2016-2020
Student Affairs & Enrollment Management Strategic Plan
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Letter from the Vice President

Colleagues,

I am pleased to provide the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan for the Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management. This report represents the hard work and dedication of many individuals in our Division and would not be possible without their tireless efforts. Along with the NIU Strategic Plan Framework document, upon which our own plan is based, this document will help guide the work we do for our students for the next four years. As the landscape of higher education continues to change, I hope this plan will provide the guidance we need to develop specific plans and the freedom we need to respond to the changing environment.

Please take time to review this plan, discuss it with your colleagues, and let me or a member of our leadership team know if you have questions. I look forward to the work that we will all do together as we are guided by this plan and our joint commitment to serving the students of Northern Illinois University.

In Huskie Pride,

Eric A. Weldy, Ed.D.

Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management
Introduction

The purpose of having a strategic plan for any organization is to help guide the day-to-day work of the organization. Accordingly, this Student Affairs & Enrollment Management Strategic Plan is intended to provide direction and focus to the work of the Division in serving students at NIU. With intentional efforts to align this plan with the NIU Strategic Plan Framework, what follows is a brief review of the process of developing the plan, along with the final Mission, Vision, Core Values, Goals, and Outcomes to be in place through fiscal year 2020. Fiscal Year 2016 will be a transition year, during which SAEM will identify baseline data available for the outcomes noted for each Division goal, with full implementation of the plan beginning in fiscal year 2017.

Important to the use of this plan will be the work done by all staff members across the Division, and leadership at the Division level to operationalize the various components included in this plan (e.g., mission, core values, goals and outcomes, etc.). Without those “next step” efforts, this document will remain just a document. Efforts of each staff member in SAEM will “bring to life” the words on the page so that we do not just say that we provide, for example, “student-centered service,” but that we show what it means to be student centered in our the approach to serving NIU students.

The driving force behind the Student Affairs & Enrollment Management Strategic Planning process was NIU’s Keystone Goal of Student Career Success, supported by three pillars which represent NIU’s Core Values: 1) Ethically Inspired Leadership, 2) Thriving Communities, and 3) NIU’s Financial Sustainability. In addition, the NIU Strategic Framework and the associated seven strategic imperatives, along with past SAEM Strategic Plans, history, context, challenges, and influences were also considered throughout the planning process.

Three subcommittees, along with a Steering Committee, completed the plan. The committee charge statements and membership are included below.
**Steering Committee Charge:** Review all reports and recommendations; create full draft report from subcommittee reports.

**Membership:**

*(All members were from the Office of the Vice President for SAEM)*

Amy Franklin, Chair
Brian Lance, Vice Chair
Katrina Myers Caldwell
Melanie Tucker
Kelly Wesener Michael
Eric Weldy, Ex Officio Chair

**Challenges/Influences Charge:** Review existing challenges the Division faces at the university, local, state, national, and international levels, along with potential factors that influence its future, and craft recommendations on how best to respond.

**Membership:**

Crystal Garvey Undergraduate Admissions
Anne Hardy Scholarship Office
Georgia Harris Vice President’s Office
Molly Holmes Gender & Sexuality Resource Center
Jane Jordan Student Financial Aid
Joe Lovelace Students’ Legal Assistance
Dwayne Malone Military Student Services/OCNTSS
Ginny Meo Vice President’s Office
Jeanne Meyer Student Conduct
Melanie Tucker, Chair Vice President’s Office

**Context Subcommittee Charge:** Review the context within which SAEM works at the university and national level, host forums for stakeholders, and propose recommendations to address the findings.

**Membership:**

Rebecca Babel Student Financial Aid
Katrina Myers Caldwell, Chair Vice President’s Office
Christine Grady Health Services
Cindy Henderson Career Services
Patty Martinez Housing & Dining
Jennifer Pippen-Salmon Disability Resource Center
Brooke Ruxton Counseling & Consultation Services
Katy Saalfeld Undergraduate Admissions
Jill Zambito Student Involvement & Leadership Development

**Vision/Mission Subcommittee Charge:** Review the current vision,
mission, and core values of the Division and propose changes as/if needed to remain aligned with those of the University and reflective of our current work.

**Membership:**
- Michelle Bringas  Asian American Center
- Ted Campbell  Undergraduate Admissions
- Chris Kipp  Campus Child Care
- Kelly Wesener Michael, Chair  Vice President’s Office
- Luis Santos-Rivas  Latino Resource Center
- Donna Schoenfeld  Wellness Promotion
- Mike Stang  Housing & Dining
- Abbey Wolfman  Orientation & Family Connections

**Goals/Outcomes Subcommittee Charge:** Collect information as it pertains to the past performance of the Division and review reports from other subcommittees to draft goals and outcomes for the Division in alignment with NIU’s strategic planning framework.

**Membership:**
- Sandi Carlisle  Campus Recreation
- Evelyn Comber  Wellness Promotion
- Dain Gotto  Student Involvement & Leadership Development
- Brandon Lagana  Career Services
- Brian Lance, Chair  Vice President’s Office
- Sarah Ransom  Students’ Legal Assistance
- Dani Rollins  Undergraduate Admissions
- Adam White  Orientation & Family Connections

In addition to each subcommittee’s charge, as noted above, all groups were asked to consider three additional areas of focus to help guide their work: 1) Recruitment and retention issues centered on enrollment management, 2) Diversity and inclusion, and 3) Business process and/or staffing models.
Strategic Planning Process & Timeline

Initially, the Division began the planning process for this strategic plan—which was set to begin July 1, 2015—during summer 2014. After the initiation of the University’s strategic planning process around that same time, Vice President Weldy determined that the Divisional process needed to follow, and be guided by, the Institutional process. Thus, the Divisional process was delayed until later in the fall semester of 2014. The general tasks and timeline occurred as follows:

**September/October 2014**
Drafted Outline, Timeline, & Committee Charges

**November/December 2014**
Finalized Process
Began Committee Work

**January/February 2015**
Committee Work Continued
Committee Open Forums/Meetings Conducted
Cabinet Retreat Conducted (2/20)

**February/March 2015**
Committee Work Continued
Committee Open Forums/Meetings Conducted
Committee Reports Drafted
Vision/Mission Group Finalized Recommendations
Goals & Outcomes Team Began Work

**April 2015**
Draft Committee Reports Completed
Goals & Outcomes Team Reviewed Reports and Continued Work

**May & June 2015**
Hosted Division-Wide Open Meetings
DRAFTED Strategic Plan

**July & August 2015**
DRAFTED Strategic Plan
September 2015
Submitted FINAL DRAFT Strategic Plan for review
The Challenges & Influences Subcommittee was charged to review the existing challenges the Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management faced at the university, local, state, national, and international levels, along with potential factors that influenced its future.

To meet this charge, the subcommittee met multiple times between December 2014 and March 2015. After reviewing their charge, the subcommittee brainstormed topics and constructs that may have been challenges and influences at one or more of the identified levels. Subcommittee members then selected one or more of these topic areas to research. After each subcommittee member researched their particular topic area(s), each member presented her or his information to the subcommittee. Subcommittee members researched and gathered data in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to: focus groups, literature review, informal interviews, member checking, and observation.

The Challenges and Influences subcommittee shared a summary overview of its findings during a Strategic Planning Retreat held February 20, 2015. In that presentation, subcommittee members shared information from a student perspective, university perspective, and Division perspective. Additionally, the Chair of the Challenges and Influences Subcommittee worked closely with the Chair of the Context Subcommittee to share select “points to ponder,” as there was substantial overlap identified within the two subcommittees. The broad categories shared within the presentation included:

1. Students – perceptions, physical locations of Division departments, word of mouth, value, transparency, and outreach
2. University – mistrust, working in silos, faculty/staff changes, institutional priorities, finances, and politics
3. Division – mistrust, workload and expectations, competing priorities, communication, and changing student demographics

It should be noted that during the previous Division strategic planning process, the following challenges and influences were identified that were not identified this time (perhaps an indication of growth in those areas): safety and security, facility management, academic concerns, career development, and technology.

While the Division has a myriad of challenges and influences that intersect with the work being done, staff is committed to student-centered service, partnerships focused on student learning, furthering an inclusive community, and building collaborative relationships. Collectively, the Division is led and shaped by a number of nationally known, seasoned professionals, along with numerous highly motivated, eager new professionals. A strength of the Division staff is their desire to help students be successful, and this can be tapped into when addressing challenges and influences as the Division moves forward with its impending strategic plan.
Context Subcommittee Summary

The Context Subcommittee was charged with reviewing the context within which SAEM works at the university, national, and divisional levels; hosting forums for stakeholders; and proposing recommendations to address the findings. Conditions, trends, and assumptions were identified for each of the levels. What follows are recommendations from the subcommittee.

At the **National Level**, the subcommittee looked in three areas: college completion, job outlook, and compliance.

**Recommendations:** State universities will have to 1) find ways to cut tuition costs and increase student persistence towards graduation; 2) strengthen partnerships with community colleges or create a community college alternative within their educational setting; 3) balance the student course load with employment needs and financial considerations so that students are able to afford and persist in their education; 4) redefine the needs of non-traditional students and create services to meet those needs; and 5) build retention programs for international students in order to increase persistence towards graduation.

At the **State Level**, the subcommittee explored issues in higher education in Illinois as they related to funding, regulation, affordability, accountability and performance. Illinois state government impacts public higher education institutions in a number of significant ways. Hiring, funding, academic program creation and review, workforce diversity and student outcomes are a few of the areas that fall under its purview. The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), created in 1961, is the primary agency that oversees the development of policies and programs that govern the way these institutions operate. This governance body was initially put in place to monitor a growth in higher education that took place during this period, but over the last twenty years it has shifted its focus to compliance, accountability and oversight.

**Recommendations:** State appropriated funding will continue to decrease, so public state institutions need to develop innovative funding strategies (prioritization, private donors, etc.). Institutions need to incorporate performance-based funding measures in their strategic planning and operational processes. In addition, four-year public institutions must develop strong, strategic partnerships with community colleges. Further, institutions must develop targeted efforts to eliminate the gaps in college attainment and advocate for reforms that call for more measured oversight.

Related to **changing student demographics**, the subcommittee reviewed a number of issues related to demographic shifts.

**Recommendations.** As long as tuition and fee charges continue to increase at rates double inflation, the ability to keep higher education affordable is impaired. Further, universities continue to be geared towards “traditional” college student populations, which means we need
to think about training and education for faculty and staff. In addition, preparation to help first-generation college students adjust to university expectations and culture is required. Finally, the impact of changing mental health needs may require additional education for faculty, staff, and students regarding crisis response, boundary setting, and classroom expectations.

Regarding the competition for students and staff recruitment, the subcommittee identified the following recommendations.

**Recommendations:** Illinois is not a destination university for in-state student education. State universities would benefit from putting resources towards increased research and support services for students. It could be helpful to partner with private institutions that offer pre-majors in which NIU offers the full degree. With increased competition, universities have the opportunity to better serve students through program prioritization, events, and services. Competition also allows for “outside of the box” thinking, which can create alternative means of enrollment (e.g., international student recruiting) or course structure (e.g., 3-year degrees). Diversity breeds diversity. If we had a more diverse staff, we might be able to recruit and retain a more diverse student population because students connect with like individuals and are retained at higher rates.

At the University Level, the subcommittee explored issues of transparency, institutional politics, on-boarding or transitions for new employees, and inconsistency in institutional processes.

**Recommendations:** Providing transparency in decision making must start at the very top of the administration hierarchy. People with functional area knowledge must be invited to the decision-making process. A lack of transparency and institutional politics will continue to erode the relationship between leadership and campus constituents.

At the Divisional Level, the subcommittee explored issues of workload balance, transparency in decision making, finances/staff issues, and communication.

**Recommendations:** Student Affairs & Enrollment Management, as a whole, needs to improve the way in which the Division shares its messages (internally and externally), or we will continue to breed mistrust. Further, the Division will continue to experience high employee burn-out and attrition.
Mission/Vision/Values Subcommittee Summary

The Mission/Vision/Values Subcommittee was charged with reviewing the current vision, mission and core values and proposing changes as/if needed to remain aligned with those of the University and reflective of the Division’s current work.

The process used by the subcommittee included a number of components. To create context for their discussion, each committee member used a consistent question set to interview Divisional staff with differing lengths of tenure at the university, as well as students, faculty, and staff outside the Division. Committee members researched the mission-vision-values statements at a wide variety of universities. As a group, the committee then defined the purpose of the mission, vision and core values. Then, a first draft was presented and feedback gathered at the Divisional Strategic Planning Retreat. Following discussion at the retreat, the committee offered other subcommittee members an opportunity to provide further feedback via e-mail. All feedback was considered and synthesized as it was collected throughout the process.

In developing their recommendations, the subcommittee focused on the following foundational questions: 1) Should we continue to use a vision, mission, and core values? Do we combine, alter, or delete any and why? 2) Should we align with (and to what degree) or mirror the institutional vision, mission, values, or strategic planning components? 3) Keeping in mind our “driving forces” and “areas of focus,” what are your opinions on the degree to which we change the current vision, mission and values: maintain, refresh, add to the existing, and begin from scratch (or any combination of those options)?

Guided by the questions above, the team made further revisions to the draft text resulting in the following recommendations, along with some explanatory text for each section.

Core Values

When developing the revised Core Values, the subcommittee considered the following: expand our current values to make them contemporary and reflective of our current campus and Divisional culture; include students as our focus, as well as articulating our commitment to our staff and effective professional practices; push our Division to the next level by “Striving for social justice and equity;” mirror (via “student success”) but do not duplicate “student career success;” provide the necessary longevity of a core value; and use active—not passive—language.

The Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management is committed to…
The Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management supports student academic and personal success through strategic recruitment and retention initiatives. The Division makes efforts to ensure student welfare and provide opportunities for engagement, leadership, and services that promote persistence through the collegiate experience in preparation for the entirety of their lives.

Inspire students to discover and pursue their aspirations.
Goals & Outcomes Subcommittee

The Goals & Outcomes Subcommittee was charged with collecting information pertaining to the past performance of the Division and to review reports from the other subcommittees to draft goals and outcomes for the Division in alignment with NIU’s strategic planning framework.

The members of the Goals & Outcomes Subcommittee began meeting in early 2015 to map out a plan for how to approach committee charge. The group initially focused on the previous strategic plans the Division had created and their corresponding pros and cons. After much debate, a strategy was agreed upon to create 5-7 broad goals and 2-3 associated outcomes per goal. It was decided that each outcome would have a numeric objective from which to measure success, but not to be the responsibility of a specific department. Every department and staff member in the Division would see themselves in at least one goal and/or outcome.

After agreeing upon a strategy to follow, the committee proceeded to review the other three subcommittee reports to understand the perspectives and perceptions of others across the Division about the direction the Division should take in the future. Accordingly, several meetings were held both as a committee and in open forums to help decide, narrow down, and focus on the goals and outcomes presented in this document.

The following represents recommended outcomes for the final strategic plan goals.

Through campus and community partnerships, the Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management at Northern Illinois University will strive to:

1. Foster a respectful campus community which values social justice, health, and inclusion
   - Increase engagement in social justice activities by 10%
   - Establish a culture of health and wellness
   - Develop 10 new initiatives focused on community inclusion

2. Champion the recruitment and persistence of a diverse student body
   - Increase the population of underrepresented students by 5%
   - Increase the average academic profile of all incoming students by 5%
   - Increase enrollment by 3%

3. Support students’ academic, personal, and career success through opportunities that foster engagement, learning, and development
   - Increase the number of learning-focused internship opportunities by 25%
• Increase student satisfaction with Division services by 10%
• Cultivate 15 high-impact co-curricular experiences
• Coordinate all Division student mentoring opportunities for a more consistent experience

4. Recruit, retain and develop a diverse, mission-driven, and talented staff
• Increase the satisfaction of Division staff by 10%
• Increase the population of underrepresented staff by 5%
• Increase professional development opportunities for staff by 25%

5. Ethically and efficiently manage resources to maximize the value of the student and staff experience
• Address 25 identified inefficiencies to support optimal departmental operations
• Adopt systematic assessment approaches that support the evolving needs of departments
• Establish funding sources to support departments’ use of results
Vision, Mission, Core Values, & Division Goals Quick Guide
NIU Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management

Vision
Inspire students to discover and pursue their aspirations.

Mission
The Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management supports student academic and personal success through strategic recruitment and retention initiatives. The Division makes efforts to ensure student welfare and provide opportunities for engagement, leadership, and services that promote persistence through the collegiate experience in preparation for the entirety of their lives.

Core Values
The Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management is committed to:

• Student-centered service
• Collaborative partnerships focused on student success
• Inclusive communities striving for equity and social justice
• Professional growth and competency development
• Ethical and efficient stewardship of resources

Division Goals
Through campus and community partnerships, the Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management at Northern Illinois University will strive to:

1. Foster a respectful campus community which values social justice, health, and inclusion
   • Increase engagement in social justice activities by 10%
   • Establish a culture of health and wellness
   • Develop 10 new initiatives focused on community inclusion

2. Champion the recruitment and persistence of a diverse student body
   • Increase the population of underrepresented students by 5%
   • Increase the average academic profile of all incoming students by 5%
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3. Support students’ academic, personal, and career success through opportunities that foster engagement, learning, and development
   • Increase the number of learning-focused internship opportunities by 25%
   • Increase student satisfaction with Division services by 10%
   • Cultivate 15 high-impact co-curricular experiences
   • Coordinate all Division student mentoring opportunities for a more consistent experience

4. Recruit, retain and develop a diverse, mission-driven, and talented staff
   • Increase the satisfaction of Division staff by 10%
   • Increase the population of underrepresented staff by 5%
   • Increase professional development opportunities for staff by 25%

5. Ethically and efficiently manage resources to maximize the value of the student and staff experience
   • Address 25 identified inefficiencies to support optimal departmental operations
   • Adopt systematic assessment approaches that support the evolving needs of departments
   • Establish funding sources to support departments’ use of results