating, and learning assessment cycle has [given rise to a campus culture](#) that values the assessment of student learning.

General Education assessment is overseen by the [GEC](#) and is reported in Criterion 3.B.

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4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Argument

4.C.1

Since the last HLC site visit, campus leadership has made a concerted effort to engage the campus community in conversations about retention, persistence, and completion. Current data, programs, and actions to improve retention, persistence, and completion have been center stage at [Retention Summits](#), in [Program Prioritization reporting](#), and at [Town Hall Presentations](#). A BOT Ad Hoc Committee on Enrollment began intensive scrutiny of retention data and processes in [January 2015](#) and continued meeting quarterly for over two years until [February 2017](#). These data-informed meetings and substantive conversations, along with increased data transparency, have transformed the campus culture to one in which units take more ownership for retention, persistence, and completion at all levels, including senior levels of the university. Although the ad hoc committee no longer exists, the BOT still receives regular [updates on recruitment and retention outlining NIU's current goals and associated metrics](#). Moreover, following Program Prioritization, restructuring efforts moved central responsibility for enrollment management from the Division of Student Affairs to the new Division of Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications (EMMC) and facilitated the subsequent hiring of a divisional [Vice President](#). Recognizing [strong out-migration of Illinois students to other states and the lack of in-migration of out-of-state students to NIU](#), one of the Vice President's first actions was to work to help balance the net migration by [eliminating out-of-state tuition premiums](#) for students, removing a financial obstacle for potential students.

Following the confirmation of the Acting President in June 2017, NIU created updated [goals for retention and completion](#) made available to the campus in November 2017. The [Strategic Enrollment Management \(SEM\) Committee](#), with membership from EMMC, the Division of Academic Affairs, and the Division of Outreach, Engagement, and Regional Development was re-established in Spring 2018 and charged with developing a comprehensive enrollment plan and strategies based on market analysis, forecasting and modeling, capacity management, assessment of initiatives, metrics, and dashboards. A [presentation from a recent SEM meeting](#) outlines some of the concerns they are

addressing.

4.C.2

NIU analyzes the effectiveness of student retention, persistence, and completion initiatives through a number of reporting mechanisms. At the institutional level, IE and IR prepare and submit [state and federal mandated data](#) on retention and four-, five- and six-year graduation rates and publish them in the Annual NIU Data Book. NIU also provides current retention, persistence, graduation, and student outcomes information on the [NIU Disclosures website](#) in compliance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act, the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act, and the Student Right to Know Act. The [NIU College Portrait](#) presents data on applications, admissions, and enrollment for undergraduate and graduate students and presents a standardized picture to prospective and current students.

IE regularly analyzes persistence data including [student fall-to-fall retention](#) and [gateway course performance data](#), analyzing sub-populations on a number of criteria including race, Pell grant eligibility, first-generation student status, university program participation, UNIV101, and Chicago Public School attendance. [Student retention data](#) from 2016-2017 show a 73% first-year retention rate for all freshman. Fall-to-fall retention rates measuring progression from sophomore to junior and junior to senior year from 2016-2017 are 86% and 83%, respectively.

Individual graduate and professional programs are typically responsible for monitoring graduate student retention. The Graduate School notes that retention at the master's level is 86-90% on a fall-to-fall basis, but that percentage may be higher if there is accounting for students who "stop out" for some period of time.

[Four-year and six-year graduation rates](#) for the 2010 freshman cohort are 23% and 47%, respectively. It is important to note the four- and six-year graduation rates do not reflect the success of NIU's students in its entirety, as they do not include [transfer students who make up approximately 45% of the undergraduate population](#).

NIU has historically used the Mapworks progression management software as an early intervention tool for first year students. Using student demographic and psycho-social data provided by the respondents, as well as semester and 1-year GPA and retention rates of respondents and non-respondents, [Mapworks](#) helped [faculty and staff](#) to identify students who may be at risk and to connect them with appropriate campus resources.

NIU recently increased use of the Educational Advisory Board's Student Success Collaborative Campus ([SSC Campus](#)) for its additional functionality and scope over Mapworks. The SSC Campus uses [predictive analytics](#) to [alert advisors](#) if a student is veering off-path for graduation in their desired major. The tool predicts a [student's successful progress](#) by comparing the pace of students who have successfully graduated in the desired major over the past ten years. It produces actionable data and allows for a coordinated system whereby different units who work with students can come together to provide needed support.

4.C.3

NIU recognizes the importance of improving retention, persistence, and completion, and recent initiatives have become an institutional- and program-level priority and responsibility. A wide array of efforts for connecting with and supporting students have been undertaken at the student, program, and institutional level to increase student success and satisfaction. An example of a [Retention Charter](#) illustrates such efforts.

In 2016, the university began using disaggregated data to identify equity gaps among students from underserved populations. Equity gaps and fall-to-fall retention rates were calculated for every course offered on campus over the last five years, and 4- and 6-year graduation rates were calculated among the following student populations: males, females, Hispanics, Blacks, Whites, Asians, students with disabilities, and “others.” These data were disaggregated and disseminated to [individual colleges](#) and departments across campus, followed by facilitated sessions that explained the college and department/school data to faculty and administrators. In response to and in cooperation with the [Office of Academic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#), each college created an Equity Team to develop a college action plan to address academic equity and issues surrounding inclusion/access. Examples include plans from the [CLAS](#), the [College of Education \(CEDU\)](#), and the [College of Engineering and Engineering Technology](#). An [Executive Summary](#) recommended additional concrete actions and college plans that NIU could enact to ultimately achieve academic equity for all.

Individual colleges provide discipline-specific student retention support, such as the [CEDU Student Retention program](#) provided by the CEDU Student Services office, which further assists students in achieving academic success, acclimates students to the academic culture of the campus, and engages students with resources to reach their personal, academic, and professional goals. Furthermore, each academic program has created [four-year degree paths](#) to guide the completion of an undergraduate degree within a reasonable amount of time. Degree paths show the timing and pacing of major and general education requirements to assist students in taking ownership of their education. [First-year student programs](#), [transfer orientations and advising](#), and [international student orientations](#) coordinate many incoming students’ initial experiences with NIU and its constituents, introduce students to NIU’s culture, and bridge curricular and co-curricular offerings.

4.C.4

[NIU](#) uses [IPEDS](#) definitions and methodology for tracking and reporting retention, persistence, and completion rates. In addition, NIU tracks [fall-to-fall retention rates](#) at each level for native and transfer students as well as [course-level academic equity data](#). The [SSC Campus data](#) provide additional insights regarding student success to further support students.

Since the last HLC site visit, IE was created to bring together previously distributed assessment, accreditation, evaluation, institutional reporting, and data support functions. This change has allowed NIU to make great strides in adopting a coordinated, data-informed culture in which strategic planning and decision-making efforts support NIU's mission and the success of its students.

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Student View

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4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Summary

NIU demonstrates responsibility for quality educational programs through comprehensive and regular review of programs and annual monitoring of achievement of published student learning outcomes. The university has well-defined policies governing the transcription of credit through various means, and best practice is followed when accepting transfer credit into degree programs, including participation in the Illinois Articulation Initiative. A multi-level shared governance curricular process ensures programmatic rigor. Commitment to educational achievement and improvement is established and sustained through effective and robust assessment of student learning. Throughout the university, assessment data are acted upon to improve student learning. Updated institutional goals and key performance indicators for retention, persistence, and completion combine with data collected in alignment with IPEDS to motivate institutional initiatives. Data transparency in these metrics will remain a focus of the university community.

Sources

There are no sources.

5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

5.A - Core Component 5.A

The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

Argument

Embedded Report:

In 2014, the HLC Comprehensive Visit Peer Review Team noted two core components that were "met with concerns": core component 5.A and core component 5.C, thereby placing Criterion 5 in the "met with concerns" category. The HLC team recommended a "monitoring report on budget processes and their linkage to strategic planning." The HLC subsequently changed this to an embedded report to be included in the 4-year assurance argument.

University Response:

As noted by the HLC team that completed Northern Illinois University's (NIU) 10-year comprehensive accreditation site visit in Spring 2014, at that time, NIU did not have adequate mechanisms to link the institutional mission, priorities, and strategic planning to budgeting processes. Whereas NIU's prior strategic planning efforts, Great Journeys and Vision 2020, were designed to develop institutional imperatives and benchmark progress against articulated goals, these efforts fell short of expectations and contributed to planning fatigue on the NIU campus. Still, both Great Journeys and Vision 2020 had some lasting positive effects on the university.

Great Journeys provided NIU faculty and staff with an opportunity to propose and pilot initiatives focused on student success, interdisciplinary collaboration, and faculty development at a time when peer institutions were investing in such initiatives; in addition, NIU lacked a budget model for supporting these types of innovation. Great Journeys encouraged the NIU community not only to identify priorities but also to identify and track indicators of success. Thus, Great Journeys began the

process of moving NIU towards a culture of strategic alignment by engaging the academic community in a shared sense of mission; establishing strategic planning criteria; and soliciting, evaluating, and either funding or rejecting proposals against those criteria. For some Great Journeys programs, continued financial support was contingent upon demonstrated progress towards established goals, whereas for others initial funding launched an activity with a built-in plan for institutionalization. The outcomes associated with many Great Journeys investments were benchmarked under Vision 2020, and assessed by the Executive Vice President and Provost (EVPP) and the President in AY2013-2014 to inform decisions about future investment. Programs initiated under Great Journeys were also reviewed as part of the comprehensive Program Prioritization process.

Vision 2020 was a long-term planning exercise that extended the work begun under Great Journeys by including a broader cross section of nonacademic programs and by extensive benchmarking against IPEDS peer institutions, Illinois public 4 year institutions, and Mid-American Conference (MAC) universities. The process was driven by six working groups organized around functional areas critical to NIU's goal of becoming "the most student-centered public research university in the Midwest": (1) student recruitment, retention, and success; (2) student experience; (3) faculty work excellence and rewards; (4) regional impact, outreach, engagement, and graduate education; (5) facilities and environment; and (6) sustainability. The working groups identified many opportunities and challenges facing NIU, benchmarked NIU against peers, and proposed many reasonable strategies for moving forward. However, the actions taken and the investments made by the NIU administration in the period between Vision 2020 and Program Prioritization did not realistically flow from working group recommendations. Although new programs were established and significant one-time investments were made in areas such as IT infrastructure and faculty start-up, there was no realistic plan put forward for long-term support of institutional needs. The ultimate conclusion of the Vision 2020 process was that NIU would be capable of making the investments necessary to secure its future and the 2020 vision by reaching a maximum enrollment capacity of 30,000 students. There was no plan or process articulated for prioritizing programs if those resources were not realized.

Ultimately, [Program Prioritization](#) provided the process that allows NIU to allocate available resources to maximize the impact of our institutional program portfolio, across both academic and administrative programs. As a data-informed process aligned with NIU's vision, mission, and strategic framework, Program Prioritization incorporated programs, priorities, and outcomes data from Great Journeys and Vision 2020, as well as the [strategic priorities articulated in the strategic plan triangle framework](#) developed under President Baker's leadership.

NIU initiated Program Prioritization in Fall of 2014 in response to a variety of factors. Leadership transitions in 2013 and 2014 at the positions of President, EVPP, and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) catalyzed institutional evaluation of the alignment of resources with institutional priorities and mission and a commitment to strengthen that alignment. In addition, the 2014 HLC team noted weak linkage between budgets and the institutional mission and urged the university to consider a process such as Program Prioritization to correct this deficit. Finally, the national and regional economic declines associated with the great recession, and continued reductions in state appropriations, created conditions that required the university to identify priorities and reallocate resources to achieve strategic balance. NIU's Board of Trustees (BOT) [endorsed Program Prioritization](#) as a strategic measure to identify and direct resources in a way that will provide the most benefit for NIU's current and future students.

Program Prioritization included [six phases with distinct purposes](#): planning and launch; process development; data platform development and population; program narrative writing; task force scoring and report development; and implementation. Through these efforts, two task forces, each made up of approximately 20 members of NIU's faculty and staff, evaluated 223 academic programs

and 236 administrative programs and issued comprehensive reports that identified programs as [candidates for enhanced, unchanged, or reduced resources; candidates for transformation; or candidates for review and possible phase-out](#). [Release of these reports in May 2016](#) was followed by campus feedback, divisional action planning, targeted cross-divisional “complex conversations,” and a series of Presidential recommendations. All these implementation steps have been carried out to the extent allowed by current resource constraints. The criteria adopted by the university community for Program Prioritization have been incorporated into the criteria used to assess hiring and vacancy refill, as well as the criteria used to consider historically unfunded or underfunded requests and new investments.

As indicated above, Program Prioritization at NIU was undertaken to better align resource allocation with the university’s mission and priorities, and not as a cost-cutting exercise. However, recommendations resulting from this comprehensive, data-informed process came to play a critical role in guiding the university during the 25-month Illinois budget impasse. Notably, Illinois’ failure to pass a budget resulted in a failure of the State to appropriate operating funds for higher education or the need-based grants associated with the Illinois Monetary Award Program. As a result, NIU received only 30% of FY2015 funding for FY2016, and managed through the uncertainty associated with an initial stopgap budget for FY2017 that guaranteed only six months of FY2017 funding. Program Prioritization’s recommendations and action plans continue to guide campus decisions regarding investments, budget reductions, and program consolidation or elimination as described here, specifically in Criterion 5.A and Criterion 5.C.

5.A.1

With an annual operating budget of approximately [\\$424 million](#), NIU has sufficient fiscal resources to support its operations. This budget includes support for NIU's expenses related to costs of goods sold, personnel services, contractual services, commodities, travel, automotive, scholarships, telecommunications, equipment and library materials, capital repairs, debt service, and all other.

By far the largest percentage of the budget is for personnel, with over half of the annual budget, nearing \$200 million for this category alone. These funds enable NIU to employ human resources sufficient to support operations. As seen in the most recent [Data Book](#), NIU employs 3,131 full-time individuals and another 388 part-time individuals to run the university's operations. Of these, 57% are faculty and supportive professional staff (SPS) employees while 43% are civil service employees (see Criterion 3).

NIU’s operating budget is funded by appropriated funds allocated by the Illinois General Assembly through the General Revenue Fund and non-appropriated funds generated locally from sources including tuition and fees, room and board charges, and auxiliary enterprises such as food sales and gate receipts from athletic events. The recent history of decreased state appropriations overall has significantly shifted funding responsibilities from state to local sources. During the recent two-year state budget impasse, NIU experienced a decrease in the state's fiscal commitment of over \$160 million. The historical [summary of budgeted revenue by source](#) shows this substantial shift in our resource base.

In general, NIU has addressed shortfalls and bridged non-payments, rescissions, and base budget reductions by the state through operational efficiencies, energy conservation, managed expenditures, internal reallocations, employment freezes, deferment of scheduled and often necessary maintenance and repairs, and staff downsizing. NIU’s robust Program Prioritization plan is a framework for re-engineering operations to yield efficient and effective activities coupled with the allocating of scarce resources towards mission-critical activities.

An increasingly important component of the appropriations process is the state implementation of a [performance funding program](#) for General Revenue funds. Effective in FY2013, state appropriations for public universities include a system of performance funding to allocate resources. This performance funding model is intended to improve degree completions at public universities and to reflect the differentiated missions of each public institution. The performance metrics included in the model emphasize the importance of improving outcomes for several groups of students: students who are at academic or financial risk, low-income students, first-generation students, and underrepresented students. The emphasis given to each metric is determined by the unique mission of each university. With only 0.5% being allotted to performance based funding in the state, the [impact on NIU and other state universities](#) has been modest. However, NIU has been proactive in working with state legislators to link performance to budgets and to create a process of multi-year budgets for public institutions. In March 2018, NIU joined with the University of Illinois on legislation linking five years of stable state funding to agreed-upon performance measures by the University of Illinois and NIU through the Investment, Performance and Accountability Commitment ([IPAC](#)).

NIU annually reviews and evaluates tuition charges and recommends rates that will generate adequate resources to ensure the quality of academic programs and services, while remaining consistent with our commitment to affordability and access. In accordance with [Illinois's Truth-in-Tuition statute](#), undergraduates are guaranteed a fixed tuition rate for nine semesters upon enrollment. This requires continued planning for expenditures by using predictive models for expected costs four years in the future.

Students are apprised of [tuition, fees, and surcharges](#) via the [bursar's website](#) where they can also access the online tuition estimator. The Office of the Bursar also provides documentation, including hypothetical scenarios, regarding educational costs. Despite being more affordable than some other Illinois public institutions, the increasingly heavy financial burden that students bear has had an impact on NIU's recruitment and retention.

All students are also assessed fees on a per-credit-hour basis. By far, the largest component of [student fees](#) is assessed for student major medical insurance, but students who are otherwise insured can opt out. Students are assessed an [academic program enhancement](#) and instructional technology surcharge each semester partially to support academic infrastructure initiatives including computer labs, wireless access, software maintenance, equipment, and personnel expenses. Since Fall 2010, full-time students have been assessed \$250 per semester and those taking seven or fewer credit hours, \$125 per semester. Recent technology surcharge income was [\\$8.6 million in FY2017](#), while total expenses in support of technology over the last two years have been [over \\$20 million](#).

In fulfilling NIU's mission to provide educational access to a broad spectrum of students, there is limited discretion to offer undergraduate and graduate tuition and fee waivers. These waivers follow [IBHE guidelines](#) that include mandatory waivers, not reimbursed by the state, for children of employees, ROTC cadets, veteran grants, and scholarships, along with institutional waivers for athletes, graduate assistants, and cooperating professionals such as preceptors and student teaching mentors. The history of tuition and fee waivers [for FY2013 through FY2017](#) indicates that FY2017 undergraduate mandatory waivers have remained relatively stable the last two years between \$4.5 and \$4.3 million following a FY2011 increase in over 100% in waivers for veteran grants and scholarships. Institutional waivers are necessarily much higher for graduate students as this category includes teaching and research assistantships.

The state capital budget provides permanent improvement funds appropriated through the Capital Development Board, typically deriving from sales of state bonds. These capital funds are used to

construct buildings, purchase land, and renovate/improve existing facilities and infrastructure. While [state funding for capital improvements at public universities](#) has been very limited in recent years, NIU has been proactively briefing the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and State legislators on the Appropriation Committee for Higher Education of the need for additional financial support. In March, 2018, the IBHE approved NIU's request to embark on a non-instructional capital project critical to the NIU campus, the [Boiler Replacement](#). Quarterly, semiannual, and annual capital project reports are submitted to the BOT to ensure they understand the investment decisions and priorities being determined for major repairs and mission enhancement projects. The Trustees also play a key role in engaging legislators for funding support, so it is critical that they understand the urgency of maintenance and repair investments for the university.

As described in Criterion 3.B, NIU also received a significant amount of revenue from externally sponsored projects. In [FY2017](#) alone, 112 NIU faculty and staff were awarded over 300 awards totaling nearly \$26 million in funding: \$9.7 million in research, \$3.9 million in instructional programs, and \$12.3 million in other sponsored activities.

NIU's physical infrastructure is managed through the [Division of Administration and Finance](#) which has developed improvements to the process of receiving work requests from the campus population. The [facilities management and campus services webpage](#) links with the division's work management system software and allows improved management of needs from across campus. The [structure of this approach is documented](#) and available for users. The [Physical Plant](#) is responsible for providing an optimal physical environment for teaching, learning, research, and community through maintenance and improvement of university facilities. The Associate Vice President for Facilities Management and Campus Services, reporting to the CFO, submits an annual report to the BOT, including data and analysis on expenditures and deferred maintenance, as seen in [FY2014](#), [FY2015](#), [FY2016](#), and [FY2017](#).

NIU's physical infrastructure includes [Smart Classrooms](#) that incorporate various media to support classroom teaching. All principal buildings where instruction takes place have classrooms equipped with smart technology, with a total of 129 general purpose classrooms on campus supported by the Division of Information Technology (DoIT) and funded by the Division of Academic Affairs. The College of Business and College of Engineering and Engineering Technology operate dedicated information technology services for maintaining their extensive network of classroom and computer lab services. Learning at NIU is facilitated by a variety of other forms of technology, from remote access to printers to smartphone apps. NIU supports instructors and departments by offering consultation and production in video, audio, photography, and graphic design as well as document design, printing, scanning, indexing, data capture, and digital document creation. The PeopleSoft system further coordinates university business operations with accounting, billing, accounts receivable, human resources, budgeting, planning, payroll, grants fiscal administration, procurement, and treasury operations.

NIU's technological infrastructure is maintained and made accessible through [DoIT](#). Network operations staff use the [PRTG system](#) to monitor networks and the [Cherwell incident tracking system](#) to respond to service outages in a timely manner. In 2009, DoIT began changing traditional computer servers to virtual servers, resulting in significant cost savings, as well as increased efficiency and power. As of January 2018, DoIT manages over 1,000 virtual servers with nearly 1 Petabyte of storage.

In support of continuing faculty and staff training, [DoIT's Enterprise Resource Planning Training Team](#) maintains a regular schedule of training seminars for faculty, staff, and administrators, and publishes a schedule of updates for applications and systems. The Faculty Development and

Instructional Design Center also facilitates the use of [instructional technologies for effective teaching](#) through a variety of programs, resources, and services.

NIU continues to move to a paperless environment with the use of an [Enterprise Document Management system](#), and cloud-based copying and printing, the [AnywherePrints project](#) introduced in Fall 2012, allows anyone at NIU to print to anywhere on campus at any time. One outcome of these cost-saving measures is the modification of both student and instructional behavior towards a “go paperless” philosophy. In March 1, 2018, DoIT reported to the OSC that the AnywherePrints project had [saved NIU over \\$500,000](#).

NIU provides anti-virus tools for employees, students, and retirees for work and personal computers to ensure computer security. [Policies set by DoIT](#) help protect data from external and internal compromises, ensure successful recovery by backing up data, maintain information integrity, confirm users’ identity, and ensure data confidentiality.

5.A.2

NIU allocates resources in alignment with its mission and educational purposes, most recently as guided by the Program Prioritization mechanism outlined above. A core component of Program Prioritization was its rigorous and methodical review of all programs on campus, both academic and administrative, presented to the [Faculty Senate](#) in April 2015. [Administrative programs](#), from the President's Office, to Payroll, to Athletics, were reviewed to ensure that all resource allocations were in line with NIU's mission and priorities.

As a public institution, NIU does not disperse revenues to a superordinate entity.

5.A.3

NIU's values incorporated into its [Statement of Vision and Mission](#) are realistic in light of its organization, resources, and opportunities. As described throughout the assurance argument, NIU is successful in supporting a diverse community, providing access to high quality programs to a broad spectrum of learners; providing engaged teaching and learning; promoting research and artistry; supporting student success through academic and co-curricular programs; applying current technology; working collaboratively within shared governance; and committing to a public purpose.

Further, the [FY2018 Presidential Goals](#) demonstrate NIU's ongoing commitment to these values as it seeks to grow student enrollment and success; enhance fiscal sustainability; continue implementing Program Prioritization recommendations; foster an organizational culture that is ethical and accountable; increase capacity for research, innovation, and regional engagement; and enhance the student experience.

5.A.4

NIU ensures that faculty and staff are appropriately qualified and trained in all areas. A comprehensive discussion of this process, including employee credentialing, currency, and professional development is discussed in Criterion 3.C.

5.A.5

NIU’s practice of fiscal responsibility coupled with shared governance is reflected in its approach to rational resource allocation, sustained educational quality, and strategic planning. NIU’s system of resource planning and expenditures is tied to the State of Illinois budgeting process and calendar, and

NIU operates with both state-appropriated and local funding.

NIU solicits a broad range of campus participation in the decision-making process, whether in advisory, consultative, or policy-setting matters, a hallmark of NIU's commitment to shared governance and transparency. NIU takes advantage of the collaborative governance process to manage resources and improve operational processes and outcomes. NIU is proactive with respect to state appropriations and allocates funds responsibly in order to support its educational mission despite severe state funding shortages. Due to the State of Illinois's inability to meet its appropriation commitments, all public universities in Illinois have had to adjust to numerous [budget rescissions, delays, and shortfalls](#) over the past four years. As a result, NIU and the other public institutions have gone as long as 700 days without a full annual operating budget and, once received, funding has been less than 30% of the previous years funding (FY2016). NIU has transferred some responsibility for funding to other sources, including a modest increase in costs to students in the form of [tuition and fees](#). However, there is a limit to how much and to what extent tuition and fees can be expected to substitute for loss of state revenues; consequently, the BOT recently took steps to [lower fees and stabilize the cost of tuition or room and board](#) for the coming year.

NIU's [Internal Audit Department](#) provides independent and objective assurance and consulting services to assist the BOT and university management through evaluations and recommendations for improvements to risk management, internal control, and governance processes. NIU submits annual financial audits to the [Illinois Office of the Auditor General](#), as well as various reports to local, state, and federal agencies and is audited by external agencies annually. Both compliance reports ([FY2014](#), [FY2015](#), [FY2016](#), [FY2017](#)) and financial audits ([FY2014](#), [FY2015](#), [FY2016](#), [FY2017](#)) are available for the review period. (These documents do not include cover sheets as they are password protected to ensure that they are unalterable.) [Audit findings](#) are presented to the BOT along with plans for [corrective action plans](#).

The responsibility of managing the overall budget development process resides in the [Division of Administration and Finance](#). The [annual budgeting process](#) is multi-staged and involves funding sources that include general revenue, local, and capital expenditures to maintain over 4,500 cost centers. Beginning with the creation of internal budgets for each cost center, and with department/school and college approval, institutional priorities are determined. Since 2014, university leadership has created an increasingly transparent and inclusive [budget process](#) that has been shared and adopted by the entire university. Notable changes since 2014:

- The President established an Executive Budget Committee ([EBC](#)), which provides advice to its co-chairs, the Acting EVPP, and the CFO who, in turn, [provide recommendations](#) to the President on strategic and tactical issues that affect the composition of the institution's budget
- NIU completes quarterly Budget Reviews, reported regularly to [Finance, Audit, Compliance Facilities and Operations Committee](#), that discuss year-to-date results, progress towards key initiatives, and prospective financial information through the end of the fiscal year
- The university has strengthened its commitment to the role of shared governance in setting budget priorities, by involving the leadership of the [Resource Space and Budget \(RSB\) Committee](#) and the Academic Planning Council ([APC](#)) in the budget development process. RSB and APC are designated in NIU's shared governance system as the [voices from the faculty and staff](#) that communicate their view of institutional budget priorities. RSB considers budget priorities across the institution; APC focuses on academic priorities

Upon completion of a preliminary annual budget, NIU submits to the BOT the [budget proposal in June of each year](#), reflecting the anticipated income and projected operating expenditures for both appropriated and non-appropriated funds. NIU representatives then meet with staff from the IBHE,

legislative committees, and the Governor's Budget and Planning Office to inform the budget development process. Following budget hearings in the Illinois General Assembly and enactment of a state budget bill signed by the Governor, appropriations are directed to the university. At its [August subcommittee meeting](#), the Board is asked to approve the current fiscal year's internal operating budget, which is approved by the full Board in September. The approval of a preliminary budget in June allows NIU to continue operations until the enactment of a budget bill from the Illinois General Assembly. At the same time as the current fiscal year's internal operating budget is approved, the BOT acts on the [budget guidelines for the next fiscal year](#),

NIU plans, evaluates, and prioritizes fiscal resources to meet changes in student demographics, human resources, and infrastructure needs, while monitoring changes in state-level fiscal commitments. Revenue is widely sourced, including tuition and fees, state appropriations, extramural grants and contracts, private gifts, and auxiliary enterprises. NIU seeks to maximize resources to maintain quality and integrity in its primary mission despite the uncertainty of state appropriations and distributions. The annually compiled Institutional [Data Book](#) is the official repository for demographic and cost information, making public NIU's attention to balancing student costs with operational needs.

The internal [budget process](#) involves planning, developing, implementing, managing, and reporting from many institutional levels. Each May, departments and units submit their budget plans to college and division leaders for the upcoming fiscal year using [funding source guidelines](#). In an effort to increase transparency and accountability, in FY2018, NIU held a [campus-wide Budget Development kickoff-meeting](#) followed by workshops offered by the [Budget Office](#) on how to complete quarterly budgets. In FY2019, the [CFO sent an email](#) to all division leaders to kick-off the budget development process, outlining FY2019 budget targets for each division. The Budget Office then sent out a follow-up email explaining [how and when to complete the budget development worksheets](#) and provided numerous workshops for business managers on campus. The university rolled out a quarterly budgeting model for FY2018 as a way to better manage cash flow, develop more strategic and efficient budgets, and self-evaluate the university's performance.

Throughout the year, the [Office of Budget and Planning](#) provides assistance to campus units for budgetary needs and coordinates with [Human Resource Services](#) during any salary increment process; in 2018, this office assisted with the implementation of a 3% employee [salary increment](#). The Office of Budget and Planning holds campus budget development workshops and meets with vice presidents and business managers regularly to discuss their budgets and any unfunded requirements that are then presented to the EBC for consideration and recommendation for Presidential approval.

As with the internal budget, the external budget is developed with input from campus constituents including the UC through their RSB Committee, which participates in an advisory role. The Finance, Facilities and Operations Committee of the BOT [reports to the Board](#) quarterly and brings recommendations and action items as necessary.

In addition to the annual budget request, [Program Priority Requests](#) are submitted to the IBHE each fall for the following fiscal year (e.g., in Fall 2017 for FY2019). These requests are part of the institutional budget submission and specifically address one or more of the goals of the [Illinois Public Agenda for Career and College Success](#). The most recent request was made for \$2.5 million in four critical areas: Data Sciences, Nursing, Health Information Management, and community college partnerships for engineering. These priority requests have been submitted to the IBHE annually, but NIU has never received the requested funding.

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5.B - Core Component 5.B

The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Argument

5.B.1

[NIU's eight-member BOT](#) is charged by the State of Illinois with responsibility to operate, manage, control, and maintain NIU in accordance with the laws of the State of Illinois and the US. Most BOT members have a long-standing relationship with an interest in NIU, many of them are alumni, and one is a current student. Information about [current members](#) is posted online for purposes of public information. BOT [regulations and bylaws](#) state that the Board will carry out its charge by developing and implementing appropriate governing policies; carrying out public policy and assuring prudent stewardship of university resources; and representing the university to the State of Illinois, the public, and other external entities. While it is the final institutional authority, the Board delegates the conduct of administration and management to the [President](#) and the [conduct of teaching and research to the university faculty](#). The Board is specifically empowered to make rules and policies for the management, operation, control, and maintenance of the university and its employees, students, and property. The Board meets this obligation in a variety of ways— through oversight, direct action, and programmatic approval. The Board also instructs the President to update it regularly on university issues, and the Board, in turn, is required to evaluate the performance of the [university President](#) periodically.

The roles and responsibilities of the trustees and officers are outlined in the [Bylaws](#) of the BOT. This is a living document that is closely adhered to by the BOT and is amended as needed, most recently in [August 17, 2017](#), to enable a more effective BOT committee structure. These Bylaws also present the duties and responsibilities of the President of the university as Chief Executive Officer. The [Chief of Staff](#) in the President's Office serves as the staff liaison to the BOT, a position added to the Bylaws and approved at the BOT Meeting on [March 12, 2015](#).

At its inception in 1996, the Board also established a [University Advisory Committee](#), which consists of the presidents of the [Faculty Senate](#), the [SPS Council](#), and the [OSC](#). These individuals play an important role in the meetings of the BOT, and their voices are influential in the proceedings conducted there. In addition, three additional faculty represent the faculty's multiple roles in the university, particularly those in teaching, research, and service. As described in Criterion 2, the work of the Board is distributed among [four standing committees](#) who act to advise, consult, monitor, and review actions of the Board and the university governing bodies. Minutes from these four committees

demonstrate the ways in which the BOT provides oversight of the institution's [financial](#) and [academic](#) policies and practices and meets its [legal](#) and [fiduciary](#) responsibilities. [Ad hoc committees](#), such as one on enrollment, are established by the Board, as needed, for a specific purpose or charge. Details of these committees' purpose, membership, and meeting times are found in [Article 6 of the Bylaws of the NIU BOT](#).

5.B.2

Shared Governance is a core value in NIU's [Statement of Vision and Mission](#). NIU's [Constitution](#) recognizes that this shared governance process involves faculty, students, administrative officers, and staff, especially with regard to decision- and policy-making, with oversight from the BOT. In addition to the BOT, NIU's governing bodies include the UC, Faculty Senate, SPS Council, OSC, and Student Association. Whenever possible and constitutionally appropriate, NIU includes membership from the instructor rank in department, college, and division governance. For example, one of the [co-chairs of the Program Prioritization Academic Task Force](#), was an instructor.

The [UC](#) has inclusive, university-wide representation and is responsible for establishing educational and academic policies; acting upon reports that affect the educational and academic policies; advising on policies regarding academic salaries, sabbatical leaves, leaves without pay, tenure, and promotion; establishing such standing and temporary committees as may be necessary for the discharge of its responsibilities; and advising the President and the vice presidents on policies affecting the quality of student life on campus. The UC is the [largest shared governance body at NIU](#), with 31 tenured faculty members, one representative from the University Libraries, two members of the OSC, two members of the SPS Council, the President of the Student Association, and 15 additional student members. Ex officio voting members include the President, the EVPP, and the deans of each college, the Graduate School, and the University Libraries. There are also four nonvoting members from the university administration.

The [Faculty Senate](#) is comprised of the [elected faculty members of the UC as well as 41 additional faculty](#), including at least one faculty member from each academic department or school and one member each from the College of Law (CLAW) and the University Libraries. An additional 10 ex officio members represent SPS, students, and academic councils. Maintaining faculty governance roles stipulated in the [NIU Constitution and Bylaws](#) is one of their primary responsibilities.

The [SPS Council](#) was established in 2003 as a means of communicating among SPS employees and as a vehicle for articulating the interests and concerns of SPS to other constituents of the university community. It [comprises 22 elected representatives from the SPS ranks, 22 alternates, and one council President](#). Two members of the SPS Council serve on the UC and as ex officio members of the Faculty Senate.

The [OSC](#) represents NIU's civil service employees and is an integral part of the university governance system through its participation, communication, advisement, and assistance on the resolution of issues and the formulation of policies relevant to the general welfare of operating staff employees. Through its council, [made up of 17 operating staff representatives and two ex officio members](#), the operating staff communicate concerns to the university administration and to the BOT. Two members of the OSC serve on the UC and as ex officio members of the Faculty Senate.

The university supports a strong [Student Association](#), which plays a critical role in shared governance, serves as the voice of the students to the administration, and acts on behalf of student interests by allocating a portion of its \$6.5 million budget to over 300 [recognized student organizations](#). The Student Association also explicitly encourages students to serve on any of 13 university-level

committees and councils: [five related to the UC \(Steering Committee; Rules, Governance and Elections Committee; Academic Policy Committee; University Affairs Committee; and RSB Committee\)](#) and eight additional committees: [Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources Committee](#), [Athletic Board](#), [Campus Parking Committee](#), [Campus Security and Environmental Quality Committee](#), [Community Standards and Student Conduct Advisory Board](#), [Computing Facilities Advisory Committee](#), [Library Advisory Committee](#), and the [Northern Star Publications Board](#). Many departments/schools, colleges, committees, and units create student advisory councils to encourage participation and engagement with university operations and institutional decision-making, further enhancing our dedication to shared governance at NIU.

5.B.3

NIU's shared governance structure, described above, enables the university to involve all key constituents in setting academic requirements, policies and processes. Two examples demonstrate these efforts. The first is the case of the recently approved B.S. in Biomedical Engineering. The development and approval of this degree included faculty, staff, and student involvement at many levels including in the [pre-proposal](#), where the Acting EVPP and his staff reviewed the proposal and other proposal materials; at the [Baccalaureate Council \(BC\)](#), where faculty reviewed the proposal materials; and at the [APC](#) and [University Assessment Panel \(UAP\)](#) meetings, where faculty and student members of these committees reviewed the proposal materials. Following [NIU's process](#), all these approvals are completed prior to an academic degree program being submitted to the BOT or the IBHE.

A second example illustrates policy development at NIU. As described in Criterion 3.C, NIU undertook a process to ensure compliance with HLC's Assumed Practice B.2 on faculty qualifications. As described in this [presentation at the recent HLC Annual Conference](#), NIU administrators and staff began the planning process for this policy with a policy subgroup, operations subgroup, and advisory group. As the policy was drafted and refined, it passed by several key groups including the [BC](#) and [Graduate Council](#), both of which include faculty and student representatives. The [Faculty Credentials Policy](#) was finalized and placed in NIU's Academic Policies and Procedures Manual in January 2017.

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5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

Argument

5.C.1

As discussed in Criterion 5.A, NIU has invested significant time and resources in strategic planning and resource alignment, in part as a response to findings from the 2014 HLC team's report, which noted inadequate mechanisms for linking institutional mission, priorities, and strategic planning to its budgeting processes. Whereas Great Journeys and Vision 2020 were promoted as institutional initiatives designed to develop institutional imperatives and benchmark progress against articulated goals, these efforts fell short of those expectations and contributed to planning fatigue on the NIU campus. Still, both initiatives had some lasting positive effects on the university.

In late Fall 2014, NIU kicked off [Program Prioritization](#), an inclusive planning process for 459 identified university programs (223 academic programs and 236 administrative programs) with the express purpose of better [aligning resource allocation with mission and priorities](#). From the beginning, Program Prioritization was an inclusive and transparent process. A [Coordinating Team](#), representing individuals in a variety of roles, including students, was selected by the President to guide the process. As is described in both the [Academic Task Force](#) and [Administrative Task Force](#) reports, the “goal of Program Prioritization at NIU is to allocate our resources to maximize the impact of our institutional program portfolio, across both academic and administrative programs. Further, the program prioritization process is a data-informed process aligned with NIU’s vision, mission, and strategic framework.” [The process](#) was not designed as a cost-cutting exercise although the state budget impasse during the timeframe of Program Prioritization demanded cost-cutting at all levels of the university; the two processes were sometimes conflated in the minds of some NIU constituents.

The Program Prioritization process adhered to [three guiding principles](#): (1) all academic and administrative programs would be reviewed – NIU’s leadership and the Coordinating Team were committed to a comprehensive review of the full program portfolio; (2) all contracts with all employees will be honored – leadership and the Coordinating Team were also committed to not using Program Prioritization as a means for large-scale lay-offs but as a way to reallocate funds; and (3) all students will be guaranteed the opportunity to complete their current academic programs – leadership and the Coordinating Team were unwilling to let students’ academic career success be harmed by the Program Prioritization process. The process was built upon [four key elements](#) crucial to NIU’s culture

and operations: Program Prioritization (1) had to be inclusive of all campus stakeholders; (2) was to be standardized and data-informed; (3) had to be an open and transparent process; and (4) had to be conducted with rigor and integrity. These principles guided the Program Prioritization process through its [timeline](#) and the six discrete phases with distinct purposes:

- Planning and launch
- Process development
- Data platform development and population
- Program narrative writing
- Task force scoring and report development
- Implementation

In Fall 2015, programs and units constructed program narratives from research and reflection for rigorous self-assessment on productivity and mission alignment. In Spring 2016, [two task forces](#), each made up of approximately 20 members of NIU's faculty and staff, evaluated 223 academic programs and 236 administrative programs, and issued [comprehensive reports](#) that identified programs as candidates for enhanced, unchanged, or reduced resources; candidates for transformation; or candidates for review and possible phase-out. Release of these reports in May 2016 was followed by campus feedback, divisional action planning, targeted cross-divisional "complex conversations" and a series of Presidential recommendations. All of the implementation steps related to these actions are being carried out to the extent allowed by current resource constraints.

In moving forward with the Program Prioritization process, the BOT and Acting President have planned key implementation areas in both administrative and academic programs in the [FY2018 Presidential Goals](#). By June 2018, the goal is to implement 80% of administrative program recommendations and to have 75% of the academic programs planned for transformation or elimination completed. The goal further promotes the development of a strategy and template to ensure that continuous improvement activities identified through the program prioritization process are integrated into institutional planning in order to monitor progress and improvement activities for Fall 2018 reporting to the BOT.

5.C.2

NIU links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting. Although this occurs routinely through dissemination of results of assessment of student learning outcomes (SLOs) and program review processes, nowhere has it been made more explicit than in Program Prioritization. Data required in the program narratives informed the recommendations made by the task forces.

For [administrative programs](#), information included:

- Measurement of the program's importance to the university's mission
- Program quality and effectiveness data
- Program productivity and efficiency trend analyses
- Internal and external stakeholder demand data
- Assessment of opportunity analyses for the program's future including cost-savings, consolidation, and synergistic collaboration across campus

For [academic programs](#), information included:

- Faculty quality data

- Student outcomes data
- Financial efficiency measures and metrics
- Measurement of the program's importance to the university's mission
- Program's potential analysis
- External program demand data
- Internal program demand and enrollment trend data
- Program diversity contribution data

The task forces evaluated these data as they prepared their recommendations for both [administrative](#) and [academic](#) programs. Program Prioritization has continued to serve as NIU's planning process, and updates and reports associated with Program Prioritization have verified the extent to which NIU is meeting its stated objectives. These reports have been made publicly available to the university community throughout the implementation process in the [President's Progress Report](#) and the [Division of Academic Affairs Action Plan](#) from November 28, 2016; and the [President's Progress Report](#) from May 10, 2017. These reports speak to the ways in which academic and administrative programs have been restructured to better align our resource allocation with our priorities and, especially, to better serve our students. Examples include promoting student success through enhancing academic support programs reporting to the [Office of Undergraduate Studies](#); establishing the [Division of Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications \(EMMC\)](#); reorganizing diversity resource centers to report to the [Office of Academic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#); and establishing the [Office of Institutional Effectiveness \(IE\)](#).

5.C.3

The description of Program Prioritization in Criteria 5.C.1 and Criteria 5.C.2 highlights a multitude of ways in which internal and external constituents are engaged in NIU's planning processes. Further evidence is found in a recent [Program Prioritization Evaluation Summary](#). Throughout the Program Prioritization process, an evaluation team, led by Accreditation, Assessment and Evaluation (AAE) within IE, has undertaken a thorough review of Program Prioritization with input from a wide variety of stakeholders to ensure input from faculty, staff, students, and other NIU constituents. As outlined in the report, this evaluation informed NIU's next steps as Program Prioritization was ongoing and illuminated best practices of the Program Prioritization process. Analyses from the data collected by the evaluation team has been and will continue to be shared with various groups across campus in alignment with NIU's dedication to transparency and data-informed decision-making.

Further, data from the evaluation team have been used in conjunction with the development of charters for IE projects to [improve the program review process](#) at NIU. This charter represents the evolution of the outcomes of the [Program Review Process Improvement Task Force](#) and encompasses a plan to develop a proposal merging program review with Program Prioritization.

The Division of University Advancement ([DUA](#)) oversees the unified team comprised of the [NIU Foundation](#), [NIU Alumni Association](#), and the fundraising staff of the university.

The NIU Foundation, an Illinois 501(c)3 organization, is the official endowment management and fundraising arm of NIU. As such, it raises and manages private support solely to enhance the academic, artistic, and research mission of NIU. Gifts are used for student, faculty, and programmatic priorities as articulated through university and college-level strategic planning. The Foundation has become increasingly more important as state and federal support continues to decline for public universities and is seen today as an entrepreneurial, strategic partner to the university.

Generally, Foundation funds are raised through five separate programs: [Annual Giving](#), [Major and](#)

[Planned Giving](#), [Special Events](#), Campaigns, and Corporate and Foundation Giving. Over the last two decades, private support has increased significantly. In 1990-1999, the Foundation raised \$36.5 million compared to \$140.4 million raised from 2000-2009 (including the [True North Campaign](#)). Importantly, in the post-campaign period, 2011-2017, despite the effects of a challenged national economy, giving surpassed \$100 million, illustrating sustained growth as the Foundation continued to professionalize and focus on major and principal gifts.

The Foundation also manages funds raised on behalf of the university. The Investment Committee of the NIU Foundation Board of Directors is charged with oversight of the NIU Foundation's portfolios. As of June 2017, [total assets of the Foundation were \\$133 million](#). The Foundation reports annually on its endowment fund performance to the Board, and publicly through the IRS 990 and Impact Reports to donors.

The [Alumni Association](#) is focused on building lifelong relationships with NIU alumni, prospective students, corporate partners, and friends. The Association serves 154,000 NIU alumni in the Chicago area and 225,000 alumni worldwide, reaching out to them in a variety of ways, including its quarterly magazine, [NorthernNow](#). The Association encourages active participation in [affinity groups](#), bringing together alumni with similar backgrounds and interests and has an active advocacy program that engages volunteers in strategies to communicate NIU's needs to the Illinois Governor, state legislators, and members of Congress.

The DUA, through the leadership of the NIU Foundation, has set ambitious goals for the future. In order to provide an even greater stream of philanthropic support to NIU in the coming years, fundraising programs must continue growing. The Vision 2020 goal was to double the average annual private giving from \$10.1 million in FY2010 to \$20 million by FY2018. By FY2016, fundraising exceeded \$28 million and continues on a course to grow to over \$30 million by FY2025. It is anticipated that a second capital campaign, beginning in FY2020, will propel NIU's fundraising to this next level.

5.C.4

NIU plans with a sound understanding of its currently capacity and anticipates possible impacts on the institution's sources of revenue. Enrollment trends (see Criterion 4.C) at NIU have been on the decline over the past four years and, in response, NIU has undertaken numerous activities to address this situation, including:

- Establishing the [FY2018 Presidential Goal to Grow Student Enrollment and Success](#)
- Merging various enrollment and retention functions, resulting in the new Division of Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications ([EMMC](#)) and the hiring of a new divisional Vice President
- Establishing the [Strategic Enrollment Management](#) Committee
- Eliminating [out-of-state tuition](#) premiums
- Increasing use of the [Student Success Collaborative Campus](#) software

A larger concern for NIU, however, has been the fiscal uncertainty of State of Illinois appropriations. As noted above, Program Prioritization was undertaken to better align resource allocation with the university's mission and priorities, and not as a cost-cutting exercise. However, recommendations resulting from this comprehensive, data-informed process came to play a critical role in guiding the university during the 25-month Illinois budget impasse. Notably, Illinois' failure to pass a budget resulted in a failure of the state to appropriate operating funds for higher education or the need-based grants associated with the Illinois [Monetary Award Program \(MAP\)](#). As a result, NIU received only

30% of FY2015 funding for FY2016, and NIU had to manage the uncertainty associated with an initial stopgap budget for FY2017 that guaranteed only six months of FY2017 funding. With 35.7% percent of our students dependent upon [MAP Awards](#), this put our students in serious jeopardy, and NIU and other institutions around the state had to step in to [cover these awards](#) while awaiting state funding. NIU students joined other students around the state in [protesting at the State Capitol](#) in [support of MAP Awards](#).

NIU is meeting the challenges of decreased state funding and declines in enrollments through ongoing planning processes and ongoing conversations with the state legislature. Forecasts of projected revenues and expenses point to an anticipated budget gap for FY2019 of approximately \$22 million. Factors driving the gap include decreased tuition and fee revenue, increased compensation expenses, debt service management, permanent commitment funding not fully budgeted previously, recruiting investments, online program delivery, IT infrastructure, and deferred maintenance. Based on this forecast, the [FY2019 budget planning process](#) called on [divisions to identify opportunities to close the budget gap](#), either by finding new revenue sources or reducing expenses. Divisions presented their budget plans, along with the challenges and opportunities associated with those plans, first to the EBC then, in a series of collaborative [budget hearings](#) to the senior leadership and representatives of shared governance. The outcome of that process was an assignment to each division of its share of the budget gap responsibility. Those assignments were strategically differentiated, and ranged from divisions, such as EMMC, that were safe from share liability, to those such as Athletics and Administration and Finance that were asked to absorb reductions of 8% or more.

NIU also continues to communicate with the state legislature during this time of uncertain state funding. A recent example of the outcomes of these discussions is NIU working with legislators in support of the proposed legislation, [IPAC](#), described in Criterion 5.A. NIU has also communicated with the [Illinois Higher Education Working Group](#) to assist them in understanding key issues related to enrollment, management, financial assistance for students, and the importance of reliable and timely appropriations.

As of June 1, 2018, Illinois [passed a FY2019 budget](#) with gubernatorial approval on June 4.

5.C.5

The BOT and Acting President have set the tone in planning for emerging factors, in part, through the establishment of the [FY2018 Presidential Goals](#). Each goal accounts for some aspect of change in NIU's environment and prepares the university to adapt to these changes and embrace the opportunities they provide:

- [Grow Student Enrollment and Success](#) recognizes the out-migration of Illinois students and changing demographics resulting in a broader range of student needs
- [Enhance Fiscal Sustainability at NIU](#) acknowledges the need to be more self-sustaining and the importance of optimizing the alignment of valuable resources with NIU's mission
- [Implement Program Prioritization](#) identifies the value of strategic planning and the implementation of those plans
- [Foster an Organizational Culture that is Ethical and Accountable](#) commits NIU to transparency and accountability in ethically taking advantage of opportunities within a global context as they present themselves
- [Increase Capacity for Research, Innovation, and Regional Engagement](#) adopts important strategies for better serving NIU students and contributing to NIU's research productivity
- [Student Experience](#) supports the voice of the most important constituents of NIU, the students

While the BOT and Acting President set the tone for planning at NIU, all division, colleges, and units within NIU strategically plan for the future; this model of distributed integrated planning across the university has kept NIU moving forward on a steady course through changes in senior leadership and a challenging fiscal environment. The examples below illustrate how NIU's strategic planning across campus functions synergistically toward an increased alignment of resources with the mission.

- Student Affairs (formerly Student Affairs and Enrollment Management) has embarked on two separate strategic planning processes in recent years. The first covered the period from 2011-2015 and included five divisional goals: Holistic Personal Development; Inclusive Community; Professional Identity and Acumen; Student Engagement; and Sustainability and Fiscal Responsibility. A [mid-status report](#) on the outcomes of this plan was issued in January 2013. Following shifts in the leadership in Student Affairs, as well as in the composition of the units reporting to Student Affairs, a second strategic plan began for the period of [2016-2020](#). The goals in this plan are to foster a respectful campus community which values social justice health, and inclusion; to champion the recruitment and persistence of a diverse student body; to support students' academic, personal, and career success through opportunities that foster engagement, learning, and development; to recruit, retain and develop a diverse, mission-driven, and talented staff; and to ethically and efficiently manage resources to maximize the value of the student and staff experience
- NIU's Senior Associate Vice President for Academic Diversity and Chief Diversity Officer's [three-year strategic plan](#) encompasses a broad range of goals for increased equity and inclusion that align NIU with its institutional mission and priorities while responding to present and future challenges. Of primary concern is the need to [recruit and retain a diverse student body](#)
- College level equity teams charged with increasing retention and success of underserved students have developed outcomes-based initiatives as in the [College of Engineering and Engineering Technology](#), the [College of Education](#), and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences ([CLAS](#))
- A number of colleges are creating strategic plans to work on specific issues, for example enrollment and recruitment in [CLAW](#) or promoting student success in [CLAS](#)
- In other cases, the strategic planning encompasses all activities within a college as in the [College of Business](#)

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5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

Argument

5.D.1

NIU is committed to creating a data-informed culture that supports strategic planning, decision-making, and resource allocation efforts in order to enable the university to realize its mission and to support and sustain the success of NIU students, faculty, and staff. To this end, based on recommendations made by the Program Prioritization Administrative Task Force, five programs (Accreditation; Assessment Services; Academic Analysis and Reporting; Institutional Research; and the analytical function of Testing Services) were consolidated in January 2017, into a single Office of Institutional Effectiveness ([IE](#)) with four functional emphases: (1) Accreditation, Assessment and Evaluation (AAE); (2) Decision Support and Analysis (DSA); (3) Institutional Research (IR); and (4) Academic Planning.

The [AAE](#) function manages accreditation and assessment initiatives and provides support for evaluation projects. Key assessment initiatives undertaken to support achievement of student learning outcomes and programmatic assessment include [academic degree program assessment](#), [academic support unit assessment](#), [alumni surveys](#), and the [Annual Assessment Expo](#).

As described in Criterion 4, for the purposes of programmatic assessment, academic degree programs are required to maintain an [assessment plan](#) outlining their SLOs and regularly collect data related to these outcomes; this process helps programs understand how well students are meeting programmatic SLOs and ensure that programs have enough data to support status reports. Academic support units, such as the [University Honors Program](#) and the [Academic Advising Center](#), submit assessment reports on SLOs and program outcomes every five years to the [UAP](#), which provides these reports to the [APC](#).

Each academic year [NIU surveys the previous year's alumni](#) about their NIU experience, post-graduate education, and current employment status as a feedback mechanism within the academic program review process. For ten years, NIU has hosted an [Annual Assessment Expo](#) that brings the NIU community together to celebrate accomplishments and explore [special topics](#) related to student learning and assessment.

Within IE, the [DSA](#) function serves as a university contact for institutional reporting; business intelligence reporting; and analytics and decision support related to areas of revenue, cost, productivity, and efficiency. The area promotes a highly collaborative, client-based model, providing reporting and analysis across a broad consumer base, including various unit leaders from vice presidents to chairs. The project portfolio includes reporting deliverables, statistical and analytical services, project management, and decision support related to instructional staffing resources, faculty scholarship, peer benchmarking, financial analysis, forecasting and performance, and outcome-based

measures.

DSA administers [NIUReports](#), a central repository of data and reporting on recruitment, retention, and enrollment. Launched in February 2017, this internal data repository facilitates the efficient distribution of key data to university leadership and promotes the use of the underlying data by the broader university community. Key reports include [Fall-to-Fall Enrollments](#), [Credit Hour and Enrollment Comparisons](#), [Fall Enrollments by Location](#), and the [NIU Student Profile](#).

[IR](#) provides service to the university as the primary source of official university data and for reporting to state and federal agencies and other external groups. In order to meet the breadth of reporting and compliance requirements, IR retains historical official university data on students, staffing, and finances. IR provides official university reporting to federal agencies (such as [IPEDS](#)) and several state agencies such as the [IBHE](#) and the [Illinois Controller](#). IR also provides data preparation and data submission for other state requirements, such as the IBHE annual cost study, the IBHE performance funding metrics survey, and Illinois State Legislature reports on enrollments, degrees, staffing, and costs. This unit also reports on other federal reporting requirements for NIU, including international student enrollments and surveys on research laboratory space and provides data for federal measures of enrollments in modern languages and national salary surveys.

Through the preparation of the [Fall Student Profile](#) and [Data Book](#), IR makes official data publicly available; data include information on enrollments, retention and graduation rates, new student admissions, degrees awarded, credit hour production, university staffing trends, and university financial data. In addition, IR serves the university through the completion and submission of all college guide data collection initiatives and surveys. It provides support for university management through the preparation of analyses and reports regarding student enrollments, degrees awarded, retention and graduation rates, credit hour production, weekly and annual admissions data, demographic analyses of the service region, and university finances. Support for university budgeting is provided through the determination of enrollment projections used for budget estimations and for inclusion into state budget documents. Further, IR provides data needed for bond agencies and contract certifications.

[Academic Planning](#) rounds out the four functions of IE and supports the university's ongoing commitment to providing high quality academic programs that address student and society needs. Core components of Academic Planning include oversight of new program development and program review. Academic Planning assists faculty, chairs, and deans in developing and obtaining approvals for new academic programs, including supporting them in understanding NIU's [shared governance approval process](#), undertaking the [necessary steps](#) and [formats](#) in moving the proposal forward, and completing documentation for BOT and IBHE approvals. Recent examples of this process can be found in successful submissions for the [Ph.D. in Computer Science](#) and the [B.S. in Biomedical Engineering](#). Apparent in these examples is NIU's multi-level scrutiny that ensures alignment with institutional priorities, fulfillment of an authentic external demand, enrollment and cost sustainability, and the meeting of student needs.

IE is under the leadership of the Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and uses a project management approach. In June 2017, IE hired a full-time [Projects Coordinator](#) to build project management processes [supporting institutional level strategic planning](#). Among these, large scale projects such as the HLC 4-year Assurance Argument, now include a [charter](#), [project plan](#), and [communication plan](#).

5.D.2

The Acting EVPP and CFO work to develop, implement, and manage university-wide strategies for integrating performance measures and evidence-based approaches into program management and budgeting. One example can be found in the budget development and management processes that result in issuing fiscal recommendations to the Acting President and the subsequent advancement of presidential decisions to the BOT. According to the [guiding principles for annual budget development and multi-year financial planning at NIU](#), approved by the BOT in August 2014, the EVPP has primary responsibility to drive the development and approval of specific goals and initiatives in consultation with academic and student affairs leadership, to weigh competing resource allocation choices, and to recommend overall funding priorities for programs and activities that support core university missions. The primary roles of the CFO are to advise on financial strategy to accomplish the university's varied goals and to maintain prudent financial policies and practices to permit financial stability over time.

NIU's guiding principles for annual budget development also provide for a range of success/performance indicators to be established, monitored, and used regularly to inform financial planning and budget decisions for all major programs and activities, and for annual review with the senior leadership and the BOT. The processes required to create and sustain this annual review cycle are being developed and implemented, with participation from the mission-aligned committees of the BOT, the Acting President, and the relevant members of the senior leadership. At a special meeting in November 2017, the BOT approved [presidential goal metrics](#) related to institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability.

Throughout FY2018, senior leadership has examined ways to update, improve and evaluate the budget management and budget development process. The [EBC](#) supports senior leadership and the President on strategic and tactical issues affecting the institution's budget. For example, in 2017 the co-chairs of the EBC provided a [budget update](#) for NIU's leadership team. Defined quarterly Budget Reviews are completed to discuss year-to-date results, progress against key initiatives, and prospective financial information through the end of the fiscal year.

At the statewide level, NIU staff work closely with legislative budget staff, appropriation committees, and the Governor's Office of Management and Budget on the state's [Budgeting for Results](#) initiatives. NIU continues to enjoy a strong working relationship with the state OMB, and the university provides reports throughout the fiscal year that assist the state in understanding NIU's financial position.

Other divisions, for example, the Division of Student Affairs, learn from their operational experience through the use of a divisional strategic plan. After significant restructuring in NIU's administration, the division's [2016-2020 Strategic Plan](#) articulated five goals: support students' academic, personal, and career success through opportunities that foster engagement, learning, and development; foster a respectful campus community which values social justice, well-being, and inclusion; champion the recruitment and persistence of a diverse student body; ethically and efficiently manage resources to maximize the value of the student and staff experience; and recruit, retain, and develop a diverse, mission-driven, and talented staff. Specific outcomes from this new structure are being analyzed. In the division, ongoing reporting is undertaken as part of the annual report process, providing transparency for NIU students. Consequently, an [annual report is posted online](#) detailing the activities and missions of each of the division's departments and services.

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5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

Summary

Despite unprecedented financial and leadership changes, NIU has managed its resource base to meet its primary educational mission of supporting and strengthening quality education programs. The 2014 HLC Peer Review Site Team noted that NIU's budgeting, planning, and resource allocation processes were "met with concerns." Since that time, transparent institutional processes for monitoring fiscal and human resources have been developed and articulated, and these processes continue to be integrated with NIU's comprehensive Program Prioritization undertaking. Current resource allocations now more closely and transparently align to the university's mission, and within the framework of shared governance, budget management, and resource allocation is overtly reflective within NIU's mission, values, goals, and priorities. Strategic planning has been broadly conceived throughout the institution and has allowed for sustained operations and rational growth. However, as noted in the embedded report introducing the Criterion 5 argument, the goals of previous strategic planning efforts were not fully achieved for various reasons. In many cases, their results inform continued efforts at improvement and accountability and in continued evaluation of all university procedures, policies, and planning initiatives. The past four years have been transformative for NIU, and the university community is committed to applying what has been learned to improve overall institutional effectiveness and sustainability.

Sources

There are no sources.