

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 the 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, and Fine Arts and Communication.

Throughout time, we have 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 teacher-scholar-mentor 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.

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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.

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Executive Summary

Our Plan

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 comprised of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members during academic year 2017-2018, as well as from a year-long, campus-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.
- Consistent placement in the top 10% of national publications that evaluate quality, opportunity and affordability.
- 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 transformational learning experiences;
- At Western, students will acquire significant content knowledge, various disciplinary skill sets, and 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 reporting documents, state-level reports, 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 justice advocates.
- Provide curricula, programs, training, resources, and environments that reflect and strengthen the diversity of our communities, and 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 mentoring, tutoring, academic coaching, and other student-focused academic support activities.

Action 2: Recruit, support, and retain high-potential, diverse student, faculty, and staff, and deliver financial supports directly to high achieving 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 and service learning.

Action 6: Upgrade and deliver user-centered, accessible information technology, and implement a university-wide commitment to use Western Online and other kinds of course-delivery technologies.

Action 7: Enhance and deliver innovative and accessible academic programming

Goal 2: Advance Educational Opportunity

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

Action 2: Engage in educational outreach and recruitment activities in our regional school districts.

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 health and wellness of students, faculty, and staff.

Action 2: Enhance student and community engagement.

Action 3: Create a safe, accessible, and attractive campuses in Macomb, Quad Cities, and Online

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

Action 5: Commit, clearly, 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