

**Higher Values in Higher Education:
A Center for Regional Excellence and Engagement
2016-2026**

Our Vision

Western Illinois University will be the leader in educational quality, opportunity, and affordability among regional public universities.

Our Mission

Western Illinois University empowers students, faculty, and staff to lead dynamic and diverse communities. We provide student-centered undergraduate and graduate programs characterized by innovative teaching, research, and service, grounded in interdisciplinary, regional and global perspectives. We engage our students in educational opportunities guided by a professional and diverse faculty and staff in collaboration with alumni and community partners.

Our Values

Academic Excellence

Central to our history is the commitment to teaching, to the individual learner, and to active involvement in the teaching-learning process. Western Illinois University's highly qualified and diverse faculty promotes critical thinking, engaged learning, research, and creativity in a challenging, supportive learning community. We are committed to student success in an academic environment that encourages lifelong development as learners, scholars, teachers, and mentors.

Educational Opportunity

Western Illinois University values educational opportunity and welcomes those who show promise and a willingness to work toward achieving shared educational goals. We are committed to providing accessible, high quality educational programs and financial support for our students.

Personal Growth

Western Illinois University values the development of the whole person. We are committed to providing opportunities for personal growth in an environment that supports the development of wellness, ethical decision making, and personal responsibility in the global community.

Social Responsibility

Western Illinois University is committed to equity, social justice, and diversity and will maintain the highest standards of integrity in our work with others. We create an environment that fosters and promotes civic engagement. We serve as a resource for and stimulus to educational, cultural, environmental, community and economic development in our region and well beyond it.

Our Niche

Providing from day one of the student's experience high impact, applied learning experiences inside and outside of the classroom, leading to employment and/or graduate school placement upon graduation.

Executive Summary

This *Strategic Plan* was written at a time when Western Illinois University and the Illinois public universities face decreasing enrollments, increasing competition, and uncertainty in state funding. This is the first-time in the 159-year history of Illinois public higher education that the State of Illinois failed to pass an annual appropriation for higher education. We were in the 10th month of the unprecedented budget impasse when we received approximately \$21 million in appropriations for university personnel and operating budgets, and administration of state-need based financial aid funding (approximately 1/3rd of total Fiscal Year 2016 appropriated expenses).

A strong history of conservative fiscal management and building of institutional reserves enabled the University to withstand the current fiscal climate. However, use of reserve funding is finite, and the practice is not sustainable. Therefore, the President's Leadership Team completed ten months of institutional planning given that early FY16 forecasts suggested reduced state funding (but not the current state budget impasse) was probable.

The resultant *Western Illinois University: A Center for Regional Excellence and Engagement* is the University's plan for a long-term sustainable future based on the changing landscape of Illinois public higher education. It is designed to stabilize enrollment, provide responsive academic programs, support innovation, decrease institutional reliance on state funding, and increase business acumen. Successful implementation of the goals and priorities in this *Plan* will advance our Vision, Mission, Values, and Niche in Illinois public higher education.

Following this plan, we will:

1. **Stabilize Enrollment.** Through the values of academic excellence and educational opportunity, Western Illinois University seeks high-achieving, diverse students with a commitment to educational and career success. New recruitment strategies will be implemented for high school, community college, distance education, international, honors, and working students in order to negate previous enrollment declines. Reversing these trends and stabilizing enrollment also means increasing the University's retention and graduation rates.
 - A. Expand enrollment in the High School Admissions Program.
 - B. Increase student enrollment from the 16-counties closest to the Western Illinois University Macomb and Quad Cities campuses.
 - C. Increase community college agreements and transfer student enrollment.
 - D. Achieve a 10% participation rate of currently enrolled students in Centennial Honors College.
 - E. Engage in corporate student recruitment.
 - F. Enroll 1,000 international students.
 - G. Participate in other activities designed to increase undergraduate and graduate student enrollment.
 - H. Continue to develop innovative strategies to address concerns of price sensitivity and elasticity.
 - I. Improve retention and graduation rates.
 - J. Engage in curricular efficiency studies to help examine trends influencing students time-to-degree.
2. **Provide Responsive Programs.** The academic portfolio of Western Illinois University is based on supply, demand, and need in the Western Illinois University service region. We focus on service to the region, high demand and niche programs, and the breadth and depth of the educational experience in leading students to careers and/or graduate studies. Western Illinois University will make the necessary but difficult decisions program decisions and engage in strategic reallocation of resources (see Goal #5). At the same time we will support new mission-driven programs that meet approval processes and criteria for responsiveness.

- A. Continue to ground general education in the liberal arts to equip students with the necessary foundational skills to be successful in their chosen majors, professions, and continued graduate and professional studies.
 - B. Update Signature Program analyses.
 - C. Engage in cyclic program reviews, documenting continuous improvements resulting from review processes.
 - D. Document continuous improvements resulting from annual assessment of student learning processes.
 - E. Achieve and maintain discipline-specific accreditation, where appropriate to the discipline.
 - F. Identify and eliminate barriers to interdisciplinary collaboration.
 - G. Document new program areas.
 - H. Develop a university planning process that documents workforce and graduate school placement rates, uses data from secondary sources (e.g., Occupational Outlook Quarterly) to evaluate demand and serve as the base for enrollment targets.
3. **Support Innovation.** Increasing competition for students compounded by the new fiscal era requires that Western Illinois University identify and effectively serve new markets and that we serve students with educational formats that meet their needs. Expanding distance learning increases opportunity to increase enrollment in the region, across the United States, and around the world. In serving new markets and modalities, we must reinforce a culture that supports and values innovation.
- A. Design and implement an Executive Corporate Cluster as a means to increase student recruitment, sponsored credit, internships, advisory board service, on campus recruitment fairs, engagement of external experts, and the basis for future philanthropic relationships.
 - B. Respond to changing market conditions by offering increased hybrid programs and increased online degrees.
 - C. Document other forms of innovation in academic departments and administrative units.
4. **Reduce Reliance on State Funding.** Delayed and decreasing appropriations shows that the Western Illinois University must reduce its reliance on state funding in order to support continued advancement of the vision, mission, values, and niche of the University. We will secure alternative funding sources to support and sustain university operations. Cost increases to students and their families will continue to be carefully made. Western Illinois University serves a large percentage of low-income students. Educational access and affordability are defining characteristics and traditions of the University.
- A. Establish giving expectations for the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees.
 - B. Establish annual external revenue generation goals for the President, Vice Presidents, and Deans.
 - C. Review contracts and grants rules and policies to identify and remove impediments to institutional effectiveness in generating external revenue.
 - D. Increase revenue from contracts and grants.
 - E. Transition funding of public service units from state appropriated funding,
5. **Increase Business Acumen.** Western Illinois University will continue to provide public opportunity. We will use best business practices to support and enhance the University's tradition of conservative fiscal management. Results of the University's strategic planning will continue to be communicated to the Western Illinois University and larger external community.

- A. Make necessary but difficult decisions on program continuation in recognition that a comprehensive university cannot be all things to all people.
- B. Engage in strategic reinvestment of institutional resources to support growth and academic excellence, with a three-year (FY16-FY18) \$20 million reduction and reinvestment goal.
- C. Identify opportunities to streamline and improve efficiencies.
- D. Restore institutional reserve funding.
- E. Communicate the plan and its results, internally and externally.

A Center for Regional Excellence and Engagement positions Western Illinois University for a sustainable future.