



**Strategic  
Plan  
Initiative**  
*2015*





# Strategic Plan Initiative *2015*



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# Introduction

In 2017 Northeastern Illinois University will celebrate its sesquicentennial. Throughout our history we have remained resolute in our commitment to meeting the needs of each new generation of students. Today, greater emphasis on accountability is being placed on public higher education. Even as the University has earned national recognition for the success of our graduates and the quality of our programs, we must focus our efforts not only on continued excellence, but also on demonstrating that excellence.

This plan will guide our work both intellectually and pragmatically as we align our various resources to achieve our goals within the context of a vibrant and dynamic university, preparing our graduates for success in a global society. The Strategic Plan publicly proclaims our commitment to these goals and the measures by which we will hold ourselves accountable, affirming Northeastern Illinois University's critical role as a comprehensive metropolitan university.

# Northeastern Illinois University: A Brief History

Northeastern traces its roots to the beginning of teacher training. The University was founded in 1867 in Blue Island, Illinois, as the Normal School, Cook County's first teacher training institution. Northeastern has a rich tradition of educational innovation and prides itself in preparing teachers and administrators who make a difference in Chicago. That tradition continues to this day and has expanded to include all of the University's academic disciplines, allowing the University to fully embrace the community in which it resides.

Over the years, the name, location, and mission of the University have changed, but the commitment to learning and teaching has continued from generation to generation. The University has not only changed and grown, but it has expanded to address specific urban needs. The Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies (CCICS) was established in 1966 as an important expression of the University's commitment to inner city communities and especially to the African American community. Three years later, in 1969, the University's El Centro location was founded with a special focus on service to the large, diverse and growing Latino community. In 1978, the University opened the Chicago Teachers' Center, now the Center for College Access and Success (CCAS), to offer professional development programs for urban teachers and administrators. More recently, NEIU joined the University Center of Lake County in 1996 as a founding member of a consortium of public and private universities offering baccalaureate-and master's-level course work in Lake County. To complete the picture, this mix of essentially urban locations and partnerships also includes the Gensburg-Markham Prairie, which the University acquired in 1973. Consisting of 104 acres of unspoiled Illinois prairieland, it is located just south of Chicago—a beautiful preserve for future generations to learn from and enjoy. In 2014, Northeastern opened its new El Centro location, an award-winning facility along a highly visible stretch of the Kennedy Expressway. In 2015 the University broke ground on its first residence hall.

This rich history tracks the dynamic growth of the city and the region. While keeping faith with its original mission — to provide an important resource for students from Illinois — today Northeastern attracts students from all over the world and is poised to become a model of regional public education with a truly global mission. Northeastern’s learning environment is enriched through the community’s ethnic, cultural, age and language diversity. Throughout our history the University has maintained, fostered and celebrated its commitment to diversity.

Today, Northeastern offers its 10,000 students more than 80 undergraduate and graduate programs in the arts, sciences, education, and business. Faculty encourage students to integrate classroom instruction with field-based learning, research and service, locally and around the globe.

## Diversity at Northeastern Illinois University: What is it?

*During the original strategic planning process in the spring and summer of 2008, the question was frequently asked: What is diversity? What does diversity mean at NEIU? How do we define diversity? Do we have a shared understanding of how significant it is for Northeastern? In consideration of this, the President's Council developed this reflection to provide a response to the University community. It serves as a complement to the planning process.*

Northeastern Illinois University is the most diverse public comprehensive university in the Midwest. This diversity affects the core of the institution – we learn, teach, and work in an environment that is made richer, more relevant and more rewarding by the deeply diverse group of individuals that makes up our University community.

Our demographics reflect the urban environment of Chicago and the greater metropolitan area. Individually, we vary in ethnicity, race, age, and gender. We also vary in areas other than these traditional demographic measures. Nearly 50 languages other than English are spoken as a first language by our students. We come from various cultures and observe many different religions. Our students, faculty, and staff have a variety of economic backgrounds and bring a breadth of values, experiences, intellectual interests, and sexual orientations.

Our community is diverse in every sense, and this transcends not only all that we do but how we do it. We welcome, accept, respect, and embrace our differences because we value learning from others. We support divergent perspectives and expect our community to voice its differing views of history, politics, and world events – that is how we add value to our educational experiences and grow as individuals. We recognize the broad array of experiences and knowledge of cultures that our communities bring to the University and our learning experiences. These experiences transform our individual and institutional lives.



Diversity is at the core of all we do. This is illustrated by the inclusion of diversity among the core values adopted and embraced by the University community in our Statement of Values:

***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. We encourage the open and respectful expression of ideas and differences in thoughts, experiences, and opinions.*

The University, therefore, is a collection of values, ideas, experiences, and thoughts. As a community, we incorporate this diversity into how we learn, teach, and provide service to our metropolitan region. We feel that consciously weaving this diversity into all that we do is what makes Northeastern unique.

*The President's Council, August 27, 2008*

# The Planning Process

During the fall of 2014 Northeastern Illinois University undertook an initiative to refresh the 2008 Strategic Plan. This was both good planning, since Goals and Action Steps are intended to guide the University for five to seven years, and good preparation for the 2017 visit from the Higher Learning Commission for reaffirmation of accreditation. Given that Northeastern's Guiding Statements of Mission, Vision, and Values should guide the University for a longer time, they were not considered for revision in this process.

The Initiative was led by the University Planning and Budget Council (UPBC). The Steering Committee of 15 members was co-chaired by UPBC Chair Dr. Marcelo Sztainberg and President Sharon Hahs, and consisted of UPBC members and the vice presidents. The 39-member Planning Team, gathered from nominations and self-nominations, focused on reviewing, revising, eliminating, and creating Action Steps under each of the six Strategic Goals. The members of these two groups are listed in the Acknowledgements. The University expresses its gratitude for their hard work, creative ideas, perspectives, and commitment to the process and the University.

The process was designed to be inclusive. Throughout the process there was opportunity for electronic input, and all materials were placed on the University's intranet, NEIUport. Steps included University Day, addressing Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, and reviewing the wording of the Goals; an Open Session to propose initial revisions to the Actions Steps; six working groups, one for each Goal, to refine Action Steps; overall refinements by the Steering Committee; presentation of the final draft in Open Sessions at the Main Campus, the Carruthers Center, and El Centro; final adjustments by a small meld group; and agreement by the Steering Committee to convey the document to the UPBC for endorsement. The new Goals and Action Steps document was endorsed by the UPBC on January 9, 2015. It was approved by the President on the same day. The document was endorsed by the Board of Trustees at the February 5, 2015 meeting.

A brief explanation of the elements of the plan follows, as does the entire document with the various components. The 2015 Strategic Plan will continue to provide guidance as the University embraces the future.

## Elements of the Plan

Strategic plans are founded on an institution's guiding statements—Mission, Vision and 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. They are more fluid and more specific, lending themselves to revision or completion as the University moves forward. These short-term and long-term elements are described below.

**The Mission Statement:** A Mission Statement describes 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 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 formal strategic planning, the University community developed a Statement of Values to help define how we interact with each other as an educational community. The Values were prominently displayed during the inauguration ceremony and have been a part of several University events since then.

As a public university, we share in common these values and believe that integrity, excellence, access to opportunity, diversity, community, and empowerment through learning define our culture and priorities. We believe that these values should guide how we interact with each other—both within and throughout the University and outside the University.

**Strategic Goals and Action Steps:** The University has identified six Strategic Goals as the most critical objectives in meeting our Mission and 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.

# The Strategic Plan

## *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.

## *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.

## *Values*

Northeastern Illinois University is committed to a set of shared values that, taken collectively, guides our actions and interactions as we work together to prepare graduates for the responsible exercise of citizenship. We, the NEIU community, believe it is critical for our democracy to create a space in which the commitment to these values results in a thriving educational community that transforms the lives of all. As we take stock of the present and look to the future, these values serve as the touchstone for planning how we will best achieve the educational mission entrusted to us.

### 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 in our actions. In that regard, we work to be good stewards of the resources we are entrusted to use. This includes human, physical, fiscal, and environmental resources.

### 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. We encourage the open and respectful expression of ideas and differences in thoughts, experiences, and opinions.

### Community

As a commuter institution, NEIU has a special obligation to provide an environment that is supportive, nurturing, and participatory. Such an environment is characterized by civility, fostering humanity and engagement, and creates a sense of community through inclusion, mutual respect, and empowerment. NEIU values our metropolitan setting as a laboratory for learning, and we foster partnerships for learning, research, and service throughout this dynamic region to promote the public good.

### Empowerment Through Learning

NEIU is dedicated to creating a culture that provides life-long learning opportunities for all members of the University community. We are especially committed to transforming students' lives by engaging them in an educational experience that empowers them to graduate with the skills and knowledge to become effective leaders and citizens in their personal and professional lives.

# Strategic Goals and Action Steps

The University has identified six Strategic Goals as the most critical objectives in meeting our Mission and 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.

## *Strategic Goal One*

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***Student Success:*** Advance student success from recruitment through graduation by engaging all members of the Northeastern community.

### ***Action Steps***

- 1.1** Increase the enrollment of both undergraduate and graduate students.
- 1.2** Increase retention and graduation rates for all students. Identify and implement high-impact practices for all students with a special focus on underrepresented populations.
- 1.3** Develop and implement strategies to support the transition and success of first-year and transfer students.
- 1.4** Conduct a comprehensive review of all academic advising services, and implement intentional, coordinated strategies that reflect national best practices in advising to increase student satisfaction and success.
- 1.5** Increase bicultural/bilingual support in the areas of admissions, enrollment services, financial aid, student affairs, and academic affairs.
- 1.6** Enhance the quality of service and communication to promote student satisfaction in all areas of the University with a focus on “points of entry,” such as admissions, financial services, enrollment services, the website, and other critical areas.

## *Strategic Goal Two*

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***Academic Excellence and Innovation:*** Implement and support curricular and pedagogical best practices aligned with the mission of the institution, student needs, the standards of the disciplines, and career and civic engagement opportunities.

### ***Action Steps***

- 2.1** Develop a Statement of Objectives for the master's degree, and explore adding the doctoral degree to the academic portfolio.
- 2.2** Implement and assess the University Core Curriculum.
- 2.3** Support, create, and sustain interdisciplinary courses and programs that lead to higher levels of critical, analytical, and integrated learning.
- 2.4** Focus on academic programs linked to regional economic development and workforce demands for the global society.
- 2.5** Support and create academic and professional development opportunities for students through internships, international study, research, service learning, and career services.
- 2.6** Enhance and expand academic offerings and resources at CCICS.
- 2.7** Integrate culturally relevant pedagogy and content throughout the curriculum.
- 2.8** Increase high-quality hybrid and online curricula throughout the University.
- 2.9** Prioritize resource allocation to learning resource centers and support centers.

## *Strategic Goal Three*

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***Urban Leadership:*** Build upon Northeastern's tradition of community partnership and engagement by collaborating with educational, social service, governmental, philanthropic, and business organizations in Chicago and the region.

### ***Action Steps***

- 3.1** Collaborate with local and regional schools, community organizations, and parents to vertically align knowledge, skills, and dispositions across K-12 schooling in order to prepare students to succeed at Northeastern or other postsecondary institutions.
- 3.2** Position and promote Northeastern as a leading Hispanic Serving Institution in the recruitment, retention, and graduation of Latino students.
- 3.3** Increase Northeastern's presence across diverse urban communities through intentional marketing.
- 3.4** Encourage and support programs that expand understandings of our urban metropolis, with emphasis on our community partners.
- 3.5** Encourage and support programs and research that focus on contemporary urban issues, such as education reform, immigration, economic development, and the environment.
- 3.6** Enhance Northeastern's marketing and public relations plan, inclusive of community outreach, to expand internal, local, regional, national, and international awareness of our urban leadership efforts.
- 3.7** Promote CCICS, El Centro, and CCAS as examples of Northeastern's commitment to urban leadership.



## *Strategic Goal Four*

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***Exemplary Faculty and Staff:*** Invest in and support faculty and staff to foster a nationally recognized urban university and create a thriving work environment that makes Northeastern an employer of choice.

### ***Action Steps***

- 4.1 Intentionally recruit and retain faculty and staff who understand and support Northeastern's mission and the students we serve.
- 4.2 Enhance scholarship, professional development, and training for faculty and staff.
- 4.3 Use support systems and programs to build and foster a culture of mutual respect and collegiality across the University.
- 4.4 Provide ongoing professional development to support culturally relevant pedagogical approaches from new faculty orientation onward.
- 4.5 Increase collaboration and accountability across all units of the University.
- 4.6 Develop an effective application of shared governance at Northeastern.

## *Strategic Goal Five*

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***Enhanced University Operations:*** Improve operating efficiencies, physical and technological infrastructure and systems, and environmental sustainability in order to provide a supportive learning, teaching, and working environment.

### ***Action Steps***

- 5.1** Ensure that all classroom, laboratory, office, student, and support spaces accommodate current needs and long-term growth.
- 5.2** Add a residential life component consistent with the mission of the University.
- 5.3** Invest in and implement technology applications and infrastructure to maximize academic and operational goals.
- 5.4** Establish environmental sustainability as a key element of Northeastern's identity through green design and activities such as increasing recycling, reducing waste, conserving energy, and digitizing processes.
- 5.5** Streamline and redesign operational and financial workflows and processes to improve service quality and productivity.
- 5.6** Ensure the continued safety and security of the University; that all facilities and infrastructure, including technology and critical data, are protected; and that campus security and emergency preparedness are continually monitored and enhanced.

## *Strategic Goal Six*

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***Fiscal Strength:*** Enhance Northeastern's financial position by diversifying revenue sources and by strengthening institutional relationships with donors, public and private entities, and alumni.

### ***Action Steps***

- 6.1** Increase external funding, including grants, that supports programming critical to Northeastern's mission.
- 6.2** Strategically plan for future Title V and other Minority Serving Institution grant applications using data and outcome analyses from current funds.
- 6.3** Increase advocacy efforts with federal and state governments to secure appropriations for the University.
- 6.4** Increase private, corporate, foundation, and other philanthropic support for the University.
- 6.5** Generate revenue by leveraging Northeastern's assets (such as space rentals, fees for services, and continuing education programs) while continuing to prioritize University needs.

# Demonstrating Progress in Implementation

How do we know that we are making progress on our Strategic Plan? Northeastern demonstrates progress in a variety of ways.

First, the specific Action Steps included in the Plan outline the various activities the University will undertake in the next few years to achieve our Goals. Each year we develop a set of annual activities which supports the Action Steps and Goals (called our annual work plan); at the end of each year we tally the completion of these activities, providing the results to our Board of Trustees and publishing them on our Strategic Planning website. These are specific and unique measures for Northeastern.

The second way of demonstrating progress involves comparisons with others. Northeastern has developed a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to assess tangible progress on each of our six Strategic Goals. We measure progress year to year as well as compare our results with those of carefully defined peer institutions.

In addition, our Strategic Plan supports the Illinois Board of Higher Education Public Agenda for Higher Education. We have demonstrated the connections between these two documents and the relationship between accomplishing our institutional goals and the state accomplishing its goals for higher education.

Northeastern will continue to strive to achieve its goals, reflecting excellence and accountability during the implementation of this plan.

# Acknowledgements

The University thanks the members of the University Planning and Budget Council, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and the Strategic Planning Team for their service to the University.

## *University Planning and Budget Council*

### ***Chair***

- Marcelo Sztainberg, *Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences; Associate Professor, Computer Science*

### ***Members***

- Brenda Bedolla, *Student; President, Student Government Association*
- Hong “Andy” Chen, *Associate Professor; Accounting, Business Law and Finance*
- Damita Cravens; *Manager of Graphic Arts Center, Student Leadership Development*
- Lakena Figueroa-Foreman; *Office Manager, Student Leadership Development*
- John Kasmer; *Chair, Biology; Associate Professor, Biology*
- Lisa Hollis-Sawyer; *Associate Professor, Gerontology, Psychology, Women and Gender Studies*
- Blase Masini, *Executive Director, Institutional Research and Assessment*
- Wamucii Njogu, *Dean, College of Arts and Sciences; Associate Professor, Sociology*
- Henry Owen, III, *Associate Professor, Library*
- Tim Scherman, *Associate Professor, English*
- Katherine Smith, *Associate Professor, Educational Inquiry and Curriculum Studies, and English*
- Terry Stirling, *Professor, Educational Leadership and Development*
- Wojciech Wloch, *Coordinator of International Partnerships, Office of International Programs*
- Tomas Uriostegui, *Student; Senator, Student Government Association*
- Myung-Ho Yoon, *Professor, Accounting, Business Law and Finance*

### **Ex Officio**

- Sharon Hahs, *President; Professor, Chemistry*
- Michael Pierick, *Vice President, Finance and Administration*
- Ann McNabb, *Director, University Budgets*
- Jon Hageman, *Chair Designate; Associate Professor, Archaeology*

### *Initiative to Refresh the 2008 Strategic Plan Steering Committee*

#### **Co-Chairs**

- Sharon Hahs, *President; Professor, Chemistry*
- Marcelo Sztainberg, *Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences; Associate Professor, Computer Science*

#### **Members**

- Richard Helldobler, *Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Professor, Communication, Media and Theatre*
- John Kasmer, *Chair, Biology; Associate Professor, Biology*
- Blase Masini, *Executive Director, Institutional Research and Assessment*
- Ann McNabb, *Director, University Budgets*
- April Nauman, *Associate Professor, Literacy Education*
- Michael Pierick, *Vice President, Finance and Administration*
- Isaura Pulido, *Associate Professor, Educational Inquiry and Curriculum Studies*
- Melba Rodriguez, *Vice President for Institutional Advancement*
- Victoria Roman-Lagunas, *Vice Provost, Academic Affairs; Associate Professor, Foreign Languages and Literatures (Spanish) and Women's Studies*
- Frank E. Ross, *Vice President for Student Affairs; Professor, Educational Leadership and Development*
- Tim Scherman, *Associate Professor, English*
- Terry Stirling, *Professor, Educational Leadership and Development*
- Tomas Uriostegui, *Student; Senator, Student Government Association*

### ***Strategic Planning Team***

- Tony Adams, *Chair, Communication, Media and Theatre; Associate Professor, Communication, Media and Theatre*
- Tracy Bielecki Smith, *Business Administrative Associate for the Vice President for Finance and Administration*
- John Casey, *Associate Professor, Philosophy*
- Hong “Andy” Chen, *Associate Professor, Accounting, Business Law and Finance*
- Siobhan Cooke, *Assistant Professor, Anthropology*
- Maureen Erber, *Professor, Psychology*
- David Green, *Associate University Librarian for Collections and Information Services, Library*
- Richard Helldobler, *Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Professor, Communication, Media and Theatre*
- John Kasmer; *Chair, Biology; Associate Professor, Biology*
- Felicia Keelen, *Director, Student Transition Services*
- Mateen Khumawala, *Senior Coordinator, University Technology Services Strategy and Planning*
- Rebecca LaMadrid Quevedo, *Interim Assistant Director, Academic Affairs, El Centro*
- Douglas Lawson, *Co-Chair, A&P Council; Director, Student Disability Services*
- Michalina Maliszewska, *Coordinator of Graduate Studies, College of Graduate Studies and Research*
- Blase Masini, *Executive Director, Institutional Research and Assessment*
- Ann McNabb, *Director, University Budgets*
- Jaime Mendoza, *Instructor, Art*
- Bob Moltaji, *Instructor, Physics*
- April Nauman, *Associate Professor, Literacy Education*
- Graciela Perera, *Assistant Professor, Computer Science*
- Luigi Pezzarossi, *Assistant Director, Student Computing Services*
- Michael Pierick, *Vice President for Finance and Administration*
- Kristine Pierre, *Senior Director for Academic and Community Partnerships*
- Isaura Pulido, *Associate Professor, Educational Inquiry and Curriculum Studies*

- Hannah Retzkin, *Assistant to the Vice President, Student Affairs*
- Angelica Rivera, *Director, Proyecto Pa'Lante*
- Melba Rodriguez, *Vice President for Institutional Advancement*
- Victoria Roman-Lagunas, *Vice Provost, Academic Affairs; Associate Professor, Foreign Languages and Literatures (Spanish) and Women's Studies*
- Frank E. Ross, *Vice President for Student Affairs; Professor, Educational Leadership and Development*
- Kim Sanborn, *Director, Nontraditional Degree Programs*
- Tim Scherman, *Associate Professor, English*
- Barbara Sherry, *Executive Director, Student Success and Retention*
- Terry Stirling, *Professor, Educational Leadership and Development*
- Damaris Tapia, *Director, Alumni Relations*
- Tomas Uriostegui, *Student; Senator, Student Government Association*
- Diana Valdez, *Assistant to the Dean, College of Business and Management*
- Nancy Wrinkle, *Associate Dean, College of Graduate Studies and Research; Associate Professor, Mathematics*
  
- Marcelo Sztainberg, *Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences; Associate Professor, Computer Science*
- Sharon Hahs, *President; Professor, Chemistry*



# Strategic Planning Refresh Timeline

*September 12, 2014:* Review the overall initiative with UPBC; identify Steering Committee members

*September 23, 2014:* Announce the initiative and process during the President's State of the University Address; invite nominations, including self-nominations, for the Planning Team

*October 9, 2014:* Host University Day, an annual event to engage the community in a discussion; this year's topic is "Refreshing our Strategic Plan"

*October:* Steering Committee develops any revision of Goals; reports to UPBC

*October 23, 2014:* Receive input on Action Steps

*Late October:* Each working group has one or, at most, two meetings to develop its recommendations for the Actions Steps under the assigned Goal; provide its report to the Steering Committee.

*November:* Steering Committee reviews reports and directs meld group to create polished draft

*December 4, 2014:* Final review session, Main Campus

*December 8, 2014:* Final review sessions, El Centro and Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies

*December:* Final touches from meld group and full document to UPBC; review with UPBC and vice presidents; endorsement

*December 15, 2014:* Strategic Plan update at Administrative Team Meeting

*January 9, 2015:* UPBC endorses Goals and Action Steps; President approves Goals and Action Steps

*February 5, 2015:* NEIU Board of Trustees endorses Strategic Plan Refresh; new plan set for implementation

## About the President

Creating synergies has been a hallmark of the presidency of Sharon Hahs since she joined Northeastern Illinois University in 2007. In fulfilling a requirement for reaffirmation of accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission, it became readily apparent that the creation of a Strategic Plan was necessary not only to help guide the start of her presidency but also to set a bold direction for the University.

Since then, much of the resulting Strategic Plan has been realized in ways big and small under the leadership of a president who has had much experience in higher education leadership, particularly in Illinois. At Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, just before coming to Northeastern, she served as Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for more than six years, having served for five years as Dean of its College of Arts and Sciences.

That grounding in academic affairs as well as her experience advocating for higher education in Springfield have helped to shape the University's priorities and have led to the introduction of new degree programs, accreditations and increasing numbers of graduates, among other achievements. New Masters degrees in Early Childhood Education and Social Work, new baccalaureate degrees in Global Studies and Environmental Science, and new accreditations in Music and Art have enhanced opportunities for our graduates to be successful in a global society.

President Hahs' commitment to an on-going and inclusive University dialogue is best seen in the establishment of a variety of councils and programs that have enriched the Northeastern community during her tenure—the University Planning and Budget Council, University Advisory Council, Enrollment Planning Council, Development Council, Diversity Council, Presidential Fellows Program, Ombuds Program, Great Service Matters/Learn and Lead Symposium, and the Angelina Pedrosa Center for Diversity and Intercultural Affairs.

The University's footprint has also seen positive changes since 2007 with the President having dedicated four buildings and six centers. In 2014, President Hahs opened the new El Centro in Chicago's Avondale neighborhood and announced a master plan of six facilities projects, the Decade

of Dreams, which includes new student residence halls. The University has broken ground on its first residence hall; this project will add a residential life component to the already rich spectrum of resources and opportunities available for all students.

Under President Hahs' leadership, Northeastern's reach and reputation have grown; the University enjoys national recognition as the most diverse public university in the Midwest and as having the lowest percentage of students graduating with debt. Newsweek magazine also named Northeastern as the sixth best investment among all universities in the nation, reflecting high quality programs and successful graduates.

In addition, President Hahs has been recognized with the NASPA President's Award and the State of Illinois Women's History Award. She serves as Convener of the Illinois Public University Presidents as well as a member of the Governing Board of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.

As the University approaches its sesquicentennial in 2017, the President's visionary leadership and the 2015 Strategic Plan will serve Northeastern well as it continues to fulfill its promise to prepare its students to Learn in the City and Lead in the World.

