EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Administrative Task force was charged with placing 236 administrative programs into five categories with roughly 20 percent of the programs placed in each category. The distribution is as follows:

- Candidate for enhanced resources (12%, 28 programs)
- Continue with no change in resources (28%, 66 programs)
- Continue with reduced resources (20%, 47 programs)
- Requires transformation (23%, 55 programs)
- Subject to additional review; candidate for phase-out (17%, 40 programs)

The task force believes it is extremely important, especially given the university’s limited resources, to only enhance the highest priority programs that best advance the mission of the university. As a result, only 28 programs are placed in the candidate for enhanced resources category. The number of programs in the subject to additional review category is slightly below the 20 percent target, but the number of programs in the requires transformation category is slightly above. Several of the programs in the requires transformation category are placed there because inefficiencies exist in the way that the university provides certain services. Phasing out the program may not be possible or necessary, but rethinking the current business practice could save money and improve quality. The task force had the opportunity to conduct a comprehensive review of all administrative programs on campus and believes that identifying possible inefficiencies is one of the most important aspects of the report that will help the university going forward.

After its review, it became apparent that certain business operations of the university need to be modified. In particular, the task force feels that the university should work towards a financial model that reduces or eliminates the reliance on internal charges (i.e., chargeback system) that now forms an essential element of the business model of several units. Additionally, the task force identified several duplicated services that must be eliminated and encourages an examination of distributed services provided. Finally, the task force argues for the university’s data collection and assessment to become more transparent allowing for greater accountability of programs. Regular, robust assessment of services (using both qualitative and quantitative approaches) from all units is necessary for leadership to make appropriate strategic decisions on performance, resource allocation, or potential future transformations.

In reviewing and categorizing individual programs, the task force identified a number of functional areas that have many interrelationships between multiple programs. Those functional areas fall under one of three broad categories: students, university operations, and community connections. The task force made several larger-scale suggestions on subjects including advising; financial aid; recruiting; retention; tutoring and academic support; data and reporting; marketing, communication, and media production; facilities management; information technology; off-campus and online course delivery and fee structure; athletics; communiversity relationship; external programming and conferences; and school partnerships. These suggestions include increasing collaborations, developing synergies,
mergers, and changing funding models. It is these suggestions that the task force feels will most improve the quality and consistency of services that the university provides to its students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community.

Although NIU has some inefficiencies and areas that can be improved, the task force repeatedly saw evidence of devoted, exemplary, hard-working individuals and well-intentioned programs. It is clear that NIU has a tradition of doing more with less. The task force is hopeful that the Program Prioritization process will result in better alignment and efficiencies, which will allow the university to excel. NIU will survive the economic hardships and societal shifts expected to continue in the near future and will thrive.