

2024 University Goals

Northern Illinois University
December, 2023



**Northern Illinois
University**

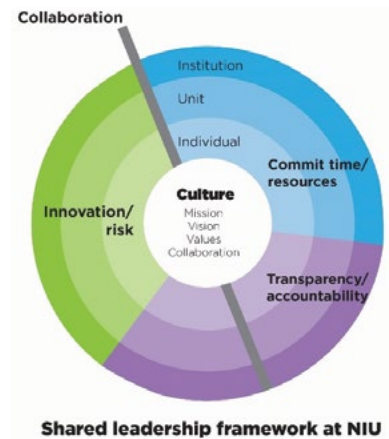
Background/Introduction

These 2024 goals establish the university's strategic priorities. These annual and multiyear goals are guided by our **Strategic Action Planning Framework** and its six themes and are informed by progress on previous years' goals. As in previous years, there are goals that appear under more than one theme, reflecting the integration of strategic priorities and highlighting opportunities to work toward our future vision in a coordinated manner across divisions, colleges, departments and units.

As we move forward together, we will continue to strive to increase alignment; promote equity-minded, data-informed decision-making; expand leadership and professional development opportunities; enhance strategic resource planning; and leverage relationships as resources. We will hold ourselves accountable for achieving outcomes that are consistent with NIU's mission, vision and values as well as our unwavering dedication to inclusive excellence and student success. In doing this, we will remember that excellence and innovation are cultivated in spaces where people are not only committed to finding better ways to do things, but also open to change, willing to take risks and unafraid to learn from failure.

Theme 1: Empowerment and Shared Responsibility

Shared leadership offers an encompassing framework to foster co-ownership of goals and adoption of processes that emphasize adaptability, interdependence and collaboration. NIU is actively building organizational capacity for shared leadership by enhancing employee skills and competencies for creating shared vision and goals; building consensus; generating feedback; navigating difficult conversations; and being self-aware. In 2023, the university adopted this model to help Huskies visualize how shared leadership can be implemented at NIU at the institutional, unit and individual levels. This shared leadership model aligns with NIU's strategic action planning framework, which emphasizes supporting the development of leaders; communicating transparently and effectively; and fostering a culture of that embraces innovation, collaboration and shared responsibility.



Goal 1A — Use shared leadership to advance a Huskie culture that truly centers and serves students.

NIU's mission, strategic action planning framework, strategic enrollment management (SEM) plans and equity statement call upon all Huskies to act in ways that are student-centric, equity-minded and that empower our students by recognizing their positive assets and focusing on their strengths. This goal seeks to strengthen our Huskie community's shared understanding of what it means to be student-centric and, specifically, to ensure that individuals and units at all levels of NIU understand how they can align their individual and collaborative efforts to achieve this aspiration:

- In 2024, the NIU executive and academic leaders represented on the senior roundtable and provost-dean roundtable will empower cross-functional groups within their divisions and colleges to review and evolve what being student-centric looks like in their context. They then will use that vision to generate specific expectations that can be: included in position descriptions; used to develop key progress indicators related to needed change in policies, practice or structures; and embedded in professional development programs for faculty and staff. Members of NIU senior leadership will share action plans based on this work with the president on or before August 1, 2024, so that implementation of the recommendations can begin before the end of the calendar year.
- In 2024, NIU will advance student-centric, equity-minded SEM goals by implementing fully a shared equity leadership (SEL) model that creates bridges between ground level-leaders and the senior team. The model features six working groups responsible for guiding and achieving positive change in key areas related to student success: 1) administrative barriers and processes; 2) advising and student pathways; 3) faculty academic experience; 4) HSI planning; 5) student academic success; 6) student engagement and well-being (note related Goals 2A and 4A).

- In 2024, NIU will participate in the *Excelencia* Technical Assistance Institute titled, “Implementing Evidence-Based Practices” (see related Goal 4A). A five-member NIU team will work to incorporate quality, equity and evidence of effectiveness into our practices and programs to more intentionally advance and accelerate Latino, and all, student success, drawing on *Excelencia*’s experience of more than 15 years with effective, student-centric practices (see related Goals 2A and 4A).

Goal 1B — Promote shared leadership to build Huskie identity and pride and to create pathways for meaningful faculty and staff engagement.

NIU recognizes that providing educational excellence for our students also means finding ways to encourage, care for and support our faculty and staff. NIU can exemplify our equity, inclusion, service and stewardship values by fostering direct pathways to promote a deeper engagement with employees in their work. When employees feel empowered and understand how they can grow and be supported by their employer, retention, pride, satisfaction and engagement increase. NIU seeks to foster an environment where employees desire to become Huskies for life. In 2024, university leadership will take the following actions:

- Empower a cross-functional employee team to develop lists of essential characteristics and guiding principles for effective, ethical supervisors at NIU. Leadership will use these to develop training focused on fostering more meaningful, purposeful interactions between supervisors and employees to support morale and contribute to a positive employee experience. One important goal is to engage campus leaders with training that strengthens their constructive, continuous feedback of direct reports’ performance and connects that feedback more directly to employee professional growth, student-centric approaches to work and NIU’s broader mission and vision.
- Increase clarity and presence of how employees can achieve greater support from and belonging to NIU. Specifically, support new and ongoing shared leadership initiatives designed to improve services, systems and processes with high impact on NIU students, faculty and staff. There are many, varied opportunities to be more intentional and proactive in meeting employees where they are, supporting them professionally and personally. For example, a greater focus on Well-Being offerings and initiatives could promote a more-supportive organizational culture and help the NIU community become more empowered, adaptable and resilient.
- Assess engagement with, and effectiveness of, shared leadership efforts by tracking improvement over time in these categories of NIU’s annual Great Colleges survey data:
 - Job satisfaction and support.
 - Professional development.
 - Faculty and staff well-being.
 - Collaboration.
 - Mission and pride.

Theme 2: Student Recruitment, Student Success and Student Experience

NIU remains committed to attracting, retaining and graduating students representing the diversity of our region, nation and world. Our current Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (**SEM 2.0**) outlines the goals and supporting strategies that we must act upon to be successful at achieving a total enrollment that reflects our public mission and values, addresses the needs of our region and state and positions NIU for fiscal sustainability. The plan emphasizes promoting the value of an NIU education, improving access and affordability and supporting students to, through and beyond graduation. For reasons noted below, these priorities remain relevant.

National trends suggest significant challenges and opportunities ahead for NIU and similar institutions. Various surveys over the past three years show that the pandemic created lasting stress on American families’ financial security and upended long-held assumptions, including confidence in college as the default post-secondary pathway to prosperity. This was reflected in retention and re-enrollment rates during the pandemic, and it is now being seen in first-year enrollment rates. In Fall 2023, first-year enrollment fell 3.6% nationally, with the decline greatest (-6.1%) at public four-year institutions. Research suggests that students who attended high school during the pandemic are choosing not to pursue higher education because of concerns about the cost and return on investment and worries about whether they are mentally ready and academically prepared. These anxieties are most prevalent among first-generation and low-income students. However, despite these changing perceptions, the four-year college degree still

largely outperforms alternatives in terms of providing a wage premium and mobility in careers, especially for first-generation students and other underserved, underrepresented students in higher education.

NIU's 2024 University Goals are responsive to our dynamic operating environment and the changing perceptions and needs of the students we serve. The goals incorporate intentional, evidence-based approaches for recruiting new students, retaining currently enrolled students and reaching out to re-enroll students who interrupted their higher education journey during or before the pandemic. Our messaging is being updated to help specific audiences better understand the benefits of an NIU education, including the excellence of our academic programs, the success of our alumni and the myriad ways that we provide students with the knowledge and skills that position them for long-term success. In addition, our programs are evolving to help us better serve our region and meet the different needs of its distinct populations of learners. NIU is committed to fostering a university culture that supports and serves all our students, enabling them to complete their degrees and move on to respected graduate or professional programs or strong first jobs.

Goal 2A — Increase Enrollment and Enhance Student Success

NIU will strive to grow and stabilize enrollment. Our efforts will be guided by strategies and targets in the **SEM 2.0** plan and related equity plans, and informed by the successes and challenges we experienced working toward the previous years' enrollment goals. We will continue to endeavor being student-centric in every interaction and transaction, and to cultivate a campus-wide culture focused on student success and "servingness."

With respect to recruitment, we will:

- Refine recruitment strategies and tactics to prioritize student-centric, audience-tailored approaches that effectively showcase the exceptional quality of our academic programs. Our actions will include:
 - Increasing capacity and attendance of on-campus events (initiate Spring 2024).
 - Update and enhance campus tour and visit experiences (initiate Spring 2024; complete during Fall 2024).
 - Updating messaging to maintain focus on affordability while placing greater emphasis on NIU value proposition including alumni career outcomes and academic experience (initiate Spring 2024; multiyear goal).
 - Strengthen partnerships with school districts by forging deeper connections to high school counselors and creating innovative enrollment opportunities specifically related to college- and career-pathways programs (initiate Spring 2024; multiyear goal).
 - Enhance opportunities and improve support for community college transfer and working adult students.
 - Fully implement partnership with **ReUp**.
 - Assess impact and use data to guide improvement and expansion of services implemented previously, including specialized advising resources and the **Transfer Credit Estimator**.
 - Continue to pursue innovative partnerships that provide place-bound transfer students and members of the incumbent workforce with access to high demand NIU certificate, baccalaureate and graduate programs:
 - Increase the breadth and visibility of resources and support available to units that seek to move academic programs fully online.
 - Launch degree-completion programs in Business Administration, Computer Science, Early Childhood Education, Psychology and Public Health at the University Center at McHenry County College in Fall 2024.
 - Implement the **EV + Energy Workforce Academy** in partnership with Richland Community College, TCCI Manufacturing and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.
 - Complete the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity with graduation and enrollment equal to, or more than, the target of 160 students. Continue to serve the region to address teacher workforce needs through innovative programs such as PLEDGE, LEAP and Grow Your Own Illinois.
 - Update degree completion offerings at Harper College by phasing out the Marketing program and replacing it with high-demand program(s).

- Explore innovative options for supporting students who wish to register after the start of classes. It is important to position students who pursue late enrollment for academic and social success. This initiative acknowledges their circumstances and challenges, and aims to provide them with appropriate resources and guidance.
- Enhance graduate student recruitment efforts:
 - Implement SLATE.
 - Develop recruitment plans for graduate programs.
- Review and revise institutional strategy for awarding financial aid and scholarships to ensure our efforts are optimized for attracting students, supporting their success and positioning the university for long-term fiscal sustainability. This is consistent with Strategy 2.4 of **SEM 2.0**, and particularly important in the current environment where federal and state dollars granted to students are increasing.

With respect to student academic and career success, we will:

- Continue to reduce systemic barriers to student success, building on goals and outcomes associated with NIU's **SEM 2.0**, the **Higher Learning Commission Quality Initiative** and **evolving equity plans**. These documents provide milestones for success that will be used to assess NIU's progress.
 - Increase retention rates for first-time, full-time Pell eligible and first-generation students.
 - Expand effective institutional practices that support students to achieve their academic goals, improve low success rates and diminish equity gaps in introductory and prerequisite courses. This will be accomplished by adjusting strategies, scaling pilots, and broadening implementation of innovative practices as indicated by ongoing formative assessment. These efforts will be supported by implementation of an SEL model that creates bridges between ground-level leaders and the senior team. The model features six working groups responsible for guiding and achieving positive change in key areas related to student-success: 1) administrative barriers and processes; 2) advising and student pathways; 3) faculty academic experience; 4) HSI planning; 5) student academic success; 6) student engagement and well-being (note alignment with Goals 1A and 4A).
- Fulfill our potential to be an institution that serves Latinx students and accelerates Latinx success in higher education:
 - Sustain full-time equivalent undergraduate enrollment that is at least 25% Latinx students to maintain eligibility to receive official designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).
 - Build on the ways we already use data, practice and leadership to foster student success by developing a comprehensive institutional strategy for more intentionally serving Latinx students, using the tools, frameworks and technical assistance developed by *Excelencia* in Education to support universities that aspire to the Seal of *Excelencia*. The knowledge gained through collaboration with *Excelencia* will strengthen NIU as a learning environment where Latinx, and all, students thrive (see related Goals 1A and 4A).
- Strengthen Braven partnership and work to provide more NIU students with opportunities to build skills, confidence, experiences and networks, thereby enhancing their potential to transition to strong first jobs (see related Goal 3A).
 - Continue Student Affairs programming designed to build enthusiasm for the Braven programs among first- and second-year students, and to connect career-focused students to each other and NIU.
 - Execute and assess Braven Accelerator (UNIV 301) pilots responsive to student feedback, including an afternoon and hybrid sections of the course, and implementation of career communities.
 - Increase Braven Accelerator participation and post-course engagement of Braven Fellows by continuing successful elements of campaigns and deploying evidence-based practices shown to be effective at Braven partners that resemble NIU.

Our 10-day census enrollment goal for Fall 2024, is to:

- Achieve total enrollment that falls within, or exceeds, a range similar to our Fall 2023 target, understanding that total enrollment is inclusive of many groups, for example: undergraduates, graduate and professional students; new freshmen; transfer students; international students; students-at-large, students returning after stopping out; students residing on-campus; and students enrolled fully online.
 - Fails to meet expectations/fails to show progress < 15,360
 - 15,360 < Meets expectations/shows progress < 15,570
 - Exceeds expectations > 15,570

Goal 2B — Continue to Make our Student Experience More Equitable and Engaging

- Use shared leadership to advance a Huskie culture that truly centers and serves students (see related Goal 1A).
 - Continue to build a community of care that demonstrates compassion, empathy and care for our students and emphasizes mental health and well-being as a collective responsibility and priority for our campus community, by taking the following actions in 2024 to support students' mental and emotional health needs and wellness:
 - Continue collaboration with **JED Campus** for year-two implementation to strengthen NIU's systems, programs and policies to protect student mental health, build life skills and support student who might be struggling by increasing help-seeking behaviors through the use of online screening tools and resources, along with expanding mental health first aid training for faculty and staff.
 - Implement and pilot a peer-to-peer mental health support program through Student Wellness in Counseling and Consultation Services to include **Togetherall**, the online platform that will provide 24/7 peer support to all students.
 - Continue to support campus campaigns, policies and practices that increase mental health awareness and decrease stigma about utilizing counseling and wellness support among all students, particularly members of marginalized communities (see related Goal 4A).
- Advance the planning and execution of the Center for Greek Life project in partnership with the NIU Foundation.
 - Land Purchase and Redevelopment Agreement finalized between the NIU Foundation and City of DeKalb (no later than the second quarter of 2024).
 - Fundraising goal and full case for support complete (no later than the third quarter of 2024).
 - Architectural plans complete (no later than the third quarter of 2024).

Theme 3: Academic Excellence and Curriculum Innovation

The promise of progress and prosperity beyond degree completion is what inspires students to pursue higher education. Worried about their futures and influenced by growing public skepticism about the value of higher education, undergraduate and graduate students are increasingly concerned about how their degree programs will prepare them for meaningful work and provide them with the opportunity for economic security. They seek academic programs and experiences that will help them develop the knowledge and skills to thrive in professional settings that are changing rapidly. They also expect higher education to prepare them to be responsible citizens, capable of solving complex problems that impact their families and communities. NIU is committed to supporting and enhancing the academic and career aspirations of Huskie undergraduate and graduate students, including their interest in strong skill development, and their desire to discover and develop innovative solutions to complex societal problems. In this context, we are pursuing improvements in our programs, policies and practices.

Goal 3A — Encourage Transdisciplinary Scholarship and Curricular Innovation

NIU achieves impact through academic excellence, innovative research and artistry and engagement with our communities. Increasingly, these pursuits require artists, scientists and humanists to work at the intersections and beyond the boundaries of established disciplines. This cannot be accomplished without expert faculty from different disciplines who are committed to collaboration, joint knowledge production and modernized systems that support and encourage transdisciplinary scholarship and curricular innovation. NIU must signal clearly to faculty members

pursuing transdisciplinary, publicly engaged or equity-oriented work that the university is committed to recognizing their value, rewarding their accomplishments and facilitating their success.

NIU also must become intentional about equipping students and scholars to build on their disciplinary foundations by accepting the legitimacy of work that is transdisciplinary and/or collaborative, and by challenging them to broaden their thinking and be open to enriching their work with additional concepts, theories and methods. In addition, our university must take actions to ensure not only that all Huskie students develop strong transferable skills but also that they are able to articulate connections between those skills and their career or graduate school ambitions. Accordingly, NIU has been working to dismantle structural barriers that: inhibit transdisciplinary scholarship; impede curricular innovation and experimentation; and discourage direct linkage of academic pursuits to career preparedness. This work will continue in 2024.

- Academic Affairs will continue to support curriculum and co-curricular enhancements that strengthen connections between curriculum, skill development and career preparedness through the following actions:
 - The General Education Committee (GEC) will continue updating the general education assessment process to ensure alignment among general education courses, knowledge domains and NIU's baccalaureate student learning outcomes, and adjust rubrics accordingly.
 - The Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning will identify and share resources that highlight innovative and effective approaches used at public research universities to ensure student access to, and awareness of, experiences that produce in-demand general, specialized and interpersonal skills, including but not limited to: critical thinking; problem-solving; verbal and written communication; creativity; data analysis; digital literacy; project management; teamwork; and leadership.
 - The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost and the undergraduate degree-granting colleges will work together to strengthen the Braven partnership and expand opportunities for NIU students to build the skills, confidence, experiences and networks that will support their transition to strong first jobs (see related Goal 2A).
- Academic Affairs will continue to build capacity for transdisciplinary scholarship and curricular innovation through the following actions:
 - Developing a cluster hiring plan that is aligned with the university's multiyear budget for implementation in 2025. Specifically, the plan will support the development of transdisciplinary teaching and research initiatives related to the Northern Illinois Center for Community Sustainability (NICCS), Transdisciplinary Research Incubator for STEM Education (TRISE) or Data Science Initiative. These areas were identified for cluster hires because NIU has established expertise – faculty from multiple colleges are actively engaged in planning – and there are prospects for donor support. Collaboration across Academic Affairs, and between that division and Research and Innovation Partnerships (RIPS), will be required to identify resources and propose the means for achieving the shared vision through a combination of new investment and resource reallocation.
 - Reducing administrative barriers to transdisciplinary team teaching, curricular experimentation and development of transdisciplinary courses and programs. Specifically, the executive vice president/provost, deans and college curricular committees will collaborate to enact tactical recommendations made by the 2021-22 Curricular Innovation Task Group:
 - Create streamlined pathways to develop curriculum for transdisciplinary courses and programs.
 - Create a “curricular innovation sandbox” to provide space for developing and testing courses efficiently without requiring a full-course approval process.
 - Develop general course numbers for interdisciplinary courses.
- Respecting and leveraging principles of shared governance, NIU administration will support the efforts of the Faculty Senate and other groups to make NIU's tenure, promotion and faculty evaluation processes are more reflective of the university's mission, vision and values, and more inclusive of diverse and evolving forms of faculty work (see related Goals 4A and 5A). To this end:
 - The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost will continue to work collaboratively with representatives of shared governance and faculty who engage in transdisciplinary scholarship to identify and share resources that can be used to inform revisions to the academic personnel process. This could involve the

creation of web resources, delivery of professional development opportunities or presentation of showcases to highlight innovative and effective practices.

- The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, the Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships and the academic colleges will continue to collaborate with representatives of shared governance and faculty who are engaged in transdisciplinary scholarship, to review NIU policies and practices that impact appointment, evaluation, promotion and tenure of faculty who teach or perform scholarly work in formal units that involve more than one academic department such as **centers or institutes**.
- University leaders will highlight the efforts of faculty who are creating transdisciplinary scholarship or achieving excellence through work with both public and scholarly benefit, with attention to how the work reflects NIU's core values and advances our mission to empower students through educational excellence.
- University leaders will highlight the efforts of faculty who are creating or teaching interdisciplinary curriculum, with attention to how the work reflects NIU's core values and advances our mission to empower students through educational excellence.

Goal 3B — Strengthen Graduate Programs, Enhance the Graduate Student Experience

NIU continues to make progress in our multiyear effort to strengthen graduate programs and enhance the graduate student experience. Actionable recommendations developed through a collaborative process reflect four major themes: create a graduate student community that supports its success; align tuition waivers to support graduate student success; set expectations for graduate student stipends and mandatory fees; and ensure adequate resources for strong and strategic programs. Original implementation timelines have been respected and updated, and these will inform the 2025 University Goals. In this context, Academic Affairs, the colleges and the Graduate School are committed to the following actions.

To create a graduate student community that supports its success, we will:

- Work with departments to review completion statistics and set goals for completion rates relative to enrollment (multiyear goal to be completed in 2025).

To align tuition waivers to support graduate student success, we will:

- Create a three-year budget model for waivers and graduate assistantships at the college- and university-level (data-informed recommendations will be proposed in 2024 with first implementation in 2025).

To set competitive expectations for graduate student stipends and mandatory fees, we will:

- Complete analysis of appropriate minimum stipends for specialist, master's professional doctoral and Ph.D. programs. Implement as part of multiyear budget planning (multiyear goal).
- Create competitive graduate student recruitment packages that offer support for the expected completion timeline for the academic program. To accomplish this, expectations will be established by programs and benchmarked against peer institutions. Implementation plans will consider recommended stipends, mandatory fee structure and budget implications (multiyear goal).

To ensure adequate resources for strong and strategic programs, we will:

- Identify promising new academic program opportunities using a strategic approach that researches the target market and validates student and employer demand. A model was created assessing the potential for cybersecurity programs at NIU.
- Expect colleges to define metrics related to graduate program enrollments, completion rates and placement results, and allocate resources to programs that are successful in enrolling talented and diverse graduate students and achieving their goals. Metrics defined in 2024 will be used to support recommendations for program investment as well as program phase-out.
- Work to lower degree costs by analyzing curricula in cognate programs to assess common requirements and opportunities for sharing courses.

Goal 3C — Reaffirmation of Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Accreditation

- Demonstrate continued compliance with HLC Criteria for Accreditation by submitting an Assurance Argument and Evidence file to the HLC.
- Prepare for successful on-site visit by HLC peer-review team, scheduled for March 25-26, 2024.

Theme 4: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging

The diversity of our student body is an important dimension of NIU's excellence. We strive to make NIU a place where all members of the Huskie community feel heard, valued and respected, regardless of their gender, gender identity, culture, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, faith, age, ability, political views, background or lived experience. We make this commitment understanding that our diversity, coupled with an environment that supports the free expression and exchange of ideas, will prepare students to be critical thinkers, compassionate leaders, successful professionals and members of a thriving democracy. These aspirations are aligned with NIU's Baccalaureate Learning Outcomes as well as with the University Goals. Moreover, they reflect the expectations of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) as expressed in the strategic plan for higher education, *A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability and Growth*.

Specifically, *A Thriving Illinois* calls on each institution of higher education in our state to create an equity plan, and to implement practices to close gaps in enrollment, persistence, advancement and completion for historically underserved and under-represented groups, including racially minoritized students, low-income students, working adults and rural students. A framework has been established by the IBHE, and institutional equity plans for FY 2025 are due in May of 2024. NIU is already using many of the strategies in this framework, including use of disaggregated data to design and assess interventions; campus climate surveys with action based on findings; professional development including cultural competency training; and systemic implementation of evidence-informed student support practices. Moreover, NIU is striving to achieve more just and equitable outcomes for students, staff and faculty through culture change driven by shared equity leadership (SEL), as reflected in the 2024 university goals.

Goal 4A — Use SEL to drive equitable outcomes and processes, and advance a more inclusive campus community.

- Advance student-centric, equity-minded SEM goals by fully implementing a model that creates shared accountability across ground-level leaders and the senior team. The model features six working groups responsible for guiding and achieving positive change in key areas related to student-success: 1) administrative barriers and processes; 2) advising and student pathways; 3) faculty academic experience; 4) HSI planning; 5) student academic success; 6) student engagement and well-being (see related Goals 1A and 2A).
- Develop a comprehensive institutional strategy for more intentionally serving Latinx students, using the tools, frameworks and technical assistance developed by *Excelencia* in Education to support universities that aspire to the Seal of *Excelencia*. The knowledge gained through collaboration with *Excelencia* will strengthen NIU as a learning environment where Latinx, and all, students thrive (see related Goals 1A and 2A).
- Act on opportunities for improvement identified in 2022 Viewfinder Campus Climate (aka NIU IDEA) survey:
 - Expand space for respectful dialogue among Huskies with different political views and perspectives.
 - Nurture inclusion for diverse gender identities, interfaith perspectives and persons with disabilities.
 - Increase campus knowledge about NIU's processes for reporting incidents that involve discrimination, bias and harassment by communicating with the university community more frequently and with increased clarity about reporting mechanisms and possible outcomes.
 - Be more sensitive and responsive to the university-wide need for mental health services, particularly to the needs of historically marginalized students (see related goal 2B).
- Continue to support the efforts of the Faculty Senate and other groups to make NIU's tenure, promotion and faculty evaluation processes more reflective of the university's mission, vision and values, and more inclusive of diverse and evolving forms of faculty work, respecting and leveraging principles of shared governance (see related Goals 3A and 5A):
 - The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost will continue to work collaboratively with representatives of shared governance and faculty who engage in transdisciplinary scholarship to identify and

share resources that can be used to inform revisions to the academic personnel process. This could involve the creation of web resources, delivery of professional development opportunities or presentation of showcases to highlight innovative and effective practices. Academic Diversity Equity and Inclusion or the presidential commissions might contribute exemplars related to work in social justice and equity.

- The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, the Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships and the academic colleges will continue to collaborate with representatives of shared governance and faculty who are engaged in transdisciplinary scholarship to review NIU policies and practices that impact appointment, evaluation, promotion and tenure of faculty who teach or perform scholarly work in formal units that involve more than one academic department, such as **centers or institutes**.
- University leaders will highlight the efforts of faculty who are creating transdisciplinary scholarship or achieving excellence through work with both public and scholarly benefit, with attention to how the work reflects NIU's core values and advances our mission to empower students through educational excellence.
- University leaders will highlight the efforts of faculty who are creating or teaching interdisciplinary curriculum, with attention to how the work reflects NIU's core values and advances our mission to empower students through educational excellence.

Goal 4B — Embrace the Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) Framework

- Build on the success of NIU's inaugural Real Talk Conference and its theme of bridging race, identity and community, by:
 - Selecting a theme and building the program for the 2024 Real Talk Conference at NIU.
 - Inviting students, faculty and staff to participate in GIVE (Growing through Inclusive Vulnerability and Empathy) circles. GIVE circles are spaces that encourage authentic sharing of, and deep listening to, personal narratives to strengthen relationships and understanding of unique perspectives and experiences.
 - Adopting the TRHT-focused Campus Climate Assessment Toolkit as a complement to NIU's climate surveys to promote deeper understanding of the lived experiences of students, faculty, staff and communities.

Theme 5: Research, Scholarship, Artistry and Engagement

Northern Illinois University is an engaged public research university recognized as a Carnegie High Research Activity (R2) university and designated as a Carnegie Community Engagement institution. The university has been recognized by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) as an Innovation & Economic Prosperity University, and by INSIGHT Into Diversity as a 2021, 2022 and 2023 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award winner. These acknowledgements reflect the excellence of our faculty and staff as well as our dedication to knowledge creation and effective community partnership.

NIU strives to prepare our students and the communities we serve for a century of change by bringing our resources to bear on complex societal challenges. We empower teams made up of faculty, staff and students with diverse and relevant experiences to think and act creatively. NIU scholars are focused on responding to environmental change, advancing technology, preparing for shifting demographics and interpreting the world around us. They have had great success working with stakeholders across sectors to advance the discovery and application of new knowledge. Yet the impact of their work could be multiplied through more-intentional transdisciplinary collaboration and greater public engagement. The APLU has challenged public research universities to modernize scholarship for the public good. NIU has already been moving in this direction. These university goals further our commitment to a more-supportive environment for non-traditional scholarly work at NIU, including work that is community-engaged, entrepreneurial, equity-oriented and transdisciplinary. In addition, they demonstrate our dedication to the concept and practice of sustainability.

Goal 5A — Strengthen Infrastructure for Research/Artistry/Engagement

NIU consistently aspires to be academically excellent as well as recognized and respected for impactful and inclusive research, scholarship, artistry and engagement. Our ability to achieve these outcomes can be either enabled or

obstructed by our systems, policies and practices, including those that determine how faculty are hired and how their accomplishments are evaluated and rewarded. The nature and strength of the institutional infrastructure available to support research, artistry and community engagement also makes a difference. In this context, and reflective of our desire to maximize the societal impact of our work, the following actions will be pursued in 2024:

- Advance community engagement as a central and essential element of NIU's mission by supporting the **Engagement Roundtable**, and the recommendations made by this shared leadership group regarding implementation of the **2023-26 Engagement Action Plan**. Specifically, in 2024, NIU will:
 - Create an action team charged with ensuring NIU's reclassification as a Carnegie Engaged Institution, and increasing NIU competitiveness for other national recognition related to community engagement and publicly impactful scholarship.
 - Provide a series of professional development opportunities for faculty and staff around community and civic engagement; publicly engaged and publicly impactful scholarship; student engagement; and service learning. These opportunities will help to nurture an institutional culture in which community engagement is highly valued as an enrichment of teaching, learning and students' academic experience; a form of scholarship, research and artistry; and an essential element of advancing the university's public service mission.
 - Identify funding for community engagement projects as a first step in creating a sustainably supported, catalytic internal grants program focused on publicly engaged research.
 - Develop and support institutional tracking and evaluation mechanisms for community engagement. These actions will help with setting strategic goals and evaluating progress as well as with demonstrating the collective impact of NIU and its partners.
- Academic Affairs will develop a cluster hiring plan aligned with the university's multiyear budget for implementation in 2025. Specifically, the plan will support the development of transdisciplinary teaching and research initiatives related to the Northern Illinois Center for Community Sustainability (NICCS), Transdisciplinary Research Incubator for STEM Education (TRISE) or Data Science Initiative. These focal areas for cluster hires are mature efforts where NIU already has expertise, multiple colleges are involved and prospects exist for donor support. Collaboration across Academic Affairs, and between that division and RIPS, will be required to identify resources and propose the means for achieving the vision through a combination of new investment and resource reallocation (see related Goal 3A).
- Respecting and leveraging principles of shared governance, NIU administration will support the efforts of the Faculty Senate and other groups to make NIU's tenure, promotion and faculty evaluation processes more reflective of the university's mission, vision and values, and more inclusive of diverse and evolving forms of faculty work (see related Goals 3A and 4A). To this end:
 - The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost will continue to work collaboratively with representatives of shared governance and faculty who engage in transdisciplinary scholarship to identify and share resources that can be used to inform revisions to the academic personnel process. This could involve the creation of web resources, delivery of professional development opportunities or presentation of showcases to highlight innovative and effective practices. Exemplars related to patents and commercialization may be contributed by RIPS. Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development might contribute exemplars related to publicly engaged or impactful scholarship.
 - The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, the Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships and the academic colleges will continue to collaborate with representatives of shared governance and faculty who are engaged in transdisciplinary scholarship to review NIU policies and practices that impact appointment, evaluation, promotion and tenure of faculty who teach or perform scholarly work in formal units that involve more than one academic department, such as **centers or institutes**.
 - University leaders will highlight the efforts of faculty who are creating transdisciplinary scholarship or achieving excellence through work with both public and scholarly benefit, with attention to how the work reflects NIU's core values and advances our mission to empower students through educational excellence.
 - University leaders will highlight the efforts of faculty who are creating or teaching interdisciplinary curriculum, with attention to how the work reflects NIU's core values and advances our mission to empower students through educational excellence.

Goal 5 — Advance NICCS and Sustainability Initiatives

The Northern Illinois Center for Community Sustainability (NICCS) will be a destination for subject matter experts external and internal to NIU along with government and business leaders, graduate and undergraduate students and citizens working to enhance sustainability in their communities. NICCS will expand opportunities to create knowledge related to food systems, water resources and environmental change, inform sustainability policy and educate the next generation of environmental scientists and stewards. To these ends, the following objectives have been established for 2024:

- Proceed with the NICCS design-build process.
- Hire a director to provide leadership for NICCS and support collaborative work related to NICCS mission, including partnerships with public and private sector organizations.
- Begin implementation of **NIU's Sustainability and Climate Action Plan** with attention to aligning and integrating the plan's recommendations with university priorities. For example, in 2024, NIU will explore the potential for an Energy Savings Agreement to support sustainability goals and address deferred maintenance. As part of this process, the university will seek opportunities to leverage related campus projects as part of the NICCS research and engagement agenda (see related Goal 6B).

Theme 6: Resource Development and Fiscal Responsibility

After a decade of declining resources, fiscal deficits and operational challenges, including the COVID pandemic, NIU must turn the page on past challenges and move forward within Illinois' new, higher-education environment. Our priorities are aligned with the three overarching goals of *A Thriving Illinois*: 1) Equity—close the equity gaps for students who have historically been left behind; 2) Sustainability—build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions; and 3) Growth—increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth. Accordingly, NIU is committed to sustaining budgets that are academically responsive and fiscally responsible; that reflect our dedication to being student-centric and equity-minded; that demonstrate an ongoing investment in our faculty and staff; and that align with our mission, vision and values.

In this context, **as recommended by the 2022 Budget and Planning Workgroup**, NIU is moving to adopt an equitable, iterative budget planning process that aligns resources with strategic priorities over annual and multiyear time frames, and that achieves long-term financial sustainability through a combination of revenue generation, expense reduction and reallocating resources. To achieve a structurally balanced budget by FY26, we are taking steps to manage recurring revenues and expenses and incentivize new and innovative revenue generation. Thoughtful, intentional and transparent allocation of resources will position NIU for continued success and long-term sustainability. Philanthropic resources raised as part of our comprehensive campaign will also contribute to sustained institutional excellence.

Goal 6A — Continue to Implement an All-Funds, Multiyear, Comprehensive Planning and Budget Process

- Identify strategies during FY24 to reduce deficit by half for FY25 through university-wide efforts focused on revenue generation as well as expense reduction and reallocation (annual milestone; multiyear goal).
- Continue to advocate at the state level for adequate, equitable and sustainable state support and other legislative priorities that would enhance NIU's long-term financial sustainability (multiyear goal).
- Continue to engage the Board of Trustees in a quarterly process to communicate the status and progress toward identified budget milestones and targets.
- Continue to transition NIU budget process from allocating and accounting for resources to strategic budgeting and planning (multiyear goal; work in progress).
- Begin implementing an all-funds budgeting model by developing and initiating a process for the effective use of scholarship funding. This requires collaboration among multiple university divisions, including Enrollment Management Marketing and Communications, Academic Affairs, University Advancement and Administration and Finance (multiyear goal).
- Advance timeline for annual budget development, review and approval to permit a more equitable, iterative process (multiyear goal; work in progress).

- Make training and education available that covers basic budgeting terminology and concepts; provides more actionable data and decision support; and distinguishes long-standing NIU practices from statutory obligations (multiyear goal; work in progress).
- Continue to maintain an innovation fund managed outside of the university's operations and maintenance budget.
- Continue to incentivize innovative revenue generation through gainsharing, using the strategic auxiliary management plan as an example of gainsharing in the context of responsible multiyear, all-funds budgeting.

Goal 6B — Advance Facilities and Technology Planning Priorities

- Advance state capital projects including NICCS and the Health Informatics Technology Center.
- Deploy the NIU Master Planning Framework to guide capital planning and align project decisions to our strategic priorities (see related Goal 1A)
- Work to ensure that all students can access the information technology resources needed to participate fully and succeed in their academic programs, focusing on equitable access to wireless internet connectivity and laptop computers.
- Explore potential for Energy Savings Agreement to support NIU's sustainability goals and address deferred maintenance (see related Goal 5A).

Goal 6C — Fundraising and Campaign Execution

- Achieve \$28.5 million in total philanthropy.
- Advance the Comprehensive Campaign to the final stage of planning.
 - Finalize the volunteer campaign structure, with Campaign Cabinet Launch by the first quarter of 2024.
 - Complete the University Case for Support and execute rollout of fully branded case to the university community (inclusive of boards and key leadership groups) by the first quarter of 2024.
 - Execute campaign fluency training for the university community (inclusive of boards and key leadership groups) to complete no later than the second quarter of 2024.
 - Execute at least five campaign focused engagement events for executive leaders, key stakeholders and large donor groups during 2024.