

2023 University Goals

Northern Illinois University
December, 2022



Northern Illinois
University

Background/Introduction

These 2023 goals are organized according to the six themes presented in our Strategic Action Planning Framework and establish the university's priorities. They respond to looming external challenges, including unpredictable state and federal funding, declining numbers of traditional-age students, greater accountability pressures, new technologies and increasing competition. In addition, the goals are future-focused with both annual and multiyear objectives.

The Huskie community understands that positioning NIU for long-term success will require multifaceted, complex changes in our organizational practices and systems, and that change is a process that occurs over time. Accordingly, many of this year's goals build on progress achieved last year.

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 core values as well as our unwavering commitments to inclusive excellence and student success.

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 building organizational capacity for shared leadership at the organization, team and individual levels because experience tells us that NIU gets great results when cross-functional teams are empowered to think creatively, express their opinions and develop solutions.

This past year, such a group was charged with recommending strategies that senior leadership could implement to enhance NIU's 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. They were asked specifically to identify expertise and professional development opportunities that align with skill-building in these areas both inside and outside of NIU, recognizing that while it is important to build skills at all levels of our organization, the approach and opportunities will vary depending on position and/or division. The recommendations from this team are well-aligned with NIU's strategic action planning framework, which emphasizes supporting the development of leaders; communicating transparently and effectively; and creating a culture of shared responsibility. They inform these annual and multiyear goals.

Goal 1A: Build Capacity for Shared Leadership



Shared leadership framework at NIU

- Continue to promote shared leadership to strengthen institutional culture; build Huskie identity and pride; and create pathways for meaningful faculty and staff engagement. Use the accompanying graphic designed by the Shared Leadership Task Force to foster a common understanding of how shared leadership can be implemented at NIU at the institutional, unit and individual levels.

Specifically, the Task Force co-leaders will present at the monthly leadership meeting in January 2023. The university will develop and implement a series of professional development opportunities designed to heighten individual and team performance, foster shared leadership and improve accountability with Phase One of a professional development series implemented by July 1, 2023.

- Continue to empower cross-functional teams to address complex institutional problems and pursue opportunities that align with NIU strategic priorities. Specifically, support new and ongoing shared leadership initiatives designed to improve services, systems and processes with high impact on NIU students, staff and faculty, including but not limited to projects identified by the [2020 Administrative Efficiency Project](#) and the [2021-22 Budget and Planning Work Group](#) (see Goal 6A). For example, work initiated in 2022 by an ad-hoc team focused redesign of HRS employment processes is expected to continue with expert assistance.

- Encourage collaboration and build capacity for intersectional problem-solving and enhanced accountability across individuals and groups with shared responsibility for NIU's current strategic enrollment management plan (SEM 2.0). SEM 2.0 has a strong focus on retention as everyone's responsibility, and its success will be enhanced using a framework similar to NIU's shared equity leadership (SEL) framework.
- Develop methodology for approving and prioritizing new administrative efficiency projects; develop communication templates to update key stakeholders on progress and key milestones; seek recommendations for new projects; work with campus partners to develop and encourage appropriate change management practices in support of new technology and processes.

Goal 1B: Assess Impacts of Changes Inspired by Shared Leadership Recommendations

- 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.
- Focus on impacts, intended and unintended consequences of the remote working policy through:
 - Assessing the impact of remote work on campus spaces (parking, flexible office space, environmental impact, etc.) and responding accordingly.
 - Assessing the impact of remote work on service to students and responding accordingly.
 - Assessing the impact of remote working on service to employees and responding accordingly.
 - Highlighting effective remote work practices to supervisor community.
 - Continuing to develop toolkits and training to support supervisors and employees.

THEME 2: Student Recruitment, Student Success and Student Experience

NIU continues to develop new programs and strategies designed to make an NIU degree even more accessible, equitable and affordable, and to improve student success outcomes for all students, including those from historically and currently under-resourced and underserved communities. Prior to the pandemic, implementation of the university's original SEM plan (2019-22) was associated with growth in the number of new, academically accomplished students choosing to attend NIU, as well as positively trending total enrollment and first-year retention rates. Some of this progress was stalled with positive retention trends reversed by the prolonged pandemic and the related stresses on students' academics, financial status, mental health and social engagement.

To respond to the disruptions introduced by COVID-19, NIU introduced [Strategic Enrollment Management \(SEM\) Plan \(2022-25\)](#). The overarching purpose remains to attract, retain and graduate students who represent the diversity of our region, nation and world. However, the specific goals and strategies have been updated in response to our changed operating environment and the profound impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the strategies prioritized in NIU's updated SEM Plan 2.0, place greater emphasis on 1) effective student transitions into the Huskie Family, 2) holistic support to ensure student success and 3) attention to the mental, physical, social and emotional needs of students.

The new SEM plan is accompanied by an [Accountability Plan](#) that details milestones and completion timelines for each strategy. Prioritized goals and metrics related to student recruitment, student success and student experience are reflected in these university goals.

Goal 2A: Increase Enrollment and Enhance Student Success

NIU will continue to grow and stabilize enrollment by attracting new students and improving retention rates for continuing students, guided by strategies and targets presented in the updated SEM plan as well as related equity plans. NIU will maintain

a university-wide focus on closing equity gaps in retention rates, graduation rates and post-graduation outcomes. We will center students in this work and share responsibility for their success, as detailed in [last year's summary of progress](#). We will continue to reach out to reenroll students who left NIU during the pandemic, while acknowledging the inevitable impact of their departure on our total enrollment.

- Achieve total enrollment in target range for AY2023-24:
 - Fails to meet expectations/fails to show progress < 15,360
 - 15,360 < Meets expectations/shows progress < 15,570
 - Exceeds expectations > 15,570
- Pursue multiyear equity goals articulated in our [Higher Learning Commission Quality Initiative Proposal \(HLCQIP\)](#) and [Illinois Equity in Attainment \(ILEA\) Equity Plan](#).
 - Achieve retention rate for first-time, full-time Pell eligible students of 65-68%, or higher.
 - Assess impact of strategic interventions developed to address low success rates and equity gaps in introductory, prerequisite courses and implemented as part of HLCQIP. Adjust strategies as needed (part of ongoing formative assessment).
- Hire and train advisors to work in the Academic Advising Center and focus on serving freshmen students (this milestone is for implementation of centralized advising).
- 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.
 - Implement first-year program for Braven Scholars to build enthusiasm for the program and connect career-focused students to each other and NIU.
 - Enroll 700-850 students in Braven Accelerator in AY2023-24.
 - Increase Braven Accelerator participation to 951-1,000 starting in AY2024-25.

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

- Ensure students transition successfully into the Huskie experience (SEM 2.0, Strategy 3.1).
 - Implement a comprehensive transition model for all incoming students spanning from pre-college to the end of the first year.
 - Fully integrate the Huskie First Survey to identify student needs and make connections to campus support resources.
 - Prioritize task force recommendations on how to revitalize Greek life. Create and share implementation and accountability plans with clear annual and multiyear goals.
 - Collaborate with [JED Campus](#) four-year program to strengthen NIU's systems, programs and policies to protect student mental health, build life skills and support student who might be struggling. Year 1: Assessment and Strategic Planning; Year 2-3: Implementation and Support; Year 4: Evaluation and Sustainability.

THEME 3: Academic Excellence and Curriculum Innovation

NIU remains committed to achieving excellence and impact through student success, innovative research and artistry and partnership with our communities. The university achieves these outcomes by supporting and enhancing the academic and career aspirations of Huskie undergraduates, graduate students and faculty, including their desire to discover and develop innovative solutions to complex societal problems. Increasingly, contemporary issues demand that artists, scientists and humanists work at the intersections and beyond disciplinary boundaries. In this context, the university needs to prepare students and scholars to build on their disciplinary foundations by broadening their thinking; by being open to integrating additional concepts, theories and methods; and by accepting the legitimacy of work that is transdisciplinary and/or collaborative. This will require change, specifically the dismantling of structural barriers that inhibit transdisciplinary scholarship and discourage curricular innovation and experimentation. This past year, two task forces appointed by the provost shared actionable recommendations about how to remove such obstacles and enhance support for transdisciplinary scholarship and curricular innovation, and their suggestions have informed these university goals.

Goal 3A: Transdisciplinary Scholarship and Curricular Innovation

Transdisciplinary curricular development requires collaboration between disciplines to create cohesive academic experiences where students have opportunities to connect the same idea across various subjects and propose solutions to complex multi-faceted problems. Expert faculty from different disciplines who are committed to collaboration and joint knowledge production are important to this process, and NIU must be intentional about recognizing their value, rewarding their accomplishments and removing impediments to their success.

The following actions have been identified by NIU faculty as important first steps university leaders should take to make NIU more hospitable to transdisciplinary collaboration in teaching, research and sponsored project development. A subset appears again under Goals 4C and 5B, because the actions are also critical to advancing equity and strengthening infrastructure for research, artistry and engagement.

- Standardize Current and Future Joint Appointments at NIU.
 - Create standard process/templates/expectations for memoranda of understanding (MOU) that establish joint appointments with national laboratories and across academic departments and centers within the same or different colleges. Promote adoption of consistent, effective practices through dialogue and sharing of exemplar MOU with deans, department heads and faculty members.
 - Work in alignment with related university efforts from the Faculty Senate Social Justice Committee, the Centering Engagement, Driving Impact TaskForce and other relevant groups to explore options other than MOU for managing joint appointments.
- Ensure that NIU's multiyear budget plans include dedicated resources to support targeted hiring of faculty with special expertise as well as faculty from underrepresented groups. Standardize process for seeking these funds.
- The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities describes [cluster hiring](#) as an emerging practice in higher education that involves hiring faculty into multiple departments or colleges to support interdisciplinary research foci, increase faculty diversity or address other aspects of institutional excellence. NIU will explore cluster hiring as a mechanism to build capacity for transdisciplinary scholarship and emerging research themes, promote collaboration and increase faculty diversity.

Specially, NIU will develop a model cluster hiring plan to incorporate into multiyear planning with implementation in FY24-26, outlining the resources required and proposing the means for achieving the vision through a combination of new investment and resource reallocation. The model will be informed by strategies employed successfully at NIU and other universities, as well as by the ongoing planning exercises related to transdisciplinary research clusters focused on STEM-Ed, artificial intelligence/machine learning (AI/ML) and social justice. Ultimately, any cluster hiring proposal will need to align with Academic Affairs' annual and multiyear hiring plans, multiyear budget strategy and NIU affirmative action planning.

- Establish an enterprise level office reporting to the VP of RIPS to consolidate and expand NIU resources available to facilitate and support transdisciplinary research, scholarship, artistry and engagement, and facilitate cross-university and multi-institutional proposals and awards.

Additional steps NIU will take to encourage curricular innovation and experimentation, and provide opportunities for interdisciplinary courses and programs to emerge from teams of faculty or research groups:

- NIU aspires to be academically excellent as well as respected for impactful and inclusive research, scholarship, artistry and engagement. Inarguably, our ability to achieve these outcomes can be either enabled or obstructed by the systems, policies and practices that determine how faculty accomplishments are evaluated and rewarded. In this context, the following actions will be pursued in AY 2022-23.
 - Respecting and leveraging principles of shared governance, NIU will elevate the framework under development by the Faculty Senate and advance specific initiatives focused on updating NIU's tenure, promotion and faculty evaluation processes so that they are more reflective of the university's mission, vision and values, and more inclusive of diverse and evolving forms of faculty work. Specifically:
 - University leadership will contribute to the development of, draw upon and supplement the emerging framework and curated supporting materials created by the Academic Affairs working group of the Faculty Senate Social Justice Committee to support development of a stepwise action plan.

- The Faculty Senate president, provost and president will present to faculty shared governance and shared leadership groups about specific approaches to tenure and promotion processes.
- University leadership will provide support in the drafting of responsive language for university academic personnel process (Faculty Senate Bylaws Article 8), which will be discussed by the Faculty Senate and/or Faculty Senate Personnel Committee before the end of the academic year.
- NIU will task a working group with development of a model competitive, internal grants program to inspire and incentivize curricular innovation and experimentation. (This annual goal is the first step in a multiyear effort to implement such a program).
 - The proposed program (announcement, application and award processes) will provide a suggested timeline for submission, review and award; a template for budget request; and suggestions for sharing credit and accountability for course preparation and delivery across participating faculty, centers, departments and colleges; and criteria for review. (Model to be delivered no later than July 2023)
 - The proposed program will be co-administered by CITL and RIPS, and as part of that responsibility, CITL will gather resources and create a toolkit(s) to support and encourage faculty, departments, centers and colleges to pursue curricular innovation and experimentation. (Resources to be assembled and organized during AY2022-23 to support competition to be launched in AY2023-24)
- NIU will encourage the EVPP, deans and college curricular committees to relieve administrative barriers to curricular experimentation and development of transdisciplinary courses and programs. Guided by the tactical recommendations from the 2021-22 Curricular Innovation Task Group, they will collaborate to:
 - Review university and college policies to ensure that centers can participate in curriculum development process and provide representation on college curricular committees.
 - Engage college curricular committees in development of courses outside of departments.
 - Create a “curricular innovation sandbox” to provide space for developing and testing courses without requiring full course approval process.
 - Develop general course numbers for interdisciplinary courses.

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

The past year also saw continued 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. Implementation timelines have been identified, and these will inform university goals going forward to 2025. In this context, Academic Affairs, the colleges and the Graduate School are committed to these actions.

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

- Continue efforts focused on understanding the experience of international and underrepresented graduate students by analyzing graduate student data from the climate survey, hosting listening sessions with assistance from academic units and student organizations and engaging with student advisory board and cultural resource centers to elevate voices of underrepresented students. Complete by May 2023.
- Assess and improve professional development and training available to support graduate student teaching proficiency, research skills and career success, considering programs offered by the Graduate School, the Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships and the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning. Complete by May 2023.
- Restructure Rhoten Smith Assistantship program to more effectively support recruitment, retention and mentorship of graduate students underrepresented in their respective fields. Updated program implemented for Fall 2023 awardees.
- Promote an environment and culture in which international students are welcomed to NIU’s campus by strengthening connections between colleges, International Affairs and Student Affairs, and by creating a student ambassador program for international students. Program design complete by June 2023.

- 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:

- Prorate waivers relative to the percentage of appointment, maintaining the requirement of a minimum 0.25 FTE appointment. To accomplish this, feedback will be sought from Graduate Council and other impacted units prior to implementation of a new waiver policy in Spring 2023 for waivers awarded in 2024.
- Develop criteria for equitable allocation of tuition waivers not associated with assistantships and phase out or reallocate waivers as appropriate to support graduate student retention and completion. Criteria developed in Spring 2023 for implementation in 2024.
- 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.
- 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.

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

- 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 to be defined by May 2024 and 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.

3C: Improve Support for Community College Transfer and Working Adult Students

Students transitioning to public universities from community colleges face challenges related to academic credit transfer, clear pathways to degree completion and convenient access to courses and services. Working adults face similar barriers when they attempt to enroll and navigate our higher education system. Serving these populations of students requires streamlined admissions strategies and dedicated, specialized support. In this context, NIU is committed to:

- Creating specialized advising resources targeted to the of needs prospective transfer students to enhance their transition to NIU. Transfer advisors would focus on helping students determine how previous coursework would apply to different degree programs; what requirements would remain in majors that align with their interests; whether prior learning credit is possible; and the estimated time and cost associated with earning NIU degrees.
- Implementing a technology solution to provide prospective transfer students with credit estimates, recommendations for best fit majors and customized application support.

THEME 4: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

NIU's commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging underpins our efforts to realize our mission and vision, live our values and co-create a welcoming university community where all voices are heard, valued and respected. Accordingly, we have enacted specific strategies to improve access, academic equity and inclusive excellence, and have been inspired to go beyond to identify, address and eradicate inequitable systems and practices that limit the potential of NIU students, faculty and staff.

Although we have made laudable progress, there is still much more to be done. To sustain our momentum, we need to make clear that equity is everyone's work and hold each other accountable. A coherent, overarching leadership framework will facilitate these efforts.

Goal 4A: Shared Equity Leadership (SEL)

Shared equity leadership is an approach that seeks to scale diversity, equity and inclusion work and create change by encouraging and connecting individual and organizational transformation. Broadening and sharing responsibility for this work requires change in the ways that expectations are communicated, outcomes measured, and accountability defined. Accordingly, NIU is reconceptualizing the way members of our community come together to shape the climate, systems and processes encountered by our students and employees. Specifically, we are taking these steps to implement the SEL model presented to the Board of Trustees in August 2022:

- Share draft Shared Equity Leadership (SEL) model with stakeholders for feedback during Fall 2022. Use feedback to further develop the proposed NIU bridge model and encourage shared accountability for DEI goals and outcomes. Begin to implement SEL model based on stakeholder feedback and recommendations no later than Spring 2023.
- Launch a strategic communication plan to articulate the purpose of the SEL model and set expectations for campus accountability. Link model to SEM 2.0.

Goal 4B- Social Justice Education, Inclusion and Belonging

- Continue to strengthen and develop the Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation Center through collaboration with campus partners:
 - Host student-centered racial healing circles in Spring 2023 as well as a racial healing conference in collaboration with Student Affairs no later than Fall 2023.
 - Continue to create transformative experiences that encourage students to think critically, develop compassion and acquire the skills needed to integrate complex and conflicting realities. Leverage the success of Greenwood Rising tour and Rebuilding Democracy Lecture to design domestic and international student experiences that incorporate restorative history.

Goal 4C: Advancing Equity/Actionable Data

- The university will continue to administer climate surveys to gain insight into the experiences and perceptions of individuals in our diverse university community. Survey results will help NIU foster an environment where all Huskies feel welcome, valued and respected.
 - A working group with relevant social science expertise and broad campus representation will review raw data and summary reports from Viewfinder Campus Climate Survey (aka NIU IDEA survey) administered in Spring 2022. They will extract high-level themes; compare our data to those of three peer institutions selected for benchmarking; determine the need to perform additional analysis or generate additional reports; and draft an action plan. They will also work to integrate the results from the IDEA survey with those obtained from Great Colleges to Work For. The themes and action plan draft will be presented to campus groups for feedback.
 - The SHARE (Sexual Harassment Assault and Relationship Experiences) survey will be conducted in 2023 to examine perceptions and personal experiences at, and within, NIU. This survey was most recently conducted in 2018/19.
- NIU aspires to be academically excellent as well as respected for impactful and inclusive research, scholarship, artistry and engagement. Inarguably, our ability to achieve these outcomes can be either enabled or obstructed by the systems, policies and practices that determine how faculty accomplishments are evaluated and rewarded. In this context, the following actions will be pursued in AY 2022-23.
 - Respecting and leveraging principles of shared governance, NIU will elevate the framework under development by the Faculty Senate and advance specific initiatives focused on updating NIU's tenure, promotion and faculty evaluation processes so that they are more reflective of the university's mission, vision and values, and more inclusive of diverse and evolving forms of faculty work. Specifically:

- University leadership will contribute to the development of, draw upon and supplement the emerging framework and curated supporting materials created by the Academic Affairs working group of the Faculty Senate Social Justice Committee to support development of a stepwise action plan.
 - The Faculty Senate president, provost and president will present to faculty shared governance and shared leadership groups about specific approaches to tenure and promotion processes.
 - University leadership will provide support in the drafting of responsive language for university academic personnel process (Faculty Senate Bylaws Article 8), which will be discussed by the Faculty Senate and/or Faculty Senate Personnel Committee before the end of the academic year.
- NIU will explore cluster hiring as a mechanism to increase faculty diversity. There is no doubt that cluster hiring has worked as a successful strategy to diversify the faculty at other universities. NIU will move forward with a plan to advance cluster hires with the intention in partnership with key academic programs such as Black Studies; Latino and Latin American Studies; the Center for Southeast Asian Studies; the Center for Women, Gender, and Sexuality; and the Asian American Resource Center.

As noted above, specially, NIU will develop a model cluster hiring plan to incorporate into multiyear planning with implementation in FY24-26, outlining the resources required and proposing the means for achieving the vision through a combination of new investment and resource reallocation. The model will be informed by strategies employed successfully at NIU and other universities, as well as by the ongoing planning exercises related to transdisciplinary research clusters focused on STEM-Ed, artificial intelligence/machine learning (AI/ML) and social justice. Ultimately, any cluster hiring proposal will need to be aligned with Academic Affairs' annual and multiyear hiring plans, multiyear budget strategy and NIU affirmative action planning.

- NIU will ensure that multiyear budget plans include dedicated resources to support targeting hiring of faculty spouses/partners and faculty from underrepresented groups. Standardize process for seeking these funds.
- NIU will articulate a Business Enterprise Program (BEP) strategy informed by an analysis of current and potential opportunities and consistent with our desire to increase participation of businesses owned by minorities, women and persons with disabilities. We will leverage the College of Law Business Innovation Clinic to expand training and assistance to eligible vendors and service providers. We will research and learn from the University of Illinois' experience implementing a sheltered market. We will continue to advocate for legislative changes to enhance BEP opportunity.

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 and 2022 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 in support of established and emerging opportunities for transdisciplinary research, especially those related to the most pressing challenges of our time. Our efforts are centered around innovative solutions for responding to environmental change, advancing technology, preparing for shifting demographics and interpreting the world around us. These priorities inform the university goals.

Goal 5A: Advance NICCS and Sustainability Initiatives

The Northern Illinois Center for Community Sustainability (NICCS) is envisioned as a destination for subject matter experts external and internal to NIU, as well as government and business leaders, graduate and undergraduate students and citizens working to enhance sustainability in their communities. Accordingly, NICCS will expand opportunities to create knowledge related to food systems, water resources and environmental change, and educate the next generation of environmental scientists and stewards. To these ends, the following objectives have been established for 2023-24:

- Proceed with the NICCS design build process as allowed by the Illinois Capital Development Board (CDB).
- Hire a director to provide leadership for NICCS and support collaborative work focused on understanding and address challenges associated with environmental change, shifting demographics and sociopolitical inequity impacting our region and world.
- Support the task force developing a sustainability and climate action planning framework specific to NIU's institutional context and commitment. Outcomes will include specific goals, targets and timelines for creating a more sustainable campus; climate action planning ties to a net zero goal and date; alignment of the sustainability plan with NIU's master planning framework and multiyear budget; and integration of sustainability planning into NIU's operations.

Goal 5B: Strengthen Infrastructure for Research/Artistry/Engagement

The task forces charged previously with reducing barriers to transdisciplinary scholarship and curricular innovation recommended investing in, and implementing, several strategies that would strengthen support for faculty research and artistry, facilitate collaboration and provide research development programming in support of institutional goals for research, scholarship, artist, engagement and external funding. These are listed below as well as elsewhere in the document.

- NIU aspires to be academically excellent as well as respected for impactful and inclusive research, scholarship, artistry and engagement. Inarguably, our ability to achieve these outcomes can be either enabled or obstructed by the systems, policies and practices that determine how faculty accomplishments are evaluated and rewarded. In this context, the following actions will be pursued in AY 2022-23.
 - Respecting and leveraging principles of shared governance, NIU will elevate the framework under development by the Faculty Senate and advance specific initiatives focused on updating NIU's tenure, promotion and faculty evaluation processes so that they are more reflective of the university's mission, vision and values, and more inclusive of diverse and evolving forms of faculty work. Specifically:
 - University leadership will contribute to the development of, draw upon and supplement the emerging framework and curated supporting materials created by the Academic Affairs working group of the Faculty Senate Social Justice Committee to support development of a stepwise action plan.
 - The Faculty Senate president, provost and president will present to faculty shared governance and shared leadership groups about specific approaches to tenure and promotion processes.
 - University leadership will provide support in the drafting of responsive language for university academic personnel process (Faculty Senate Bylaws Article 8), which will be discussed by the Faculty Senate and/or Faculty Senate Personnel Committee before the end of the academic year.
- NIU will explore cluster hiring as a mechanism to build capacity for transdisciplinary scholarship and emerging research themes, promote collaboration and increase faculty diversity. Specifically, NIU will develop a model cluster hiring plan to incorporate into multiyear planning with implementation in FY24-26, outlining the resources required and proposing the means for achieving the vision through a combination of new investment and resource reallocation. The model will be informed by strategies employed successfully at NIU and other universities, as well as by the ongoing planning exercises related to transdisciplinary research clusters focused on STEM-Ed, AI/ML and social justice. NIU has not provided the mechanisms for exploring new research themes in recent years, in part due to fiscal constraints. Improved conditions and broad university support for emerging research themes provide opportunities for departments and colleges to work together to advance research goals—particularly within the intent of diversifying the faculty. Ultimately, any cluster hiring proposal will need to be aligned with Academic Affairs' annual and multiyear hiring plans, multiyear budget strategy and NIU affirmative action planning.
- Establish an enterprise level office reporting to the VP of RIPS to consolidate and expand NIU resources available to facilitate and support transdisciplinary research, scholarship, artistry and engagement, and to facilitate cross-university and multi-institutional proposals and awards.
- Elevate community collaboration and engagement as key elements of NIU's mission, and strengthen community-engaged scholarship infrastructure to support the goal of sustaining Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement.

- The Centering Engagement, Driving Impact Task Force was charged with developing an NIU definition of engagement and recommending an action agenda to address six key areas of engagement strategy and operations. Deliverables will include:
 - A definition of engagement that can be shared by faculty, staff and students across the research, engagement and public service missions of the institution.
 - A set of guiding principles for engagement and recommendations about how units across the university might operationalize the definition and principles and make engagement central to their work.
 - An action agenda with specific recommendations to university leadership about how to address six key areas of engagement strategy and operations: engagement infrastructure; assessing outcomes of engagement; partnership guidance; scholarly engagement; faculty recognition, rewards and incentives; and engagement equity.

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. “Thriving Illinois,” the IBHE’s Higher Education Strategic Plan, is focused on three overarching goals: 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 last year’s 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 FY25, 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.

Goal 6A: Continue to Implement a Multiyear, Comprehensive Planning and Budget Process

- Continue to engage the Board of Trustees in a quarterly process to communicate the status and progress toward identified budget milestones and targets.
- Hire a permanent vice president for finance/chief financial officer. Support that individual’s transition to NIU and involve him, her or them in the development and implementation of budget planning process that is equitable, iterative, multiyear and aligned with the university’s mission, vision, values and strategic priorities.
- Create action plan and timeline for enacting the following recommendations received from the budget planning work group:
 - Transition focus of NIU budget process from allocating and accounting for resources to strategic budgeting and planning. (multiyear goal; work started in FY23)
 - Distinguish statutory obligations from long-standing NIU practices as first step towards removing impediments to multiyear budgeting. (FY23)
 - Advance timeline for annual budget development, review and approval to permit a more equitable, iterative process. (multiyear goal)
 - Make available training and education that covers basic budgeting terminology and concepts and provide more actionable data and decision support. (multiyear goal)
 - Create and maintain an innovation fund managed outside of the university’s operations and maintenance budget. (innovation pitch piloted in FY22; plan to repeat in FY23)
 - Incentivize innovative revenue generation through gainsharing (propose a strategy and pilot on a limited basis in FY23/24).

Goal 6B: Advance Facilities and Technology Planning Priorities

- Advance state capital projects including NICCS and the Health Informatics Technology Center. Continue efforts to align physical footprint with evolving academic priorities, changed economic conditions and resumed emphasis on master planning. Use master planning to envision NIU as a university of the future, and link our buildings, spaces and campus environments to our mission, strategic priorities and students' needs, understanding that this will be achieved over a multiyear timeframe.
- Complete phased move from legacy phone system to Microsoft Teams Voice.

Goal 6C: Fundraising and Campaign Execution

- Achieve \$28.5 million in total philanthropy.
- Roll out campaign plan to entire university community.
- Announce Campaign Cabinet by June 30, 2023, and form a campaign committee prior to public launch, no later than Oct. 1, 2024.