

**FINAL REPORT OF THE
PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCES ON
STUDENT SUCCESS AND CURRICULAR INNOVATION**

**NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
STRATEGIC PLANNING INITIATIVE**

**FACILITATED BY
CAROLINDA DOUGLASS AND DAVID CHANGNON**

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Presidential Task Force on Student Success

Carolinda Douglass (Chair), Director, Assessment Services
Don Bramlett, Director, Retention Services
Sue Doederlein, Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Shevawn Eaton, Director, ACCESS
Kay Forest, Chair, Sociology
Brent Gage, Assistant Vice Provost for Enrollment Services
Michael Gonzales, Director, Center for Latino & Latin Studies
Melissa Lenczewski, Associate Professor, Department of Geology & Environmental Geoscience
Brigid Lusk, Chair, Department of Nursing and Health Services
Michael Morris, Associate Professor, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures
Lesley Rigg, Associate Professor, Department of Geography
Denise Rode, Director, Orientation and First Year Experience

Presidential Task Force on Curricular Innovation

David Changnon (Chair), Professor, Department of Geography
Nancy Castle, Professor, Department of Allied Health and Communicative Disorders
Jes Cisneros, Assistant Director, Honors Program
Murali Krishnamurthi, Director, Faculty Development
Greg Long, Professor, Department of Allied Health and Communicative Disorders
Desiree Matel-Anderson, Student, College of Law
Keith Millis, Professor, Department of Psychology
Jenny Parker, Associate Professor, Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education
Mary Pritchard, Associate Dean, Health and Human Sciences
Mona Salmon, Assistant Director, Evening MBA Program
Lucy Townsend, Professor, Department of Leadership, Educational Psychology & Foundation
Laura Vazquez, Associate Professor, Department of Communication

Executive Summary of the Presidential Task Forces on Student Success and Curricular Innovation

May, 2008

In the fall of 2006, President John Peters announced that the NIU community would embark on a strategic planning process to examine current issues facing the university and develop imperatives, strategies, and actions that could be used to place NIU as an elite regional university with a global perspective. A group of nearly 40 faculty and staff spent the 2006-07 academic year developing the underlying imperatives from which strategic planning would move forward. These imperatives are to:

- 1) Preserve, strengthen, and extend NIU's teaching and learning environment;
- 2) Develop a strategy for investing in multi-disciplinary scholarship and artistic clusters – to complement NIU's focus on individual scholarly and artistic achievement;
- 3) Strengthen and extend NIU's global/regional impact; and
- 4) Make NIU an institution of “first choice” for faculty, students, and staff.

The Charge

In the fall of 2007, Provost Alden announced the formation of two Presidential Task Forces; Student Success and Curricular Innovation. Members of these task forces included approximately 30 faculty, staff, and students who were charged with examining critical issues including: improving student retention and advising; alleviating the strain on impacted majors; improving the campus climate at NIU; enhancing engaged learning; and integrating state-of-the-art technologies into classrooms. These task forces began meeting in mid-November and met two to four times a month through April 2008. Members of each task force selected and participated on specific task force subgroups based on their experience and assessment of where they felt they could make the greatest contributions.

The violent and tragic events of February 14, 2008, had a tremendous impact on the activities of both task forces. Based on discussions in the weeks after the event, the task force vision statement was developed and implemented; “Solidify the NIU Huskie identity as one of a strong, caring and engaged community committed to local, regional, and global citizenship.”

The two task forces developed four overarching goals, the first two focusing on activities related to the Task Force on Student Success and the latter two related to the Task Force on Curricular Innovation:

- 1) Increase student retention and academic success at NIU;
- 2) Increase the positive culture of NIU that leads to a more welcoming, student-centered, safe and integrated environment for all students;
- 3) Actively engage students in their own learning;
- 4) Improve upon and maintain high quality teaching effectiveness among faculty and staff.

The Results

Under each overarching goal, each Task Force identified a number of strategies to address the goal, as well as a number of initiatives that would be used to accomplish each strategy. These strategies and actions are described in detail within this final report and summarized in the strategic planning reporting templates located on the NIU website.

As part of this process, the Task Forces want to thank those who provided insight into the various issues currently facing NIU including various members of the task forces, Provost Ray Alden, Vice Provosts Virginia Cassidy and Earl (Gip) Seaver, Joseph Grush, and Assistant Vice President for Public Affairs Melanie Magara. We wish to express our appreciation to those shared governance groups and units that provided useful data and information to the Task Forces. We also thank our consultant, George Kuh from Indiana University for his helpful input.

The report is divided into two main sections, one focusing on overarching goals 1 and 2 which were overseen by the Task Force on Student Success, and one focusing on goals 3 and 4 advanced by the Task Force on Curricular Innovation. Given that these overarching goals dealt primarily with student-related issues, there are natural overlap among the strategies and sub-goals.

Sub-goals under Goal 1: Increase student retention and academic success at NIU include:

- Develop Centralized Coordination of Student Academic Support Functions and Enhance Student Success-based Programming.
- Enhance Enrollment Management Strategies to Impact the Makeup and Characteristics of the Incoming Class and Attract and Retain Well-prepared Students to Match the Mission and Resource Capabilities of NIU.
- Develop a Formal Process by which to Identify Students At-Risk and Initiate Early Interventions to Aid Students in Becoming More Successful.
- Develop a Coordinated System of Advising for Undecided Students and Students who may be Moving Towards Academic Difficulty, which Takes into Account Students' Academic Strengths, Weaknesses and Interests, and Allows Students to Explore an Array of Educational Opportunities.
- Alleviate Strain on Impacted Programs to Create a Balance in the Student/Faculty Ratio, Without Heavy Reliance on Part-time Adjuncts and to Allow Students to Make Timely Progression Through Degree Programs.
- Increase Accountability through Increased Transparency of Characteristic Profiles of Students, Measures of Student Engagement with Learning, and Measures of Academic Achievement at NIU.

Sub-goals under Goal 2: Increase the positive culture of NIU that leads to a more welcoming, student-centered, safe and integrated environment for all students include:

- Highlight the Principles and Ideals Inherent in our University Mission and integrate them Throughout all Services for Students.
- Foster a Sense of Unity and Pride in Being Part of the NIU Community as a Student, or Member of Faculty or Staff.

Strategies under Goal 3: Actively engage students in their own learning include:

- Increase High Impact - Engaged Learning Activities by Establishing an Office of Engaged Learning
- Develop and implement a significantly enhanced General Education Program
- Develop approaches to best support a collaborative learning/teaching environment
- Advance learning environments with state-of-the-art technology
- Integrate courses, extra-curricular activities, and programming around a “Campus Theme”

Strategies under Goal 4: Improve upon and maintain high quality teaching effectiveness among faculty and staff include:

- Transform policy involved in faculty review at the departmental, college, and university levels to encourage the enhancement of teaching effectiveness
- Provide faculty and staff with needed resources and support to create new curriculum and enhance teaching methods

This report represents one step among many associated with the strategic planning journey that lays ahead for NIU. To increase participation in and take ownership of this university effort we recommend that the administration include other NIU faculty, staff and students. The greater the involvement the greater the chance that measurable changes will occur to address the imperatives listed above.

Final Report of the Presidential Task Force on Student Success

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Table of Hotlinks and Rankings
Task Force on Student Success

Title of Sub-goal, and Strategy or Proposal under Sub-goal	Ranking
1) <u>Centralized Coordination of Student Academic Support Functions</u>	1 out of 8
Develop centralized academic support functions	high
Establish formal on-going programming to address student transition and success	immediate
Proposal for Collaboration between University Writing Center and Foreign Languages and Literatures	tied 4 th out of 6
Proposal for a Developmental Writing/Reading Collaboration	6 out of 6
Proposal for Undergraduate Writing Program	tied 2 nd out of 6
2) <u>Enhance Enrollment Management Strategies</u>	2 out of 8
Create a new committee to consider new and different strategies for admission	immediate
Encourage increased applications from competitive high school graduates	long-term
Establish a formal commitment to development of bilingual/bicultural positions in key student contact areas	high
Proposal for Pre-Collegiate Programs and Upward Bound Programs	tied 2 nd out of 6
3) <u>Identify students at Risk through Early Alert Referrals System, Initiate Early Interventions</u>	3 out of 8
Expand and coordinate the Early Alert referral system for general education pilot	immediate
Establish a form of academic success advocacy	immediate
4) <u>Create Coordinated System of Academic Advising</u>	tied 4 th out of 8
Use generalist academic advisors & academic support advocates, improve advising	high
Evaluate the academic advising training processes that exist on campus	immediate
Using academic advisors and transition specialists, improve advising	high
Evaluate the academic advising systems at NIU and peer institutions	high
5) <u>Alleviate Strain on Impacted Programs</u>	7 out of 8
Increase number of faculty lines	immediate
Improve curricular options for required out-of-department courses	long-term
6) <u>Increase Accountability through Increased Transparency</u>	tied 4 th out of 8
Research Data Collection Processes for public accountability system, possibly the Voluntary System of Accountability and create implementation plan	high
7) <u>Highlight the Principles/ Ideals Inherent in our University Mission and Integrate them in Services.</u>	Tied 4 th out of 8
Incorporate a consistent, campus-wide focus on providing exceptional service that communicates that we value our students	immediate
Participate in Foundations of Excellence [®] in the First College Year	immediate
Proposal for Intensive Orientation Program	tied 4 th out of 6
Proposal for Second Year Experience	1 out of 6
8) <u>Foster a Sense of Unity and Pride in being part of the NIU Community</u>	8 out of 8
Identify student, faculty, and staff perceptions of NIU	high
Develop an ad-hoc committee to conduct a request for proposals geared toward fostering a sense of unity and pride in being part of NIU	immediate

Final Report of the Presidential Task Force on Curricular Innovation

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<u>Task Force Strategy</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Comments/Issues</u>
<u>Strategy 3.1—Engaged Learning</u>	High	This strategy has actions that begin in 2008 and continue through the funding period. Need to identify coordinator is HIGH
<u>Strategy 3.2—General Education</u>	High	This strategy has actions that begin in 2008 and continue through the funding period. Need to identify coordinator is HIGH.
<u>Strategy 3.3—Approaches for Collaborative Learning/Teaching</u>	Immediate	This strategy contains a number of concept papers that can be funded independently, and at a low cost; some are LONGTERM
<u>Strategy 3.4—Use of State-of-the-Art Technology</u>	High	This strategy contains a number of concept papers that can be funded independently. Need to identify coordinator is HIGH.
<u>Strategy 3.5—Campus Theme</u>	Long term	Success of this strategy requires developing an appropriate process to implement at NIU
<u>Strategy 4.1—Faculty Review</u>	Immediate	This strategy focuses on policy changes.
<u>Strategy 4.2—Resources to enhance Teaching Effectiveness</u>	High	This strategy contains a number of ideas that will require significant resources.