

# HIGHER VALUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION, 2022-2027

## REVISION

September, 2022

### Preamble

Western Illinois University was founded in 1899 as the Western Illinois State Normal School to address teacher preparation in the State's grammar schools. The faculty and students of Western were eager to meet this need, and the institution soon became known for its well- rounded, deeply committed graduates, a tradition that continues to this day.

As the years passed, the University changed its name, first to Western Illinois State Teachers' College in 1921, and then to Western Illinois University in 1957. Likewise, as it evolved, the institution's mission broadened to include the traditional academic majors that prepared high school teachers, the state's earliest and most successful extension program, a multifaceted graduate school, a liberal arts program, and, eventually, the present distinguished colleges devoted to the Arts and Sciences, Business and Technology, Education and Human Services, Fine Arts and Communication, and Honors.

Through the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries Western earned and maintained a reputation for expanding access to affordable, high-quality degree programs and fostering student involvement in all University activities.

Western is now a leading University with campuses in Macomb, the Quad Cities, and online. By virtue of its quality, opportunity, and affordability, the school serves students from Illinois, across the nation, and around the world.

Together, at Western, we provide a transformative educational experience through the caring educator model. We empower students and graduates to become engaged and productive global citizens committed to making a difference in the diverse communities and professions they represent. Our alumni are leaders in their fields equipped with the knowledge, problem solving skills, and community awareness necessary to address the professional, economic, and social issues of our time.

Through the successful implementation of Higher Values in Higher Education 2017-2027 (HVHE),

# HIGHER VALUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION, 2022-2027

## REVISION

### Executive Summary

#### *Our Plan and Presidential Priorities*

Western Illinois University is poised for a dynamic evolution in its economic and cultural impact on the communities of western Illinois, in its diverse and robust student successes, and in its growing financial health and sustainability.

As such, and as updated in August 2022, *Higher Values in Higher Education 2017-2027 (HVHE)* defines Western Illinois University's new vision for the next five years.

This vision is based on results from empirical environmental scanning completed by the Social Responsibility Task Force, which was comprised of students, faculty, staff,

*Our Commitment to Financial Sustainability*

Western Illinois University fosters respect, equity, and inclusion for all students, faculty, and staff. Western is committed to anti-racism, anti-oppression, equity, social justice, and diversity. We value inclusion as a core value and as an essential element of Western's public service mission.

Western embraces individual uniqueness and a culture of inclusion that supports broad and specific diversity initiatives. Western believes in the educational and institutional benefits of diversity in society as integral to the success of all individuals.

At Western, we will:

- Maintain a safe and secure environment for all members of our Western communities;
- Educate and empower students, staff, and faculty to be social and environmental justice advocates;
- Provide curricula, programs, training, resources, and environments that reflect and strengthen the diversity of our communities in order to elevate cultural awareness and understanding;
- Ensure fair, equitable, and inclusive access to University facilities, programs, resources, and services;
- Create inclusive and equitable policies and practices;
- Diversify the University's workforce by assessing hiring practices to attract, retain, and develop talented staff and faculty from diverse backgrounds;
- Address disparities in representation, retention, learning outcomes, and graduation rates;
- Create a University-wide diversity plan to ensure a continued commitment to anti-racism, anti-oppression, equity, social justice, and diversity.

### *Our Institutional Learning Outcomes and Commitment to Student Success*

Western has four [Institutional Learning Outcomes](#), all of which deeply underscore our core values and our mission. At Western students will:

- Develop problem-solving skills and engage in transformative learning experiences;
- Acquire significant content knowledge, various disciplinary skill sets, and engrained professional behaviors that lead to success in our academic disciplines;
- Practice professional integrity and ethical decision making;
- Celebrate diversity, equity, and inclusion, and commit to anti-racist practice and protocols.

These outcomes will be measured, reported, and reviewed through annual university assessment activities, internal reporting documents, annual state-level reporting documents, and other means. We will engage in a practice of continuous improvement and, in doing so, increase our larger impact and student success rates.

### *Our Values in Practice*

The goals stated below represent what we do and will continue to do in order to advance the core values of the institution—again, our motto, “Your potential. Our purpose,” has its roots in our core values.

[Annual reports](#) completed by every academic department and administrative unit, planning and accomplishment reports made by the Vice Presidents and areas that report to the President, strategic plan reporting to university governance groups, continuing accreditation by the [Higher Learning Commission](#) and other agencies, and [enrollment](#)

Western will strive to provide access and opportunity to those who are historically underrepresented in higher education, with particular attention paid to Black, Latinx, low-income, rural, disabled, veteran, LGBTQIA, and working adult learners. As such, we are committed to providing accessible, high-quality educational programs, and financial and other support for our students to ensure all can thrive at here at Western,

The goals that we will put into practice are as follows:

#### Goal 1: Enrich Academic Excellence

Action 1: Focus on the individual learner, prioritize collaborative and peer learning, and increase support for student success and achievement.

Action 2: Recruit, support, and retain high-potential and diverse students, faculty, and staff.

Action 3: Maintain high standards of excellence in instruction and in the assessment of student learning.

Action 4: Provide strong commitments to research, scholarly, and creative activities.

Action 5: Promote civic engagement, service learning, experiential learning, applied projects, and volunteerism.

Action 6: Upgrade and deliver user-centered, accessible information technology, and implement a university-wide commitment to the use of Western Online and other course delivery technologies.

Action 7: Enhance and deliver accessible academic programming within and across disciplines.

#### Goal 2: Advance Educational Opportunity

Action 1: Establish and implement institution-level equity plans and practices to close access, progression, completion, and attainment gaps.

Action 2: Focus on quality and accessibility in every aspect of the institution, including the student's campus experience, classroom experience, and residential life experience.

Action 3: Engage in educational outreach and recruitment activities targeted to populations historically underrepresented in higher education.

Action 4: Advance affordability and decrease time-to-degree rates.

Action 5: Increase retention and graduation rates, with special focus on opportunity gaps.

Action 6: Align academic programming with potential economic growth in our communities.

#### Goal 3: Support Personal Growth

Action 1: Promote physical health, mental health, and wellness in our students, faculty, and staff.

Action 2: Enhance student and community engagement.

Action 3: Create a safe, accessible, and attractive campus in Macomb, the Quad Cities, and Online

Action 4: Educate students on the processes, procedures, and support services at Western

Action 5: Clearly commit to supportive and shared governance of the university

#### Goal 4: Promote Social Responsibility

Action 1: Promote civic engagement, sustainability, and service learning

Action 2: Use state, local, and other partnerships to advance university, community active and shared governance of



HIGHER VALUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION 2012-2027  
GOAL 1: ENRICH ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE





We will continue national leadership in the provision of mission-driven public service and civic engagement. As of Fall 2020, Western Illinois University is classified as a Best Practice, “Community Engaged” Institution by the [Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching](#).

Our students, faculty, and staff apply disciplinary expertise and professional commitments to advance the social, economic, cultural, and ethical quality of life for members of our host communities, regions, and beyond. Even as the highest priority of the university is teaching and learning, members of the WIU academic community serve as volunteers and board members, and actively participate in civic engagement, service learning, fundraising, and many other activities designed to advance the public good.

In order to continue to build stronger, more resilient, more dynamic communities, we will:

- a) Support student, faculty, and staff public service actions that are consistent with the University’s [Community Engagement classification](#).
- b) Use university public service centers, the Auxiliary Facilities System (UHDH, [University Union](#), and [Campus Recreation](#)), [University Libraries](#), institutes, and broadcasting services to support community engagement.

*Action 6: Deliver user-centered information technology and implement a university-wide commitment to use Western Online and other course-delivery technologies*

We will provide user-centered information technology to support instruction, research and scholarly/creative activities, educational outreach, public service. [University Technology](#) provides a secure, reliable, and high-speed technological infrastructure; an efficient and effective operations environment; integrated information management solutions; and other high-quality, timely services to support to the University community.

Likewise, University Libraries identifies, collects, organizes, preserves, and provides access to 612 792 reW\*BT/F1 11.04

and develop our innovative and accessible programming, we will:

- a) Continue to apply, at every level, heavy scrutiny to all new academic course or program proposals
- b) Promote innovation and creativity in developing new programs
- c) Align all new programming with high standards of accessibility and community needs by identifying audience, market dynamics, and the potential contribution of the program to the larger economic and civic viability of the region.



- b) Bring more applicants and students who have been accepted to campus prior to initial registration and enrollment.
- c) Increase recruitment partnerships that will lead to increased accessibility and more diversity in each new cohort of students.
- d)

As noted in the Preamble of this plan, from its inception Western Illinois University has been an institution devoted to the needs of the west-central Illinois region, and an institution connected to the economic growth and stability of that region.

In order to maintain this tradition, we will:

- a) Pay close attention to the feasibility of and market need for all new academic programs
- b) Conduct annual analyses of market, economic, and intellectual needs in the region
- c) Continue our long commitment to educating students who will become teachers, professionals in legal and justice administration, professionals in public health and social work, professionals in business and technology, and professionals in the traditional STEM disciplines, the Fine Arts, the Humanities, and the Social Sciences.

### Goal 3: Support Personal Growth

We will continue to take a holistic approach in supporting the personal growth of students, faculty, and staff. With the understanding that optimal health and wellness supports optimal personal and professional growth, we will provide comprehensive programs, services, and events in these areas. We will also emphasize the sense of belonging and community.

Our support of personal growth extends to community-university engagement, and the social, economic, and cultural development and enrichment opportunities it provides. We value lifelong learning and participation in university events to these ends.

#### *Action 1: Promote mental health, physical health, and wellness in our students, faculty, and staff*

We will continue to support physically- and psychologically-healthy lifestyles, which will in turn continue to create healthy learning and working environments. To cultivate mental and physical well-being in every aspect of university community, we will:

- a) Increase health, wellness, and recreational programs, services, and activities provided by the University.
- b) Expand health, wellness, and recreational partnerships with local/regional providers to address needs and services for students, faculty, and staff.
- c) Evaluate the feasibility of establishing new sports clubs and other areas of campus recreation.

#### *Action 2: Enhance student and community engagement*

We will insist that students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members become more engaged with the University. Participation in university events supports the values of our communities, and encourages contact among individuals from different backgrounds as well as lifelong learning.

Participation and support of intercollegiate athletic programs also has many benefits related to personal growth, and as such, we will promote participation in these activities.

To advance a high level of participation we will:

- a) Engage high-profile university speakers and performers on all campuses to increase campus and community engagement
- b) Use artist/scholar/expert-in-residence programs to enable visiting professional(s) to be actively engaged with students, faculty staff, and community members on topics of interdisciplinary interest(e.g., tax preparation, religious understanding, aspects of citizenships, etc) during their stay at the University
- c) Provide the university and surrounding communities with a diverse season of quality cultural entertainment opportunities
- d) Offer professional development opportunities in academic disciplines to members of our host and external communities
- e) Enhance opportunities for lifelong learning on all three campuses
- f) Support a broad-based National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I and Football

respective conferences and nationally

- g) Demonstrate strict adherence to NCAA operating principles related to governance and rules compliance, academic integrity, equity, and student-athlete welfare
- h) Foster a culture that integrates Western with its surrounding communities at every level.

*Action 3: Provide safe, accessible, and attractive campus environments in Macomb, Quad Cities, and online.*

We will provide safe and secure learning and living environments for our students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University. Our safe and accessible campus environments are guided by our Campus Master Plans; our objective, as outlined in these plans, is to provide the premier facilities and grounds that premier students, faculty, and staff deserve. As part of our facilities planning and curricular delivery, we are strongly committed to environmental sustainability and justice, and as such will:

- a) Support educational programs, services, and partnerships committed to the prevention of crime; protection of life and property; preservation of peace, order, and safety; and enforcement of laws and University policies
- b) Enhance university facilities by exploring every option for enhancement, support, and development
- c) Demonstrate accountability in environmental sustainability on our campuses

*Action 4: Educate students on the processes, procedures, and support services at Western.*

We will develop meaningful proactive approaches to educate students on administrative processes related to success inside and outside of the classroom. Each student arrives to Western Illinois University with varying understanding of navigating the university environment. We will continue to support and celebrate the first-generation college student experience assisting students in navigating their ne

governance policies, processes, and committees can be enhanced.

- b) Recognize the collective bargaining agreements entered into with labor unions at the institution as forms of shared governance of the labor exerted by all university employees.
- c) Abstain for organizational practices that could result in the filing of charges of unfair labor practices.
- d) Adhere to the terms and conditions of the collective bargaining agreements, so as to limit grievances, and when grievances do arise, seek to resolve them at the lowest level possible.
- e) Abide by arbitration decisions, when all other efforts to resolve grievances have been unsuccessful.



## Goal 4: Promote Social Responsibility

Social responsibility is a core value of Western—and its promotion is a key goal of this plan. In this way, students, their families, taxpayers, and donors all invest in Western’s mission to prepare our learners to lead in our local and global communities. We understand that we are the stewards of these donations and tuition dollars, as well as the time that each learner invests in their pursuit of a degree from Western. And we understand that we have a social responsibility to provide safe, accessible, responsive, and sustainable environments to support our academic mission.

In preparing students to lead in dynamic and diverse communities, we will advance civic engagement and economic development. We will work with business, industry, education, governmental agencies, municipalities, non-profit agencies, and other individuals from the public and private sectors to make Western the partner of choice in advancing educational, organizational, cultural, environmental, community and economic development in our region and well beyond. At the same time, we will use partnerships to advance the vision, mission, goals, and actions of the University, and we will remain accountable and transparent in achieving the objectives of this *Strategic Plan*.

### *Action 1: Promote civic engagement, sustainability, and service learning*

We will continue advancing civic engagement as means for preparing students to lead in their

The Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA), for example, was established in 1989 after a Task Force on the Future of Rural Illinois completed 25 public hearings. IIRA was chartered as a companion agency to the Governor's Rural Affairs Council and charged with finding innovative solutions for rural issues that can be implemented in Illinois and providing technical assistance to policy makers. These efforts have focused on economic development, value-added rural development, health care, transportation and infrastructure, public management, housing strategies, and information technology.

We value our role in university, community, and economic development. As such, we will continue to work with members of the western Illinois region to recruit and retain talent, business, and industry, which in turn creates and expands jobs, and sustains a strong tax base. Likewise, we will use new and enhanced partnerships to leverage additional goals and priorities of the region and the University, with the latter including decreasing institutional tuition reliance.

To continue this tradition of engaged economic and community development, we will:

- a) Enhance all current University partnerships
- b) Expand community and economic development partnerships by using the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA), the Illinois Innovation Network, and other similar structures at the institution and in the state.

## Conclusion

As members of the Western Illinois University community, we share in the goals of recruiting, retaining, and graduating students in a transformative educational experience where learners engage in the discovery, acquisition, and application of knowledge for personal enrichment and in preparation for future occupations and/or graduate and advanced studies. We do so in a manner that is inclusive and engaging; it is an educational environment built upon the foundation of our core values-- academic excellence, educational opportunity, personal growth and social responsibility.

We are nationally recognized for our leadership in quality, opportunity, affordability, community and economic development, and graduating more students than predicted based on academic preparation variables.

We empower students to become engaged and productive global citizens committed to making a difference in the diverse communities and professions that they represent. Our alumni are leaders in their fields equipped with knowledge, problem solving skills, and community awareness necessary to address the professional, economic, and social issues of our time.

We are a strong university built on the foundations of excellent teaching, engaged research, and deep service to the community. Simply stated, these practices and philosophical commitments will continue far into the future.

And this will be evidenced by the successful attainment of the goals, priorities, and actions in this *Strategic Plan*.