



STRATEGIC PLAN

2026-2031





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2026-2031 STRATEGIC PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

For more than 150 years, Northeastern Illinois University has met the needs of each new generation of students. The 2026–2031 Strategic Plan has been guided by the priorities of rebuilding, stabilization, and growth—strengthening core systems, restoring institutional momentum, and positioning the University for long-term success. The plan positions NEIU to advance opportunity, elevate its identity, and expand its regional impact at a time when public higher education demands clear outcomes, accountability, and relevance.

By aligning priorities, resources, and partnerships around a shared vision for the future, this Strategic Plan affirms NEIU’s commitment to student success, institutional excellence, and measurable progress, while reinforcing the University’s role as an urban, public comprehensive university serving Chicago and the region.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The University’s last Strategic Plan was created in 2008 and refreshed in 2014. Our goal is to develop a new plan to guide us forward, enabling NEIU to strengthen its impact as a Minority-Serving, Hispanic-Serving, and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution committed to providing a high-quality and accessible education.

NEIU’s Strategic Planning will be informed by three major frameworks:

1. Best practices for HSIs and MSIs
2. Core components of the Excelencia framework
3. Data-informed methods and analysis

KEY FEATURES OF NEIU’S NEW STRATEGIC PLAN:

- **Commitment** — Uniting our community around institutional priorities that support our mission
- **Goals** — Defining actionable goals to guide NEIU’s direction and decisions
- **Planning** — Identifying resources and investments that foster growth and impact
- **Assessment** — Establishing metrics to measure progress and ensure accountability
- **Adaptability** — Creating a framework that anticipates future trends and challenges

FRAMEWORK

The framework for NEIU’s Strategic Planning process is one shared by the Society for College and University Planners (SCUP). SCUP is an association of higher education professionals that fosters an inclusive community of practice in integrated planning to advance colleges and universities.

According to SCUP, five coordinating actions occur in strategic planning.

- Assess the Landscape
- Develop a Planning Roadmap

- Create a Plan
- Implement a Plan
- Evaluate the Outcomes

STRATEGIC-PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

The NEIU strategic planning process was guided by the five coordinating actions of strategic planning and designed to outline the work required to build a new comprehensive strategic plan. This plan focused on developing the strategic framework, with implementation and evaluation phases to follow upon adoption. Aligned with this framework, a phased planning model was used to organize the process, structure engagement, and ensure a data-informed and inclusive approach to plan development.

The strategic planning process was led by the Strategic Planning Leadership Team, which included:

- R. Shayne Cofer, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Chris Childers, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications
- Claudia Mercado, Interim Vice President for Enrollment Management

STRATEGIC PLANNING CORE TEAM

The Strategic Planning Core Team included a cross-section of Northeastern Illinois University faculty, staff, and student volunteers who facilitated the University's strategic planning process. The team drove the planning effort by engaging University stakeholders, analyzing institutional and external data, supporting the development of strategic priorities and goals, and contributing directly to the drafting of the plan.

The Core Team led the strategic-planning development process and was composed of representatives from key internal constituent groups. A stakeholder mapping matrix was used to inform team composition and ensure broad representation. The Core Team's purpose was to coordinate the planning process, facilitate stakeholder engagement, organize opportunities for input and feedback, review and synthesize data, and collaborate on communication and engagement activities throughout the planning cycle.

STRATEGIC PLANNING GOAL TEAM

The Strategic Planning Goal Team guided NEIU's comprehensive strategic planning process by translating the university's mission, vision, and values into clear, actionable priorities. The team engaged campus and community stakeholders, synthesized institutional and external data, and identified key challenges and opportunities. This work directly informed the development of NEIU's five strategic priorities and the drafting of the five institutional goals, including associated key performance indicators as measures of success.

NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY: A BRIEF HISTORY

Northeastern Illinois University traces its origins to 1867, when it was founded in Blue Island, Illinois, as the Normal School—Cook County’s first teacher-training institution. From its earliest days, the university has been committed to educational innovation and to preparing teachers and administrators who make a meaningful impact in Chicago. Over time, that mission has broadened to include all of the university’s academic disciplines, allowing NEIU to fully embrace and serve the diverse communities in the metropolitan area it calls home.

Although the university’s name, location, and scope have evolved over the decades, its dedication to learning and teaching has remained constant. Northeastern has continuously adapted to meet the changing needs of an urban population and, in doing so, has established a strong tradition of engagement, access, and community partnership.

A number of signature initiatives mark this growth. The Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies (CCICS), founded in 1966, represents a significant commitment to serving inner-city communities, particularly Chicago’s African American community. In 1969, the university opened its El Centro location to better serve the city’s large and growing Latinx population. The university expanded again in 1978 with the Chicago Teachers’ Center—now the Center for College Access and Success (CCAS)—which provides professional development for urban teachers and administrators.

In 1973, Northeastern acquired the 104-acre Gensburg-Markham Prairie, preserving one of the region’s last high-quality prairie ecosystems for education, research, and future generations. The university further extended its regional reach in 1996 by joining the University Center of Lake County as a founding member, offering baccalaureate- and master’s-level coursework through a public-private consortium.

More recent milestones reflect NEIU’s continued growth. In 2014, the university opened its award-winning El Centro facility along the Kennedy Expressway, creating a highly visible and modern learning environment. In 2015, Northeastern broke ground on its first residence hall, marking a significant step toward enhancing the student experience and campus life.

This rich history mirrors the dynamic evolution of Chicago and the surrounding region. While remaining faithful to its founding mission of serving Illinois students, Northeastern has grown into a globally-engaged public university that attracts learners from around the world. The university’s educational environment is strengthened by the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and age diversity of its community—an enduring hallmark of NEIU’s identity.

Today, Northeastern serves approximately 6,000 students and offers more than 80 undergraduate and graduate programs across the arts, sciences, education, and business. Faculty encourage students to connect classroom learning with real-world experience through fieldwork, research, service, and global engagement—preparing graduates to succeed as leaders in their professions and communities.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

NEIU Community Strategic Planning: Empowering our Mission, Vision and Values Development Process

This document describes the development process used to create Northeastern Illinois University's 2026–2031 Strategic Plan. It outlines the overall approach, timeline of activities, and stakeholder involvement. The framework used to design this planning process was informed by the Society for College and University Planners (SCUP).

The NEIU planning process considered these five coordinating actions and outlined the work needed to develop the University's new Strategic Plan. This plan focused on the process used to create the Strategic Plan, with implementation and evaluation occurring after plan adoption. Aligned with this framework, a phased model was used to organize the planning process.

PHASE 1-GROUNDWORK

The groundwork phase included preparation for planning and initial actions in the plan-development process. This work was completed by the university's Executive Leadership Team.

Assess institutional context

- Examined past planning processes
- Reviewed outcomes of previous strategic plans
- Analyzed institutional structure and culture to inform the planning process

Identify stakeholders

- Identified internal and external individuals, groups, and organizations impacted by the plan
- Mapped stakeholders and defined their roles in the planning process

Identify the Core Planning Team

- Include representatives from key stakeholder groups

Design the planning process

- Developed a process aligned with NEIU's institutional context

Create a communication plan

- Established how information would be shared and how feedback would be collected
- Defined timeline, audiences, messages, delivery methods, and frequency

Launch the planning process

- Introduced the process through the President's State of the University

PHASE 2-COORDINATION

The coordination phase occurred after the Core Planning Team was established. Activities in this phase were led by the Core Planning Team following onboarding.

Onboard the Core Planning Team

- Issued a call for self-nominations
- Developed a formal charge and communicated expectations
- Ensured members were equipped to lead the planning process

Engagement opportunity / Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Input survey

- Administered a university-wide SWOT input survey to gather perspectives on NEIU's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

PHASE 3-ENGAGEMENT

The Core Planning Team designed and facilitated multiple engagement activities to involve stakeholders in identifying the strategic issues facing the university.

SWOT analysis development

- Drafted a SWOT analysis based on survey input, institutional data, and research
- Shared the draft for feedback and finalized it

Data summits

- Hosted two data summits for stakeholders to review and discuss key institutional data
- Developed a core data set, benchmarking framework, and data glossary
- Sessions were facilitated by Core Planning Team members and held in person and virtually

Stakeholder roundtables

- Convened in-person and virtual discussions to gather input framed around strategic prompts
- Provided multiple methods for feedback

Stakeholder survey

- Conducted a final stakeholder survey prior to drafting the Strategic Plan
- Solicited feedback on emerging themes and the future direction of NEIU

PHASE 4-ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

The Core Planning Team conducted analysis and synthesis with support from the Office of Institutional Research.

- Reviewed all data from surveys, roundtables, and data summits
- Created session summaries and analyzed survey responses
- Consolidated and themed outputs from all engagement activities

Through this process, the Core Planning Team identified strategic priorities and began drafting strategic goals. By the conclusion of this phase, an initial set of strategic goals had been developed.

PHASE 5-FINALIZATION OF GOALS

Feedback on the draft of strategic goals was gathered from stakeholders and institutional leadership. This feedback informed revisions to goal statements and supported the identification of key performance indicators. A full draft of the Strategic Plan was completed.

PHASE 6-DEVELOPMENT OF ACTION STEPS AND KPIS

The final Strategic Plan document, including strategic goals and key performance indicators.

Pending final approval February 2026.



TIMELINE



PHASE 1-GROUNDWORK

- Assess institutional context (August/September 2024)
- Identify and map stakeholders (October 2024)
- Identify the core planning team (October 2024)
- Design the planning process (October 2024)
- Create communication plan (October 2024)
- Analyze the environment (October/early November 2024)

PHASE 2-COORDINATION

- Onboard the Strategic Planning Core Team (mid-November 2024)
- Conduct SWOT survey (November 2024)

PHASE 3-ENGAGEMENT AND FEEDBACK

- Plan engagement opportunities (January 2024)
- SWOT input survey (December 2024/January 2025)
- Data summits (February/March 2025)
- Stakeholder roundtables (February/March 2025)
- Stakeholder survey (Early March 2025)

PHASE 4-ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

- Review and thematize data from all engagement opportunities (mid-March/mid-April 2025)

PHASE 5-FEEDBACK

- Gather stakeholder feedback on draft strategic goals (August through October 2025)

PHASE 6-ADOPTION

- Final strategic plan document completed and approved
- **Final strategic plan document adopted February 2026.**

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN

Mission — Our enduring purpose: whom we serve and how we are distinct.

Vision — Our shared aspirations for the future.

Values — How we interact as a learning community.

Strategic Goals — The most critical outcomes advancing mission and vision.

Action Steps & KPIs — Translate goals into work with measurable progress.

Assessment & Improvement — Continuous evaluation and course correction.

MISSION

As a public comprehensive university with locations throughout Chicago, Northeastern Illinois University 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.

VISION

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

VALUES

Integrity

NEIU is accountable to those we serve and to those from whom we receive support. We are committed to honesty, respect, and transparency in our words and actions. We work to be good stewards of the human, physical, fiscal, and environmental resources entrusted to us.

Excellence

In our pursuit of and commitment to excellence, we value the highest quality of learning and teaching, scholarship, and service. We value opportunities and experiences that support personal and professional development for all members of our community. In all that we say and do, we are committed to the process and products of excellence.

Access to opportunity

NEIU values access to opportunity; we value a welcoming environment that provides appropriate support as well as encourages mutual responsibility for and commitment to learning.

Diversity

NEIU values the inclusion of a broad spectrum of students, staff, and faculty in the life of the university. We celebrate and foster global perspectives and encourage the open, respectful expression of ideas and differences.

Community

As a commuter institution, NEIU has a special obligation to provide an environment that is supportive, nurturing, and participatory. We foster civility, humanity, engagement, and a sense of community through inclusion, mutual respect, and empowerment. We value our metropolitan setting as a laboratory for learning and cultivating partnerships throughout the region to promote the public good.

Empowerment through learning

NEIU is dedicated to creating a culture that provides lifelong learning opportunities for all members of the University community. We are committed to transforming students' lives by engaging them in educational experiences that empower them to lead and succeed.



STRATEGIC GOALS AND TACTICS

GOAL 1: STRENGTHEN STUDENT SUCCESS AND RETENTION

Improve student progression, engagement, and persistence to support the success of NEIU's diverse student body. This goal will ensure students have the resources, support, and sense of belonging needed to thrive from initial enrollment through graduation.

Tactic 1: Improve first-year student retention and persistence

Develop and implement a coordinated first-year retention strategy that integrates academic advising, proactive outreach, and data-informed decision making. Use predictive analytics as a tool—not the focus—to identify at-risk students early, personalize interventions, and ensure that each student receives the right support at the right time. Emphasize relationship-building, inclusive communication, academic planning, and financial support to create a seamless and affirming first-year experience that leads to higher retention and continued engagement.

Tactic 2: Advance equity-driven retention and graduation for African American and Hispanic students

Engage in intentional, culturally responsive efforts to understand and address the unique factors influencing African American and Hispanic student retention by leveraging the CBD framework and increased student progression tracking. Conduct deep qualitative analyses of student experiences to identify what fosters or hinders persistence. Pilot and refine micro-initiatives that promote academic planning, financial planning, sense of belonging, student empowerment, and academic success, and scale effective models across the institution in quick measures.

Tactic 3: Enhance student engagement and sense of belonging

Cultivate a vibrant and inclusive campus environment where students feel seen, supported, and connected. Expand student peer leadership and coaching, and first-year experiences that foster personal and academic growth. Provide a student-success marketing guide and supporting materials. Strengthen the campus climate by increasing opportunities for cultural celebration, community engagement, and dialogue that affirms student identity and voice.

Tactic 4: Strengthen pathways to completion and career readiness

NEIU will strengthen pathways to completion by integrating academic advising, career development, and experiential learning into a coordinated, student-centered framework. Advisors and faculty will use data-informed tools and technology to align degree planning, career exploration, and real-world learning. The university will expand practicums, internships, cooperative education, and workforce partnerships to connect classroom learning with professional opportunities. This integrated approach ensures that every student graduates prepared to succeed in their career and contribute meaningfully to their community.

GOAL 2: ENHANCE CURRICULAR INNOVATION, SCHOLARSHIP, AND FACULTY/STAFF EXCELLENCE

Advance program innovation, expand learning modalities as appropriate, and provide faculty and staff development to meet evolving student and workforce needs. This goal affirms NEIU's dedication to academic excellence and continuous professional growth.

Tactic 1: Continuous review and improvement of academic programs to expand and strengthen cross-disciplinary collaboration and scholarship and to drive tangible outcomes in research excellence, curriculum development, and instructional innovation.

This tactic establishes support structures to facilitate collaboration between academic units across campus and create a network for peer-to-peer support in the areas of scholarship, pedagogy and professional development to position NEIU to better serve our student and community needs.

Tactic 2: Systematically expand the adoption of student-centered, evidence-based curricular and instructional practices to achieve consistent, high-impact learning outcomes across the university.

This tactic provides incentive and support for scaling evidence-based practices that contribute to student learning, engagement and success. Grows use of evidence-based teaching practices by department, tracking the percentage of faculty in each department that consistently uses evidence-based teaching practices. Data will be collected to build a repository of implemented practices.

Tactic 3: Develop and expand pathways for certificates and micro credentials to advance learners' intellectual and professional development while strengthening alignment with workforce needs and community engagement.

This tactic adds credential pathways that align with learner, community, and workforce needs, offered in expanded modalities of learning, and provides flexibility that serves a wide variety of students. Examples of additional credentialing pathways are micro credentials, certificates, digital badges, bundle/ladder options, etc.

Tactic 4: Enhance faculty capability to design and integrate inclusive, high-impact learning experiences that measurably advance equitable access, participation, and success for all students.

This tactic ensures that faculty have the knowledge and skills to create accessible, inclusive learning environments essential for meeting legal compliance requirements while also advancing educational equity for students with diverse learning needs. NEIU can proactively remove barriers to student success rather than reactively addressing accessibility issues. This investment in faculty development ultimately creates a more equitable learning community where all students, regardless of ability or learning preference, can fully engage with course content and demonstrate their knowledge.

Tactic 5: Foster a culture of inclusivity, collaboration and well-being

This tactic recognizes that creating a strong, connected community begins with ensuring every employee feels seen, supported, and included. Through transparent communication, increased participation in shared governance, expanded wellness programming, and intentional recognition of values-based behaviors, we will cultivate a workplace rooted in belonging and collective care—ensuring employees have the support they need to thrive personally and professionally.

Tactic 6: Strengthen employee skills and career growth opportunities

This tactic will build a supportive, equitable environment where all employees have access to meaningful professional development. By expanding learning opportunities, creating clear pathways for growth, and investing in mentorship, training, and modern learning systems, we will cultivate a skilled, engaged workforce equipped to advance both individual careers and institutional excellence.

Tactic 7: Develop a university-wide ‘Start with Care’ Initiative

This tactic launches the Start with Care Initiative, a human-centered, equity-driven, and culturally responsive framework designed to transform how colleges and universities serve their students. Built on three foundational pillars—Understanding, Listening, and Action—this initiative strengthens institutional culture in ways that directly support student success, sense of belonging, and persistence.

The initiative equips all employees—faculty, staff, administrators, and student workers—with the shared knowledge, skills, and practices needed to deepen their understanding of who their students are and the systems students navigate; to listen with care, curiosity, and cultural humility; and to take meaningful action through warm handoffs, timely follow-through, and supportive problem-solving. This approach ensures that every student interaction is grounded in care, clarity, and responsiveness, ultimately driving improved student satisfaction, retention, and completion.

GOAL 3: IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR A SUSTAINABLE, ACCESSIBLE, AND STUDENT-CENTERED UNIVERSITY

Strengthen NEIU’s physical spaces, policies, and technologies to create a sustainable, accessible, and student-centered campus environment. This goal will enhance the student experience, improve institutional effectiveness, and ensure the university’s long-term capacity to serve its community.

Tactic 1: Conduct a master planning process that considers accessibility, sustainability, and equitable access to current and future physical spaces and technological resources.

Conduct a comprehensive, university-wide audit and master plan integrating accessibility, sustainability, technology, and universal design across all campuses (Main, El Centro, and CCICS). Develop and implement a coordinated Master Plan and Sustainability Framework aligned with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), and campus technology standards to enhance both physical and digital environments.

Tactic 2: Enhance student experience and overall university experience through technology standardization and modernization.

Prioritize and elevate the student and overall university experience through the deployment of sustainable, innovative classroom and lab technologies, enhanced enterprise systems, and a reliable, scalable infrastructure. Integrate AI models and advanced digital platforms that empower students and employees to streamline official university business processes, help students excel academically, and equip graduates with the technological skills required for future career success.

Simultaneously, optimize and modernize student-facing services by streamlining redundant support models, standardizing processes, systems, and workflows; and implementing defined technology refresh cycles. These efforts will drive operational efficiency, optimize costs and sustainability and strengthen the University’s overall IT security posture.

Tactic 3: Re-envision student union, centers, student wellness, and student engagement spaces across campuses.

Re-envision and modernize student union, cultural centers, and wellness-related engagement spaces across NEIU campus locations — including the Main Campus, El Centro, and the Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies — to foster a stronger sense of belonging, well-being, and community.

This initiative will reimagine and modify student engagement spaces so that every NEIU student has a place they can call “home away from home.” It will integrate student health, counseling, wellness, and safety supports into redesigned spaces that promote holistic student development and engagement. The project will incorporate inclusive design principles, technology-enhanced collaboration tools, and flexible layouts that support student services, student organizations, cultural programming, leadership development, and cross-divisional engagement.

The enhanced environments will serve as vibrant, welcoming hubs that connect wellness, engagement, and belonging—creating spaces that celebrate NEIU’s diversity, strengthen student success, and reflect the university’s commitment to a sustainable, accessible, and student-centered campus culture.

Tactic 4: Modernize classrooms, laboratory spaces, art studios, and performance spaces across campuses.

Modernize classroom, laboratory spaces, art studios and performance spaces across NEIU campus locations — including the Main Campus, El Centro, and the Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies — to provide access for our students to dynamic educational environments.

These enhanced environments will provide access to modern technology, equipment, and resources and provide inviting spaces for learning, research, creative activities, and educational exploration. Spaces may be redesigned, renovated or updated as needed.

GOAL 4: ELEVATE NEIU’S IDENTITY AS AN URBAN UNIVERSITY WITH REGIONAL IMPACT

Position Northeastern Illinois University as a premier urban-serving university in the Chicago region by elevating the positive perception of NEIU as an affordable, academically excellent, accessible, and workforce-aligned institution. NEIU will strengthen its reputation for delivering high-value education through hands-on learning, experiential opportunities, and career-ready outcomes. This goal focuses on increasing recognition of NEIU’s programs and community impact, and positive perception among traditional undergraduate, transfer, graduate, and adult learners at all three university locations.

Tactic 1: Measure brand perception

NEIU will implement a brand perception and competitiveness study to measure positive perception across key stakeholder groups—to inform marketing strategy directly.

Tactic 2: Improve the University brand and messaging system

NEIU will create a brand messaging platform that establishes universal language, tone, visual standards, and best practices for marketing, website, and social media communications for use across all colleges and units.

Tactic 3: Improve digital and AI visibility

NEIU will adopt the latest digital marketing technologies by optimizing its website, content architecture, and academic program pages for both Google search and emerging AI-driven search platforms—ensuring top-tier visibility for priority academic programs and key enrollment pathways.

Tactic 4: Improve culturally responsive outreach to Latinx markets

NEIU will expand culturally responsive marketing by translating high-impact enrollment materials into Spanish to strengthen engagement and enrollment of Latinx students across the Chicago region.

Tactic 5: Improve academic program visibility

NEIU will promote new academic programs in partnership with the Office of the Provost through coordinated marketing campaigns, refreshed program-marketing materials, and integrated digital outreach.

Tactic 6: Highlight signature events and institutional visibility

NEIU marketing and communications will identify signature NEIU events and elevate their visibility through comprehensive promotion strategies to strengthen campus pride, community connection, and regional brand recognition.

Tactic 7: Improve strategic storytelling and reputation building

NEIU will expand internal and external storytelling efforts to elevate its reputation by consistently distributing high-impact narratives featuring students, faculty, alumni, community partnerships, and institutional achievements across paid and earned media.

Tactic 8: Strengthen political and stakeholder relationships

Using the Strategic Plan as the foundation to advance NEIU's identity as an urban-serving institution by cultivating and strengthening relationships with city, county, state, and federal policymakers, as well as community and civic leaders. Through proactive engagement, coalition leadership, and clear communication of NEIU's economic and social value, the university will position itself as a trusted regional partner and essential contributor to public policy, workforce development, and community advancement. This approach emphasizes building long-term, transformational relationships that connect academic expertise with community priorities — creating shared value and systemic change that advances both educational attainment and community well-being.

GOAL 5: ADVANCE FISCAL STABILITY AND GROWTH

Diversify revenue streams, build strategic partnerships, and support enrollment growth to ensure long-term financial sustainability. This goal will secure the resources needed to invest in students, faculty, staff, and the future of the university.

This goal is focused on building a resilient and forward-looking financial framework that aligns resource stewardship, revenue innovation, and philanthropic engagement. By integrating enrollment-informed financial planning, strategic partnerships, and diversified funding strategies, this work will support both near-term stability and long-term growth. Together, these efforts will position NEIU to respond proactively to changing economic conditions while advancing institutional priorities.

Collectively, these strategies will create a sustainable financial ecosystem for NEIU—one that balances fiscal responsibility with strategic investment. By strengthening revenue diversity, and fostering external partnerships, NEIU will ensure its capacity to fulfill its mission and support student success for generations to come.

Tactic 1: Strengthen Long-Term Financial Performance and Returns

Develop and implement a coordinated, state-compliant investment strategy that strengthens NEIU's long-term financial performance and overall return on investment. This tactic emphasizes prudent diversification, peer-aligned practices, and disciplined oversight—using enhanced investment tools as a support mechanism to balance risk, liquidity, and growth. The approach prioritizes compliance, transparency, and sustainability while creating additional revenue capacity beyond tuition and state appropriations.

Tactic 2: Optimize University Properties to Support Strategic Use and Increase Rental Revenue

This tactic focuses on two complementary approaches that can be explored to enhance the value of university-owned properties and increase rental income where feasible: strategically planning for the long-term use of vacant Bryn Mawr and El Centro properties and optimizing the university's centralized reservation system to maximize external space rentals. For the vacant properties, the emphasis is on envisioning potential uses—academic, community, or revenue-generating—engaging stakeholders, and integrating concepts into the University Master Plan for long-term consideration. For the reservation system, the focus is on ensuring all available spaces are fully loaded, promoting adoption across units, and maximizing revenue from external users while preserving academic and student priorities.

Tactic 2.1: Evaluate long-term opportunities for vacant Bryn Mawr and El Centro properties

Develop long-term strategies for the vacant Bryn Mawr and El Centro properties, recognizing their current poor condition, to inform capital planning, community engagement, and future university priorities. This work will focus on envisioning potential uses, gaining stakeholder input, and ensuring any concepts are incorporated into the University Master Plan for future consideration.

Tactic 2.2: Optimize space rental through the centralized reservation system to increase rental revenue

Maximize the use of university space and increase external rental revenue by ensuring all academic and non-academic spaces are fully identified, loaded, and available in the centralized reservation system. While prioritizing academic instruction and student activities, this work will improve transparency and utilization, and increases potential revenue generation.

Tactic 3: Advance a fundraising campaign for strategic priorities and grow annual baseline fundraising outcomes

Diversify revenue streams by cultivating donor relationships with alumni, corporate and private foundation partners, and individual and community stakeholders. This will be achieved through two complementary strategies: (1) executing a fundraising campaign focused on strategic priorities, and (2) strengthening baseline annual fundraising outcomes to build a sustainable foundation of donor support.

The fundraising campaign will focus on strategic plan priorities organized within broad categories to be determined through comprehensive planning and donor engagement. Each category will include specific initiatives aligned with campaign goals. The campaign structure will allow responsive alignment with donor interests while advancing institutional goals. Campaign parameters will be determined through a comprehensive planning study. Concurrently, baseline fundraising metrics including donor retention, participation rates, gift progression, and annual fund performance, will be strengthened to build sustainable support independent of campaign cycles.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This strategic plan is the product of the work of the NEIU community. We thank the Strategic Planning Leadership Team, Core Team, and all faculty, staff, students, and community partners who contributed.

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GOAL 1: TEAM LEADS:

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- Elizabeth Lehl, *Faculty, El Centro*
- Timothy Libretti, *Dean, College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)*
- Tammy Martin, *Interim Director of Career Services*
- Abby Murray, *Associate Vice President for Human Resources*
- David Nissim-Sabat, *Director, Pre-Health Programs, College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)*
- Sudha Srinivas, *Acting Associate Provost*
- Mary Thill, *Faculty, Ronald Williams Library*
- Diana Valdez, *Associate Director, College of Business and Technology (CBT)*
- Sandy Vue, *Director of Institutional Research and Assessment*
- Yi Yang, *Faculty, College of Business and Technology (CBT)*
- Ymelda Robles, *Business Manager*

GOAL 3: TEAM LEADS:

Terry Mena, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students;
Nicki Bazer, Interim General Counsel

Goal Team:

- Akua Cason, *Interim Director, Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies (CCICS)*
- Andy Dutil, *Executive Director of Student Union, Event and Conference Services, and Campus Recreation*
- Christine Guerges, *Deputy Director of Human Resources*
- Amie Jatta, *Director, TRIO Student Support Services*
- Jennifer Knuepfer, *Interim Assistant Director, Student Counseling Services*
- Eliot Rodriguez, *Chief Information Officer, University Technology Services (UTS)*
- Steve Saba, *Director, University Technology Services (UTS)*
- Hemant Shah, *Architect III, Facilities Management*
- Josh Sumner, *Executive Director of Facilities Management*
- Harrison Mwaura, *Institutional Data Research Specialist*
- Patricia Lopez, *Student Representative*

GOAL 4: TEAM LEADS:

Chris Childers, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications;
Blanca Jara, Interim Executive Director of Government Relations

Goal Team:

- Doni Alecia, *Director of Integrated Marketing and Communications*
- Mike Bedell, *Dean, College of Business and Technology (CBT)*
- Sylvia Daniels, *Director of Development*
- Amanda Dykema-Engblade, *Acting Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)*
- Effie Kritikos, *Interim Associate Provost and University Contract Administrator*
- Jennie Lasko, *Director of Student Health Services*
- Timothy Libretti, *Dean, College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)*
- Richard Prescott, *Student Representative, Nontraditional Degree Programs*
- Ryan Trout, *Director of Undergraduate Admissions*
- Kenneth M. Voglesonger, *Acting Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)*
- Karl Voigt, *Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees; Chair, University Policy Coordinators Group; Business Operations Manager, Legal Affairs*
- Russell Wartalski, *Department Chair, Daniel L. Goodwin College of Education (GCOE)*

GOAL 5: TEAM LEADS:

Liesl Downey, Vice President for Institutional Advancement; Executive Director, Northeastern Illinois University Foundation; Beni Ortiz, Vice President for Finance and Administration

Goal Team:

- Amanda Dykema-Engblade, *Acting Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)*
- Jeremy Babcock, *Director of the First-Year Experience Program (FYE)*
- Marcelo Sztainberg, *Dean, College of Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR)*
- Rona Castaneda, *Senior Director of Budget, Planning, and Forecasting*
- Ryan Trout, *Director of Undergraduate Admissions*
- Aaron Cortes, *Program Director, STEAM Pathways[®], Center for College Access and Success*
- Garo Agopian, *Faculty, College of Business and Technology (CBT)*
- Paola Vargas, *Associate Dean of Students, Student Affairs*
- Sudha Srinivas, *Acting Associate Provost, Academic Affairs*
- Tom Phillion, *Dean, Daniel L. Goodwin College of Education (GCOE)*





ABOUT THE PRESIDENT



Katrina E. Bell-Jordan, Ph.D.

Dr. Katrina E. Bell-Jordan currently serves as President of Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) and is a Professor in the Department of Communication, Media and Theatre. Appointed in August 2024 as the 8th President of Northeastern Illinois University, Dr. Bell-Jordan's tenure at NEIU began in 1997, when she joined the Department of Communication, Media, and Theatre (CMT) as an Assistant Professor. She has since held various leadership roles at the University, including serving as CMT Department Chair, Associate Dean in NEIU's College of Arts and Sciences, and Interim Dean. She was appointed Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences in 2020 and served in this position until being appointed NEIU's Interim President in 2023. She has served in leadership roles on various advisory, curriculum, and hiring committees during her time at NEIU, including serving on the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Team for the University's 2017 accreditation visit, the NEIU Baccalaureate Goals Working Group, and the University's first Writing-Intensive Faculty Advisory Committee as Co-Chair. She also co-led a two-year Economic Inequality Initiative at NEIU, a partnership between the College of Arts and Sciences and the NEIU Division of Student Affairs.

Dr. Bell-Jordan earned a Ph.D. in Rhetorical Studies and Media Studies and a M.A. in Rhetorical Studies at the Ohio University School of Interpersonal Communication. She earned a B.S.J. in News Editorial Journalism from the Ohio University E.W. Scripps School of Journalism. Her teaching background includes media literacy and media theory, rhetorical theory and criticism, and news writing/journalism. Her research has focused on critical media studies, including the politics of gender, race, and representation in the media; the rhetoric of popular culture; and news culture. She has served on the editorial board of academic journals such as *Critical Studies in Media Communication* and *Women's Studies in Communication*, and she has written for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and the *New York Daily News*.

Dr. Bell-Jordan serves as a Governing Board member of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), on HACU's Commission on International Education, and as a member of the Alumni Advisory Council of the School of Communication Studies at Ohio University. She is a member of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences, and the Economic Club of Chicago. She is also an elected member of the Board of Education for Skokie, Illinois, District 68, where she has served four terms since 2011, including four years as Board Vice President and two years as Board Secretary.



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