

**Highest Order of Excellence
1997-2003**

Charting Our Future Course

As we move toward the 21st century, Northwestern University can celebrate its inclusion among the distinguished universities not only of the Midwest but of the nation and, indeed, the world. We anticipate even greater success in the upcoming decades. To achieve this goal, we must recognize the external challenges we face, identify the underlying principles that will guide us, reaffirm and adjust our sense of institutional identity, and set specific strategies for the near future.

We recognize and embrace the following broad external challenges:

- the increasing globalization of knowledge and society
- the changing needs of our society and our obligation to contribute meaningfully in their solutions
- the increasing diversity of our population, and the associated need to achieve greater diversity in the composition of our University community and create a culture that capitalizes on the intellectual benefits of that diversity
- the need to keep ahead of the rapidly changing technology base supporting our enterprise

In facing these challenges and setting the future course of the University, we identify as our underlying *modus operandi*:

- the application of high standards to our education, scholarship, and service activities
- links between our units within the University and to the world beyond the University
- an interdisciplinary emphasis in education and research
- innovation and adventure as the basis for fruitful change
- accountability stimulating us to improve where appropriate and to discontinue that which is no longer needed or not working well

We draw upon the distinctive features of Northwestern University in identifying our broad ambitions for further advancement of our success. We will:

- gather together exceptionally talented faculty, students, and staff in the mutually reinforcing activities of education and research
- foster a healthy balance and interaction between undergraduate education and graduate-level study in the disciplines and the professions
- promote a culture where liberal and professional education inform and complement one another

- support intellectual and artistic innovation and adventure and welcome novel approaches to significant academic issues
- nurture innovative teaching and pioneering research by faculty members who are permitted - indeed, encouraged - to transcend traditional academic boundaries in order to accommodate fundamental changes in the structure of knowledge
- develop imaginative and rigorous academic programs that address student interests and needs
- cherish our roots in the American heartland and in the dynamic Chicago metropolitan area, while increasing our influence abroad
- retain an institutional scale that prizes a genuine sense of community while providing a broad range of resources and opportunities for students, faculty, and staff

We reaffirm strategic emphasis on intellectual domains linking our education and research activities in exciting and productive interdisciplinary areas. These include:

- Materials science
- Life and biomedical sciences
- Cognitive sciences
- Economic, international, and social studies
- Communications
- Management and policy studies
- Humanities
- Performing and creative arts

By nearly any measure, Northwestern University has achieved that "highest order of excellence" to which its founders aspired a century and a half ago. But our successes of the past inspire us to raise our sights even higher, to redefine the highest order of excellence to which we can aspire. Especially by comparison with many peer institutions, we are greatly privileged to be able to look with confidence to the future as well as with satisfaction to the past.

Though we are undertaking initiatives to provide significant additional funds to support our work, we recognize that our ambitions will inevitably exceed our resources. And thus we are challenged to make the choices that will ensure that, as we translate broad goals into specific programs, we do so both wisely and well.

In the following pages, we address four broad priorities for strategic investment: the faculty, undergraduate education, graduate and professional education, and the infrastructure necessary for teaching, learning, and research.

We consider the above priorities to be the framework on which more specific proposals and initiatives will be built in collaboration with the various units of the

University. For each of our broad priorities we set forth briefly our sense of its central importance, our ambitions, and some strategies to be followed to fulfill those ambitions. Taken together, these priorities will be instrumental in shaping Northwestern's future course.

Recognizing Exceptional Achievement

Invest in the Faculty

As we recruit new faculty, we must demonstrate the administrative flexibility and intellectual agility that will strengthen fruitful links among departments and schools.

The quality of a university depends centrally upon that of its faculty. As Northwestern seeks to capitalize on its uniquely privileged place in American higher education, the very highest priority must be accorded to the recruitment, support, and recognition of faculty members of outstanding intellect, artistic talent, and training—people who combine a commitment to the transmission of knowledge through teaching with a passion for the discovery of new knowledge through research and creative work.

Northwestern has a long tradition of interdisciplinary effort and has supported faculty whose pioneering work crosses traditional academic borders. Our faculty wish to intensify this interconnectedness. As we recruit new members of the faculty and seek to provide a congenial and supportive environment for our current faculty, we must demonstrate the administrative flexibility and intellectual agility that will strengthen fruitful links among departments and schools. This can be effectively nurtured by such imaginative strategies as the hiring of clusters of faculty, whose academic homes might be in various schools and departments sharing common interests, and making funds available to encourage experimental teaching and research initiatives proposed by ad hoc interdisciplinary faculty groups.

A set of specific strategies and objectives has been developed consistent with these ambitions. They include:

Selectively, and on a limited basis, add new faculty lines that simultaneously strengthen key disciplines and support initiatives for enhanced student learning

- Add approximately 50 positions, not including additions planned for the Medical School
- Raise new endowment and deploy some of the announced new tuition revenues for this initiative

Recruit both highly visible faculty leaders in their fields and young candidates with extraordinary potential

- Develop cross-unit faculty search and hiring committees
- Emphasize joint appointments that build interschool links
- Creatively use newly endowed chairs to foster links
- Encourage the recruitment of faculty groups—scholars who have formed, or will form, cohesive and productive research teams

Strongly encourage innovation and risk-taking in research

- Develop funding opportunities for adventurous, cutting-edge pilot projects
- Create multiple internal grants for small projects
- Invest in staff and infrastructure to enable excellent research
- Revisit policies on leaves for research and creative work; consider University standards where appropriate

Foster interaction among current faculty

- Support exciting intellectual experiments in teaching, artistic performance, and research
- Promote team teaching across academic boundaries
- Sponsor quarterly meetings of faculty in large domains of teaching and research, based on the model of the Searle Life Sciences faculty dinners

Enhance recognition and retention of our best faculty

- Proactively identify key faculty to retain, on a school-by-school basis
- Recognize and encourage exceptional achievement in teaching, service, research, and creative work
- Address issues of University culture and environment
- Improve human resource, financial management, and administrative policies to enable the faculty and staff to be fully engaged in their work
- Strengthen efforts to support women and minorities

Inspiring a Passion for Discovery

Intensify Undergraduate Learning

Our undergraduate programs must prepare students to meet not only the obvious challenges of today but also the unforeseeable challenges of the future.

Northwestern is unique among private American research universities in providing so rich an array of programs in its six undergraduate schools. Our talented and highly diverse student body enters Northwestern with a broad range of interests and backgrounds. As both the talent and the diversity of our undergraduate students increase during the next two decades, we must also ensure that students feel part of a learning community larger than their departments or schools. All Northwestern undergraduates should enjoy such common experiences as a sense of responsibility for the ownership of their education; the opportunity to work closely with faculty; the mastery of core competencies; the appreciation of the relationship between a student's academic concentration and that field's social and academic or artistic contexts; and the development of the intellectual and artistic passion that defines, in part, the liberally educated person.

Our undergraduate programs must prepare students to meet not only the obvious challenges of today but also the unforeseeable challenges of the future. To this end, we will continue to examine our curricula both critically and imaginatively. Such programs as Integrated Arts, Music Theatre, Mathematical Methods in the Social Sciences, Engineering First, and the Integrated Science Program are models of the challenging, interdisciplinary programs that offer unique opportunities to intellectually and creatively ambitious students. We will encourage and reward faculty efforts to mount more such programs. We will also recognize the many important off-campus resources available to our students and facilitate student participation in endeavors such as foreign study and credit and noncredit internships.

The University will provide an environment in which exceptional academic aspiration and achievement are encouraged and recognized. Our undergraduate students will be inspired to take advantage of the many opportunities that are uniquely available in a research university like ours. We will ensure that our structures do not obstruct our students; that we offer both opportunity for and encouragement of independent student research and internships; and that we provide resources such as research grants and off-campus opportunities to support such work. In addition, we will be mindful of our special character as a residential university. For Northwestern students, important intellectual, cultural, and personal growth takes place in such venues as residence and dining halls, playing fields, internships, extracurricular organizations, and - importantly - the nearby city of Chicago.

Specific strategies and objectives for intensifying the Northwestern undergraduate experience include:

Foster intellectual ownership and passion among our students

- Facilitate the ability for students to customize their education with a minimum of bureaucracy
- Consider selective changes in focus from departmentally based programs toward more broadly based majors; take advantage of Northwestern's unique strengths to create inventive pathways in the curriculum
- Increase opportunities for intensive, small group learning more comprehensively across the curriculum by developing more specialized programs on the model of American Studies, Music Theatre, Integrated Science Program, Integrated Arts, Honors Program in Medical Education, Engineering First, and Mathematical Methods in the Social Sciences

Encourage undergraduate work in close collaboration with faculty and graduate/professional students

- Increase the opportunities for undergraduates to actively participate in research
- Encourage senior theses, junior tutorials, and other intensive academic experiences
- Foster greater participation of professional school faculty, and graduate and professional school students, in these experiences

Develop "signature" courses and programs

- Initiate exciting lecture courses that cross departmental and school lines, using our premier faculty teachers; e.g., Thinking Scientifically, Thinking Aesthetically, Democracy and Public Life and Media and Society.
- Coordinate lectures with small group discussions
- Limit the total number of such courses
- Utilize team teaching
- Make these courses introductory in nature, with few prerequisites
- Allow these courses to form the backbone of the freshmen/sophomore academic experience, replacing at least some distribution requirements

Create focused curricular packages in areas of competency uniquely strong at Northwestern; one example would be "communication"

- Teach students how to write and speak in a compelling and logical fashion
- Help students become critical thinkers, able to assess the written and spoken word

- Provide students with the skills needed to become vital, thoughtfully outspoken members of their communities
- Emphasize the importance of intellectual risk-taking, which is so vital to an individual's own career development and the advancement of the broader community

Expand flexible learning opportunities beyond the classroom and campus

- Enhance academic and career advising services
- Support improvements in living facilities to stimulate cocurricular learning and interaction like that in the residential colleges
- Enhance opportunities for student participation in organizations and learning activities on campus; e.g., special lectures/performances, literary journals, other creative works, and service organizations.
- Enhance internship opportunities, especially in the Chicago area
- Expand and enhance the study abroad program

Maintain our commitment to access and diversity

- Further endow financial aid in order to maintain need-blind admission of freshmen

Recognize and encourage outstanding student achievement

- Fund student projects and experiences through a competitive awards program
- Celebrate student successes

Capitalizing on Our Strengths

Redesign Graduate Education and Strengthen Professional Education

A pioneer in fields ranging from African studies to performance studies to the interdisciplinary study of materials, Northwestern is well positioned to continue its tradition of creating graduate and professional programs that embrace cutting-edge intellectual developments in various fields and are therefore highly attractive to prospective students. These programs will be designed to produce future leaders in scholarship and the professions and will help shape the very definition of those fields. At the same time, however, the University must also rethink long-standing administrative and other practices that may impede rather than facilitate the achievement of such goals. The recent Report of the Task Force on PhD Programs: Doctoral Education at Northwestern will help guide some of our new initiatives.

We will fundamentally change our PhD programs to ensure that they achieve the consistently high academic quality to which we aspire. We will demonstrate the foresight and vision to mount new programs that capitalize on our strengths. Weak programs will be reconfigured or dropped, and new programs may emerge. We recognize that, given its size and resources, Northwestern cannot mount uniformly distinguished graduate and professional programs in all fields of human knowledge. Specific graduate and professional education strategies and objectives include:

Support and encourage fundamental changes in PhD programs

- Support innovative programs and initiatives that are at the cutting edge of disciplines
- Develop interdisciplinary, consolidated, and/or reconfigured programs in place of some existing programs
- Eliminate weak programs
- Establish structured links between undergraduate, professional, and graduate students
- Enhance teaching and research links between professional and graduate students and undergraduates
- Enhance cocurricular links between professional and graduate student programs

Encourage vigorous recruitment of top students

- Provide more competitive, multiyear support based on University and external funding as well as new endowments
- Continue Northwestern's leadership position in initiatives fostering student diversity

- Elevate efforts by the Graduate School to mentor graduate students and improve their experiences at Northwestern beyond those in the classroom and research environments

Continue to build on the excellence already attained in one of the best professional-student environments in the country

- Enhance teaching links among University schools with strong cross-school programs/courses
- Enhance teaching and research links beyond the University, in the Chicago area and globally
- Support interschool faculty links through courtesy and joint appointments
- Maintain commitment to access and diversity

Enhancing Facilities and Resources

Build the Infrastructure for Teaching, Learning and Research in the 21st Century

Fundamental to the achievement of the University's goals is the availability of the resources – human, administrative, physical, technological, and financial – that will allow Northwestern to translate its ambitions into realities.

We will recognize anew the critical ways in which the University's infrastructure conditions the behavior of students, faculty, and staff. We will pay continuing attention to such fundamental institutional needs as the quality and contemporaneity of classroom, performance, laboratory, and research space; library resources; computer technology; and support services ranging from animal care facilities to accounts payable. We will also challenge ourselves to reinvent management processes within our administration to achieve less bureaucracy and more timely service. Our ambitions for new learning and research initiatives will demand new ways of thinking and organizing our efforts to serve these functions.

Key strategies and objectives for addressing the future infrastructure of the University include:

Improve student residences

- Add up to 500 beds for undergraduates to eliminate the need for a lottery system
- Replace the Chicago campus residential facilities

Improve student service facilities

- Expand Norris University Center to accommodate growing demand for student activity space
- Provide adequate recreational facilities for students on the Chicago campus

Enhance the University's libraries

- Expand information access as well as collections

Enhance the University's academic facilities

- Complete reconstruction of the Technological Institute building
- Build a new biomedical sciences research building in Chicago in collaboration with Northwestern Memorial Hospital

- Build a nanometric sciences wing
- Build a new life sciences wing in Evanston in collaboration with Evanston Hospital
- Build a social sciences center
- Expand Andersen Hall
- Complete the fourth floor of Annenberg Hall
- Expand the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art
- Upgrade general classroom equipment
- Enhance operating budgets for equipment upgrades in student performance studios and teaching laboratories
- Develop better awareness of the location and intersection of departments and centers

Deploy cutting-edge technology

- Expand the number of "smart classrooms"
- Advance electronic technology and multimedia capacities for teaching and learning
- Provide training for faculty and staff
- Sustain advanced systems for Research

Reinvent management processes

- Implement and take advantage of new technologies
- Replace administrative information systems
- Re-engineer processes
- Reduce administrative complexities
- Enhance training opportunities designed to improve skills
- Implement follow-up mechanisms; once plans are in place, maintain systematic accountability by establishing timetables, measures of success, and reports on progress
- Effectively communicate accomplishments resulting from planning activities, task forces, and review efforts
- Improve support services
- Invest in outstanding staff and their training
- Address academic year calendar issues to ensure cooperation across units

Next Steps

We feel the constellation of broad priorities, strategies, and goals outlined here are, taken together, the best framework for Northwestern's future course of action. Although we already are a premier university, following the outlined course will secure our place among the very top institutions of higher learning in the world. Sustaining this goal will require boldness, creativity, and initiative from the entire University community. We call for specific proposals from individual units of the University and from collaborating sets of units. We anticipate using these broad priorities and the associated strategies and goals to develop case statements for University fund-raising and proposals for the investment of new tuition revenues. We look forward to working with faculty, staff, students, and administrative leaders in the translation of our aspirations into specific gains for Northwestern.

Ad Hoc Faculty Committee

Faculty

Peter Dallos, Professor, Biomedical Engineering, Audiology, Neurobiology and Physiology, Otolaryngology; John Evans Professor of Neuroscience

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