

Northwestern ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

State of the University Address

PRESIDENT SHARON K. HAHS

SEPTEMBER 23, 2008



State of the University Address

September 23, 2008

Thank you Dr. Shub. Thanks to you and to all the members of the Faculty Senate for the invitation to speak to the University Assembly, and for your leadership.

Good afternoon and welcome to the State of the University Address!

Appreciation

As we begin this afternoon, I would like to take a moment to express our thanks and appreciation for contributions to the life of the University as reflected in a variety of representative groups. As you are acknowledged, I would ask that you please stand and that you stay standing while others are called.

Members of the NEIU Strategic Planning Steering Committee with special thanks to Co-chair Amy Hietapelto, Vice Chair Vicki Roman-Lagunas, and Support Specialist Ellen Reeve

Members of the Strategic Planning Team

Student Government Association Officers

Newly Tenured and Promoted Faculty and
The Bernard Brommel Distinguished Researcher Sarah Hoagland

Suleyma Perez, Director of Government Relations

Model Illinois Government Delegation. This year they received the Best Delegation Award.

Recipients of the Faculty Excellence and Instructor and Academic Support Professional Awards

Peer Leaders for New Student Orientation, and Robert Bedford, Assistant Dean of Students

And, everyone who is here today who has served the University between 10 and 20 years.

All of you are symbolic of so many who have done so much—thank you for your contributions.

The Planning Process

Let us turn to the Strategic Plan. Today is our “first look.” The handout you received at the door has all of the core elements of the plan, endorsed by our Board of Trustees just last Thursday. We can look forward to an expanded, more polished presentation in the near future.

This is an important moment in the life of Northeastern Illinois University. Indeed, it is a pivotal time. Planning for the future is not only a requirement from the Higher Learning Commission, following our reaccreditation visit in January of 2007, but it is critical if we are to meet the changing needs of today’s 21st century students who come to us with new goals and wish to follow new career paths. To meet these needs we must use our intellectual and material resources creatively and effectively. The Strategic Plan gives us the road map to do this. Let me describe briefly the development of our Plan.

In October 2007, the University publicly advertised for consulting expertise to assist in our strategic planning process. After a review of the submitted proposals, two firms were brought to the University for a series of discussions with our community. In February 2008, Pappas Consulting Group Inc. was selected and has worked diligently over the past several months to assist us in the strategic planning process and to develop appropriate Strategic Goals and Action Steps.

A major tenet of our strategic planning process was to be inclusive and open. This was done by having several public forums and numerous focus groups, and using technology to communicate with and get input from all areas of the University community. Public sessions and focus groups were held at all University locations. The University formed a Steering Committee of twenty-one

faculty, staff and students to provide overall leadership and communication. In addition, a Planning Team was formed that included eighty-two individuals, representing the Board of Trustees, the Foundation Board, and all University areas, departments, employee categories, students and locations. The University expresses its gratitude for their hard work, creative ideas, perspectives, and commitment to the process and the University.

As the process began, Pappas Consulting was provided background data on the University and the region, as well as information about the work of the Illinois Higher Education Public Agenda planning and the NEIU Presidential Task Force on the Millennium Student. The consultants conducted a series of focus groups and interviews to learn about the goals and aspirations of the various areas of the University and to get an understanding of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, challenges, and values. From these focus groups, interviews and initial meetings with the Steering Committee, the consultants provided a planning framework, data compendium and analysis, themes, and developed a revised mission statement, a new vision statement, and strategic goals and related action steps. The initial Pappas drafts were reviewed, discussed and edited by more than 600 members of the University community. Numerous revisions were made to each document. All of this work can be accessed through *NEIUport*.

Elements of the Plan

Strategic plans are founded on an institution's guiding statements—Statement of Mission, Statement of Vision and Statement of Values. These guiding statements are intended to provide direction for a fairly long time. By contrast, the activities—Strategic Goals and Action Steps as we have named them—are meant to provide direction only into the near future, perhaps five to seven years. We are hoping to stretch that, in effect, to 2017, our sesquicentennial. Strategic Goals and Action Steps are more fluid and more specific, lending themselves to revision or completion as the University moves forward. Let me describe these short-term and long-term elements and show you how they fit together.

The Mission Statement

Mission Statements describe the broad purposes of a University. The statement should reflect why the University exists, describe the students we serve, and define what we do that distinguishes Northeastern Illinois University from other universities. A Mission Statement, as differentiated from a Vision Statement, is grounded in the present but also provides the framework for the future. The revised Mission Statement was approved by the NEIU Board of Trustees at its meeting on September 18, 2008.

The Vision Statement

A Vision Statement is a brief statement and, as the name implies, communicates the future direction of the University. The Vision Statement should be optimistic and dynamic and should reflect the aspirations of the University. The Vision Statement should be a consensus of the University community; all students, faculty and staff should see their place in the future of the University and should be excited to be a part of that future.

Statement of Values

Prior to the start of our formal strategic planning, the University community developed a Statement of Values to help define how we interact with each other as an educational community and to provide a foundation for all of our decisions and planning. The Values were prominently displayed during the inauguration ceremony and have been a part of several University events since then, including today's address.

Strategic Goals and Action Steps

The University has identified six Strategic Goals as the most critical objectives in meeting our Mission and as the means to achieving our Vision. These Goals, and the Action Steps accompanying each Goal, will be used to establish our work and budget priorities each year and will serve as the framework to determine the success of the University. Over the next few months, the Action Steps will evolve into a more detailed work plan that will be University-wide, encompassing the work activities in all departments and units.

As we proceeded with the work of developing our mission, vision, goals and actions, we often encountered questions about the role and meaning of diversity at Northeastern Illinois. The President's Council developed a reflection to provide a response to the University community. It is printed on the back of your handout. We might think of it as part of our foundation and values.

NEIU's Strategic Plan

Let us look at our plans:

Mission

Northeastern Illinois University, as a public comprehensive university with locations throughout Chicago, provides an exceptional environment for learning, teaching and scholarship. We prepare a diverse community of students for leadership and service in our region and in a dynamic multicultural world.

Let me note that our basic purpose—our mission—has not changed. Our Statement of Mission is more contemporary, briefer than our former one; we are secure in our mission.

Vision

Northeastern Illinois University will be a leader among metropolitan universities, known for its dedication to its urban mission, for the quality of its programs, for the success of its graduates, and for the diversity of its learning environment.

Metropolitan universities are located in major metropolitan areas, are interactive with their region, work with the region to develop academic programs that meet the region's needs, and work in partnership generally with their region. NEIU, with its tradition of community involvement, is clearly a metropolitan university.

Values

Here we have our Values—*Integrity, Excellence, Access to Opportunity, Diversity, Community and Empowerment through Learning*. You will recall that we began work on the Statement of Values on University Day in March of 2007. We completed our work that spring and had the Values affirmed by the Student Government Association, the Civil Service Council, the A and P Council, and the Faculty Senate.

Next we have our *Strategic Goals and Action Steps*, the real work for the future. There are six Strategic Goals—*Student Success, Academic Excellence and Innovation, Urban Leadership, Exemplary Faculty and Staff, Enhanced University Operations, and Fiscal Strength*. Let's look at each one. While you have each Goal with its Action Steps in your handout, the Action Steps will not appear on the slides—I plan to comment on just a few today.

Strategic Goals and Action Steps

Strategic Goal One: Student Success

Ensure student success from recruitment through graduation by creating a culture in which all members of the University community are engaged in attracting, educating and graduating students who achieve the objectives for baccalaureate and graduate degrees.

In my view, this will be the most critical Strategic Goal to accomplish in order to ensure our future. Last year we formed the Enrollment Management Council. The Council is working hard on appropriate plans and goals. While the official enrollment numbers are not yet available for this fall, we expect that the Council's goal of increasing the number of new freshmen by 2 percent will have been met, and exceeded. This is good news and we congratulate everyone who contributed to this effort, including our Peer Leaders who supported twenty-two new student orientations all summer. On the other hand, we anticipate that we will have fallen short on the goal for the number of continuing students—in fact, it may have decreased. So we must re-double our efforts to retain our continuing students. We must have sufficient numbers of course sections, coordinated services, excellent teaching, clear requirements, and helpful, respectful interactions to assist all students on their paths to success.

In that regard, the Report of the Presidential Task Force on the Millennium Student is complete. It offers important recommendations for student success. Special thanks go to co-chairs Dr. Barbara Scott and Dr. Santos Rivera for their leadership.

Also, we have met the goal of bringing in six, rather than three, new Presidential Scholars this fall. We will continue to work on growing this program.

Strategic Goal Two: Academic Excellence and Innovation

Develop an environment that supports curricular and pedagogical innovation aligned with the mission of the institution, the standards of the disciplines, student needs, and career and civic opportunities in a global society.

To support this Goal, and at the recommendation of the Vice President for Finance and Administration, we have directed \$100,000 to the Colleges to restore academic equipment funds. Also, we are providing an additional \$50,000 to enhance support lines in the Colleges.

I am also happy to report the excellent progress being made by the Task Force for the undergraduate degree in Global Studies, and I thank this group for its creative work.

Strategic Goal Three: Urban Leadership

Work collaboratively with educational, social service, governmental, and business institutions in Chicago and the region to build upon NEIU's tradition of community involvement.

An example of our success in Urban Leadership is this year's Golden Apple Award winners. They are chosen from hundreds of wonderful teachers in the region. This year, five of the ten recipients are NEIU alumni. We put a congratulatory ad in the Chicago Tribune on September 6th, the day of the Awards Ceremony.

With respect to our Goal of Urban Leadership, I want to note especially the Action Step (3.4) which says "Strive to make NEIU, as a designated Hispanic Serving Institution, an institution of choice for Latino students." We have been given a very special opportunity to support this Action Step. This year NEIU received a special appropriation of \$1.5 million for our HSI Initiative. We are deeply grateful for the legislative support, especially the Senate Leadership, that resulted in this appropriation.

As the only public four-year Hispanic Serving Institution in the Midwest, we have proposed the creation of a program to increase our capacity to serve our students and our communities. The HSI Initiative proposes to strengthen disciplines which provide services that are important to Latino communities, by increasing the number of culturally and linguistically competent professionals providing social services to them. The Initiative will begin by creating Latino concentration programs in social work, justice studies and counseling to train a larger number of service providers in these areas. We have initiated searches for tenure-line faculty in social work and justice studies, both of which will focus on immigration policy and practice. We also expect to create a new position in the College of Education in near future that will support the Initiative. We will expand to other disciplines as the program evolves.

Oversight of the HSI Initiative will be by the President's Council with leadership from Dr. Santos Rivera and Provost Lawrence Frank. The Initiative will be guided by an Advisory Group for academic and support program development. The co-chairs are Dr. Christina Gomez, Sociology, and Dr. Paul Schroeder-Rodriguez, Foreign Languages. Additional groups will be formed as we proceed. This is a very exciting initiative. It has the potential to help define our University for many years to come.

Strategic Goal Four: Exemplary Faculty and Staff

Invest in faculty and staff to make NEIU a world-class metropolitan university and an employer of choice.

To support this Goal, we are establishing a fund, as recommended by the Provost, of \$300,000 for adding tenure-line faculty in strategic academic areas over the next two years. While we hoped the fund would be larger, we must cover continuing staffing obligations from two of our HECA grants that were originally funded by the IBHE budget before it was cut.

I would also like to initiate a Faculty Internship Project in the Office of the President. While the idea is not completely developed, I envision this as an opportunity to learn about administration, and to participate in work of the office, e.g. helping to develop programming for the Presidential Scholars and to assist with implementation of various aspects of the Strategic Plan. Look for additional information on this in the near future.

Strategic Goal Five: Enhanced University Operations

Provide a supportive learning, teaching and working environment by improving operating productivity, physical infrastructure, and environmental sustainability.

In support of this Goal, we will be installing five additional technology-enhanced classrooms—three on this campus, one on the CCICS campus, and one on the El Centro campus.

I also want to note Action Steps 5.2 and 5.3 regarding the addition of a residential life component (residence hall), and plans for a "One Stop Shop" for student services and a cultural center. These are all significant and exciting projects. While we will address them with a series of steps over the next few years, we have the opportunity to consider a cultural center right away.

After discussions with a variety of individuals, I am proposing the development of Diversity Village—the initial name we will give to both a location (planned for Building E) and a concept for an overarching, all-encompassing unit that will link to programs and initiatives throughout the University in all its locations. Within Diversity Village we will develop a Latino Resource Center, an Africana Resource Center, perhaps an Asian American Resource Center, to be followed with more programs, initiatives, centers and activities as the project evolves. To begin, we have asked Sharron Evans, Director of Student Activities, and Daniel Lopez, Director of El Centro, to be co-chairs of the Diversity Village Program Committee. The Committee will also coordinate its work with the HSI Initiative Advisory Group. We look forward to building our Diversity Village this year.

Strategic Goal Six: Fiscal Strength

Enhance the University's financial position by reducing reliance on state general funds and student tuition, diversifying revenue sources and strengthening institutional relationships with federal, state and local governments, and private sponsors.

The overall budget for this fiscal year, FY09, is an improvement over prior years. First of all, our base state appropriation increased by 2.8 percent to \$41,901,900. Secondly, we received a special appropriation of \$1.5 million, giving us the highest percentage increase of the public universities. Much of this was due to the hard work and leadership of our Director of Government Relations, Suleyma Perez, and supported by all the Vice Presidents and the Budget Director. However, we must be cautious—we are not immune to a budget reserve or rescission, and our special appropriation is not part of our base; it must be requested again next year and each year.

Regardless, in support of this Goal, approximately \$200,000 has been directed to Institutional Advancement to continue to build the infrastructure in this area.

I am pleased to report a few highlights of our fund-raising efforts over this past year. Vice President Knorowski and her team are making great progress. Our total contributions moved from nearly \$369,000 in FY07 to almost \$680,000 in FY08; the contributions for scholarships increased from almost \$168,000 in FY07 to \$348,000 in FY08; and finally, the contributions from our own staff and faculty increased from \$53,651 in FY07 to \$152,916 in FY08. This last category had the greatest percentage increase, even as the number of individual donors has stayed roughly the same. Let me thank those who have helped so much, and encourage others to join in supporting the important work of our University. On October 29th, we will have the first annual meeting of the NEIU Foundation, where there will be additional announcements and many special thanks.

Let me also mention a wonderful grant we have received from the National Science Foundation. The grant award is nearly \$600,000 to support competitive scholarships for talented and motivated students intending to major in Earth Science, Mathematics or Physics. Each student receives up to \$10,000 per year, based on financial need, for four years. Congratulations to the departments and thanks to Doctors Srinivas, Physics; Voglesonger, Earth Science; and Wrinkle, Mathematics, for leading the implementation.

Closing

Today I have provided an overview of our Strategic Plan along with some of the activities that are being implemented right away to support the Plan. Over the next few months we will refine our Action Steps into annual activities, identifying responsibilities, resources and timeframes. We will also ask the University Budgetary Council to refine its role to include an annual review of our strategic planning process and progress.

Looking back over this past year, we have accomplished a great deal together. Thank you again to the hundreds of you who joined in the discussion and development of our plan, and who have helped bring us to this point. We have collectively and collaboratively developed our road map to the future. Our plans are ambitious; our plans are exciting! And together we will work hard to achieve them, step by step, year by year. We will be sustained by the knowledge and belief that Northeastern Illinois University is a very special place, worthy of our hard work and commitment. And in so doing, we will help Northeastern to become

. . . a leader among metropolitan universities, known for its dedication to its urban mission, for the quality of its programs, for the success of its graduates, and for the diversity of its learning environment.

Thank you.

