

**University Strategic Plan (2010-2020)**  
**Planning Framework**  
**1.19.10**

Over the past ten years, our research enterprise has flourished and sponsored research awards to Northwestern have doubled; faculty have garnered prestigious honors and students have been awarded increasing numbers of major fellowships; undergraduate applications have grown over 60% and student quality has increased; the number of graduating seniors who have studied abroad has more than tripled; we have gained international prominence in many fields including nanotechnology, economics and business, and the performing arts; our women's lacrosse team has been the national champion five years in a row; and we launched a brand new campus in Qatar.

In short, in just one decade, the university repositioned itself to become more national, more international, and more prominent among the world's best research institutions. As we envision Northwestern over the next ten years, we must be even bolder in our thinking and even more strategic in our planning. The goal is not only to improve against our own metrics, but also to improve relative to our peers. We want to attract the best students, faculty, staff, and partners to our institution to provide a world-class education, produce cutting-edge research, and through that research and the community we build impact and transform our world.

**Principles**

As workgroups discuss the priority areas, the following principles should guide thinking:

- **Beyond Borders.** Northwestern has a strong tradition of interdisciplinary research, where faculty from across departments come together to solve complex problems, design innovative processes, and create groundbreaking performances. We have opportunities associated with three geographically distinct campuses and we collaborate with partners across the world to enhance our research and teaching. We must continue to cross borders, break barriers, and collaborate, so that regardless of program home, students, staff, and faculty can take advantage of all of Northwestern's assets, and so those from the outside perceive just One Northwestern.
- **The Northwestern Experience.** The Northwestern Experience means choice. We are a top tier research university with a strong emphasis on undergraduate education. We have campuses in Evanston, Chicago, and Doha, and the unique advantages of each locale. We have a broad portfolio of academic specialties, as well as a broad set of available experiences. As we plan our next decade, we must continue to leverage these options, as well as better define the Northwestern Experience.
- **The Preferred.** Northwestern attracts the most highly qualified students, faculty, and staff. We must continue efforts to attract and retain talent, and to be not only a top institution, but to be the preferred institution.

## Workgroup Charge

### How

Workgroup members have been selected to represent the broad spectrum of the Northwestern community. Therefore, it is expected that participants serve as conduits, bringing information to and from the workgroup, so that recommendations represent the best thinking among not only the workgroup members, but among the entire community. Workgroups should therefore actively solicit proposals and ideas from throughout the University.

### What

Each workgroup is expected to submit a white paper that addresses the specific charge identified in the framework. Successful recommendations will be:

1. **Transformative.** With a clear vision and institutional commitment, Northwestern has the ability to transform itself in the next decade. Identify what actions will most influence Northwestern's trajectory.
2. **Differentiating.** Northwestern's peers are the best institutions in the world, and they, similar to Northwestern, consistently strive to improve. Please provide a strategic analysis of how your recommendations and proposed actions will differentiate Northwestern from our peer group, keeping in mind not only where they stand today, but where they are going in the future.
3. **Achievable.** While it is important to be ambitious in our thinking, it is equally important to be realistic. Plans will remain plans if they are not achievable and able to be assessed.
4. **Specific.** While general recommendations are thought-provoking, specific plans lead to action. Please include specific actions that must be taken to accomplish outlined goals.
5. **Prioritized.** There are unlimited ways in which we can improve Northwestern, yet there are limited resources to apply in a given time. Therefore, it is important for each workgroup to prioritize recommendations.

While each group has been provided specific questions to guide thinking, a set of common questions that cut across all groups should also be addressed.

- How can Northwestern advance **diversity and inclusion** goals in this area?
- How can Northwestern advance **globalization** goals in this area?
- What current or new **strategic partnerships** are critical for Northwestern to achieve goals in this area?
- Are there specific strategies we should consider to better **communicate** in this area?
- What **infrastructure** (administrative, information technology, physical and other) must be in place to implement this recommendation?
- How will we **assess** progress against our goals in this area?
- What is the **priority** of the workgroup recommendations? Which potential initiatives will have the greatest impact on our core missions: undergraduate education, graduate and professional student training, and faculty teaching and scholarship/creative work?
- What activities should we discontinue in order to **reallocate** resources toward new initiatives?

## Conclusion

The first phase of the strategic planning process tackles the seven areas identified through community-wide discussions and outlined in this framework. Absent from this list are two critical areas that will be addressed in a second phase, as planning moves closer to implementation.

### Infrastructure

As noted in the Highest Order of Excellence (2005-2010), a robust infrastructure is needed to enable faculty and student success. While it is critical to have the appropriate infrastructure in place to achieve stated goals, it is even more important to have a complete understanding of university priorities before infrastructure recommendations are made. Therefore, the infrastructure recommendations provided by each workgroup will be considered holistically before moving forward in planning the enabling infrastructure.

### Communications

*How* we communicate our story is critical to Northwestern's identity and future success. To plan an effective communication strategy, however, *what* we communicate, must also be apparent. Therefore, a communications workgroup will come together once the University's key directions have been developed through the planning process. At that point, the group will discuss how best to convey our identity, what communication channels are optimal for various constituent groups, and how to balance messages from a central unit with messages from individual units.

Throughout the planning process, numerous excellent and achievable recommendations will be brought forth. These recommendations will be prioritized by contributors, by workgroups, and eventually by university leadership. Therefore, as a natural part of the process, not all of the good ideas will emerge as part of Northwestern's strategy for the next decade. This prioritization process does not, however, preclude advancing recommendations that have garnered wide support, as operational plans proceed in parallel with strategic plans.

## I. Areas of Distinction: Scholarship, Research, and Creative Work

With research strength across a spectrum of disciplines, and increasingly at the intersection of disciplines, Northwestern is positioned to lead in a number of fields. We have a responsibility to the members of the Northwestern community, to the Chicago region, and to the country to focus our attention and resources on select areas of distinction, as well as to design processes to identify new areas of endeavor with the highest potential impact. How we identify these areas depends not only on our existing strengths, but also on our unique ability to address global concerns and to contribute to global discourse.

**Process:** The workgroup will solicit “Distinction” proposals from the Northwestern community. Proposals should address elements outlined below, as well as additional areas deemed critical by the workgroup. The areas of distinction should include existing areas of strength, as well as forward thinking areas in which Northwestern must excel as one of the top international universities in the future.

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**Charge for Proposers:** Articulate exactly what steps need to be taken for Northwestern to become a leader, or strengthen its leadership position, in this domain. These steps include efforts to attract and retain the very best faculty and students from round the world. Indicate how research in this area will address critical needs.

**Charge for Workgroup:** Assess and prioritize proposals based on their potential impact on both Northwestern and on the field. Identify a process that continuously identifies priority areas and sunsets areas that are no longer distinctive.

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### Proposal Elements

- Perform a “SWOT” analysis to identify not only Northwestern’s Strengths and Opportunities in this field, but also our Weaknesses and the Threats to our ambitions.
- What comparative advantage does Northwestern have in this arena?
  - How can Northwestern leverage our proximity to Chicago and other resources/structures to advance this domain?
  - How does our structure and portfolio of schools and programs, and our history of collaboration, advantage us in this domain?
- How will increased investment lead to additional external awards? What funding opportunities in this field are likely to emerge from government, industry, and private foundations?
- What societal needs will this research area address over the next decade?

### Common Questions

- Diversity and inclusion: How will investment in this domain better advance diversity and inclusion goals?
- Globalization: How can investment in this domain advance globalization goals?
- Strategic partnerships: What current partnerships provide Northwestern a competitive advantage in this field? What new strategic partnerships are critical for Northwestern to achieve goals in this domain?

- Infrastructure: What infrastructure (administrative, information technology, physical and other) must be in place for this domain to succeed at Northwestern?
- Assessment: How should success in this domain be measured?

### **Workgroup Questions**

- Assess the proposals based on their:
  - Impact on the field
  - Competitive advantage
  - Fit with current and future Northwestern programs, research, and people
  - Range of departments and schools involved
  - Feasibility – are the outlined implementation steps, including financial, space, and administrative needs, achievable?
  - Impact on undergraduate learning
  - Impact on graduate education
  - Impact on student experience
- Categorize the proposals into three groups:
  1. Highly recommended based on the analysis (please rank)
  2. Recommended but not the highest priority
  3. Not recommended
- What strategies could we employ to communicate our distinction in these select areas?
- Does the group recommend any current University activities be discontinued in order to reallocate resources toward new initiatives?

## II. Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

We have witnessed modest changes in our modes of teaching and learning at Northwestern, but new technologies and research on effective teaching and learning models suggest that more pronounced changes should occur in the coming years.

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**Charge:** Identify effective and improved learning models for all types of learners (undergraduates, graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, adult learners), and methods to assess their effectiveness in creating value-added learning outcomes.

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### Workgroup Questions

- With increasing competition from for-profit institutions, distance learning providers, and international universities, what is Northwestern's value proposition for undergraduate education? How should we balance liberal arts and pre-professional education?
- Disregarding historical and current teaching practices, if you were to design the most effective models of education, what characteristics would they have? What different practices would be employed to serve different student populations and different fields of study? How would technology be employed?
- What role should experiential learning, group learning, and service learning play in the education of our different student populations?
- How can the divides between research, learning, and teaching become more permeable so that each informs the other for faculty, undergraduate, and graduate and professional students?
- What more can Northwestern do to motivate and reward faculty for excellent teaching, as well as research and creative work? Must our incentive systems be re-examined?
- How can teaching and learning experiences contribute to an improved sense of community on campus?
- How do we measure the learning of our students and what evidence do we have in this regard? How do value-added learning experiences impact career outcomes?
- What learning environments outside of the classroom need to be supported or created?
- How can we better integrate our research findings in teaching and learning with actual practice on campus?
- We have experimented with different teaching modes for Gateway courses. Do these and other pilots provide models for broader consideration?

### Common Questions

- Diversity and inclusion: How can the content and structure of our educational models improve diversity and inclusion on campus?
- Globalization: How can our teaching and learning models advance our goals of more globally engaged students and faculty?
- Strategic partnerships: What partnerships help, or could help, Northwestern improve in the areas of teaching, learning, and assessment?
- Communication: Are there specific strategies we should consider to better communicate our strength and commitment to excellent teaching?

- Infrastructure: What infrastructure (administrative, information technology, physical and other) must be in place to deliver recommended changes in our education model?
- Assessment: How will we assess progress against our goals in teaching, learning, and assessment?
- Priority: What is the priority of the workgroup recommendations? Which potential initiatives will have the greatest impact on our core missions: undergraduate education, graduate and professional student training, and faculty teaching and scholarship/creative work?
- Reallocation: What activities, in this area and in others, might we discontinue because they are no longer effective relative to the investment with the result that we might then be able to reallocate resources toward new initiatives?

### III. Beyond the Classroom

Our students, faculty, and staff seek to be engaged in meaningful intellectual, civic and social experiences in addition to what occurs in the classroom. We, as a university community, must find ways to communicate clearly the opportunities that exist to address community needs, and through such engagement enhance the experience of being at Northwestern on campus and in regional, national, and international venues.

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**Charge:** Utilizing the lenses of recruiting, retaining, and providing the highest quality experience for students, faculty, and staff, clarify Northwestern's unique value proposition outside of the classroom. Articulate ways to strengthen the sense of intellectual, social, and civic community that takes advantage of the opportunities associated with our location and breadth.

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#### Workgroup Questions

- What culture does Northwestern aspire to have? Should we develop common experiences for students? For faculty? For staff?
- What steps can be taken to create a sense of one community for students, staff, and faculty across all schools on both the Chicago and Evanston campuses? Qatar?
- Considering the recent Housing Study, what steps should Northwestern take to create intellectually and socially stimulating living/learning communities? How can all members of the University community take part?
- How can Northwestern foster greater civic participation and volunteerism?
- How can we make better use of our proximity to Chicago?
- How can we celebrate our unique athletics status of being a highly ranked private university in the Big Ten?
- What changes might enable recreational athletics (intramurals, fitness activities) increase participation and building community?
- How might our performing arts program be enhanced to create shared experiences and to build community?
- Identify ways to make Northwestern one of the top places to work for staff, faculty, and students.
- What incentives should be provided for faculty, graduate and professional students, and upperclassmen to be involved in the integration of undergraduate life with the intellectual, social, and civic community?
- Specifically for undergraduate students:
  - How can we strengthen our first-year experience?
  - Should we invest more in other forms of experience-based learning, such as lab research or entrepreneurial opportunities?
  - What steps can we take to address undergraduate student satisfaction?
  - Are we taking full advantage of our alumni as strategic partners in creating internship and career opportunities for our students?



## Common Questions

- Diversity and inclusion: How can we strengthen a sense of inclusion of diverse people and ideas throughout campus?
- Globalization: What experiences, outside the classroom, can contribute to a more global-minded community?
- Strategic partnerships: What strategic partnerships can enhance out of classroom experiences?
- Communication: Are there specific strategies we should consider to better communicate the intellectual life beyond the classroom?
- Infrastructure: What infrastructure (administrative, information technology, physical and other) must be in place to support a vibrant community?
- Assessment: How will we assess progress against our goals?
- Priority: What is the priority of the workgroup recommendations? Which potential initiatives will have the greatest impact on our core missions: undergraduate education, graduate and professional student training, and faculty teaching and scholarship/creative work?
- Reallocation: What activities, in this area and in others, might we discontinue because they are no longer effective relative to the investment with the result that we might then be able to reallocate resources toward new initiatives?

## IV. Globalization

In our increasingly global society, Northwestern's global strategy is critical to the University's identity. We must define our educational and research priorities and establish a clear strategy for building relationships with countries or institutions abroad.

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**Charge:** With the dual goal of bringing greater diversity to Northwestern while expanding the excellence of Northwestern throughout the world, identify Northwestern's priorities in global engagement and create a framework for how we pursue and react to new opportunities.

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### Workgroup Questions

- What are our institutional goals regarding globalization?
- What is unique about Northwestern with respect to globalization?
  - What strategies have our peers articulated? What lessons can be learned from their strategies and efforts? What arenas already have many players?
  - What intellectual strengths does Northwestern have and how does that inform our strategy?
  - How do we incorporate our strengths in interdisciplinarity and collaboration in our global activities?
- What regions are priorities for outreach? What activities are priorities in these environs?
  - Based on the listing of current international activities and research (the Buffett Center for International and Comparative Studies is leading the construction of a web site on Northwestern University Global Opportunities, or NU GO): Is there an absence of strategically important locations or activities that we should consider adding? Does a review of this list suggest an involvement in activities of questionable value or potentially unacceptable risk?
- What goals do we have in terms of the numbers of international students (undergraduate, graduate, and professional) that study here? What goals do we have for the share of students at each level that will have a global experience—of what type, duration and impact?
- How effectively are we supporting faculty and students from other parts of the world at Northwestern? How effectively are we supporting our students, faculty and staff in their work abroad?
- How can we continue to improve the overall integration of study abroad into the undergraduate curriculum?
- How can we utilize existing and future technologies to achieve our goals in globalization?
- What organizational changes are needed to implement a chosen strategy?
  - What activities should be coordinated centrally?
  - What activities should occur at the school, department, or individual level?

## Common Questions

- Diversity and inclusion: How do we incorporate diversity so that international members of our community add to, and do not disappear into, the Northwestern identity?
- Strategic partnerships: What international partnerships can be made to enhance campus initiatives? Can we capitalize on or add value to existing linkages abroad to expand opportunities on campus?
- Communication: Are there specific strategies we should consider to better communicate our globalization efforts and plans?
- Infrastructure: In addition to organizational changes, what other infrastructure (administrative, information technology, physical and other) must be in place to support our globalization priorities?
- Assessment: How will we assess progress against our goals?
- Priority: What is the priority of the workgroup recommendations? Which potential initiatives will have the greatest impact on our core missions: undergraduate education, graduate and professional student training, and faculty teaching and scholarship/creative work?
- Reallocation: What activities, in this area and in others, might we discontinue because they are no longer effective relative to the investment with the result that we might then be able to reallocate resources toward new initiatives?

## V. Diversity and Inclusion

Our efforts to build a diverse and inclusive environment at Northwestern have only partially succeeded. We must do even more to create opportunities for members of our community to expand their understanding of the world, to learn from those with differing perspectives and backgrounds (income, geographic, ethnic, and other), and to extend their intellectual and social comfort zones.

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**Charge:** Create a strategy to recruit and retain talented and diverse students, faculty, and staff and create an environment that nurtures the richness that diversity brings.

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### Workgroup Questions

- What are our goals for diversity and inclusion and how do our current practices and environment enhance or interfere with achieving these goals?
- Are we effectively leveraging our proximity to Chicago to recruit diverse and talented students, staff, and faculty?
- How can we make both our cultural and physical environment more inviting and inclusive for all individuals?
- What models of increasing and supporting diversity and inclusion have worked at Northwestern? At our peer institutions?
- Are we effectively using national organizations (e.g. Women in Engineering)?
- Are there organizational changes that we need to make to create improvements?
- For Undergraduate, Graduate, and Professional Students
  - How can we better utilize summer outreach/research programs to recruit talented and diverse students?
  - Are Northwestern students, alumni, and faculty helping to recruit diverse students effectively?
  - Does Northwestern need to consider new financial aid models to attract a diverse class of students?
  - What programs and networks are in place and need to be put in place to support students?
  - What role does housing play in diversity and inclusion efforts?
  - What role do athletics, Greek life, and other activities play in diversity and inclusion efforts?
- For Faculty and Staff
  - What hiring and retention strategies does Northwestern need to consider to recruit and keep a diverse faculty and staff?

### Common Questions

- Globalization: Are we effectively engaging international students so that the benefits of diversity and inclusion are reaped from both the students and the community?
- Strategic partnerships: What partnerships help, or could help, Northwestern attract, retain, and support diverse students, faculty, and staff?
- Communication: Are there specific strategies we should consider to better communicate our goals, efforts, and successes in creating a diverse and inclusive environment?

- Infrastructure: What infrastructure (administrative, information technology, physical and other) must be in place to deliver recommended changes?
- Assessment: How will we assess progress against our goals in diversity and inclusion?
- Priority: What is the priority of the workgroup recommendations? Which potential initiatives will have the greatest impact on our core missions: undergraduate education, graduate and professional student training, and faculty teaching and scholarship/creative work?
- Reallocation: What activities, in this area and in others, might we discontinue because they are no longer effective relative to the investment with the result that we might then be able to reallocate resources toward new initiatives?

## VI. Strategic Partnerships

The University has benefited greatly from a range of key partnerships, e.g. with Argonne and Fermi, the Chicago Biomedical Consortium, hospital affiliates, legal clinics, the Adler Planetarium, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Lookingglass Theatre, the Art Institute, the Big Ten, and with the Chicago Botanic Gardens among many others. As we consider the University's plans over the next ten years, it is important to strengthen these relationships, as well as consider new arrangements.

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**Charge:** Consider ways that Northwestern can better leverage existing partnerships and identify new strategic partners that further our mission.

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### Workgroup Questions

- Do we have a good understanding and inventory of existing regional, national and international partnerships with other institutions, clinical affiliates, government institutions, non-profit organizations, K-12 schools, industry, consortia, our alumni, and others?
  - Are there additional innovative connections we can make to existing consortia and partnerships?
  - What new partnerships should we build?
  - Are there partnerships that are no longer strategic that should be terminated?
  - What are the reasons for creating partnerships? Are there priority partnerships that should be emphasized?
- What activities should be coordinated centrally and what activities should occur at the local level?
- What emerging trends in research support by the government and industry will drive local or regional partnerships over the next decade?
- How can Northwestern partner with nearby institutions (including the city, county, state and federal governments and the private sector) so that the Chicagoland region is seen as an intellectual and research hub akin to the Bay Area, Boston, and North Carolina's Research Triangle?
- How can we best foster student, faculty, and staff engagement with Chicago and Evanston?

### Common Questions

- Diversity and inclusion: What partnerships help, or could help, Northwestern attract, retain, and support diverse students, faculty, and staff?
- Globalization: What international partnerships can be made to enhance campus initiatives? Can we capitalize on or add value to existing linkages abroad to expand opportunities on campus?
- Communication: Are there specific strategies we should consider to better communicate our existing partnerships and our openness to creating new ones in strategic areas?
- Infrastructure: What infrastructure (administrative, information technology, physical and other) must be in place to promote and maintain critical partnerships?
- Assessment: How will we assess successful partnerships?

- Priority: What is the priority of the workgroup recommendations? Which potential initiatives will have the greatest impact on our core missions: undergraduate education, graduate and professional student training, and faculty teaching and scholarship/creative work?
- Reallocation: What activities, in this area and in others, might we discontinue because they are no longer effective relative to the investment with the result that we might then be able to reallocate resources toward new initiatives?

## **VII. Purple Sky**

To be truly visionary, we must imagine what our world will look like in the future and how Northwestern can best contribute to that world. Using “purple sky” thinking, without preconceptions, the sky is the limit as we brainstorm new and exciting practices and directions for Northwestern.

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**Charge:** Imagining future needs and goals, suggest new, inventive, and better ways for Northwestern to accomplish its mission of educating students, making new discoveries, and contributing to society.

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### **Areas to Consider**

- Financial Model – Is higher education, and more specifically, Northwestern’s current financial model sustainable? What options exist to innovate in this area?
- University Size – Should we maintain historical numbers of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students? What costs and benefits would there be in decreasing and/or increasing the various student populations?
- University Scope – Do our current set of schools and programs advantage us for the future? Are there new macro areas that we should invest in? What large areas should we move away from?