Executive Summary
August 27, 2018

On 3 December 2017, Northwestern closed Assessment Year (AY) 2016-2017 having secured its reaffirmation of accreditation from the Board of Trustees for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). This validation of mission accomplishment is a testament to the tremendous work of the entire University community and reflects a sincere commitment to excellence. While the SACSCOC Board of Trustees reaffirmed the accreditation, it also requested a Monitoring Report from the University addressing the Visiting Committee's recommendation (March 14-16, 2017) applicable to CS 3.3.1.1, Institutional Effectiveness (IE): educational programs. This standard expects an institution to identify expected outcomes, assess the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provide evidence of improvement based on the analysis of the results in its educational programs, including student-learning outcomes. Specifically, the Board of Trustees found “the institution provided evidence that it identifies student learning outcomes for each academic program and assesses the extent to which those outcomes are achieved; however, the institution did not provide sufficient evidence of improvement based on the analysis of the results.” The University will submit its response to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees concern on 7 September 2018.

AY 2017-2018 is the second iteration of exercising the University’s Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Model as part of Strategic Plan 2016-2021 Dedicated to One Goal—Yours. The focus during the past year has been on validating the approach, refining procedures and processes, and further ingraining a culture of continuous improvement. The growth in the process has been tremendous over the last 12 months. Just as the strategic plan is maturing so is the IE Model and its associated assessment processes. Northwestern's IE Model now consists of a series of ongoing and systematic institutional procedures and integrated practices reflected in the strategic, operational, and tactical decisions made by the President and his senior leaders, the college deans and unit directors, and degree program coordinators and faculty in the classroom. The Model encompasses strategic and operational planning, the allocation of budget and resources, and the evaluation of programs and services, including administrative and experiential learning activities. Additionally, it includes the identification and measurement of outcomes across all objectives, including strategic focus areas, student learning and service outcomes, and
the analysis of data and assessment results to inform decision making. These coordinated activities are intended to support and enhance the Mission, Vision, and Core Values of Northwestern State University by improving programs and services and increasing student success and institutional quality.

Completing the second iteration of its institution-wide assessment process for all strategic focus areas, academic programs, administrative support services, and academic and student support services allows for analytical comparisons of the results between the previous year or benchmark to this year and to the established target. These comparisons provide the University with meaningful evidence to drive institutional improvement, including student learning and programs. The study of these results is the bedrock for the development of executable action plans focused on improvement in student learning, as well as institutional and program growth. The process provides the University the opportunity to analyze program results across all colleges and schools to better inform its strategic planning effort and make informed improvements based on the analysis of these results. The University will now be able to provide SACSCOC with the required evidence of improvement based on the analysis of the results per the requested Monitoring Report.

With clear objectives and mature comparison data, Northwestern is now in a better position to quantifiably measure progress and gauge success. Informed assessment allows for enhanced environmental visualization, which drives our ability to make better decisions and navigate the future. This cyclic analytical decision-making process will continue to require honest, and at times, complex analysis of our current plan. Through this process, we continue to find we must be flexible in modifying (including adding or deleting) objectives, metrics, and methods. The results point to better-informed objectives, metrics, and associated strategies, thereby allowing for holistic findings, comprehensive analyses, and informed strategic decisions. This document represents the second of four annual assessments, all underpinning our Strategic Plan and overarching planning process. The foundation of the process is organizational self-actualization and continuous reassessment, adjustment, and refinement, all focused on meeting our 2021 objectives.

**Strategic Decision Making, 2017-2018.** This process continues to allow for better strategic decisions resulting in transformative change and the establishment of a community of trust and inclusion. The actions below resulting from the analysis of assessment results serve as the evidence Northwestern is engaged in the process of continuous improvement. Highlights from 2017-2018 include:
Financial Decisions.

**Strategic budgeting.** In October 2017, Northwestern State University officially transitioned to the Planning, Programming, and Budget Execution (PPBE) approach to budgeting, the fourth component of its Institutional Effectiveness Model. The approach was incremental to align this process with the University’s financial capabilities. The process focused on identifying, prioritizing, and funding enhancement requests from faculty and administrators across the University. This inclusive approach provided the appropriate incentives and emphasized a high level of transparency, in concert with the principles of the University’s Strategic Plan. The University committed $500,000 to this effort. More than 65 enhancement requests, totaling over $2.1 million, were submitted from various University units in Natchitoches, Shreveport, Alexandria, and Leesville. Using the Strategic Planning and Budgeting Committee’s recommended priority list, the President and his advisory team determined how to best leverage the funding committed to this process. As a result, the University supported over $775,000.00 of the requests submitted and retained a prioritized list of requirements should additional monies become available.

**Faculty/staff raises.** The University received approval from the University of Louisiana System Office to implement a cost of living salary increase for 561 faculty and staff members. This was the first University-wide salary increase plan since academic year 2007-08 and was made possible by revenues generated from increased enrollment. Its timing coincided with the Louisiana State Civil Service Compensation Redesign Plan, which provided a salary increase for all classified employees effective January 1, 2018.

**Facilities.** Northwestern assumed the lease and management of the Learning Center for Rapides Parish (LCRP), a 40,000 square foot facility located at England Airpark in Alexandria, Louisiana. While the University has been a long-time tenant of this facility, this decision supports the University’s commitment to serving the constituents of the central Louisiana region and provide an opportunity to increase enrollment, enhance onsite support services, and engage the community in a broader sense in economic development.

The Recreation Complex made significant improvements to enhance student experiences at the University and expand the University’s community enrichment initiatives. Upgrades and enhancements include new cart paths on the 18-hole golf course, resurfaced decks at the Olympic-size swimming pool, construction of a new driving range, and other improvements to the grounds and facilities. Student participation in Recreation Complex events has increased, and more civic and
community activities are conducted at the complex pavilion.

External funding. The NSU Foundation continued to expand financial support to attract and retain students. In the first quarter of 2018 alone, the Foundation disbursed $1.55M in institutional support. This included $972,000 for student scholarships, $204,000 for faculty-staff support, and $104,000 for capital improvements. Additionally, $60,000 for recruiting and marketing initiatives and $70,000 for alumni and community outreach events were spent. The unit’s platform to assist in job placement of graduates has grown to 20,000 users and had 2,500-page views in the past quarter. A drive to expand and update alumni membership and information resulted in 72,000 alumni records submitted to a national alumni service organization for data updates. Included in the NSU Foundation’s facility improvement initiatives was the distribution of $300,000 in private funds for an Academic Success Center in Watson Library that will enhance the student experience. More than 2,200 donors contributed to the NSU Foundation last year—a substantial increase from the 1,857 of the previous year. Total contributions over the past year were $4,995,613. In March 2018, the value of the NSU Foundation endowments was $16,841,141—up from the $13,988,696 of last year.

Board of Regents Initiatives.

Elevate Louisiana. The Board of Regents adopted Elevate Louisiana in 2015 as an aspirational theme, tying the response of the state’s higher education system to the challenge of meeting the ever-changing job market. Key among the Elevate Louisiana initiatives is the emphasis on undergraduate education and the need to increase the number of citizens achieving degrees and credentials of value in a timely manner. Recognizing students must be provided a structured pathway to timely completion and graduation, Northwestern has fully adopted the Louisiana Board of Regents’ and the Complete College America initiative 15 to Finish/Think 30 campaign. The initiative encourages full-time Northwestern students to pursue and successfully complete a minimum of 15 credit hours per semester, 30 per academic year. At Northwestern, students pursuing 15 credits per semester pay the same tuition as those earning 12 credits. Therefore, pursuing 15 credits not only saves money, but it puts students on track to graduate and begin their careers sooner.

Co-Requisite Delivery. Northwestern will participate in the Board of Regents’ pilot program, Co-Requisite Delivery, to address Academic Affairs policy 2.18 Minimum Placement Requirements for Entry Level—College Level Mathematics and English. In Fall 2018, we will utilize a co-requisite delivery model in which students with ACT scores of 16, 17, 18 (Math) and 15, 16, 17 (English) will be placed together in class
section cohorts, engaging in both lecture and laboratory experiences to meet course objectives and to enhance learning. Our Math and English Departments will continue to evaluate how we offer co-requisite support for Math and English students who fall below the ACT threshold for regular admission to the University. The process is flexible to ensure each student is provided every opportunity to be successful. Additionally, Northwestern will respond to the Regents’ guidelines for Academic Affairs policy 2.22, Minimum Requirements for Dual Enrollment, and will monitor the program accordingly, beginning fall 2018.

**Distance learning leadership.** Northwestern renewed its contract with the Louisiana Board of Regents to facilitate the BOR’s eLearning activities at the state level. In doing so, the University spearheaded activities such as promoting the BOR’s eLearning Innovation Grants Program ($70,000 awarded annually) and the State’s eLearning Conference, which provided for several national presenters and more than 150-200 participants each year. This partnership further acknowledged and underscored Northwestern as a leader in online education and provided the University with the opportunity to be at the forefront of the State’s eLearning activities and engagement.

**Academic Programs.**

**College of Arts and Sciences.** The College of Arts and Science developed a Faculty Advisory Committee to initiate conversations with their faculty in an effort to: (1) share information across departments and schools about successful strategies in the classroom environment; (2) assist in dialogue regarding how the College can continue to grow and maintain its responsiveness to students; and (3) offer suggestions regarding how the College can reach the larger campus community, as well as the Natchitoches community, and how to make the College accessible.

During Fall 2017, the Department of Theatre and Dance submitted a letter of intent to the University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors to establish a new degree program: **Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance.** This decision was made after the Spring 2016 accreditation visit of the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST). The team noted students in dance were not performing the work of a concentration; instead, they were performing at the level of a Bachelor’s in Fine Arts. It was recommended the University pursue the degree. The letter of intent was approved, at which time it moved to the Louisiana Board of Regents for approval. The program proposal and curriculum were then submitted to the University of Louisiana System Board and approved in April 2018. The Board of Regents approved the program in May 2018. Northwestern is the only public institution in Louisiana to offer this degree. The degree will assist with influence and reach into regional dance studios to provide
experiential learning opportunities for Northwestern students, as well as faculty exchanges with the National Center for Contemporary Dance in Angers, France. Also, the Department of Theater and Dance intends to become a regional dance resource center that assists in providing support, feedback, choreographers, dancers, and interns for dance studios, productions, and other arts-related fields in the area.

**College of Business and Technology.** To provide a venue for external funding and experiential student learning, the School of Business became a member of the New Louisiana Angel Fund 2 (NLAF 2) in March 2018. As a member, the Dean of the College of Business and Technology and selected Northwestern business students now have an active role in evaluating potential start-up companies for North Louisiana. These companies could improve the region’s economic future and possibly allow the School to participate in the profit of these new companies. NLAF 2 provides opportunities “to continue stimulating high-growth startup enterprises that will add jobs and increase the economic well-being of our communities. Participation in this fund will yield two-fold returns: the creation of potential Return on Investment by young startup companies with high-growth capability as well as improving the quality of place in North Louisiana to retain future generations” (New Louisiana Angel Fund 2 [NLAF2] 2017, February 20, Executive Summary).

The School of Business also partnered with the BRF’s Entrepreneurial Accelerator Program (EAP) to create the NSU “Inferno Pitch,” which will allow students who have business ideas to compete among their peers in a business model competition. The three top winners will receive EAP services that include assistance with business plans, financial analysis, modeling, market analysis, market industry research, and assistant with locating funding opportunities. The inaugural event is scheduled for Fall 2018. This initiative will provide another venue for experiential student learning and student visibility. The decision was made by the College to host a business and industry showcase during the spring semester. This venue allows business and industry partners to become more knowledgeable about Northwestern’s program content, special programs, and outreach initiatives.

To provide a setting for external funding and experiential student learning opportunities, the Hospitality Management and Tourism Department sought external locations to showcase its culinary arts talents and provide students with the opportunity to plan major and small events. One such fund-raising event is the Columns Café. It is believed these initiatives have increased student interest.

Because of regional business and industry feedback, the Engineering Technology Department established a collaborative partnership—the Advanced Manufacturing
**Technician (AMT) initiative.** Students can earn an associate degree from Northwestern and an AMT certificate from the Central Louisiana Technical Community College-Natchitoches Campus. This initiative is a work-based learning program allowing students to earn an associate degree in Engineering Technology and apply knowledge and skills while employed with a sponsoring manufacturer.

During Spring 2018, the College of Business and Technology submitted a letter of intent to the University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors to establish a **master’s degree program in Computer Information Systems** (CIS). This decision was based on feedback from students seeking opportunities to further their education. The letter of intent was approved, at which time it moved to the Louisiana Board of Regents for approval.

**Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development.** The Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development (GCEHD) developed a **Vision Casting Committee** to initiate conversations with faculty across the college to highlight current best practices and set short-term goals for each department and for GCEHD. This college-wide Committee is an effort to (1) share information across departments about successful initiatives and procedures; (2) establish goals regarding growth and retention of students and faculty; and (3) initiate conversations with internal and external stakeholders to foster new programs, concentrations, or events.

The departments in the GCEHD, along with the NSU Foundation, will raise funds for scholarships, facility improvement, research, and professional development within the College. At the NSU Foundation "Flavor of Louisiana" event held in March 2018, GCEHD conducted a silent auction and raffle for a variety of NSU items and Louisiana travel. In addition, GCEHD launched its **first fundraising campaign** for all departments in the college (Health and Human Performance; Psychology; Military Science; Social Work; and Teaching, Leadership, and Counseling) in May 2018. All graduates from 2002-2017 will be contacted. This effort is targeted to more fully engage GCEHD graduates with current initiatives.

During the academic year 2017-2018, the Department of Teaching, Leadership, and Counseling worked toward **reaccreditation** with two national agencies. The Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) is examining the program in Child and Family Studies, and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) is exploring all programs leading to a teaching license. Site visits for both accrediting organizations will occur during the academic year 2018-2019.

**College of Nursing and School of Allied Health.** Based on Advisory Council requests, the Doctor of Nursing Practice program (DNP) faculty investigated the
possibility of adding another concentration to the DNP program, focusing on preparing organization/systems leaders. The DNP Curriculum Committee developed an organizational/systems leadership concentration curriculum that aligned with national standards and met the needs of the local nursing leaders. After receiving approval from University’s Curriculum Committee, a substantive change application was submitted to the Louisiana State Board of Nursing and to the Commission of Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), one of the College of Nursing’s national accreditation agencies. After receiving approval from these agencies in Spring 2016, students began to enroll in the first Organizational-Systems Leadership DNP cohort (Fall 2016). The first cohort graduated in Fall 2017.

During Spring 2016, the Alexandria-Leesville Advisory Council met with numerous nursing executives from various hospitals and recommended Northwestern offer the Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner concentration to help meet the growing number of psychiatric patients being seen in their hospitals and clinics and address the lack of qualified psychiatric mental health providers. Further, the Rapides Foundation asked Northwestern to draft a proposal for a psychiatric mental health NP program to meet their service area’s needs. An additional survey of community stakeholders was administered to both Central Louisiana and Shreveport area hospitals/clinics. After receiving an overwhelmingly positive response, a consultant was hired to aid in program curriculum development. After receiving approval from the State Board of Nursing and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) and hiring qualified faculty, the University began offering the psychiatric mental health NP concentration in Fall 2017. The Rapides Foundation provided funding to aid with the program consultants’ fees and the hiring of faculty. Eighteen students were admitted into the first cohort (Fall 2017) and all students progressed to their second semester in Spring 2018.

For the past two years, the College of Nursing has moved to computerized testing to better prepare students to take their national licensure examination. Students were transferred from the classroom setting to a computer lab to take the exams. Often the computer labs were in a different building from the teaching classroom causing students to extend their time on campus. Further, the rapid growth (over 30%) of undergraduate nursing students caused faculty to rotate students through the computer labs in over five shifts. Basically, the program had outgrown its computer lab space. After Information Technology Services (ITS) was consulted, faculty surveyed regarding their needs for learning resources, and the Student Government Association addressed regarding campus concerns, it was determined that computer lab development was outdated and costly due to the need for constant upgrades. A viable option was to offer in-class testing; ITS recommended iPad testing as the best option.
for the students. In Spring 2018, iPads Beta testing was implemented with a sizeable undergraduate nursing class. Continued Beta testing on a larger scale will occur during Summer 2018. The goal is to achieve full-scale iPad testing for Fall 2018.

**Distance Learning.** Northwestern decided to adopt a broader model for recruitment of online students. By expanding the current strategies to include a focused online national effort, the University is competitively positioned in the online education space central to the University’s mission. As an example, the University decided to maintain the existing fee structure for the military. This strategic decision affects all branches of the military, including active duty members of the reserves, military dependents, veterans, and retirees. While most of the instruction is delivered online and the fee structure must adhere to Department of Defense regulations, this decision made by the University will ensure competitiveness in serving military constituents both on campus and online.

**Student, Alumni, and Community Relations.**

**Student enrichment.** The Wellness, Recreation & Activity Center (WRAC) continued to expand and enhance services and programs to address the student experience and community enrichment realms of the Strategic Plan. The WRAC promotes fitness, wellness, and a healthy lifestyle among students, faculty, and other area citizens and provides outstanding facilities and continually-improved programming. Non-student membership has grown to more than 640, and student-faculty participation in the facility and programs continued to expand. Intramural programs and participation also have increased. More than 1,682 students were involved in intramural competition during spring 2018. A new website was created for WRAC activities, and social media engagement increased by 900 percent over the past six months. Summer camps for youth are expanded, and a satisfaction survey of this year’s Fun and Fitness camps indicated 100% satisfaction in seven of eight categories.

**Alumni engagement.** Alumni-Foundation social media activity continued to grow, with 4,496 Facebook, 1,936 Twitter, and 445 Instagram followers. The NSU Student Alumni Association has been re-established to expand current and future alumni engagement and support for the University. Twenty-four active alumni chapters across the nation provide support for the University, and alumni membership continues to grow.

**Community engagement.** The Student Experience and Community Enrichment focus areas will be enhanced by a partnership resulting in a new campus bookstore and marketplace for the Fall 2018 semester. Progress continued in collaboration with the
City of Natchitoches for the development of a recreation park that will serve NSU students and complement the NSU Recreation Complex. Community service projects undertaken by athletes, members of student organizations, and other students, faculty, and staff, have increased at least 70% in the past year. Together, members of the University have contributed over 375,000 hours of their time to various community partners.

**Campus events for area students.** Schools and Departments in the College of Arts and Sciences have either continued to evolve in current recruiting practices beneficial to the College and the University or implemented new events. The Spirit of Northwestern Marching Band annually sponsors the *Classic on the Cane* marching contest. Since 2016, the contest has had corporate sponsorship to pay the registration fee for high school bands to compete. This has assisted in increasing the number of participants (22-25 bands in 2015 to 35-38 in 2017). Overall attendance (bands and spectators) has exceeded 10,000. In addition, the School of Creative and Performing Arts hosted the American Collegiate Dance Association Regional Conference (400+ participants), Choral Day (200+), and plans, during academic year 2018-19, to host an Orchestra Day, inviting area students to a day of clinics with the faculty of the School. The School of Biological and Physical Sciences initiated their annual *Science Showcase* in 2017; attendance doubled in 2018 (300+). Northwestern also hosts the Social Sciences Fair, the Demon Math Classic, and LitCon. After seeking feedback from students, the Scholars' Day recruiting event has undergone significant changes to serve prospective students better.

**Marketing.** Advertising, social media activity, and other marketing initiatives reflect all areas of the Strategic Plan, primarily through expanded promotion of University programs and activities. These initiatives included the installation of more than 20 new signs at buildings on the Northwestern campus and its off-campus instructional sites to enhance the appearance and image of the campus. Outdoor advertising on billboards and other signage created more than 40.5 million impressions in Alexandria, Baton Rouge, Natchitoches, Port Barre, Marksville, Bunkie, Leesville, Fort Polk, Many, and other locations. Television and social media commercials created more than 1.7 million impressions throughout Louisiana.

**Social Media targeting** on Facebook, Instagram and other platforms, reached more than three million. Numerous campus events were highlighted through video sharing and social media engagement, including Freshman Connection programs, Presidential Investiture, Christmas Gala programs, Flavor of Louisiana fund-raising event, Homecoming programs, Scholars' Day events, and numerous other activities.
The Sports Information office has expanded regular email distributions to more than 90 local, state, regional and national media, including Associated Press and other distribution hubs. Updates and expansion of web and social media platforms, including more video production, has resulted in increased coverage of University events and activities. This activity is in harmony with Strategic Plan initiatives related to Academic Excellence, Student Experience, Community Enrichment and Athletic Prominence.

External Affairs.

The University’s Division of External Affairs continued to expand its governmental affairs initiatives to help assure adequate funding for higher education, especially TOPS scholarships. Working in concert with the University of Louisiana System, External Affairs continually contacted legislators and other elected officials to advocate on behalf of the University and the state higher education community. Governmental affairs activities include daily monitoring of legislation that would affect the University and making contacts to provide information to legislators. All areas of the University’s Strategic Plan are impacted by legislative actions, and the University remains extremely engaged in efforts to create positive outcomes for Northwestern and the state in matters related to legislative decisions.