

HIGHER VALUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION 2017-2027

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.

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

Higher Values in Higher Education 2017-2027 defines Western Illinois University's vision for the next decade. 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, and 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, annual Strategic Plan Supplements will be produced and enacted beginning in academic year 2018-2019. These documents will address unforeseen changes and opportunities at the time of writing 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 over 10,000 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.

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: Recruit, Support, and Retain high-achieving, diverse faculty and staff.
- Action 2: Focus on the individual learner.
- Action 3: Maintain high standards of excellence in instruction.
- Action 4: Provide strong commitments to research, scholarly, and creative activities.
- Action 5: Engage in mission-driven public service.
- Action 6: Deliver user-centered information technology.

Goal 2: Advance Educational Opportunity

- Action 1: Focus on quality.
- Action 2: Engage in educational outreach and recruitment activities.
- Action 3: Advance affordability.
- 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.

Goal 4: Promote Social Responsibility

- Action 1: Provide safe, accessible, and attractive campus environments.
- Action 2: Promote civic engagement and service learning.
- Action 3: Use partnerships to advance university, community and economic development.
- Action 4: Achieve the goals of this *Strategic Plan*.
- Action 5: Provide transparency and accountability reporting.

HIGHER VALUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION 2017-2027

GOAL 1: ENRICH ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Western Illinois University will continue to recruit, retain, and support high-achieving, diverse world-class faculty and staff that is second to none. The strength and definition of a university are the faculty and staff who engage in instruction; research, scholarly/creative activities; and service in support of the vision, mission, and values of the institution.

We attract world-class students, faculty, and 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. As a university community, our faculty and staff provide expertise, governance, and direction to the university, students, and external constituencies that we serve.

To continue recruiting and retaining the very best faculty and staff, we will provide competitive salaries, compensation, support structures, and opportunities for professional development. At the same time, we will continue to develop institutional policies and procedures that promote a holistic and supportive environment that responds to employee workforce needs as we individually and collectively advance the vision, mission, and values of the University.

Action 1: Recruit, Support, and Retain High-Achieving, Diverse Faculty and Staff

a) Advance Faculty and Staff Recruitment

1. Provide competitive starting salaries that enable the University to recruit high-achieving, diverse faculty and staff [*President's Leadership Team, Deans, Directors*].
2. Offer and administer comprehensive and competitive benefit packages [*Human Resources, Academic Personnel*].
3. 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 [*President's Leadership Team, Human Resources, Academic Personnel*].
4. 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 [*Human Resources, Equal Opportunity and Access, Faculty and Staff*].
5. Increase the participation of faculty and staff who have been traditionally underrepresented in higher education¹ [*All faculty and staff*].

b) Enhance Faculty and Staff Support and Retention

1. Work with bargaining units to develop agreements that allocate available resources to support salaries that meet and exceed the mean of peer institutions [*Bargaining Teams, President's Leadership Team*].
2. Implement negotiated contractual agreements for salary and benefits, and similar compensation for non-negotiated employees [*President's Leadership Team*].

¹ Illinois Public Act 85-283 defines members of underrepresented groups as females, minorities, and individuals with disabilities.

3. Follow the missions of the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research and Human Resources, provide programs, services, and events that support career needs, interests, and professional growth of employees [*Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research, Human Resources*].
4. Align faculty and staff expectations with available resources (e.g., travel funding, professional development opportunities) to support promotion, tenure, and career advancement [*President's Leadership Team, Deans, Department Chairs, Directors*].
5. Support use of release time, tuition waivers, and other University benefits for faculty and staff to advance educational pursuits [*President, Vice Presidents, Deans, Directors*].
6. Provide structures and available resources to help faculty earn tenure and employees earn promotions. Examples include mentoring for junior faculty, assistance with pre- and post-grant acquisition, travel support to conferences, and professional development opportunities sponsored by the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research and Human Resources [*President, Vice Presidents, Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research, University Libraries, University Technology, Colleges, Departments, Civil Service Employees Council, Council of Administrative Personnel*].
7. Continue to provide awards recognizing excellence at the college and university levels. Examples include the Provost's Awards of Excellence, Civil Service Employees Council and Council of Administrative Personnel's Employees of the Year awards, and the Quad Cities Values in Practice Awards [*President, Vice Presidents, Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research, Colleges, Civil Service Employees Council, Council of Administrative Personnel*].
8. Implement succession planning for Administrative/Professional and Civil Service employees. This includes establishing and maintaining classification systems with clear job responsibilities, provides promotional opportunities, and aligns total compensation to market levels [*President's Leadership Team, Human Resources, Academic Personnel*].
9. Make recommendations to the Equal Opportunity and Access officers and the president regarding policy, campus initiatives, and programs in support of the University's Affirmative Action program [*University Diversity Council, Faculty, Staff*].

Action 2: Focus on the Individual Learner.

We will continue to advance student success through the teacher-scholar-mentor model. Delivery of high quality instruction is top priority of the faculty. Sixty-seven percent of the University's budget is allocated to instruction and academic support. Our students are engaged with faculty and staff members in instruction, research, and service beginning the freshmen year and continuing throughout the educational experience. US News and World Report data annually demonstrates that more students graduate from the University than predicted based on entering characteristics (i.e., standardized test scores and high school percentile ranks).

Faculty members teach 96% of undergraduate classes with graduate teaching assistants teaching 4%. From the onset of their educational experience, students work 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. The Washington Monthly's 2017 rankings place Western Illinois University in the top 12% of 632 institutions nationally for our faculty and staff's contributions to the public good in the areas of social mobility (recruiting and graduating low-income students), research (producing cutting-edge scholarship and doctorates) and service (encouraging students to give something back to their country). We will uphold and advance these traditions of excellence.

- a) Continue to support contractual agreements that place instruction as the highest priority of faculty [*Academic Affairs*].
- 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 [*Provost, Deans, Department Chairs, School Directors*].
- c) Provide class sizes that meet course thresholds and support personal attention to the individual learner, and [*Provost, Deans, Department Chairs, School Directors*].
- d) Complete and implement approved recommendations from the nine-point charge from the Faculty Senate to the Ad Hoc First Year Experience Program Review Committee. Include feedback from students as part of the review in this Committee. [*Faculty Senate, Provost, Vice President for Student Services, Associate Provost for Undergraduate and Graduate Studies, Academic Affairs, Student Services, Quad Cities Student Services, Student Government Associations-Macomb and Quad Cities*].
- e) Launch new living-learning communities based on student demand [*Academic Affairs, Student Services*].
- f) Use Consolidate Annual Reports as a method to evaluate and subsequently enhance academic and support structures for students on both campuses [*Academic Affairs, Student Services, Quad Cities and Planning*].
- g) Engage in planning and implementing priorities to increase student engagement in educational activities highly correlated with persistence and completion [*Colleges; Departments; School of Distance Learning, International Studies and Outreach; Student Services, Quad Cities Student Services, Faculty*]. This includes:
 - 1. Internships and other forms and durations of experiential learning.
 - 2. Student teaching.
 - 3. Clinical placements.
 - 4. Research, scholarly/creative activities.
 - 5. Community outreach and service activities.
 - 6. Education abroad opportunities.
 - 7. Co-curricular and leadership experiences.

Action 3: Maintain High Standards of Excellence in Instruction

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 scholarship of teaching and learning, assessment of student learning, and continuous improvements at all levels of the educational experience. We will also continue to provide academic culture that values and engages in multidisciplinary interactions and provides professional development opportunities to faculty and staff.

- a) Continue to provide opportunities learn, discuss, and adapt best practices in the scholarship of teaching and learning. This includes the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research offering Master Teacher Certification and Best Practices in Online Education, workshops and other events that demonstrate, showcase, and discuss new and emerging technologies, instructional methodologies, and other academic matters [*Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research*].
- b) 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 [*Academic Affairs*].
- c) Support multidisciplinary course, program, institute, and center development and sustainability [*Academic Affairs, Faculty Senate, Graduate Council*].
- d) Use results of needs assessments administered by the Center for the Innovation in Teaching and Research and Human Resources to develop new and enhance existing professional development programs and services for faculty and staff [*Center for the Innovation of Teaching and Research, Human Resources*].

- e) Demonstrate institutional commitments to instruction by maintaining the highest percentage of institutional expenditures in support of instruction and the academic mission of the University [*Board of Trustees, President's Leadership Team*].

Action 4: Provide Strong Commitments to Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activities

We will continue to demonstrate strong commitments to research, scholarly, and creative activities. For example, the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research supports faculty in research planning, collaboration, and innovation through workshops, guest lectures, collaborative projects with support offices, and an annual Faculty Research Symposium. The Office of Sponsored Projects also provides comprehensive support services to the University community for successful administration of externally sponsored projects.

The faculty and staff of Western Illinois University are highly accomplished in scholarship and creative activities. In calendar year 2017, University employees generated over \$11 million in external grants and contracts and engaged in 2,144 scholarly and professional activities. The latter includes publishing 21 books and 254 chapters/monographs/refereed articles, making 880 conference presentations, and engaging in 853 creative activities.

- a) Allocate institutional resources and assistance to support research, scholarly/creative activities, and grants of faculty and staff [*Board of Trustees, President's Leadership Team, Deans, Directors*].
- b) Evaluate the effectiveness of programs, services and events designed to support scholarship and creative activities [*Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research, Office of Sponsored Projects*].
- c) Use available resources to support faculty and staff travel to professional associations, conferences, and workshops, which is a necessary component of tenure and in maintaining professional currency [*President's Leadership Team, Deans, Directors, Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research*].
- d) Support faculty sabbaticals as a means for faculty members to advance their research and scholarly agendas [*Board of Trustees, Provost, Deans, Directors*].
- 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 [*Provost, Deans, Directors, Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research, Office of Sponsored Projects*].
- g) Host domestic and international visiting scholars, executives, and artists in residence programs [*Provost, Deans, Directors*].

Action 5: Engage in Mission-Driven Public Service

We will continue national leadership in the provision of mission-driven public service. 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 to 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 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. We will continue to help build stronger, more resilient, more dynamic communities.

- a) Support student, faculty, and staff public service actions that are consistent with the University's Community Engagement classification [*President's Leadership Team, Deans, Chairpersons, Faculty, Staff, Student Organizations*].
- b) Use university public service centers, University Libraries, institutes, and broadcasting services to support community engagement [*Centers, University Libraries, Institutes, Tri-State Public Radio, University Television, WQPT*].
- c) Lead a university-wide task force to receive institutional renewal as a Carnegie Foundation Community Engaged Institution [*Vice President for Quad Cities and Planning, Director of the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs*].

Action 6: Deliver User-Centered Information Technology

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 at Malpass, and the Music, Curriculum, and Quad Cities 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.

- a) Achieve the 10 goals and associated priorities from the *Information Technology (IT) Strategic Plan 2017-2022*. The *Strategic Plan* is focused on the adoption of technologies pertaining to the support and advancement of teaching, learning, research, and business processes at the University. [*University Technology*].
- b) Continue to engage in IT Shared Governance and other means to increase communication and collaborative planning. [*President Leadership Team, University Technology, IT Alliances, University Technology Committees, Colleges and Departments*].
- c) Provide user-centered library services and resources to support and meet the needs of students, faculty, staff, and community patrons [*University Libraries*].

GOAL 2: ADVANCE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Providing educational opportunity equates to serving high-achieving, diverse students in high-quality programs and services. We have a strong academic portfolio and will return to stabilized and growing enrollment. Western Illinois University enrolled over 9,400 students in fall 2017.

A review of statewide and national college recruitment trends shows that the top five reasons for new freshmen selecting a college or university are academic reputation, job placement rates, financial assistance, cost of attendance, and completing a college visit². Successfully enacting our *Vision* of providing national leadership in quality, opportunity, and affordability is consistent with the reasons why students select a college or university. With focused action, we will have a stabilized and growing enrollment of over 10,000 students by 2027.

Providing educational opportunity is also working with students to achieve their educational goals. We are currently below national averages for first-year (fall to fall) and six-year graduation rates of first-time, full-time freshmen. Determining causes and reversing the trend of where approximately 15% of first-time, full-time new freshmen start at the University but graduate from another institution will be a key strategy in advancing our retention and graduation rates to the top 25% of our highly competitive peer group.

Action 1: Focus on Quality

We will emphasize our institutional quality as we stabilize enrollment. Western Illinois University receives more than 13,000 applications for new freshman, transfer, and graduate student applications each year for fall admission. We will increase our market-share of high school graduates and reverse the trend of students to attend colleges and universities in states contiguous to Illinois.

- 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. Faculty teach over 96% of undergraduate classes [*Admissions, School of Graduate Studies, University Marketing, University Relations, Web Services, Quad Cities Technology, Quad Cities Public Information, Colleges, Schools, and Departments*].
 2. Illustrate student engagement in:
 - i. Research, scholarly, and creative activities inside and outside the classroom
 - ii. Service activities inside and outside the classroom [*Admissions, School of Graduate Studies, University Marketing, University Relations, Web Services, Quad Cities Technology, Quad Cities Public Information, Colleges, Schools, and Departments*].
 3. Promote the University's national recognitions, job placement rates, and the percent of alumni attending graduate and professional schools [*Admissions, School of Graduate Studies, University Marketing, University Relations, Web Services, Quad Cities Technology, Quad Cities Public Information, Colleges, Schools, and Departments*].
 4. Showcase student, faculty, and staff interactions on homepages and departmental pages on the Macomb and Quad Cities campuses through multimedia applications [*Web Services, Quad Cities Technology, University Marketing, University Relations, Quad Cities Public Information, Colleges, Schools, and Departments*].

² Source: 2016 American Freshmen Survey, Higher Education Research Institute, University of California-Los Angeles.

5. Emphasize the distinctiveness and excellence of Western Illinois University and our colleges and departments [*University Marketing, University Relations, Quad Cities Public Information, Colleges, Schools 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 [*Internet Technology Advisory Committee, University Technology, Director, University Marketing*].
 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 [*University Marketing, University Relations, Quad Cities Public Information, Colleges and Departments*].
- b) Place Centennial Honors College and the Pre-Honors program at the forefront of the University by:
1. Increase the number of pre-honors and honors course opportunities and subsequent enrollments [*Colleges, Departments, and Centennial Honors College*].
 2. Launch a Task Force with the objective of relocating Centennial Honors College to high profile locations on both campuses. Include students, faculty, and staff in this Task Force [*President*].
 3. *Centralize the location for information (opportunities, deadlines) for external scholarships for high-achieving students.*
 4. Benchmark and implement national best practices in serving honors students, including those best practice standards defined by the National Collegiate Honors Council [*Provost, Centennial Honors College, University Housing and Dining Services, Colleges, Schools and Departments*].
- c) Use program review and discipline-specific accreditation processes to assure and advance programmatic quality and viability [*Colleges, Departments, Provost's Office, Planning, Budget and Institutional Research*].

Action 2: Engage in Educational Outreach and Recruitment Activities

We will increase the number of prospective students who visit campus. The Western Illinois University experience, our welcoming and safe campus environments, and host communities sell themselves. Data from the admissions office shows that 20% of all new freshmen applicants ultimately enroll at the University. However, the freshmen yield rate increases to 50% for those applicants who participate in campus activities, prior term first-term enrollment.

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 [*Admissions; School of Graduate Studies; School of Distance Learning, Internal Studies and Outreach*].

- b) Bring more applicants and students who have been accepted to campus prior to initial registration and enrollment [*Admissions, Colleges, Schools and Departments*].
- 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 [*Admissions; School of Graduate Studies; School of Distance Learning, International Studies and Outreach; Colleges; Schools; and Departments*].
- d) Enact new recruitment strategies inside and outside the University's 16 county service region to attract more dual enrolled, freshmen, transfers, and graduate students from Illinois and beyond [*Admissions; School of Graduate Studies; School of Distance Learning, International Studies and Outreach; Colleges; Schools; and Departments*].
- e) Increase recruitment partnerships.
 - 1. Document plans and outcomes from the President's Executive Institute in helping with educational outreach, enrollment stabilization, and growth [*Vice President for Quad Cities and Planning*].
 - 2. Expand institutional partnerships with foundations and external organizations that support educational outreach and student recruitment [*Faculty and Staff*].
 - 3. Participating in statewide and national associations and initiatives designed to increase student enrollment [*Faculty and Staff*].
 - 4. Increase the number of partner schools and high school dual enrollments [*Academic Affairs, Admissions, Quad Cities Student Services*].
 - 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 [*Colleges, Departments, Vice President, Quad Cities and Planning*].
- 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 achievement gap (i.e., retention and graduation rates) between different categories of students [*Admissions; School of Graduate Studies; School of Distance Learning, International Studies and Outreach, President's Executive Institute, Faculty and Staff providing or assisting with educational outreach and recruitment events*].
 - 2. Increase the number of international agreements and international student enrollments [*Colleges, Departments, School of Distance Learning, International Studies, and Outreach*].
 - 3. Implement recommendations from the Military Task Force that has representation of students, faculty, and staff as a means to increase the enrollment of students who have served or are serving in the United States Armed Forces. [*President's Leadership Team, Faculty and Staff*].
 - 4. Expand the University's distance education portfolio to serve military students, working professionals, and place-bound individuals. This includes increasing the number of:
 - i. Online majors [*Colleges, Departments, Provost*].
 - ii. Community colleges hosting the University's online and/or degree programs [*Provost, Colleges, Departments, Vice President, Quad Cities and Planning*].
 - iii. Hybrid programs, where 25% percent of instruction is completed on-campus and the remaining 75% is completed online [*Colleges, Departments, Faculty Senate, Graduate Council, Provost*].
 - 5. Increase the awareness of prospective students and employers with regard to career options associated with Bachelor of General Studies degree program, which serves as a degree

completion program for working professionals, many of whom are place-bound individuals
[School of Distance Learning, International Studies, and Outreach].

g) Engage in continuous improvement opportunities.

1. Working with an enrollment consultant to identify strengths and implement improvements in undergraduate, general studies, international student, and graduate admission processes
[Admissions; School of Graduate Studies; School of Distance Learning, International Education and Outreach, Colleges, Schools and Departments].
2. Completing an update to the 2012 American Association of State Colleges and Universities review of institutional processes and campus climate to inform planning for increasing international student recruitment and retention *[School of Distance Learning, International Education and Outreach]*.
3. Benchmarking and adapting national best practices in student recruitment *[Admissions; School of Graduate Studies; School of Distance Learning, International Education and Outreach, Colleges, Schools and Departments]*.

h) Provide new educational opportunities.

1. Continuing 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 *[Colleges, Departments, Faculty Senate, Graduate Council, Provost]*.
2. Reinvesting in high demand and high potential for growth programs *[President's Leadership Team, Deans, Department Chairs, School Directors, Faculty]* and following established university processes for completing feasibility and needs studies, and establishing new degrees, options, certificates, and concentrations *[Deans, Department Chairs, School Directors, Faculty]*.

Action 3: Advance Affordability

We will emphasize quality, affordability, and cost predictability. These are all key tenets of Western Illinois University. 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. A 2018 article by the New York Times³ provides data that compares college graduation rates for students born in the 1980s. This article demonstrates that students from the lowest wealth group⁴ had an 11.8% college completion rate, while those from the highest wealth group had a 60.1% college completion rate.

Western Illinois University is poised to reduce this achievement gap. 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 predictions based on entering student academic preparation and

³ Source: www.nytimes.com/2018/03/25/opinion/college-graduation-gap.html

⁴ Wealth categories are based on a person's parents' wealth when the person was 10-14 years old. Lowest wealth group is the bottom 40 percent of households; middle wealth is the middle 40 percent; upper wealth is the top 20 percent. Educational outcomes are at age 25.

socioeconomic status variables. We will build on these efforts and advance national leadership in access, affordability, and student persistence and completion.

- 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. [*University Marketing, University Relations, Quad Cities Public Information, Web Services, Quad Cities Technology*].
- 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 [*Provost, Deans, Department Chairs, School Directors*].
 2. Administrative costs per credit hour below the statewide average for Illinois public universities [*President's Leadership Team, Deans, Chairpersons, Directors*].
- c) Maintaining competitive values for Western Commitment Scholarship and other financial aid programs [*President's Leadership Team*].
- d) Implementing and evaluating new strategies designed to decrease or eliminate the difference between student costs and financial aid [*Student Cost Task Force, Financial Aid, Vice President for Student Services, School of Distance Learning, International Studies and Outreach*].
- e) Enacting recommendations from the Student Cost Task Force, and continue to ensure student, faculty, and staff representation on the Task Force [*Student Services, Administrative Services*].
- f) Forming 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.

Action 4: Increase Retention and Graduation Rates

We will improve retention and graduation rates. We have graduation rates lower than national averages. Data published by the National Center for Education Statistics for fall 2006 through fall 2009 cohorts of new freshmen from four-year public institutions nationally shows that slightly over one-third of all students start and graduate from the same four-year public institution within four years (34.8% with the fall 2009 new freshman cohort). This figure increases to nearly three-fifths of all freshmen who graduate in six years (59.1% for the fall 2009 cohort). Percent increases are similar at Western Illinois University, although graduation rates are lower than national averages (31.5% and 52.8%, respectively).

We will use results from a meta-analysis of research completed over the last decade on the topic of student persistence and completion to improve the University's retention and graduation rates. In 2017, Connie Matthiessen of Great Schools.com found that costs, academic preparation, institutional fit, college transition, first-generation status, and perceived relevance are the primary contributors to student attrition.

- e) 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. [*Colleges, Departments, Career Services*].
 2. Launch a cooperative education model that allows students to take classes and participate in experiential placements at the same time [*Academic Affairs*].

3. Explore the establishment of legacy and other tuition rates used at competitor institutions to recruit and retain students from all socioeconomic backgrounds [*Student Cost Task Force*].
- f) Enhance student preparation.
1. Enact strategies designed to help increase persistence and completion rates for “mid-range” students⁵ (i.e., regularly admitted students who are not in the Honors College). One example currently being piloted is academic mentoring and success coaching as a result of a gift from the Stanes Foundation. Similar academic support initiatives have proven successful in the Office of Academic Services and Centennial Honors College for the population of students that these programs serve [*Academic Affairs, Student Services, Quad Cities Student Services*].
 2. Increasing student awareness and use of academic support available online and across the University [*Academic Affairs, Student Services, Quad Cities Student Services*].
- g) Improve college transitions and fit.
1. Designate an office to conduct a survey 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 [*President’s Leadership Team*].
 2. 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 [*Academic Affairs, Student Services, Quad Cities Student Services*].
 3. 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. [*Academic Affairs, Student Services, Quad Cities Student Services*].
- h) Enhance retention and graduation rates of first generation and all other students.
1. Use results from annual Underrepresented Groups Reports that are submitted to the Illinois Board of Higher Education to document institutional outcomes and plans to increase the participation and achievement of students from traditionally underrepresented groups⁶ [*Faculty and Staff*].
 2. Institutionalize successful outcomes (e.g., deployment of My Western, the Learning Assistants model) from the University’s four-year participation in the Higher Learning Commission’s Persistence and Completion Academy that will conclude at the end of academic year 2017-2018 [*Academic Affairs, Student Services, Quad Cities Student Services, Distance Learning*].
 3. Expand the student success coach model [*College of Arts and Sciences, University Advising and Academic Services Center*].
 4. Complete the three-year pilot of the Learning Assistants’ Program in the Quad Cities during academic year 2019-2020 and modifying/scaling results other areas, where appropriate [*Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Participating Faculty*].
 5. 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

⁵ “Midrange students are defined as the Interquartile Range, or the middle 50% of ACT scores of new freshmen. This was 18-23 in fall 2017.

⁶ Illinois Public Act 85-283 defines underrepresented groups as minorities, females, and individuals with disabilities.

graduation rates *[Academic Affairs, Student Services, Quad Cities Student Services, Distance Learning, Faculty and Staff]*.

6. Increase electronic services to give students access to on-demand, real-time support services *[University Technology, Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research, Student Services, Quad Cities Student Services]*.
 7. Continue institutional participation in statewide and national initiatives designed to increase retention and graduation rates *[Faculty and Staff]*.
- i) 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]*.

Action 5: Reduce Time-To-Degree Rates

We will continue to provide national leadership in decreasing time-to-degree rates. The time-to-degree rate for baccalaureate degree recipients at Western Illinois University is more efficient than national averages. Data from the National Student Clearinghouse published in 2016 shows that the average time-to-degree for baccalaureate degree recipients from four-year public institutions nationally is 5.2 years. The current time-to-degree rate at Western Illinois University of 4.6 years, and below the national average. Students who graduate from Western do so in a manner that requires less time than national averages. We will continue decreasing time-to-degree rates by expanding high school dual enrollment programs and engaging in the following actions.

- a) Support granting academic credit for students successfully completing external proficiency examinations *[Schools and Departments]*.
- b) Publicize departmental protocol for awarding of credit for prior learning and life experiences where appropriate to the discipline *[Schools and Departments]*.
- c) Participate in all facets of the Illinois Articulation Initiative to promote successful student transfer *[Schools and Departments]*.
- 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 *[Colleges, departments, faculty]*.
 2. Live streaming sections *[Faculty, University Technology]*.
 3. *Flipped classrooms* *[Faculty]*.
 4. Summer school offerings and enrollment *[Provost, Deans, Department Chairs, School Directors, Faculty]*.

5. Undergraduate and graduate hybrid programs [*Provost, Deans, Department Chairs, School Directors, Faculty*].
 6. Alternatives to the traditional 16-week semester [*Provost, Deans, Department Chairs, School Directors, Faculty*].
 7. Accelerated degree and certificate options where appropriate to the discipline [*Provost, Deans, Department Chairs, School Directors, Faculty*].
- e) Participate in statewide and national initiatives designed to decrease time-to-degree [*Faculty and Staff*].

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 Health and Wellness of Students, Faculty, and Staff

We will continue to support physical and psychologically-healthy lifestyles, learning and working environments. Cigna Insurance reported in 2017 that 70% of health care costs in the United States resulted from lifestyle choices that could have been avoided. Absenteeism, stress, heart disease, many mental disorders, other chronic illnesses, student attrition, and employee turnover can be greatly reduced, while academic and occupational performance can be greatly increased by making healthy lifestyle changes.

- a) Increase health, wellness, and recreational programs, services, and activities provided by the University [*Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research, Human Resources, Counseling Center, Campus Recreation, Beu Health Center, University Wellness Team, Quad Cities Student Services*].
- b) Expand health, wellness, and recreational partnerships with local/regional providers to address needs and services for students, faculty, and staff [*Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research, Human Resources, Counseling Center, Campus Recreation, Beu Health Center, Quad Cities Administrative Team*].
- c) Evaluate the feasibility of establishing new sports clubs and other areas of campus recreation [*Campus Recreation, Quad Cities Administrative Team*].
- d) Utilize the location of the Riverfront Campus adjacent to the Mississippi River and a community bike and pedestrian trail system as a means to increase health, wellness, educational, and community activities [*Quad Cities Faculty and Staff*].

Action 2: Enhance Student and Community Engagement

We will support students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members becoming more engaged with the University. Engagement in cultural, artistic, intellectual, and leadership events is associated with the National Survey of Student Engagement's High Impact Practices for learning and personal growth. 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. In discussing these advantages, Dr. Robert Sternberg, Provost at Oklahoma State University cites leadership development and a lifetime fitness ethos for student-athletes; a period of stress relief and prosocial behavior for students; and increased school spirit and pride and for the university and its community.

Likewise, the Partnership for 21st-Century Skills, a coalition of business and education leaders and policy makers found that education and engagement in dance, theater, music, and the visual arts helps instill curiosity, creativity, imagination, and capacity for evaluation; all of which are important to personal and professional growth. In fact, an IBM study conducting interviews with 1,500 CEOs around the world concluded that "creativity trumps other leadership characteristics."

- a) Sponsor University-theme programming and events for students, faculty, staff, and members of our host communities and regions. [*University Theme Committee, First Year Experience Faculty and Staff, University Libraries*].
- b) Deliver programming for first-year students that is integrated with the University theme [*First Year Experience Faculty and Staff, University Libraries*].
- c) Engage high-profile university speakers on both campuses to increase campus and community engagement [*President, Vice President, University Theme Committee, Environmental Summit Planning Committee, Colleges, Departments*].
- d) 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 [*Academic Affairs, Colleges, Departments, Foundation, Development, Office of Sponsored Projects*].
- e) Provide the university and surrounding communities with a diverse season of quality cultural entertainment opportunities [*College of Fine Arts and Communication, Bureau of Cultural Affairs, Performing Arts Society, Office of Student Activities, University Libraries, University Art Gallery, Quad Cities Student Services*].
- f) Offer professional development opportunities in academic disciplines to members of our host and external communities [*Academic Affairs*].
- g) Enhance opportunities for lifelong learning of senior citizens [*Non-Credit Programs*].
- h) 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 [*Board of Trustees, President, Vice President for Student Services, Director of Athletics*].
- i) Demonstrate strict adherence to NCAA operating principles related to governance and rules compliance, academic integrity, equity, and student-athlete welfare [*Board of Trustees, President, Athletics*].
- j) Host arts and selected athletic events in the Quad Cities to increase community engagement and support for the University [*College of Fine Arts and Communication, Intercollegiate Athletics, Quad Cities Student Services*].

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. The Higher Education Research Institute reports that 24% of new freshmen nationally feel unsafe on campus. Our safe and accessible campus environments are guided by our *Campus Master Plans* that 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.

- 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 [*Office of Public Safety, Student Services, Community University Partnership Program*].
- b) Enhance university facilities.
 1. Implement accessibility standards in new construction and campus renovation projects [*Facilities Management, Auxiliary Facilities System, Quad Cities Facilities, Office of Equal Opportunity and Access, Americans with Disabilities Advisory Committee, Council on Campus Planning and Usage*].
 2. Pursue state funding for the highest facility priorities identified in *Campus Master Plans*, which include new facilities and funds to support deferred maintenance [*Board of Trustees; President; Vice Presidents, Planning, Budget and Institutional Research; Physical Plant; Quad Cities Facilities*].
 3. Achieve *Master Plan* goals and priorities [*Facilities Management, Quad Cities Facilities*].
 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 [*Board of Trustees, President's Leadership Team, Assistant to the President for Governmental Relations*].
 5. Apply institutional resources to address permanent improvements (deferred maintenance) and capital renewal [*President's Leadership Team, Facilities Management, Quad Cities Facilities*].
- c) Demonstrate statewide and national leadership in environmental sustainability.
 1. Earn Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification in new construction and major renovations [*Facilities Management, Auxiliary Facilities System, Quad Cities Facilities*].
 2. Support educational opportunities designed to raise awareness of social, environmental and sustainability issues [*Faculty, Staff, Campus Sustainability Committee, University Libraries*]. Examples include courses, minors, and degree programs that emphasize sustainability (see

www.wiu.edu/vpas/sustainability/education.php), participating in Recycle Mania, taking the Sustainability Pledge, and attending special university events related to this topic.

3. Continue to provide statewide, regional, and national leadership in environmental sustainability within all aspects of University operations (e.g., the curriculum, community and co-curricular events, new construction, and administrative operations). This includes university actions to support initiatives of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, United States Green Building Council, and Tree Campus USA [*Faculty and Staff*].

Priority 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 [*President's Leadership Team*].
- b) Engage in activities associated with the American Democracy Project [*Academic Affairs, Student Services*].
- c) Participate in the annual Federal Constitution Day and Martin Luther King Day activities on both campuses [*Academic Affairs, Student Services, Quad Cities Student Services*].
- d) Prepare students for civic engagement and the global workforce of the 21st century by emphasizing diversity and inclusivity in race, culture, socioeconomic status, religion, plurality of thought and perspective, etc. in the curriculum, programs, services, and events [*Academic Affairs, Student Services, Quad Cities Student Services*].
- e) Increase student participation in service learning, internships, student teaching, simulations, and other forms of experiential learning [*Academic Affairs, Student Services*].

Priority 3: Using Partnerships to Advance University, Community and Economic Development

We will continue to be an essential component to our service region. Western Illinois University provides an educational experience that develops talent needed for our local and global communities. We have a \$473 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 public university located in this urban area.

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 [*All members of the Western Illinois University Community*].
2. Cultivate new and existing donors [*Board of Trustees, President, President's Leadership Team, Advancement and Public Services, President's Executive Institute, Deans, Directors, Development Officers*].
3. Increase the value received from external giving [*Board of Trustees, President, President's Leadership Team, Advancement and Public Services, President's Executive Institute, Deans, Directors, Development Officers*].
4. Develop and launch the next comprehensive fundraising campaign for Western Illinois University [*President, Vice President for Advancement and Public Services, Western Illinois University Foundation*].
5. Expand the percent of alumni giving to the University [*Advancement and Public Services, Development Officers, Deans, Chairs*].
6. Increase the value received from grants and contracts [*Faculty and Staff*].
7. Advocate for changes to statewide policy currently contributing to the statewide teacher shortage [*Provost, Assistant to the President for Governmental Relations, College of Education and Human Services*].
8. Develop a plan for the Alumni Association that links the goals and actions of this *Strategic Plan* to the work of the Association [*Alumni Association, Alumni Council*].
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* [*President, Vice Presidents, Deans, Chairs, Directors*].

b) Expand community and economic development partnerships by using the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA) and President's Executive Institute (PEI) as a means to:

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

5. Improve the quality of life for rural residents by partnering with public and private agencies on local development and enhancement efforts [*IIRA, Faculty and Staff*].
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 [*IIRA, University Libraries, PEI, Assistant to the President for Governmental Relations, Faculty and Staff*].
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 [*Colleges; Departments; School of Distance Learning, International Studies and Outreach, IIRA*].
8. Continue to support public-private partnerships to advance new and enhanced services to students, faculty, and staff in our host communities [*President’s Leadership Team, PEI, IIRA, Colleges and Departments*].

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 over 10,000 students. [*All academic departments and administrative units*].
 2. Achieve retention and graduation rates at the top 25% of peer institutions.
 3. Place in the top 10% in national rankings of quality, opportunity, and affordability [*Faculty and Staff*].
- 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 distinctive and nationally recognized by promoting an active educational experience inside and outside of the classroom that emphasizes the hallmarks of a Western Illinois University education—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. Additionally, our graduates have lower time-to-degree rates than national averages.

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. Despite the historic and unprecedented statewide budget impasse of Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017, and the need to restore fair and predictable funding to Illinois public higher education, we retained our status as a Top 10 Midwestern Regional University by *US News and World Report*, A Best University by the *Princeton Review*, and as a Best for Vets Institution by *Military Times* EDGE Magazine.

Additionally, we were one of only 11 colleges and universities from across the United States selected to appear in the U.S. Department of Education's (DOE) *Promising Practices for Improving Student Degree Attainment*. Likewise, we received Minority Access' *Commitment to Diversity Award* and were featured in the DOE report, *Fulfilling the Promise, Serving the Need*.

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*.