



Executive Summary

14 September, 2019

On 10 December 2018, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) found Northwestern State University **compliant–no further action required** regarding the AY 2017-2018 monitoring report issued during our affirmation of accreditation. Specifically, they found NSU identifies student learning outcomes for its educational programs, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and it provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results moving forward. This validation of mission accomplishment is a testament to the tremendous work of the entire University community and reflects a sincere commitment to excellence.

AY 2018-2019 is the third iteration of exercising the University's Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Model as part of the *Strategic Plan 2016-2021 Dedicated to One Goal–Yours*. The focus during the past year has been on building momentum, validating the approach, refining procedures and processes, and further ingraining a culture of continuous improvement. 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. It includes the identification and measurement of outcomes across diverse objectives, including strategic focus areas, student learning, service, and core competency 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 third 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 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 improvements based on the analysis of these results.

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 third of five 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, 2018-2019. 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 2018-2019 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. In 2018-2019 the University committed \$100,000 to this effort. Forty enhancement requests, totaling over \$692,048, 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 \$111,850 of the requests submitted and retained a prioritized list of requirements, should additional monies become available. The University is investigating how to alternatively source another \$46,500.

This year's legislative session ended with the **first reinvestment in base funding** for higher education in a decade. Colleges and universities received \$1.06 billion in state general funds for their operating budgets, an **increase of \$47.2 million over last year's** funding. Northwestern also requested and received capital outlay funding to initiate planning for replacement of Kyser Hall, roof replacement for Fournet Hall, extension of South Jefferson Street to the Highway 1 Bypass, and demolition of Dodd Hall, Prudhomme Hall, and Caddo Hall. Planning for those projects are under way. Other legislative action during the session affecting higher education includes textbook affordability, dual enrollment, work-based learning, campus safety, and financial aid. The session was extremely productive for NSU and other colleges and universities.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Human Resources (OIEHR) **purchased a subscription to a new faculty credentials system, Interfolio.** This system replaces one which was outdated and difficult to use. The work of the implementation team resulted in the summer hiring of graduate assistants and student workers to input faculty curriculum vitae data into the system. Interfolio representative, Madison Wilkinson, will be on campus for the Fall 2019 Faculty Institute. She will provide hands-on training for faculty members and their supervisors. Madison's visit will ensure all participants understand how the system functions and allow them to fully use all features. This is key, as the former system did not allow for ad hoc reports required by various departments for accreditation and other University processes.

Interfolio will also **assist in the annual evaluation process of faculty members**. It is the goal for an additional component to be added that will help with the promotion and tenure process.

An athletic facility plan totaling nearly \$10 million of completed, in-progress, or future projects was developed under the umbrella of a campaign entitled **“Victorious.”** Among the noteworthy improvements are the new N-Club Hall of Fame display at Prather Coliseum; the facelift to the front of Turpin Stadium that includes reallocated and resurfaced space, planters and banners; and renovations to seating and adjoining areas at Brown-Stroud Field.

External funding. The **NSU Foundation** continued to expand financial support to attract and retain students. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, the NSU Foundation provided \$4,878,099 in institutional support including \$2,106,807 for student scholarships, \$931,961 for faculty/staff support, \$1,009,058 for capital improvements, \$127,293 for recruiting/marketing initiatives, \$435,293 for operating expenses and \$267,687 for alumni/community outreach events. The unit’s platform to assist in job placement of graduates has grown to 1,602 advisory volunteers and had over 22,000-page views over the past year. Included in the NSU Foundation’s facility improvement initiatives was the opening of the NSU Campus Marketplace a newly renovated off campus facility complete with a university bookstore and Chick-fil-a restaurant. More than 2,400 donors contributed to the NSU Foundation last year. Total contributions for the year totaled \$5,516,869—an increase of 9.7%. Restricted endowment assets increased by 20.6% totaling over \$40 million as of June 30, 2019.

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.

Reducing student costs. In response to ULS and LBOR requests to reduce student costs for required textbooks and course materials, Northwestern developed a three-year plan. The University piloted the program with select math courses in Fall 2018 and success rates went up from 70% to 90%. Discussions with discipline faculty and administrators began in October 2018 and continued through April 2019, culminating in a presentation to ULS Board of Supervisors, June 2019. In partnership with the University **Bookstore provider, Follett Higher Education**, the plan includes a course fee (added to students’ tuition and fee accounts when they enroll in any of the courses included), offers discounted prices, and ensures that students have access to required course materials from the first day of class. The plan was approved by the ULS, effective fall 2019.

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 utilized 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 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 College of Arts and Sciences updated the way it delivers co-requisite requirements for students in Math and English. While both programs saw a higher success rate in both Fall and Spring semesters, the impact was felt the most in Math where student success and passing rate was over 90%. In addition, both Math and English co-requisite programs saw fewer students enrolled in the Spring semester due to more success in the Fall.

Northwestern decided to continue its contract with the Louisiana Board of Regents to facilitate the **BOR's eLearning activities** at the state level. In doing so, the University spearheads such activities as promoting the BOR's eLearning Innovation Grants Program (\$70,000 awarded annually) and the State's eLearning Conference which provides for several national presenters and more than 200+ participants each year. This partnership further acknowledges and underscores Northwestern as a **leader in online education** and provides the University the opportunity to be at the forefront of the State's eLearning activities and engagement.

Distance learning leadership. Northwestern decided to expand its recruitment effort of dually enrolled high school students to include **Louisiana's Online High School–University View Academy**. While the university has been a long-time provider of courses for students in Louisiana high schools, the expansion better positions the university to serve students who are located throughout the state taking fully online high school classes. This decision supports the University's commitment to serve the constituents of Louisiana on a broader scale and provides an opportunity to increase enrollment through expanded engagement with the K-12 community.

Academic Programs

Efforts to improve students' marketability for employment and to bridge the gap between skills of the current workforce and the needs of business and industry, leaders of academic programs at Northwestern proposed letters of intent for new degree programs and certificates. At the March 2019 board meeting, the **University of Louisiana System (ULS) recommended approval for three undergraduate certificates** (Business Analytics, Strategic Communication, and Leadership Studies) and one post-master's certificate (Adult-Gerontological Acute Care Nurse Practitioner). These four programs, along with the M.S. in Computer Information Systems, will be considered for approval by the Louisiana Board of Regents (LBOR) in August 2019. Pending approval, the programs will be offered fall 2019.

Due to **changes to the federal rule—from the Common Rule to the Final Rule**–Northwestern's Institutional Review Board (IRB) updated its Policies and Procedures Manual (www.nsula.edu/irb), effective January 2019. As a result, Northwestern's IRB application process moved to a digital submission, with all forms and documents available on the website. Further, **Northwestern partnered with the CITI program** to offer training in the ethical treatment of

human subjects. Separate training programs are available for student researchers, faculty researchers, and IRB members, and there will be a three-year time limit for any ethics training certificate. Thus, the ethics training certificate of any individual involved in a research project must be recent—within the last three years.

In fall 2019, Northwestern State University will initiate its ULS-approved textbook program to save students money on course materials. **IncludED is a partnership between the NSU Marketplace Campus Store** and NSU Auxiliary Services that will allow students to rent or purchase digital textbooks at a reduced cost. Partnerships like IncludED are being implemented nationwide, but Northwestern State is the first institution in the University of Louisiana System to put the program in place. Highlights of the plan include: 1) Textbooks and course materials for 135 courses available this fall; 2) **Average cost savings of 62%** (\$114 per course); 3) Inclusive access on the first day of classes to all materials; 4) Digital delivery, rental, or purchase of materials; and 5) Optional hardcopies of digital textbooks available at a reduced cost. The charge will be posted on the student's myNSU account along with tuition and fees and can be paid along with other university charges or using financial aid. Students may opt-out of the automatic course fee and secure materials on their own. Students will receive an email from the university and from the campus bookstore directing them to a landing page with detailed information that will show courses, rental costs, and how much they are saving.

College of Arts and Sciences. The Department of English proposed a new concentration in Creative Writing in response to direct feedback received from their advisory council. The Department of English and the Louisiana Scholars' College have been working on a 4+1 Accelerated degree which would lead to a Bachelor of Arts (Scholars') and a Master of Arts (English).

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.** The School of Creative and Performing Arts enrolled its first incoming class in the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance Fall 2018. Enrollment is double ($N=19$) that outlined in the Letter of Intent to the UL System Board of Supervisors and the Board of Regents. Preliminary data indicates that retention of those enrolled in the program will be at or near the 90% mark. The addition of this degree program in the School has increased the visibility of an already vibrant School.

College of Business and Technology. In Fall 2018, the School of Business launched its first annual NSU **"Inferno Pitch,"** in partnership with the BRF's Entrepreneurial Accelerator Program (EAP). Numerous teams competed with the top three teams being recognized. The top team continues to work with EAP on launching their idea. The School of Business has already met with the EAP staff to discuss expanding this program to more students in the 2019-2020 academic year. The launch of this program also coincides with the launch of the new Entrepreneurship concentration in the BS in Business Administration.

To provide a setting for external funding and experiential student learning opportunities, the Hospitality Management and Tourism Department established **Columns Café** to showcase the culinary arts talents of its students allowing them the opportunity to plan both major and small-scale events. The café serves a four to five course themed meal and is open to public. To date, each event has been sold out with great reviews from the community.

The School of Business faculty continued to push forward with the establishment of the **Master of Science in Computer Information Systems (CIS)**. As of early April, the Board of Supervisors and Board of Regents had approved the letter of intent and the Board of Supervisors had approved the full program proposal. The hope is for proposal approval by the Board of Regents to allow for the launch of the program in Fall 2019.

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. Based upon input from the college-wide Vision Casting Committee and the GCEHD leadership, a revised mission for the college was crafted. This iterative, collaborative process brought multiple groups together to determine the goals of the college. The revised mission seeks to streamline the goals of the represented academic and support units within the college.

The **Department of Teaching, Leadership, and Counseling** was renamed in July 2018 as the School of Education. This change was made to better reflect the size and breadth of the programs found within this academic unit. The School of Education hosted an onsite accreditation visit in September 2018 by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and received full accreditation of all initial programs in April 2019.

The **Accreditation Council of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)** has reaffirmed the Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development's **School of Education** accreditation at the initial-licensure level. The accreditation status is effective between the Spring 2019 and Spring 2026 semesters. The next site visit will occur in Fall 2025.

The **Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development** received national recognition for its undergraduate elementary teacher preparation program being named one of the best in the country by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), a nonpartisan, not-for-profit research and policy organization. In addition, this spring the college launched the **Call Me MISTER program at NSU**. Efforts will begin immediately to recruit minority males to become leaders in education. The program's goal is to increase the pool of teachers from more diverse backgrounds to work as teachers, administrators, role models and mentors.

College of Nursing and School of Allied Health. Based on requests from hospital CEOs of the largest healthcare systems in Louisiana as well as request from advisory council members in Alexandria and Shreveport, the CONSAH will obtain a national consultant and develop a quality **DNP-Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) program** to be housed within the College of Nursing. This program which will receive all needed new program approvals (BOR, Systems Board, State Board of Nursing, National Accreditation, SACSCOC). This will be one of two state-supported CRNA programs in Louisiana.

Having achieved the previous year's goal of establishing the Military Medic/Paramedic to ASN program (20 per year), and the BS to BSN program (10 per year), the CONSAH will actively market and recruit students to ensure full student cohorts are enrolled in the programs' first year offerings. Maximum enrollment in these programs not only fiscally justifies the need for additional faculty members, it also demonstrates to the approving educational boards the need for these innovative programs, as well as future programs NSU will develop.

To ensure students choose NSU as their undergraduate nursing and allied health program, and to ensure NSU maintains national eminence as quality health professional programs and producers of competence, caring graduates, who are actively sought for employment at graduation, NSU will maintain a minimum of **95% licensure passage rates** for ASN, BSN, and 90% licensure passage rates for BSRS students.

Due to the 48% increase in undergraduate nursing enrollment and the 21% growth in undergraduate allied health enrollment, NSU has expanded CONSAH's footprint in Alexandria and Leesville off campus instructional sites. However, with the addition of **two new programs (Military Medic to ASN, BS to BSN)** and in planning for the CRNA program, for the upcoming year, NSU will receive BOR approval to expand distance offerings and space rental on the DeRidder off campus instructional site and launch a fundraising campaign to expand the Shreveport campus with the construction of a new building on NSU owned property adjacent to the current Shreveport off campus instructional site.

Distance Learning. Northwestern decided to continue the model that was adopted for recruitment of online students. The strategies continue to include a national effort that is focused on an individual's profile. This type of approach allows the university to be more intentional in its recruitment of individuals who are more closely aligned with the typical Northwestern student. This approach is considered a **unique marketing strategy** as compared to the traditional ad-based initiatives. By continuing the current strategies that focus on the recruitment of online students, the University is competitively positioned in the online education space central to the university's mission.

Student, Alumni, and Community Relations

The **College of Business and Technology** continues to engage industry stakeholders and the community. Industry representatives provided feedback through the School of Business Advisory Council, CIS Advisory Council, and Department of Engineering Technologies Advisory Council. The community also had an opportunity to view the accomplishments of the various areas of the COBT at the annual COBT Showcase. The annual J. Walter Porter Forum provided an opportunity for speakers to inform students of real-world experiences. In April, the new "Start the Spark" series begins with a lecture by Dr. Nita Landry. Faculty continue to engage the community through other outreach as well. CIS faculty have conducted outreach through the Hour of Code, technology training sessions with NSU Elementary Lab students, technology training sessions with NSU Middle Lab students, the Natchitoches Demons Coding Club, the Alexandria Demons Coding Club, a technology training session at the Pineville Youth Center, and other events. Engineering Technology faculty and staff continue to offer robotics camps during the summer and recently supported students in a robotics competition.

NSU's Chamber Choir **finished third in the prestigious Ave Verum International Choral Competition in Baden, Austria.** The choir was one of two from the United States selected for the competition. Before the competition, the Chamber Choir performed in three European capitals at St. Martin's Basilica in Prague, Czech Republic, St. Peter's Basilica in Vienna, Austria, and St. Martin's Cathedral in Bratislava, Slovakia.

In Fall 2019, the university will welcome a **Steak 'n Shake restaurant** to the Friedman Student Union. This restaurant addition is another major step in expanding our dining services and

enhancing the student experience on campus. Over the past couple of years, we have opened Café DeMon' restaurants in Watson Library and on our Shreveport campus and a Chick-fil-A restaurant in the Campus Marketplace that includes the University Bookstore. These additions, along with the new outdoor stage at Iberville Green and the anticipated addition of our eSports and Multipurpose Event spaces in the Student Union, continue to illustrate our commitment to success by ensuring students have an engaging, purposeful, and relevant student experience.

Northwestern's Human Resources office has experienced success with the implementation of **background checks**. Although this additional step may add some time to the hiring process, the goal is to hire employees who will enhance the academic environment.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Human Resources ended the fiscal year with the hiring of a **new Human Resources Director**. The incoming Director has a wealth of HR knowledge, especially in the area of employee law and conflict resolution. The position had been open for almost a year. This hire will spearhead the implementation of recommendations made by HR consultant, Dr. Courtland Chaney. These recommendations were made to move the HR Office past a transaction unit into a 21st century office.

As Northwestern began to redevelop and implement strategic plans at the cabinet level and eventually for the entire institution, the need for a new organizational structure in the Student Experience became apparent. In the summer and spring of 2018, a committee in the Student Experience met multiple times to develop the best management structure for the area. Following discussion, an organizational chart was presented to the President and Cabinet and approved for implementation. In the fall of **2018 two new positions, Director of Enrollment Management and Director of Student Affairs** were advertised and filled.

Student enrichment. The Randall J. Webb Wellness, Recreation & Activity Center (WRAC) continued to expand and enhance programs and services to address the student experience and community enrichment realms of the Strategic Plan. The WRAC promotes wellness and fitness among students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members and provides outstanding facilities, equipment, and programming. Non-student membership has grown to more than 600, and student-faculty participation in the facility and programs continued to expand. Intramural programs and participation continue at high levels. More than 1,100 students were involved in intramural competition during spring 2019. The WRAC made some upgrades as they added acoustic panels in the group exercise room, installed a new steam room system, replaced all treadmill belts, and added a new cable cross-over machine in the free weight room. Summer camps for youth are well attended, 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 5,323 Facebook, 2,068 Twitter, and 782 Instagram followers. Data mining efforts resulted in a 12.6% growth of valid email addresses over the past year further expanding electronic outreach efforts. Twenty-four alumni chapters in major cities across the nation are active and self-sustaining. The NSU Student Alumni Association has experienced growth and continues to expand through the support of a dedicated special committee of the NSU Alumni Association board of directors.

Community engagement. The Student Experience and Community Enrichment focus areas has been enhanced by the new campus bookstore and marketplace which Spring 2019. Progress

continues in the 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 **contributed over 351,809 hours** of their time to various community partners.

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, and Scholars' Day events, among others.

The Sports Information office has expanded regular email distributions to more than 90 **local, state, regional and national media outlets**, including the 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.