

HIGHER VALUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION, 2017- 2027 Vision, Mission, and Values

Our Vision

Western Illinois University aims to be the leading public regional university in providing educational quality, opportunity, and affordability.

Our Mission

Western Illinois University empowers students, faculty, and staff to lead dynamic and diverse communities. We provide student-centered undergraduate and graduate programs characterized by innovative teaching, research, and service, grounded in multidisciplinary, regional, and global perspectives. We engage our students in educational opportunities guided by a professional and diverse faculty and staff in collaboration with alumni and community partners.

Our Values

Academic Excellence

Central to our history is the commitment to teaching, to the individual learner, and to active involvement in the teaching-learning process. Western Illinois University's highly qualified and diverse faculty promotes critical thinking, engaged learning, research, and creativity in a challenging, supportive learning community. We are committed to student success in an academic environment that encourages lifelong development as learners, scholars, teachers, and mentors.

Educational Opportunity

Western Illinois University values educational opportunity and welcomes those who show promise and a willingness to work toward achieving academic excellence. We are committed to providing accessible, high quality educational programs and financial support for our students.

Personal Growth

Western Illinois University values the development of the whole person. WT/F1 3devel

HIGHER VALUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION, 2017-
2027

Executive Summary

Our Plan and Presidential Priorities

As updated in June 2022, *Higher Values in Higher Education 2017-2027 (HVHE)* defines Western Illinois

Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism

Western Illinois University has made it a priority to focus on [diversity, equity, and inclusion](#). Everyone is welcome at Western, regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability, genetic information, LGBTQIA status, and veteran

Action 4: Provide strong

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GOAL 1: ENRICH ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

faculty and staff.

- d) Work with bargaining units to develop agreements that allocate available resources to support salaries that meet or exceed the mean of peer institutions.

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

Embedded in the University's history is the commitment to teaching and the individual learner. Providing high-quality instruction is the highest priority of the faculty. We will continue delivering high standards of instructional excellence, with strong commitments to the assessment of student learning, and a continuous improvement model at all levels of the educational experience. We will also continue to promote an academic culture that values and engages in transdisciplinary interactions and provides professional development opportunities to faculty and staff.

To honor these commitments and maintain these standards, we will:

- a) Follow the [University's Assessment Plan](#) to use results from assessment of student learning in general education, undergraduate majors, and graduate programs to inform curricular revision and development.
- b) Support multidisciplinary program development and sustainability.
- c) Demonstrate institutional commitments to instruction by maintaining the highest percentage of institutional expenditures in support of instruction and the academic mission of the University.
- d) Better integrate Western Online into the daily operation and delivery of academic curriculum.

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

We will continue to demonstrate strong commitments to research, scholarly, and creative activities.

The faculty and staff of Western Illinois University are highly accomplished in scholarship and creative activities. While the highest priority of the university is teaching and learning, Western Illinois University is an intellectual home to highly accomplished faculty and staff whose disciplinary, regional, national, and international contributions to research, scholarly, and creative activities is an important part of the academic experience at the university. In order to continue our success as a leader in priority teaching alongside impactful research and scholarly and creative activities, we will:

- a) Allocate institutional resources and assistance to support faculty and staff in research, scholarly/creative activities, and grant-generating activities.
- b) Evaluate the effectiveness of programs, services and events designed to support scholarship and creative activities.
- c) Use available resources to support student, faculty, and staff travel to professional associations, conferences and workshops, which is a necessary component of tenure and professional currency.
- d) Support faculty sabbaticals as a means for faculty members to advance their research and scholarly agendas.
- e) Provide educational leave opportunities for staff members where such opportunities are used for study, research, and/or professional growth.
- f) Augment institutional resources to encourage and promote research, creative, and scholarly activities with special emphasis on supporting new and junior faculty members.
- g) Host domestic and international visiting scholars, executives, and artists in residence programs.

Academic programming sits at the center of Western's pursuit of academic excellence. In order to enhance 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.

GOAL 2: ADVANCE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

We define educational opportunity as providing high-quality academic programs and learning communities to high-potential, diverse learners. We have a strong academic portfolio and we will continue to deliver excellent educational opportunities to our immediate region and the surrounding communities.

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

We will strive to provide greater access and opportunity to those learners who are historically underrepresented in higher education. We recognize that the first step in this work comes from planning and developing new practices and perspectives in our everyday culture at Western.

To take this first step, we will:

- a) Align our planning with both the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) strategic plan, *A Thriving Illinois*, and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) strategic plan, *EVOLVE*.
- b) Participate in the second cohort of the American Council of Education (ACE) project, The Learner Success Lab (LSL), which will allow us to develop specific, granular-level initiatives that will increase retention rates for those students in historically underrepresented groups
- c) Foster widespread university and community investment in these and other initiatives.

Action 2: Focus on quality and accessibility in every aspect of the institution, *kpemf kpi 'vj g'lwaf gpvau'eco r wu'gzr gt kgpeg. 'erc uat qgo 'gzr gt kgpeg. 'cpf 't gukf gpvkn' life experience.*

We will emphasize our institutional quality as we move forward through the next five years, and in doing so we will emphasize. In order to do this, we will:

- a) Emphasize and focus on the quality, outcomes, and personal attention associated with Western in marketing

- 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) Provide new educational opportunities by developing the new programs and reinvesting in existing programs that have a clear, high demand in our diverse communities.
- e) Advance opportunities by focusing recruitment initiatives on underrepresented learner groups in our immediate communities,

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

support our athletic program at a level that allows student-athletes to be competitive within our 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 new environment. To accomplish this, we will:

- a) Review polices and create easy to access and understand steps or guides through the student perspective.
- b) Offer outreach related to specific university procedures and polices at key times throug

- a) Work with Faculty Senate to identify those areas of institutional practice in which shared 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, s

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,

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