

HIGHER VALUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION, 2022-2027

September, 2022

Updated revision reviewed by Faculty Senate, 9/13/22
Updated reviewed by Board of Trustees, 9/22/22

Preamble

Western Illinois University was founded in 1899 as the Western Illinois State Normal School to address teacher preparation in the State's grammar schools. The faculty and students of Western were eager to meet this need, and the institution soon became known for its well-rounded, deeply committed graduates, a tradition that continues to this day.

As the years passed, the University changed its name, first to Western Illinois State Teachers' College in 1921, and then to Western Illinois University in 1957. Likewise, as it evolved, the institution's mission broadened to include the traditional academic majors that prepared high school teachers, the state's earliest and most successful extension program, a multifaceted graduate school, a liberal arts program, and, eventually, the present distinguished colleges devoted to the Arts and Sciences, Business and Technology, Education and Human Services, Fine Arts and Communication, and Honors.

Through the 20th and 21st centuries Western earned and maintained a reputation for expanding access to affordable, high-quality degree programs and fostering student involvement in all University activities.

Western is now a leading University with campuses in Macomb, the Quad Cities, and online. By virtue of its quality, opportunity, and affordability, the school serves students from Illinois, across the nation, and around the world.

Together, at Western, we provide a transformative educational experience through the caring educator model. We empower students and graduates to become engaged and productive global citizens committed to making a difference in the diverse communities and professions they represent. Our alumni are leaders in their fields equipped with the knowledge, problem solving skills, and community awareness necessary to address the professional, economic, and social issues of our time.

Through the successful implementation of Higher Values in Higher Education 2017-2027 (HVHE), we will advance Western Illinois University's Vision, Mission, Values, and related goals and priorities discussed in this strategic plan.

HIGHER VALUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION, 2022-2027

Executive Summary

Our Plan and Presidential Priorities

Western Illinois University is poised for a dynamic evolution in its economic and cultural impact on the communities of western Illinois, in its diverse and robust student successes, and in its growing financial health and sustainability.

As such, and as updated in September 2022, *Higher Values in Higher Education 2017-2027 (HVHE)* defines Western Illinois University's new vision for the next five years.

This vision is based on results from empirical environmental scanning completed by the Social Responsibility Task Force, which was comprised of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members during academic year 2017-2018, as well as from a year-long, university-wide discussion, evaluation, and revision guided by the [Provost's Office](#) and the [Strategic Plan Revision Steering Committee in 2021-22](#).

Our bold, revised plan declares to the students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of the University that, together, we will advance our traditions of excellence and implement new initiatives that will position the University for a strong, brilliant future. We envision a comprehensive University defined by the ability both to accommodate the diverse and changing expectations and academic needs of our students and to focus our disciplinary portfolio on the programs and fields of "STEAMA": Science, Technology, Education, Arts, Mathematics, and Agriculture.

At Western, your potential is our purpose! And, as we embrace the future, we devote ourselves to the success of our students, our employees, and our communities.

To make this vision a reality, over the last year the following [Integrated Parallel Plans](#) were produced by representatives from across the institution:

- Financial Sustainability Plan, which includes steps that will lead to a 17:1 student/faculty ratio, an increase in cash reserves, and a 1% annual increase in student retention by 2027
- University Distinctiveness Plan
- Information Technology Strategic Plan
- Quad Cities Campus Strategic Initiatives Plan
- Recruitment and Enrollment Plan
- Retention Plan

These kinds of hands-on, operational documents will continue to be produced and implemented through 2027, and will deliver direction for our day-to-day work, while steadily leading to an accumulation of increasingly significant successes for the institution.

Guiding these plans are the [priorities](#) outlined by President Guiyou Huang, the 12th President of Western Illinois University. President Huang's priorities are: a more adept budgeting model that will ensure **financial sustainability**; a clear vision of **institutional distinctiveness** that will solidify our identity as an institution; a commitment to **internationalization**, which will expand our cultural and economic horizons; a commitment to **student success**, which will lead to stable, steadily increasing enrollment, retention, and graduation rates; and a culture that embodies and celebrates **justice, inclusion, diversity, and equity**.

These priorities and other documents will give us the tools to address the unforeseen changes and opportunities at the time of the initial writing of this strategic plan. And with these tools this plan becomes an evolving document that will make us both nimble and proactive as we move forward into the future.

Our Commitment to Financial Sustainability

Western Illinois University is committed to developing a budgeting model that will lead past financial stability and into financial sustainability as we evolve into our promising future.

Western recognizes further that this commitment is in itself connected to a set of larger commitments and beliefs, which include:

- A commitment to student success
- A commitment to understand stewardship and the larger social justice implications of our financial health
- A commitment to transparency and collaboration
- A commitment to use research, scholarship, peer institution and student data, and Western's mission, vision, and core values as the basis for analysis and decisions included in this work
- A belief that the creation of a sustainable fiscal culture leads to a flourishing and thriving university in the decades ahead

Western's new budgeting model will address institution-wide issues and then provide ways to proactively meet and evolve out of the challenging fiscal environment within which the institution now operates. In proactively engaging financial sustainability, we will move towards the exciting future we envision for our Western campuses.

A significant part of our institutional history, found most clearly in the culture of our athletic programs, is the "tradition of tough." Western is tough. It always has been. And it is this toughness, coupled with the intelligence, insight, and sensitivity of our University community, that is the foundation upon which the vision of our prosperous future rests.

Our Commitment to Institutional Distinctiveness

For over 120 years, Western's core mission has been to provide educational opportunities to underserved populations (first generation, lower socio-economic status, etc.), and this mission continues today.

As an institution, Western's great distinction is that it provides the most for those who have the least. Beyond the outstanding academic degree programs that provide a path to economic stability and mobility, Western has solid support programs in place to ensure that its students, from all backgrounds, succeed. A number of these programs are listed in this report, and include financial support, mental health support, other kinds of social support, and career placement support.

In terms of academic programming, for decades we have delivered the kind of skill acquisition and content expertise that leads directly to success in our students' careers and personal lives. Significantly, our programs continue to grow and to evolve.

Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism

Western Illinois University has made it a priority to focus on [diversity, equity, and inclusion](#). Everyone is welcome at Western, regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability, genetic information, LGBTQIA status, and veteran status. Each person matters and deserves a respectful, civil, and supportive living, learning, and working environment.

Western Illinois University fosters respect, equity, and inclusion for all students, faculty, and staff. Western is committed to anti-racism, anti-oppression, equity, social justice, and diversity. We value inclusion as a core value and as an essential element of Western's public service mission.

Western embraces individual uniqueness and a culture of inclusion that supports broad and specific diversity initiatives. Western believes in the educational and institutional benefits of diversity in society as integral to the success of all individuals.

At Western, we will:

- Maintain a safe and secure environment for all members of our Western communities;
- Educate and empower students, staff, and faculty to be social and environmental justice advocates;
- Provide curricula, programs, training, resources, and environments that reflect and strengthen the diversity of our communities in order to elevate cultural awareness and understanding;
- Ensure fair, equitable, and inclusive access to University facilities, programs, resources, and services;
- Create inclusive and equitable policies and practices;
- Diversify the University's workforce by assessing hiring practices to attract, retain, and develop talented staff and faculty from diverse backgrounds;
- Address disparities in representation, retention, learning outcomes, and graduation rates;
- Create a University-wide diversity plan to ensure a continued commitment to anti-racism, anti-oppression, equity, social justice, and diversity.

Our Institutional Learning Outcomes and Commitment to Student Success

Western has four [Institutional Learning Outcomes](#), all of which deeply underscore our core values and our mission. At Western students will:

- Develop problem-solving skills and engage in transformative learning experiences;
- Acquire significant content knowledge, various disciplinary skill sets, and engrained professional behaviors that lead to success in our academic disciplines;
- Practice professional integrity and ethical decision making;
- Celebrate diversity, equity, and inclusion, and commit to anti-racist practice and protocols.

These outcomes will be measured, reported, and reviewed through annual university assessment activities, internal reporting documents, annual state-level reporting documents, and other means. We will engage in a practice of continuous improvement and, in doing so, increase our larger impact and student success rates.

Our Values in Practice

The goals stated below represent what we do and will continue to do in order to advance the core values of the institution—again, our motto, “Your potential. Our purpose,” has its roots in our core values.

[Annual reports](#) completed by every academic department and administrative unit, planning and accomplishment reports made by the Vice Presidents and areas that report to the President, strategic plan reporting to university governance groups, continuing accreditation by the [Higher Learning Commission](#) and other agencies, and our social responsibility as professional, caring educators hold us accountable to achieving the goals of this strategic plan.

Western will strive to provide access and opportunity to those who are historically underrepresented in higher education, with particular attention paid to Black, Latinx, low-income, rural, disabled, veteran, LGBTQIA, and working adult learners. As such, we are committed to providing accessible, high-quality educational programs, and financial and other support for our students to ensure all can thrive at here at Western,

The goals that we will put into practice are as follows:

Goal 1: Enrich Academic Excellence

- Action 1: Focus on the individual learner, prioritize collaborative and peer learning, and increase support for student success and achievement.
- Action 2: Recruit, support, and retain high-potential and diverse students, faculty, and staff.
- Action 3: Maintain high standards of excellence in instruction and in the assessment of student learning.
- Action 4: Provide strong commitments to research, scholarly, and creative activities.
- Action 5: Promote civic engagement, service learning, experiential learning, applied projects, and volunteerism.
- Action 6: Upgrade and deliver user-centered, accessible information technology, and implement a university-wide commitment to the use of Western Online and other course delivery technologies.
- Action 7: Enhance and deliver accessible academic programming within and across disciplines.

Goal 2: Advance Educational Opportunity

- Action 1: Establish and implement institution-level equity plans and practices to close access, progression, completion, and attainment gaps.
- Action 2: Focus on quality and accessibility in every aspect of the institution, including the student's campus experience, classroom experience, and residential life experience.
- Action 3: Engage in educational outreach and recruitment activities targeted to populations historically underrepresented in higher education.
- Action 4: Advance affordability and decrease time-to-degree rates.
- Action 5: Increase retention and graduation rates, with special focus on opportunity gaps.
- Action 6: Align academic programming with potential economic growth in our communities.

Goal 3: Support Personal Growth

- Action 1: Promote physical health, mental health, and wellness in our students, faculty, and staff.
- Action 2: Enhance student and community engagement.
- Action 3: Create a safe, accessible, and attractive campus in Macomb, the Quad Cities, and Online
- Action 4: Educate students on the processes, procedures, and support services at Western
- Action 5: Clearly commit to supportive and shared governance of the university

Goal 4: Promote Social Responsibility

- Action 1: Promote civic engagement, sustainability, and service learning
- Action 2 : Use state, local, and other partnerships to advance university, community and economic development, and equity
- Action 3 : Celebrate diversity
- Action 4: Create anti-racism actions, protocols, and policies.

Vision, Mission, and Values

Our Vision

Western Illinois University aims to be the leading public regional university in providing educational quality, opportunity, and affordability.

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 multidisciplinary, 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 academic excellence. 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 a transformative educational 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 civic and community engagement, 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 citizenship. We serve as a resource for and stimulus to educational, cultural, environmental, community and economic development in our region and well beyond it for the public good.

HIGHER VALUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION 2012-2027

GOAL 1: ENRICH ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Western Illinois University will continue to recruit, retain, and support diverse, high-potential students, faculty, and staff. At its core, Western is defined by an activity that leads to a larger public good: our faculty and staff teach our learners, who then develop and grow as they move from our campuses into their professional, civic, and private lives.

We attract high-potential students, excellent faculty, and committed staff because we set, expect, and achieve high standards for the institution and one another. To continue recruiting and retaining our students, faculty, and staff, we will provide supportive, inclusive, and intellectually rich classroom and campus environments where our Western community can thrive. We will continue to develop institutional policies and procedures that promote a culture that responds to student, faculty, and staff needs as we individually and collectively advance the vision, mission, and values of the University.

Action 1: Focus on the individual learner, prioritize collaborative and peer learning, and increase support for student success and achievement.

We continue to advance student success through the caring educator model. From the onset of their educational experience, learners at Western work closely with faculty and staff in their discipline and across the University.

During the next five years, we will continue this individual focus and its resulting excellence by doing the following:

- a) Invest time, talent, and resources toward the university's teaching priorities
- b) Enhance efforts that promote attention to and focus on the individual learner
- c) Develop practices that will increase opportunities for collaborative learning
- d) Increase support for student success
- e) Support [contractual agreements](#) that place instruction as the highest priority of faculty, while including successful research and committed service as also being a significant part of a faculty member's portfolio.
- f) Use [Annual Reports](#) and the [Integrated Parallel Plans](#) as a way to evaluate and subsequently enhance academic and support structures for students on all campuses.
- g) Engage in planning and implementing priorities to increase student engagement in educational activities highly correlated with persistence and completion.
- h) Engage in planning and implementing initiatives to increase individual mentorship.

Action 2: Recruit, support, and retain high-potential, diverse students, faculty, and staff

To enrich the academic experiences on Western's campuses, we must create a learning and living environment that is diverse and supportive. As such, we will do the following:

- a) Enhance university-wide support and retention for students, faculty, and staff
- b) Increase accountability for all colleges, departments, programs, and units per HLC and other accrediting bodies.
- c) Provide competitive starting salaries that enable the University to recruit high-achieving, diverse faculty and staff.

- d) Work with bargaining units to develop agreements that allocate available resources to support salaries that meet or exceed the mean of peer institutions.

Action 3: Maintain high standards of excellence in instruction and in the assessment of student learning

Embedded in the University's history is the commitment to teaching and the individual learner. Providing high-quality instruction is the highest priority of the faculty. We will continue delivering high standards of instructional excellence, with strong commitments to the assessment of student learning, and a continuous improvement model at all levels of the educational experience. We will also continue to promote an academic culture that values and engages in transdisciplinary interactions and provides professional development opportunities to faculty and staff.

To honor these commitments and maintain these standards, we will:

- a) Follow the [University's Assessment Plan](#) to use results from assessment of student learning in general education, undergraduate majors, and graduate programs to inform curricular revision and development.
- b) Support multidisciplinary program development and sustainability.
- c) Demonstrate institutional commitments to instruction by maintaining the highest percentage of institutional expenditures in support of instruction and the academic mission of the University.
- d) Better integrate Western Online into the daily operation and delivery of academic curriculum.

Action 4: Provide strong commitments to research, scholarly, and creative activities

We will continue to demonstrate strong commitments to research, scholarly, and creative activities.

The faculty and staff of Western Illinois University are highly accomplished in scholarship and creative activities. While the highest priority of the university is teaching and learning, Western Illinois University is an intellectual home to highly accomplished faculty and staff whose disciplinary, regional, national, and international contributions to research, scholarly, and creative activities is an important part of the academic experience at the university. In order to continue our success as a leader in priority teaching alongside impactful research and scholarly and creative activities, we will:

- a) Allocate institutional resources and assistance to support faculty and staff in research, scholarly/creative activities, and grant-generating activities.
- b) Evaluate the effectiveness of programs, services and events designed to support scholarship and creative activities.
- c) Use available resources to support student, faculty, and staff travel to professional associations, conferences and workshops, which is a necessary component of tenure and professional currency.
- d) Support faculty sabbaticals as a means for faculty members to advance their research and scholarly agendas.
- e) Provide educational leave opportunities for staff members where such opportunities are used for study, research, and/or professional growth.
- f) Augment institutional resources to encourage and promote research, creative, and scholarly activities with special emphasis on supporting new and junior faculty members.
- g) Host domestic and international visiting scholars, executives, and artists in residence programs.

Action 5: Promote civic engagement and service learning

We will continue national leadership in the provision of mission-driven public service and civic engagement. As of Fall 2020, Western Illinois University is classified as a Best Practice, “Community Engaged” Institution by the [Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching](#).

Our students, faculty, and staff apply disciplinary expertise and professional commitments to advance the social, economic, cultural, and ethical quality of life for members of our host communities, regions, and beyond. Even as the highest priority of the university is teaching and learning, members of the WIU academic community serve as volunteers and board members, and actively participate in civic engagement, service learning, fundraising, and many other activities designed to advance the public good.

In order to continue to build stronger, more resilient, more dynamic communities, we will:

- a) Support student, faculty, and staff public service actions that are consistent with the University’s [Community Engagement classification](#).
- b) Use university public service centers, the Auxiliary Facilities System (UHDH, [University Union](#), and [Campus Recreation](#)), [University Libraries](#), institutes, and broadcasting services to support community engagement.

Action 6: Deliver user-centered information technology and implement a university-wide commitment to use Western Online and other course-delivery technologies

We will provide user-centered information technology to support instruction, research and scholarly/creative activities, educational outreach, public service. [University Technology](#) provides a secure, reliable, and high-speed technological infrastructure; an efficient and effective operations environment; integrated information management solutions; and other high-quality, timely services to support to the University community.

Likewise, University Libraries identifies, collects, organizes, preserves, and provides access to information resources and services to support students, faculty, staff, and external patrons.

Both University Technology and University Libraries have liaison programs, committees, and other processes to encourage communication and shared planning to meet the needs of Western’s students, faculty, and staff. Both entities are committed to supporting a connected, contemporary educational environment.

As such, we will continue to prioritize a university-wide commitment to these forms of information technology, as well as an intentional plan to better use Western Online. In order to accomplish this last goal, we will:

- a) Continue to engage in IT Shared Governance and other means to increase communication, collaborative planning, and better us of technologies on our campuses.
- b) Provide user-centered library services and resources to support and meet the needs of students, faculty, staff, and community patrons.
- c) Develop accountability and more intentional practices in the use of Western Online and the services of the [Office of Distance Education and Support](#).

Action 7: Enhance and deliver innovative and accessible academic programming

Academic programming sits at the center of Western’s pursuit of academic excellence. In order to enhance

and develop our innovative and accessible programming, we will:

- a) Continue to apply, at every level, heavy scrutiny to all new academic course or program proposals
- b) Promote innovation and creativity in developing new programs
- c) Align all new programming with high standards of accessibility and community needs by identifying audience, market dynamics, and the potential contribution of the program to the larger economic and civic viability of the region.

GOAL 2: ADVANCE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

We define educational opportunity as providing high-quality academic programs and learning communities to high-potential, diverse learners. We have a strong academic portfolio and we will continue to deliver excellent educational opportunities to our immediate region and the surrounding communities.

Action 1: Establish and implement institution-level equity plans and practices to close access, progression, completion, and attainment gaps

We will strive to provide greater access and opportunity to those learners who are historically underrepresented in higher education. We recognize that the first step in this work comes from planning and developing new practices and perspectives in our everyday culture at Western.

To take this first step, we will:

- a) Align our planning with both the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) strategic plan, *A Thriving Illinois*, and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) strategic plan, *EVOLVE*.
- b) Participate in the second cohort of the American Council of Education (ACE) project, The Learner Success Lab (LSL), which will allow us to develop specific, granular-level initiatives that will increase retention rates for those students in historically underrepresented groups
- c) Foster widespread university and community investment in these and other initiatives.

Action 2: Focus on quality and accessibility in every aspect of the institution, including the student's campus experience, classroom experience, and residential life experience.

We will emphasize our institutional quality as we move forward through the next five years, and in doing so we will emphasize. In order to do this, we will:

- a) Emphasize and focus on the quality, outcomes, and personal attention associated with Western in marketing and public relations materials.
- b) Use program review and discipline-specific accreditation processes to assure and advance programmatic quality and viability
- c) Use co-curricular assessment and other annual reporting to focus on quality in residential life experiences.

Action 3: Engage in educational outreach and recruitment activities targeted to populations historically underrepresented in higher education

In general, we will increase the number of prospective students visiting campus each year, and we will improve the campus experience during these visits.

In this work we will specifically include historically underrepresented student populations with the intention of increasing accessibility and opportunities for these learners.

To do this, we will:

- a) Increase year-round educational outreach activities that bring prospective applicants to Western Illinois University and engage faculty and staff who want to participate in these actions.

- b) Bring more applicants and students who have been accepted to campus prior to initial registration and enrollment.
- c) Increase recruitment partnerships that will lead to increased accessibility and more diversity in each new cohort of students.
- d) Provide new educational opportunities by developing the new programs and reinvesting in existing programs that have a clear, high demand in our diverse communities.
- e) Advance opportunities by focusing recruitment initiatives on underrepresented learner groups in our immediate communities, the state of Illinois, and neighboring states.

Action 4: Advance affordability and decrease time-to-degree dates

At Western, we value persistence and completion while providing leadership in learner access and we emphasize quality and cost predictability. As such, we recognize that Western is uniquely poised to reduce the opportunity gap in Illinois.

To build on these efforts and to advance leadership in access and student persistence and completion, we will do the following:

- a) Continue to engage in fiscally conservative, mission-driven spending that limits cost increases to new students.
- b) Maintain competitive values for Western Commitment Scholarship and other financial aid programs.
- c) Implement and evaluate new strategies designed to decrease or eliminate the difference between student costs and financial aid
- d) Work with Financial Aid Office, Budget Office, and others to improve the student experience when receiving financial assistance.

Action 5: Increase retention and graduation rates with focus on the opportunity gap

We will improve retention and graduation rates, and we will reduce the opportunity gap that defines the experience of many learners in the state of Illinois. To do this, we will:

- a) Address costs and relevance of programs.
- b) Enhance the institution's student-readiness through comprehensive annual assessment.
- c) Improve college transitions and the sense of belonging in our community.
- d) Increase responsiveness to learner needs by expanding delivery modalities that promote increased graduation and decreased time-to-degree rates.
- e) Participate in statewide and national initiatives designed to decrease time-to-degree

Action 6: Align academic programming with the potential economic growth of our communities

As noted in the Preamble of this plan, from its inception Western Illinois University has been an institution devoted to the needs of the west-central Illinois region, and an institution connected to the economic growth and stability of that region.

In order to maintain this tradition, we will:

- a) Pay close attention to the feasibility of and market need for all new academic programs
- b) Conduct annual analyses of market, economic, and intellectual needs in the region
- c) Continue our long commitment to educating students who will become teachers, professionals in legal and justice administration, professionals in public health and social work, professionals in business and technology, and professionals in the traditional STEM disciplines, the Fine Arts, the Humanities, and the Social Sciences.

Goal 3: Support Personal Growth

We will continue to take a holistic approach in supporting the personal growth of students, faculty, and staff. With the understanding that optimal health and wellness supports optimal personal and professional growth, we will provide comprehensive programs, services, and events in these areas. We will also emphasize the sense of belonging and community.

Our support of personal growth extends to community-university engagement, and the social, economic, and cultural development and enrichment opportunities it provides. We value lifelong learning and participation in university events to these ends.

Action 1: Promote mental health, physical health, and wellness in our students, faculty, and staff

We will continue to support physically- and psychologically-healthy lifestyles, which will in turn continue to create healthy learning and working environments. To cultivate mental and physical well-being in every aspect of university community, we will:

- a) Increase health, wellness, and recreational programs, services, and activities provided by the University.
- b) Expand health, wellness, and recreational partnerships with local/regional providers to address needs and services for students, faculty, and staff.
- c) Evaluate the feasibility of establishing new sports clubs and other areas of campus recreation.

Action 2: Enhance student and community engagement

We will insist that students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members become more engaged with the University. Participation in university events supports the values of our communities, and encourages contact among individuals from different backgrounds as well as lifelong learning.

Participation and support of intercollegiate athletic programs also has many benefits related to personal growth, and as such, we will promote participation in these activities.

To advance a high level of participation we will:

- a) Engage high-profile university speakers and performers on all campuses to increase campus and community engagement
- b) Use artist/scholar/expert-in-residence programs to enable visiting professional(s) to be actively engaged with students, faculty staff, and community members on topics of interdisciplinary interest(e.g., tax preparation, religious understanding, aspects of citizenships, etc) during their stay at the University
- c) Provide the university and surrounding communities with a diverse season of quality cultural entertainment opportunities
- d) Offer professional development opportunities in academic disciplines to members of our host and external communities
- e) Enhance opportunities for lifelong learning on all three campuses
- f) Support a broad-based National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I and Football Championship Series varsity intercollegiate athletics program. This includes funding commitments to support our athletic program at a level that allows student-athletes to be competitive within our

- respective conferences and nationally
- g) Demonstrate strict adherence to NCAA operating principles related to governance and rules compliance, academic integrity, equity, and student-athlete welfare
 - h) Foster a culture that integrates Western with its surrounding communities at every level.

Action 3: Provide safe, accessible, and attractive campus environments in Macomb, Quad Cities, and online.

We will provide safe and secure learning and living environments for our students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University. Our safe and accessible campus environments are guided by our Campus Master Plans; our objective, as outlined in these plans, is to provide the premier facilities and grounds that premier students, faculty, and staff deserve. As part of our facilities planning and curricular delivery, we are strongly committed to environmental sustainability and justice, and as such will:

- a) Support educational programs, services, and partnerships committed to the prevention of crime; protection of life and property; preservation of peace, order, and safety; and enforcement of laws and University policies
- b) Enhance university facilities by exploring every option for enhancement, support, and development
- c) Demonstrate accountability in environmental sustainability on our campuses

Action 4: Educate students on the processes, procedures, and support services at Western.

We will develop meaningful proactive approaches to educate students on administrative processes related to success inside and outside of the classroom. Each student arrives to Western Illinois University with varying understanding of navigating the university environment. We will continue to support and celebrate the first-generation college student experience assisting students in navigating their new environment. To accomplish this, we will:

- a) Review polices and create easy to access and understand steps or guides through the student perspective.
- b) Offer outreach related to specific university procedures and polices at key times throughout the academic year.
- c) Review student use of campus resources and target populations who may be unaware of services and support resources on campus.
- d) Invite critical review of polices and procedures from outside entities to provide insight on updates needed to ensure student success.

Action 5: Clearly commit to supportive and shared governance at Western.

We will continue to commit time, attention, and resources to our collaborative, shared governance model. Western has a long history of shared governance, and in the continuation of that tradition, we will:

- a) Work with Faculty Senate to identify those areas of institutional practice in which shared

governance policies, processes, and committees can be enhanced.

- b) Recognize the collective bargaining agreements entered into with labor unions at the institution as forms of shared governance of the labor exerted by all university employees.
- c) Abstain from organizational practices that could result in the filing of charges of unfair labor practices.
- d) Adhere to the terms and conditions of the collective bargaining agreements, so as to limit grievances, and when grievances do arise, seek to resolve them at the lowest level possible.
- e) Abide by arbitration decisions, when all other efforts to resolve grievances have been unsuccessful.

Goal 4: Promote Social Responsibility

Social responsibility is a core value of Western—and its promotion is a key goal of this plan. In this way, students, their families, taxpayers, and donors all invest in Western’s mission to prepare our learners to lead in our local and global communities. We understand that we are the stewards of these donations and tuition dollars, as well as the time that each learner invests in their pursuit of a degree from Western. And we understand that we have a social responsibility to provide safe, accessible, responsive, and sustainable environments to support our academic mission.

In preparing students to lead in dynamic and diverse communities, we will advance civic engagement and economic development. We will work with business, industry, education, governmental agencies, municipalities, non-profit agencies, and other individuals from the public and private sectors to make Western the partner of choice in advancing educational, organizational, cultural, environmental, community and economic development in our region and well beyond. At the same time, we will use partnerships to advance the vision, mission, goals, and actions of the University, and we will remain accountable and transparent in achieving the objectives of this *Strategic Plan*.

Action 1: Promote civic engagement, sustainability, and service learning

We will continue advancing civic engagement as means for preparing students to lead in their communities. Through Western’s transformative, active, and engaged educational process, our alumni have the knowledge, analytical skills, and civic disposition required to address local and global challenges.

Our alumni are prepared to lead and to have an immediate impact in their chosen professions. Many Western students have had professional experiences through internships, student teaching, simulations, and other forms of experiential learning. To continue this work we will:

- a) Form a Task Force of students, faculty, and staff to focus on communication, collaboration and increasing and supporting student civic engagement on the three campuses.
- b) Prepare students for civic engagement and the global workforce by emphasizing diversity and inclusivity in race, culture, socioeconomic status, religion, and other dimensions of personal and community identity in the curriculum, programs, services, and events.
- c) Increase student participation in service learning, internships, student teaching, simulations, and other forms of experiential learning.

Action 2: Use state, local, and other partnerships to advance university, community, economic development, and equity

Western Illinois University cultivates expertise through a variety of educational experiences that has a direct impact on local, regional, and global communities. As the largest regional employer, WIU cultivates relationships that enhance economic development, and provides resources for many agencies and communities.

Serving as the largest employer in the Macomb region and as the only public university in the Quad Cities region illustrates the beneficial relationships between the University and our host communities and regions. A strong University strengthens its community and regions, while their increased strength likewise increases the strength of the University.

Western has a proud tradition in community and economic development.

The Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA), for example, was established in 1989 after a Task Force on the Future of Rural Illinois completed 25 public hearings. IIRA was chartered as a companion agency to the Governor's Rural Affairs Council and charged with finding innovative solutions for rural issues that can be implemented in Illinois and providing technical assistance to policy makers. These efforts have focused on economic development, value-added rural development, health care, transportation and infrastructure, public management, housing strategies, and information technology.

We value our role in university, community, and economic development. As such, we will continue to work with members of the western Illinois region to recruit and retain talent, business, and industry, which in turn creates and expands jobs, and sustains a strong tax base. Likewise, we will use new and enhanced partnerships to leverage additional goals and priorities of the region and the University, with the latter including decreasing institutional tuition reliance.

To continue this tradition of engaged economic and community development, we will:

- a) Enhance all current University partnerships
- b) Expand community and economic development partnerships by using the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA), the Illinois Innovation Network, and other similar structures at the institution and in the state.

Conclusion

As members of the Western Illinois University community, we share in the goals of recruiting, retaining, and graduating students in a transformative educational experience where learners engage in the discovery, acquisition, and application of knowledge for personal enrichment and in preparation for future occupations and/or graduate and advanced studies. We do so in a manner that is inclusive and engaging; it is an educational environment built upon the foundation of our core values-- academic excellence, educational opportunity, personal growth and social responsibility.

We are nationally recognized for our leadership in quality, opportunity, affordability, community and economic development, and graduating more students than predicted based on academic preparation variables.

We empower students to become engaged and productive global citizens committed to making a difference in the diverse communities and professions that they represent. Our alumni are leaders in their fields equipped with knowledge, problem solving skills, and community awareness necessary to address the professional, economic, and social issues of our time.

We are a strong university built on the foundations of excellent teaching, engaged research, and deep service to the community. Simply stated, these practices and philosophical commitments will continue far into the future.

And this will be evidenced by the successful attainment of the goals, priorities, and actions in this *Strategic Plan*.