

HIGHER VALUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION 2017-2027

Month, Day, 2022

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 and the name was changed to Western Illinois State Teachers' College in 1921, and then to Western Illinois University in 1957, our mission continually broadened to include 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, 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 century** we earned and maintained a reputation for expanding access to affordable, high-quality degree programs and fostering student involvement in University activities.*

We are now a leading University with campuses in Macomb, the Quad Cities, and online. By virtue of our quality, opportunity, and affordability, we serve students from Illinois, across the nation, and around the world.

*Together, we provide a transformative educational experience in 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 knowledge, problem solving skills, and community awareness necessary to address the professional, economic, and social issues of our time.*

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

HIGHER VALUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION 2017-2027

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 2017-2027

Executive Summary

Our Plan

As updated in 2022, *Higher Values in Higher Education 2017-2027* defines Western Illinois University's vision for the next five years. It 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.

This plan is a call to action for the students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of the University. Together, we will advance our traditions of excellence and implement new actions that position the University for a strong and sustainable future.

To make this vision a reality, Strategic Plan Supplements have been produced (in 2020-21) and will continue to be produced and implemented through 2027. These documents will address unforeseen changes and opportunities at the time of the initial writing of this *Strategic Plan*. Engaging in annual environmental scanning and continuous improvement will help to ensure that by 2027, Western Illinois University has achieved:

- Stable enrollment of nearly 9,000 students;
- Retention and graduation rates that place in the top 25% of peer institutions;
- Financial sustainability and planning for years to come;
- A culture that embodies and celebrates diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism.

Our Institutional Learning Outcomes

Western has four institutional learning outcomes, all of which are based on our core values and our mission statement. They are:

- At Western students will develop critical thinking skills and will engage in transformative learning experiences;
- At Western, students will acquire significant content knowledge, various disciplinary skill sets, and engrained professional behaviors that lead to success;
- At Western, students will practice professional integrity and ethical decision making;
- At Western, students will value and celebrate diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism.

These outcomes will be measured, reported, and reviewed through annual internal reporting documents, annual state-level reporting documents, and other means.

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 WIU, regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability, genetic information, 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. WIU 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.

WIU 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 WIU, we will:

- Maintain a safe and secure environment for all members of our University 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 intergroup disparities through areas as 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 Strategic Goals

The prioritized goals of Western Illinois University are stated below and represent how we as a university community will advance the values of the institution as we fulfill our mission and pursue our vision. Annual Reports completed by every academic department and administrative unit, Planning and Accomplishment presentations 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 our social responsibility as professional educators and service providers hold us accountable to achieving the goals of this *Strategic Plan*.

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 through faculty and staff mentoring, peer mentoring, tutoring, learning assistants, academic coaching, and other student-focused academic support activities.
- Action 2: Recruit, support, and retain high-potential and diverse students, faculty, and staff, and deliver financial supports directly to high-achieving, high-potential students.
- 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 innovative and accessible academic programming within and across disciplines.

Goal 2: Advance Educational Opportunity

Action 1: Focus on quality in every aspect of the institution, including the student's campus experience, classroom experience, and residential life experience.

Action 2: Engage in educational outreach and recruitment activities.

Action 3: Advance affordability and measurable value for our students.

Action 4: Increase retention and graduation rates.

Action 5: Decrease time-to-degree rates.

Goal 3: Support Personal Growth

Action 1: Promote physical and mental health and wellness of students, faculty, and staff.

Action 2: Enhance student and community engagement.

Action 3: Create a safe, accessible, and attractive campus in Macomb, the QC, 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: Develop an expectation of mission-driven public service across the University.

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

Action 3: Celebrate diversity and actively cultivate anti-racism, equity, and social and environmental justice.

HIGHER VALUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION 2017-2027

GOAL 1: ENRICH ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Western Illinois University will continue to recruit, retain, and support diverse, **high-potential students**, faculty, and staff. The strength and definition of **our** university are the faculty and staff who engage in instruction, in research, scholarly/creative activities, and in service **first to** support the vision, mission, and values of the institution, and **second to teach the students who learn, develop, and grow during their time here on our campuses.**

We attract **high-potential** students, **excellent** faculty, and **committed** staff because we set, expect, and achieve high standards for the institution and one another. We strive for and are achieving national leadership in quality, opportunity and affordability and we empower students, faculty, and staff to lead dynamic and diverse communities.

To continue recruiting and retaining **our students**, faculty and staff, we will provide **supportive, inclusive, and intellectually rich classroom and campus environments where our Leatherneck 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 through mentoring, tutoring, academic coaching, and other student-focused academic support activities.

We will continue to advance student success through the **caring educator** model. Delivery of high quality instruction is **the** top priority of **our** faculty. Our students are engaged with faculty and staff members in instruction, research, and service beginning the freshmen year and continuing throughout the educational experience.

From the onset of their educational experience, students **at Western** work **closely** with faculty and staff in their discipline and across the University. Student, faculty, and staff interactions occur inside and outside the classroom through mentoring, research, scholarship, creative activities, public service, and at co-curricular programs and events.

Our focus on the individual learner is a nationally recognized best practice. **We have a long tradition of this focus at Western, and we will uphold and advance these traditions of excellence by doing the following:**

- a) Continue to support contractual agreements that place instruction as the highest priority of faculty
- b) Establish an overall university student-to-faculty ratio of 17:1, with the understanding that there will be disciplinary differences, for example, due to accreditation and/or certification/licensure requirements.
- c) Launch new living-learning communities based on student demand.
- d) Use Annual Reports as a method to evaluate and subsequently enhance academic and support structures for students on **all** campuses.
- e) Engage in planning and implementing priorities to increase student engagement in educational activities highly correlated with persistence and completion. This includes:
 1. Internships and other forms and durations of experiential learning.
 2. Student teaching.
 3. Clinical placements.
 4. **Undergraduate and graduate** research, scholarly/creative activities.

5. Community outreach and service activities.
6. Education abroad opportunities.
7. Co-curricular and leadership experiences.

Action 2: Recruit, support, and retain high-potential, diverse students, faculty, and staff and deliver financial supports to high-achieving, high-potential students

a) Advance Faculty and Staff Recruitment

1. Increase the participation of faculty and staff who have been traditionally underrepresented in higher education;
2. Provide competitive starting salaries that enable the University to recruit high-achieving, diverse faculty and staff;
3. Offer and administer comprehensive and competitive benefit packages;
4. Support actions beyond the *Family Medical Leave Act* to improve work-life balance by continuing to implement fiscally responsible, family-friendly programs, policies, and procedures that assist employee recruitment and retention. **Develop regular University Job Fairs for the community.**
5. Engage in new actions to increase awareness of faculty and staff support services (e.g., the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research’s workshops, events, mentoring and travel programs) as means to increase the recruitment of high-achieving, diverse faculty and staff.

b) Enhance university-wide support and retention

1. **Increase levels of student employment and financial supports on campus**
2. **Develop and implement a “New Faculty Orientation Program,” a “Mid-Career Faculty Mentorship” program, and a “New Chairs/Administrators Program”**
3. Align **student**, faculty, and staff expectations with available resources (e.g., travel funding, professional development opportunities) to support **student success, faculty promotion and tenure, and staff** career advancement.
4. Support use of release time, tuition waivers, and other University benefits for faculty and staff to advance educational pursuits.
5. Continue to provide awards recognizing excellence **in students, faculty, and staff** at the **department, college, and university levels.**

c) **Continued accountability for all university programs, departments, and units per HLC and other accrediting bodies.**

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 **trans**disciplinary 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 course, program, institute, and center 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. **In order to continue this success, we will:**

- a) Allocate institutional resources and assistance to support research, scholarly/creative activities, and grants of faculty and staff.
- 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 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. **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. We are one of only 8% of the 4,726 Title IV degree-granting institutions across the country to have earned this distinction.

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. We 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.

We also participate in the mutually beneficial exchange, exploration, and application of knowledge. The collections, holdings, and services of University Libraries are open to the public. The Centers for Best Practices in Early Childhood Education and Preparation of Educational Professionals builds capacity in P-12 education, and the Speech-Language Hearing **Clinic** provides free clinical services to children, adults, and their families.

The Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs supports community development activities across the state.

University Television, WQPT-Quad Cities Public Television, and Tri-States Public Radio provide educational programming that supports life-long learning. And the Multicultural Center, Bureau of Cultural Affairs, College of Fine Arts and Communication, Performing Arts Society, and Intercollegiate Athletics provides our region with a series of year-long, high-quality cultural, athletic, and artistic programs, services, and events.

In order to continue to help build stronger, more resilient, more dynamic communities, **we must:**

- 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. University Libraries is a rich source of information, providing patrons with access to over one million volumes, more than 23,000 print and full text e-periodical subscriptions, 350,000 government resources and maps, over 115 subscription-only bibliographic databases, outstanding digital research collections, and much more.

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, modern educational environment.

As such, we will continue to create a university-wide commitment to these forms of information technology, as well as an intentional plan to better use Western Online. To so we will"

- a) Continue to engage in IT Shared Governance and other means to increase communication and collaborative planning.
- b) Provide user-centered library services and resources to support and meet the needs of students, faculty, staff, and community patrons
- c) **Add info from Ray Lawson**

Action 7: Enhance and deliver innovative and accessible academic programming

GOAL 2: ADVANCE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

We define educational opportunity as providing a service to high-potential, diverse students with high-quality academic programs and learning communities. 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: Focus on quality 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. We will increase our market-share of high school graduates, international students, transfer students, and students looking to pursue graduate education. In order to do this, we will:

- a) Emphasize the quality, outcomes, and personal attention associated with Western Illinois University in marketing and public relations materials.
 1. Stress that Western Illinois University is a teaching institution.
 2. Illustrate student engagement in:
 - i. Research, scholarly, and creative activities inside and outside the classroom
 - ii. Service activities inside and outside the classroom.
 3. Promote the University's national recognitions, job placement rates, and the percent of alumni attending graduate and professional schools.
 4. Showcase student, faculty, and staff interactions on homepages and departmental pages on the Macomb and Quad Cities campuses through multimedia applications.
 5. Emphasize the distinctiveness and excellence of Western Illinois University and our colleges and departments.
 6. Enhance the University's web presence by:
 - i. Utilizing more interactive features; and
 - ii. Increase the ease of access to information the Macomb and Quad Cities webpages.
 7. Promote continuous improvement in marketing quality, opportunity, and affordability by using analytics to evaluate and enhance integrated marketing at the institutional, college, and programmatic levels.
- b) Use program review and discipline-specific accreditation processes to assure and advance programmatic quality and viability

Action 2: Engage in educational outreach and recruitment activities

We will increase the number of prospective students visiting campus each year, and we will improve the campus experience during these visits. We will implement a goal of 70% yield rate for campus visitors.

In order to increase the number of current and prospective students who visit our campuses, we will enhance our marketing and educational outreach efforts to bring even more awareness about Western Illinois University, our national leadership in quality, opportunity, affordability, and the successful job placement and graduate/professional school continuation rates of our alumni.

We will increase recruitment efforts by increasing market share enrollments; expanding recruitment partnerships; enhancing university commitments to diversity, the military, and place bound students; engaging in continuous improvements; and providing new educational opportunities.

- 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) Implement specific strategies to capture a greater market share of enrollment from the University's immediate 16-county service region to prevent continued population loss in west central Illinois.
- d) Enact new recruitment strategies inside and outside the University's 16 county service region to attract more dual enrolled **students**, freshmen, transfers, and graduate students from Illinois and beyond.
- e) Increase recruitment partnerships.
 1. Document plans and outcomes from **the numerous HVHE supplemental plans** in helping with educational outreach, enrollment stabilization, and growth.
 2. Expand institutional partnerships with foundations and external organizations that support educational outreach and student recruitment.
 3. **Participate** in statewide and national associations and initiatives designed to increase student enrollment.
 4. Increase the number of partner schools and high school dual enrollment **students**.
 5. Develop new partnership agreements with community colleges, including pathway degree program partnerships for students. These pathway agreements should clearly delineate classes that transfer from community colleges and how students can go about submitting a class to be evaluated for credit.
- f) Expand institutional commitments to diversity, the military, and place-bound students.
 1. Develop, implement, and evaluate specific plans designed to increase the enrollments of minority students, female students, and individuals with disabilities in accordance with *Illinois Public Act 85-283* to increase the enrollments and decrease the **opportunity** gap (i.e., retention and graduation rates) between different categories of students.
 2. **Increase** the number of international agreements and international student enrollments.
 3. Expand the University's distance education portfolio to serve military students, working professionals, and place-bound individuals. This includes increasing the number of:
 - i. **Major degrees and graduate certificates online.**
 - ii. Community colleges hosting the University's online and **in-person** degree programs.
 - iii. Hybrid programs, where 25% percent of instruction is completed on-campus and the remaining 75% is completed online.
 4. Increase the awareness of prospective students and employers with regard to career options associated with **the** Bachelor of General Studies degree program, which serves as a degree

completion program for working professionals, many of whom are place-bound.

- g) Provide new educational opportunities.
 - 1. Continue development of new degree programs and post baccalaureate certificates in areas of high demand/critical skills shortages that are consistent with the academic mission of the University.
 - 2. Reinvest in high demand and high potential for growth programs and follow established university processes for completing feasibility and needs studies, and establishing new degrees, options, certificates, and concentrations.

Action 3: Advance affordability and measurable value for our students [update numbers]

We will emphasize quality, affordability, and cost predictability. These are all key tenets of Western Illinois University. **As of SP 2022**, over 75% of our students receive financial assistance, with 49% of the Macomb students and 32% of the Quad Cities students receiving Pell Grants. In recognizing the importance of financial planning, we are the only Illinois public university to provide new students with a cost guarantee of no price increases for their tuition, fees, and room and board rates for four years provided the student maintains continuous fall/spring enrollment.

We value student access, persistence, and completion when providing national leadership in access and affordability.

Western Illinois University is poised to reduce the **opportunity gap in Illinois**. We have a long-standing tradition in advancing student success for low-income students. The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Postsecondary Education recognized Western as a best practice institution in graduating more low-income and first-generation students than predicted based on entering student academic preparation and socioeconomic status variables.

We will build on these efforts and advance national leadership in access, affordability, and student persistence and completion, **by doing the following**:

- a) Prepare and distribute marketing and public relations materials that promote the University's statewide, regional, and national leadership in affordability and cost predictability in a manner that is easily understood.
- b) Continue to engage in fiscally conservative, mission-driven spending that limits cost increases to new students. This will be demonstrated by maintaining:
 - 1. Instructional costs per credit hour below the statewide average for Illinois public universities
 - 2. Administrative costs per credit hour below the statewide average for Illinois public universities
- c) Maintain competitive values for Western Commitment Scholarship and other financial aid programs.
- d) Implement and evaluate new strategies designed to decrease or eliminate the difference between student costs and financial aid.
- e) **Form a university-wide task force of students, faculty, and staff charged with examining national best practices and specific strategic proven to increase the retention and graduation rates of students from lower socioeconomic levels, and making implementation recommendations to the President's Leadership Team.**
- f) **Work with Financial Aid Office, Budget, and others to improve the student experience. [Bobbi]**

Action 4: Increase retention and graduation rates

We will improve retention and graduation rates. To do so, we will use results from a meta-analysis of research completed over the last two years on the topic of student persistence and completion to improve the University's retention and graduation rates.

- a) Address costs and relevance.
 1. Increase student, employer, and potential donor access to internship information. Internships and other forms of experiential education are often paid and are correlated with student persistence and completion.
 2. Launch a cooperative education model that allows students to take classes and participate in experiential placements at the same time.
 3. Explore the establishment of legacy and other tuition rates used at competitor institutions to recruit and retain students from all socioeconomic backgrounds.
- b) Enhance student preparation.
 1. Enact strategies designed to help increase persistence and completion rates for underrepresented student populations, first-generation students, and students from rural, rural-remote, and rural-distant school districts.
 2. Increase student awareness and use of academic support available online and across the University.
 3. Use local results from the National Survey of Student Engagement and other national surveys in planning and evaluating initiatives designed to increase student involvement, retention, and graduation rates.
 4. Use results from the survey discussed above, coordinate implementation of strategies designed to lower the percentage of first-time freshmen who start at Western Illinois University but graduate from another college or university.
- c) Improve college transitions and fit.
 1. Focus efforts regarding transition, fit, and a sense of belonging into three areas: The Division of Enrollment Management (EM); the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Strategic Planning (AASP); and The First Year Experience Program (FYE).
 2. Use these offices to conduct surveys and other data collection activities in order to determine the reasons why students leave before graduating from the University. Data analyses should be completed across different categories of students (i.e., new freshmen or transfers, non-traditional students, etc.) to determine if specific services are needed for specific categories of students.
 3. Use these offices to engage in benchmarking of national best practices and implement, where appropriate, new strategies that are designed to increase the persistence and completion of new transfer students.
 4. Use these offices to enhance retention and graduation rates of first generation and all other students.

Action 5: Reduce time-to-degree rates

We will continue to decrease time-to-degree rates by doing the following:

- a) Enhance, develop, and implement the supports for granting academic credit for students successfully completing external proficiency examinations and courses through dual enrollment

programming and/or early admission programming.

- b) Publicize departmental protocol for the awarding of credit for prior learning and life experiences where appropriate to the discipline.
- c) Participate in all facets of the Illinois Articulation Initiative to promote successful student transfer.
- d) Increase responsiveness to student needs by expanding delivery modalities that promote increased graduation and decreased time-to-degree rates. This includes:
 - 1. Online degrees.
 - 2. Live streaming sections
 - 3. Summer school offerings and enrollment.
 - 4. Undergraduate and graduate hybrid programs.
 - 5. Alternatives to the traditional 16-week semester.
 - 6. Accelerated degree and certificate options where appropriate to the discipline.
- e) Participate in statewide and national initiatives designed to decrease time-to-degree

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 provide comprehensive programs, services, and events in these areas. We also emphasize the sense of belonging and community. Engagement inside and outside the classroom is a proven correlate of goal attainment, student persistence and completion, and professional achievement.

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 and Physical Health and Wellness of Students, Faculty, and Staff

We will continue to support physically and psychologically-healthy lifestyles and 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 these events supports analyzing ideas, experiences, and lines of reasoning and artistic display in depth; forming new ideas and understandings; encouraging contact among individuals from different backgrounds; and engaging in lifelong learning.

Participation and support of female and male intercollegiate athletic programs also has many benefits related to personal growth.

- a) Engage high-profile university speakers on both 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 items of interdisciplinary interest (e.g., tax preparation, religious understanding) 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 of senior citizens
- 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 successful and 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) Host arts and selected athletic events in the Quad Cities to increase community engagement and support for the University

Goal 4: Promote Social Responsibility

We will continue to uphold our social responsibilities. Students, their families, taxpayers, and donors invest in the *Mission* of Western Illinois University to prepare students, faculty, and staff to lead in dynamic and diverse communities. And 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 Illinois University 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 priorities of the University, and we will remain accountable and transparent in achieving the goals of this *Strategic Plan*.

Action 1: Provide Safe, Accessible, Attractive, and Sustainable Campus Environments.

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**.

- 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.
 1. Implement accessibility standards in new construction and campus renovation projects
 2. Pursue state funding for the highest facility priorities identified in *Campus Master Plans*, which include new facilities and funds to support deferred maintenance.
 3. Achieve *Master Plan* goals and priorities
 4. Advocate for the release of previously allocated state funding for the Center for Performing Arts and Quad Cities campus, and future capital bills which support the University's highest priorities for new and existing facilities
 5. Apply institutional resources to address permanent improvements (deferred maintenance) and capital renewal
- c) Demonstrate statewide and national leadership in environmental sustainability.
 1. Earn Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification in new construction and major renovations.
 2. Support educational opportunities designed to raise awareness of **social and environmental justice and sustainability issues**. Examples include **supporting** courses, minors, and degree programs that emphasize sustainability (see www.wiu/vpas.sustainability/education.php).
 3. Continue to provide statewide, regional, and national leadership in environmental **justice and sustainability** within all aspects of University operations (e.g., the curriculum, community and co-curricular events, new construction, and administrative operations).

Action 2: Promote Civic Engagement 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 have an immediate impact in their chosen professions. Many Western Illinois University students have had professional experiences through internships, student teaching, simulations, and other forms of experiential learning. The American Association of Colleges & Universities emphasizes the importance of these experiences accompanied by structured reflection because these actions enable students to build practitioner skills in the transition from theory to practice.

- a) Form a Task Force of students, faculty, and staff to focus on communication, collaboration and increasing and supporting student civic engagement on both campuses.
- b) Prepare students for civic engagement and the global workforce by emphasizing diversity and inclusivity in race, culture, socioeconomic status, religion, plurality of thought and perspective, etc. 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 3: Use Partnerships to Advance University, Community and Economic Development

We will continue to be essential our region. Western Illinois University provides an educational experience that develops talent needed for our local and global communities. We have **over** a \$470 million annual economic impact on our immediate 16 county service area. For the 10 counties that are closest to the Macomb campus, we are the region's largest employer. For the six counties closest to the Quad Cities campus, we serve as the only **four-year** public university.

Serving as the largest employer in one region and as the only public university in a second illustrates the symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationships between the University and our host communities and regions. Strong communities and regions benefit from a strong Western Illinois University, and a strong Western Illinois University benefits from strong host communities and regions.

Western has a proud tradition in community and economic development. The Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA) 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 Governors 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.

Moreover, these efforts have been reinforced with the recent establishment of the President's Executive Institute (PEI). Members of the PEI are actively engaged in helping the University stabilize enrollment in addition to supporting community and economic development, and expanding external partnerships.

By valuing our role in university, community, and economic development, 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

a) Enhance University partnerships.

1. Advocate for the restoration of fair and predictable funding to Illinois public higher education in general and Western Illinois University in particular
2. Cultivate new and existing donors.
3. Increase the value received from external giving.
4. Develop and launch the next comprehensive fundraising campaign for Western Illinois University.
5. Expand the percent of alumni giving to the University.
6. Increase the value received from grants and contracts.
7. Advocate for changes to statewide policy currently contributing to the statewide teacher shortage.
8. Develop a plan for the Alumni Association that links the goals and actions of this *Strategic Plan* to the work of the Association.
9. Consult with external advisory boards to help advance the academic mission and service operations of Western Illinois University, in addition to the goals and actions of this *Strategic Plan*.

b) Expand community and economic development partnerships by using the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA), **the Illinois Innovation Network, and other similar structures to do the following:**

1. Increase community and economic development
2. Engage external organizations to advance university goals and priorities
3. Respond to emerging needs in the state and region
4. Expand the capacity of community leaders and policymakers by providing technical support, applied research, policy evaluation, and training across the state

5. Improve the quality of life for rural residents by partnering with public and private agencies on local development and enhancement efforts
6. Serve as a clearinghouse for information on rural issues, coordinate rural research, and work with state agencies on issues of importance to rural communities
7. Expand the use of credit and non-credit “short courses” that teach specific sets of skills or knowledge. While not the traditional semester in length, these courses are intended for those who are already working and need to update their skills
8. Continue to support public-private partnerships to advance new and enhanced services to students, faculty, and staff in our host communities

Action 4: Achieve the Goals of this Strategic Plan

We will achieve the goals and priorities of this *Strategic Plan*. Every student, alumni, faculty, and staff member represents Western Illinois University. Together, we are responsible for achieving the goals and priorities of this *Strategic Plan*. We will hold ourselves accountable to the successful advancement of the goals and priorities in *Higher Values in Higher Education* to the benefit of our vision, mission and students and communities that we serve. We will engage in continuous improvements and be accountable and transparent with regard to our progress, challenges, and opportunities. Our institutional quality and viability will continue to be externally validated and affirmed by the Higher Learning Commission.

- a) Use annual Planning and Accomplishments Reports to demonstrate actions taken to:
 1. Stabilize and increase enrollment to **nearly 9,000** students.
 2. Achieve retention and graduation rates at the top 25% of peer institutions.
 3. **Achieve financial sustainability**
 4. **Develop and maintain a culture that supports diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism**
- b) Continue to implement the *Priorities and Reinvestment Plan* [President’s Leadership Team].
 1. Prepare and implement annual Strategic Plan Supplements to address barriers, challenges, and opportunities unforeseen at the time of writing this edition of *Higher Values in Higher Education*.
 2. Update this edition of *Higher Values in Higher Education* in academic year 2022-2023 [Social Responsibility Task Force, University Governance Groups, Board of Trustees].

Action 5: Providing transparency and accountability reporting

- a) Provide the university and external communities with updates on our progress, performance, and continuous improvements.
 1. Establish and articulate enrollment, retention and graduation rate goals by campus [President, Vice Presidents].
 2. Create a new institutional dashboard of university performance indicators (available from the University Planning Website) that tracks university enrollment, retention, and graduation rates along with other key performance indicators on both campuses [Office of the Vice President for Quad Cities and Planning, Institutional Research]
 3. Prepare:

- i. Monthly Strategic Plan Updates that summarize actions in progress and related accomplishments *[Vice President, Quad Cities and Planning]*.
 - ii. Annual Strategic Plan Updates that follow the format of Monthly Strategic Plan Updates, and use data from annual Planning and Accomplishments Reports as the primary source for documentation *[Vice President, Quad Cities and Planning]*.
 - iii. Annual Performance Reports to document institutional performance on *Strategic Plan* indicators compared to peer institutions *[Vice President, Quad Cities and Planning; Planning, Budget and Institutional Research]*.
- b) Ensure Western Illinois University’s ongoing institutional quality and viability by maintaining the University’s ongoing relationship with the Higher Learning Commission.
1. Submitting Financial and Non-Financial Indicator Reports annually *[Vice President for Quad Cities and Planning, Provost’s Office, Financial Aid, Institutional Research and Planning]*.
 2. Host the review of the Quad Cities campus and off-campus locations in academic year 2019-2020, and the Macomb campus on-site visit in academic year 2020-2021 *[Vice President for Quad Cities and Planning, Faculty and Staff]*.
 3. Engage in the four-year assurance review in academic year 2024-2025 *[Vice President for Quad Cities and Planning, Social Responsibility Task Force]*.
 4. Continue to keep the Board of Trustees and other members of the University community informed of additional required Commission reporting *[Vice President for Quad Cities and Planning]*.

Summary and 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 students 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 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 and resilient university. Simply stated, Western Illinois University’s traditions of excellence have and will continue. This will be realized by the successful realization of the goals, priorities, and actions in this *Strategic Plan*.

Add this somewhere:

- a) Promote student health and wellness.
 1. Increase comprehensive academic and counseling services *[Academic Affairs, Student Services]*.

2. Expand comprehensive substance abuse counseling, along with programs and services designed to prevent substance abuse *[Student Services]*.
3. Provide late night and alternative programming to promote healthy lifestyles *[Student Services, Quad Cities Student Services, Resident Assistants, Interhall Council, Student Government Associations and Registered Student Organizations on both campuses]*.
4. Increase student, faculty, and staff awareness of and programs and services related to students who have had their rights violated under Title IX, which includes, but is not limited to, protections for equity in athletics, sexual harassment and sexual violence, and transgender students *[Equal Opportunity and Access]*.
5. Implement strategies for addressing physical and program barriers for students and employees with disabilities *[University Diversity Council, Disability Resource Center, Equal Opportunity and Access, Facilities Management, Quad Cities Student Services, Quad Cities Facilities]*.