

PARTNERSHIP FOR COLLEGE COMPLETION

Accelerating action to close the graduation gap

Illinois Equity in Attainment Equity Plan 2020-2025

January 2020



Northern Illinois University

Executive Summary

Introduction

As a regional research institution with a deep commitment to teaching, Northern Illinois University (NIU) has a long and proud history of serving students from all backgrounds by providing broad educational and career opportunities. NIU remains steadfast in its commitment to access and opportunity for students from underserved populations (e.g., Pell-eligible, students of color, and first-generation) who come to college to achieve their personal and career goals and to make a difference in their families, communities, states, and nations. We are committed to providing not only access, but also to ensure that all NIU students can succeed academically and personally. The NIU ILEA Equity Plan will serve as a roadmap for NIU to close gaps in degree attainment and academic achievement particularly for low-income, first-generation, African American, and Latino/a students.

Current State

Due to the persistence and size of equity gaps across colleges and universities in Illinois, this initiative prioritizes urgent action on equitable degree completion outcomes for students across racial and socioeconomic groups. Degree-completion and achievement disparities are present among African American and White students, Latino and White students, and Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible students.

Since 2015, NIU gathered and analyzed equity data disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, race, and Pell eligibility. These equity data track success rates in all courses offered since 2010, year-to-year persistence rates, and 4-, 5-, and 6-year graduation rates. Additionally, in 2016 the Office of Academic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, in cooperation with the Division of Academic Affairs, charged each of the NIU academic colleges with creating an Equity Team to develop a college action plan to address academic equity and issues surrounding inclusion and access. As a result, each college better recognized the challenges faced by students.

Future Vision

The goal of the equity plan and the Illinois Equity in Attainment Initiative is to eliminate disparities in degree completion rates on our campus between African American and White students, between Latino and White students, and between low-income and higher income students (as indicated by Pell eligibility). NIU will continue to execute our Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan. In addition to the investment in these strategies developed to close equity gaps for African American and Latino students, we will build capacity in our existing mentoring programs for African American and Latino males.

Institutional Strategies

NIU will continue to execute our Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan, as well as focusing on the following strategies:

1. Eliminate all non-college-level math courses and revising repeat policies
2. Provide supplemental instruction in all gateway courses with high D/F/W and/or equity gaps
3. Develop contextualized math pathways for meta majors and increasing access to adaptive

learning math labs

4. Invest in an inclusive teaching and learning model that promotes curricular redesign, culturally responsive teaching strategies, and innovative professional development
5. Remove bias processes that hinder access to financial aid and influence admissions decisions
6. Leverage financial aid to support affordability
7. Build capacity in mentoring programs for students of color
8. Implement the use of NIU Navigate for supportive interventions

Evaluation Plan

NIU has established a plan to evaluate each institutional strategy. Objectives, evaluation methods, and specific outcomes (targets) have been developed with specific personnel responsible for each objective.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Signature Page.....	5
1: Introduction	6
2. Current State.....	10
3. Future Vision	16
4. Institutional Strategies	17
5. Evaluation Plan.....	24
6. Budget	34
7. Timeline.....	37
8. ILEA Team.....	38
9. Glossary.....	39
References	41
Appendix	42

Signature Page

Northern Illinois University

Equity Plan: 2020 - 2025

This Equity Plan has been endorsed by the following members of our university community:



Date: August 14, 2020

Lisa C. Freeman, President



Date: August 14, 2020

Beth Ingram, Provost



Date: August 14, 2020

Vernese E. Edghill-Walden, Senior Vice President, Chief Diversity Officer



Date: August 14, 2020

Sol Jenson, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Marketing



Date: August 14, 2020

Omar Ghrayeb, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies

1: Introduction

1a: ILEA Overview

Despite improvements in high school graduation and college matriculation rates for Illinois students, there are wide and persistent gaps in college completion rates especially for low-income, first-generation students, and students of color. The launch of the **Illinois Equity in Attainment (ILEA)** marks a major step forward for 25 two-year and four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities from the northeast region and across Illinois who are committing to eliminate racial and socio-economic achievement gaps by 2025 while aggressively increasing completion rates on their campuses.

ILEA is the signature initiative of the Partnership for College Completion (PCC), a non-profit organization founded in 2016 to catalyze and champion policies, systems, and practices that ensure all students can graduate from college and achieve their career aspirations. With an initial focus on northeastern Illinois, PCC has set a goal to eliminate institutional achievement gaps in college degree completion for low-income, Latino and African American students in Illinois by 2025, establishing the region as a national leader in equity in attainment.

Beginning with this initial cohort, PCC will offer direct support and resources to the 25 colleges and universities who have volunteered to be members of ILEA. PCC will work alongside these partner colleges to jointly set commitments, identify appropriate evidence-based strategies to utilize on their campuses, and scale effective practices. PCC will support policy and practice change efforts that have the explicit goal of eliminating racial and socioeconomic degree completion gaps, while increasing institutional college completion rates overall.

By participating in ILEA, partners commit to a core set of principles:

- Colleges are responsible for graduating all their degree-seeking students as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- All students can graduate with college degrees if they have the right information, tools, and supports.
- Achievement gaps between low-income, Black, and Latino students and their higher-income and White peers are unacceptable and should be eliminated.
- These efforts will be undertaken without sacrificing institutional quality, excellence, or increasing admission standards.

The ILEA colleges will conduct a deep analysis of their institutional data, develop equity plans that contain annual growth targets, and report progress toward their goals which will be shared publicly. The colleges will also work to identify obstacles students face and develop programs and policies that break down unnecessary barriers to college graduation.

The launch of ILEA follows a galvanizing 2017 PCC report, “[Unequal Opportunity in Illinois: A Look at Who Graduates College and Why It Matters](#),” which found that only 33.7 percent of African American students who start at four-year institutions earn bachelor’s degrees within six years – a rate 32.7 percentage points below that of their White peers. For Latinos, 49.3 percent are earning degrees, a gap of 17.1 percentage points. The completion gap between low-income and wealthier students is also alarming: according to Advance Illinois, only 37 percent of low-income students graduate in six years while 75 percent of wealthier students do.

Increased and more equitable graduation outcomes across the diversity of our state’s higher education institutions benefits students, their families, and the state of Illinois. A three percent increase in graduation rates is projected to produce \$1.7B increase in net earnings, \$132M increase in tax revenue, and \$35M in public system savings. The progress of the ILEA member colleges and universities will provide a set of learnings that the Partnership will document and share with practitioners and policymakers across Illinois, the region, and the nation, establishing a path forward that will promote equity in college achievement.

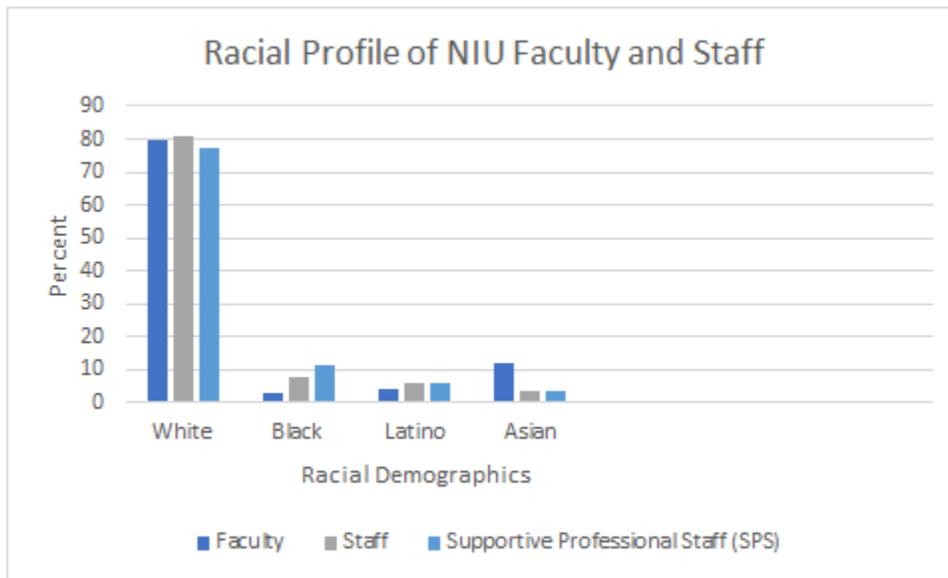
For more information on ILEA, please visit: <http://partnershipfcc.org/ilea>.

1b: Institution Overview

As a regional research institution with a deep commitment to teaching, Northern Illinois University (NIU) has a long and proud history of serving students from all backgrounds and providing broad educational and career opportunities. NIU remains steadfast in its commitment to providing access and opportunity for students from underserved populations (e.g., Pell-eligible, students of color, first-generation) who come to college to achieve their personal and career goals, and to make a difference in their families, communities, states, and nations.^[1] Collectively, students from underserved populations comprise 76% of NIU’s student body: 47% of students of color, 40% low-income, and 50% first generation.

The racial profile of the faculty and staff at NIU is becoming more diversified. As highlighted in the Strategic Enrollment Plan, to obtain a more diverse workforce, the university requires that all faculty and staff search committees complete implicit bias training before searches are approved to begin. This change, in collaboration with the College Deans, has contributed to the increased hiring of faculty of color in FY 20. As a result of these initiatives, 50% of faculty hired in FY20 are faculty of color. Faculty includes tenured and tenure-track professors, adjuncts, and instructors. Supportive Professional Staff include professionals who are in managerial roles and the President and the Senior Leadership roles.

^[1] In this document, students of color refer to Black Non-Hispanic and Hispanic students.



*Faculty and Staff who identify as American Indian and Hawaiian Pacific Islanders represent one percent or less.

NIU is recognized for its intersection of research and knowledge creation with educational opportunity and upward social mobility. A 2017 Brookings Institution report identified NIU as a leader in both research and social-mobility objectives, placing it first in Illinois and the top 60 nationally among selective public research universities. Illinois’ changing racial demographics during the past ten years has resulted in increased racial diversity among students enrolling at NIU.

With a mission of making a college degree attainable and celebrating the rich diversity of our student population, NIU is one of the most affordable colleges in Illinois for both in-state and out-of-state tuition. In addition, NIU has a rich history of serving transfer students through established, seamless transfer pathways.

1c: Equity Statement

In Fall 2019, the Committee for Academic Equity and Inclusive Excellence crafted a draft version of an equity statement. The draft equity statement was presented to the shared governance councils, The Colleges, Presidential Commissions, and student organizations. At the conclusion of the presentations, participants provided critical feedback on the statement. Furthermore, they were given a link to provide anonymous feedback. Over 90 members of NIU faculty, staff, alumni, students, and community members gave their input on the proposed equity statement.

The feedback was analyzed and coded with common themes emerging from the data including suggestions that the statement should be actionable, the term underrepresented should be defined, and the need to identify the barriers in order to eliminate them. The equity statement was revised and

presented to the university senior leadership which resulted in one minor revision. The final draft is as follows:

Northern Illinois University strives to improve outcomes for all students by identifying and removing barriers that disproportionately hinder the academic achievement and student experience of historically and currently underserved populations.

1d: Purpose of the Equity Plan

The ILEA Equity Plan is intended to serve as a roadmap for outlining how NIU will work toward closing gaps in degree attainment for low-income, first-generation, African American, and Latino students. Due to the persistence and size of equity gaps across colleges and universities in Illinois, this initiative prioritizes urgent action on equitable degree completion outcomes for students across racial and socioeconomic groups. Degree-completion disparities are present among these target student groups:

- African American and White students
- Latino and White students
- Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible students

The ILEA Equity Plan is intended to inform institutional efforts to increase equity and degree completion.

1e: Campus Engagement Plan

This campus engagement plan will augment and support NIU's existing plan to eliminate equity gaps begun in 2016.

The ILEA Core leadership team, comprised of senior leaders from Student Affairs, Undergraduate Studies, Academic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Enrollment Management, the Provost, and the President, is leading the development of this ILEA Equity Plan. These key stakeholders are also responsible for managing outcomes from the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan which includes the equity plan strategies, objectives, and tactics.

We will bring together the ILEA and SEM teams intentionally to ensure synergy as we work to achieve our academic equity, recruitment, and retention goals. The SEM Committee will engage the broader university community and includes faculty, advisors, and deans from all colleges, leadership from Academic and Student Affairs divisions, and is chaired by the Vice President for Enrollment Management and the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies.

The SEM committee has multiple working groups that are tasked with implementing the tactics in the SEM plan. One of the working groups focuses on academic equity. The Equity Working Group consists of advising staff, faculty from a wide range of disciplines, Academic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion staff from the cultural resource centers, and members of the ILEA core team representing Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. This working group will work collaboratively with the rest of the SEM and ILEA core teams to eliminate academic equity gaps

and increase student success. The working group will also work with each college and student support programs to identify and execute concrete actions to increase equity-minded practices and address academic equity at the departmental and course levels.

2. Current State

Since 2015, NIU gathered and analyzed equity data disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, race, and Pell-eligibility. These equity data track success rates in all courses offered since 2010, year-to-year persistence rates, and 4-, 5-, and 6-year graduation rates.

In 2016, the Office of Academic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, in cooperation with the Division of Academic Affairs, charged each of the NIU academic colleges with creating an Equity Team (including a Dean-appointed Team Leader) to develop a college action plan to address academic equity and issues surrounding inclusion and access. The work of the College Equity Teams included these priorities:

- Identify course, persistence, and completion equity gaps using NIU achievement data
- Explore current policies and practices that potentially undermine equal academic outcomes
- Examine existing successful academic supports
- Engage students to understand their successes and challenges
- Host faculty and staff meetings focused on current best practices for academic support, institutional barriers that impact student success, as well as strategies that can support culturally responsive pedagogy

This revealing process helped each college to better recognize the challenges faced by students providing vital insights into how faculty and staff can address some of their challenges. Many of the colleges recognized the need for the institution to take greater responsibility in its partnership with students to ensure equal outcomes. This shift represents a critical step toward creating a campus culture built on the principles of equity-mindedness. Recognizing the importance of success in gateway courses was a second outgrowth of the equity initiative. Disaggregation of performance data highlighted the significant and sometimes disproportionate impact many 100- and 200-level courses can have on access to majors, minors, certificates, and ultimately, careers. As a result of this realization, colleges and departments are examining ways to reduce equity gaps in gateway courses among students from underserved populations.

NIU 2014-2018 Credits Earned, Fall-to-Fall Persistence by Ethnicity

Cohort	Ethnicity	Count	Credits	Credits	Fall 1 to Fall 2 persistence	Credits	Fall 2 to Fall 3 persistence
			accumulated first fall (at least 15)	accumulated first year (at least 30)		accumulated by end of second year (at least 60)	
Fall 2014 New Freshmen	Black Non-Hispanic	675	24%	15%	62%	9%	44%
	Hispanic	468	48%	34%	70%	26%	61%
	White Non-Hispanic	1152	61%	47%	80%	39%	68%
	Cohort Total	2542	48%	36%	72%	28%	59%
Fall 2015 New Freshmen	Black Non-Hispanic	550	24%	18%	62%	11%	48%
	Hispanic	414	45%	36%	72%	29%	60%
	White Non-Hispanic	1039	67%	54%	77%	44%	68%
	Cohort Total	2259	51%	41%	73%	33%	61%
Fall 2016 New Freshmen	Black Non-Hispanic	441	44%	22%	58%	12%	44%
	Hispanic	325	59%	44%	74%	28%	62%
	White Non-Hispanic	842	73%	62%	80%	48%	71%
	Cohort Total	1802	61%	47%	73%	34%	63%
Fall 2017 New Freshmen	Black Non-Hispanic	471	36%	22%	62%	16%	46%
	Hispanic	362	56%	38%	66%	26%	51%
	White Non-Hispanic	826	69%	60%	80%	48%	68%
	Cohort Total	1852	58%	46%	72%	35%	60%
Fall 2018 New Freshmen	Black Non-Hispanic	580	40%	25%	61%		
	Hispanic	388	56%	42%	68%		
	White Non-Hispanic	709	73%	62%	81%		
	Cohort Total	1856	58%	45%	72%		

NIU 2010-2018 4-, 5-, and 6-year Graduation Rates by Ethnicity

	Count	Degree in 1 Year	Degree in 2 Years	Degree in 3 Years	Degree in 4 Years	Degree in 5 Years	Degree in 6 Years
Fall 2010	2705	0%	0%	0%	23%	42%	46%
Black Non-Hispanic	715	0%	0%	0%	6%	20%	26%
Hispanic	339	0%	0%	0%	17%	38%	42%
White Non-Hispanic	1416	0%	0%	1%	33%	52%	56%
Fall 2011	2590	0%	0%	1%	20%	39%	45%
Black Non-Hispanic	669	0%	0%	0%	5%	22%	29%
Hispanic	412	0%	0%	0%	15%	34%	38%
White Non-Hispanic	1228	0%	0%	1%	31%	49%	54%
Fall 2012	2664	0%	0%	1%	24%	41%	45%
Black Non-Hispanic	734	0%	0%	0%	7%	18%	24%
Hispanic	380	0%	0%	1%	16%	34%	39%
White Non-Hispanic	1253	0%	0%	1%	37%	57%	61%
Fall 2013	2679	0%	0%	1%	25%	43%	48%
Black Non-Hispanic	762	0%	0%	0%	7%	22%	30%
Hispanic	446	0%	0%	0%	20%	39%	46%
White Non-Hispanic	1194	0%	0%	1%	37%	57%	61%
Fall 2014	2542	0%	0%	1%	27%	44%	
Black Non-Hispanic	674	0%	0%	0%	10%	25%	
Hispanic	468	0%	0%	0%	24%	43%	
White Non-Hispanic	1150	0%	0%	2%	38%	55%	
Fall 2015	2259	0%	0%	1%	30%		
Black Non-Hispanic	549	0%	0%	0%	10%		
Hispanic	413	0%	0%	0%	26%		
White Non-Hispanic	1038	0%	0%	2%	41%		
Fall 2016	1802	0%	0%	2%			
Black Non-Hispanic	439	0%	0%	0%			
Hispanic	328	0%	0%	0%			
White Non-Hispanic	841	0%	0%	3%			
Fall 2017	1852	0%	0%				
Black Non-Hispanic	470	0%	0%				
Hispanic	364	0%	0%				
White Non-Hispanic	824	0%	1%				
Fall 2018	1856	0%					
Black Non-Hispanic	580	0%					
Hispanic	388	0%					
White Non-Hispanic	709	0%					

2a: African American Students

Among the cohorts analyzed (Black Non-Hispanic, Hispanic, White Non-Hispanic) from Fall 2014 through Fall 2018, African Americans represent the smallest proportion of students accumulating at least 15 credits by the end of the first semester, though this proportion has increased significantly over the timespan analyzed; the smallest proportion of students accumulating at least 30 credits by the end of the first year, though this proportion has increased over the timespan analyzed; the smallest proportion of students accumulating at least 60 credits by the end of the second year, though this proportion has increased over the timespan analyzed; and, the lowest Fall 1 to Fall 2, and Fall 2 to Fall 3 persistence rates. For African American students, the lag in both credits earned and in year-to-year persistence predictably leads to significant equity gaps in 4-, 5-, and 6-year graduation rates.

2b: Latino Students

While Latinos achieved at considerably higher rates than African Americans relative to credits earned, year-to-year persistence, and 4-, 5-, and 6-year graduation rates, they nonetheless achieved at significantly lower rates than their White peers.

2c: Pell-Eligible Students

Students eligible to receive Pell Grants achieved at significantly lower rates than their Non-Pell eligible peers in credits accumulated and Fall-to-Fall persistence rates. These equity gaps predictably lead to large equity gaps in 4-, 5-, and 6-year graduation rates. Interestingly, equity gaps in graduation rates among **transfer** students who are eligible to receive Pell Grants are considerably smaller compared to those for new Pell-eligible freshmen, though rates for Pell-eligible transfer students still trail those for non-Pell eligible transfer students. The difference in graduation rates for new freshmen and new transfer students likely is attributable to factors other than socio-economic status, such as first-generation status for which the impact diminishes dramatically the longer students are in college.

NIU 2014-2018 Credits Earned, Fall-to-Fall Persistence by Pell Grant Eligibility

Cohort	Pell Eligibility	Count	Credits accumulated	Credits accumulated	Fall 1 to Fall 2 persistence	Credits accumulated by	Fall 2 to Fall 3 persistence
			first fall (at least 15)	first year (at least 30)		end of second year (at least 60)	
Fall 2014 Freshmen	Non Pell	1257	58%	46%	76%	37%	66%
	Pell	1285	37%	26%	68%	18%	53%
	Cohort Total	2542	48%	36%	72%	28%	59%
Fall 2015 Freshmen	Non Pell	1185	63%	53%	79%	43%	68%
	Pell	1074	38%	29%	66%	22%	54%
	Cohort Total	2259	51%	41%	73%	33%	61%
Fall 2016 Freshmen	Non Pell	999	67%	56%	77%	43%	67%
	Pell	803	55%	37%	68%	24%	57%
	Cohort Total	1802	61%	47%	73%	34%	63%
Fall 2017 Freshmen	Non Pell	937	68%	58%	79%	46%	68%
	Pell	915	47%	33%	66%	24%	51%
	Cohort Total	1852	58%	46%	72%	35%	60%
Fall 2018 Freshmen	Non Pell	966	65%	54%	78%		
	Pell	890	50%	35%	65%		
	Cohort Total	1856	58%	45%	72%		

NIU 2010-2018 4-, 5-, and 6-year New Freshmen Graduation Rates by Pell Grant Eligibility

	Count	Degree in 1 Year	Degree in 2 Years	Degree in 3 Years	Degree in 4 Years	Degree in 5 Years	Degree in 6 Years
Fall 2010	2705	0%	0%	0%	23%	42%	46%
Non Pell	1350	0%	0%	1%	32%	51%	56%
Pell	1355	0%	0%	0%	15%	32%	37%
Fall 2011	2590	0%	0%	1%	20%	39%	45%
Non Pell	1287	0%	0%	1%	27%	48%	53%
Pell	1303	0%	0%	0%	14%	30%	36%
Fall 2012	2664	0%	0%	1%	24%	41%	45%
Non Pell	1324	0%	0%	1%	34%	54%	58%
Pell	1340	0%	0%	0%	14%	28%	32%
Fall 2013	2679	0%	0%	1%	25%	43%	48%
Non Pell	1236	0%	0%	1%	35%	54%	59%
Pell	1443	0%	0%	1%	16%	33%	39%
Fall 2014	2542	0%	0%	1%	27%	44%	
Non Pell	1257	0%	0%	2%	35%	54%	
Pell	1285	0%	0%	1%	18%	34%	
Fall 2015	2259	0%	0%	1%	30%		
Non Pell	1185	0%	0%	1%	39%		
Pell	1074	0%	0%	1%	20%		
Fall 2016	1802	0%	0%	2%			
Non Pell	999	0%	0%	2%			
Pell	803	0%	0%	1%			
Fall 2017	1852	0%	0%				
Non Pell	937	0%	1%				
Pell	915	0%	0%				
Fall 2018	1856	0%					
Non Pell	966	0%					
Pell	890	0%					

NIU 2010-2018 4-, 5-, and 6-year New Transfer Graduation Rates by Pell Grant Eligibility

	Count	Degree in 1 Year	Degree in 2 Years	Degree in 3 Years	Degree in 4 Years	Degree in 5 Years	Degree in 6 Years
Fall 2010	2294	0%	20%	48%	62%	66%	68%
Non Pell	1416	0%	20%	50%	64%	69%	71%
Pell	878	0%	20%	45%	57%	62%	64%
Fall 2011	2134	0%	21%	50%	64%	68%	69%
Non Pell	1261	0%	23%	53%	67%	70%	72%
Pell	873	1%	18%	45%	59%	65%	66%
Fall 2012	1913	0%	21%	51%	62%	68%	69%
Non Pell	1137	0%	22%	54%	64%	70%	71%
Pell	776	0%	19%	46%	60%	65%	67%
Fall 2013	1881	0%	20%	50%	65%	69%	70%
Non Pell	1087	0%	20%	52%	67%	71%	71%
Pell	794	0%	20%	48%	63%	66%	68%
Fall 2014	1840	1%	23%	53%	66%	69%	
Non Pell	1090	1%	24%	56%	68%	71%	
Pell	750	1%	22%	49%	63%	65%	
Fall 2015	1799	0%	27%	59%	70%		
Non Pell	1054	0%	29%	64%	73%		
Pell	745	0%	23%	52%	65%		
Fall 2016	1728	0%	27%	58%			
Non Pell	1030	0%	30%	63%			
Pell	698	1%	23%	51%			
Fall 2017	1716	0%	29%				
Non Pell	1023	1%	31%				
Pell	693	0%	25%				
Fall 2018	1577	1%					
Non Pell	958	0%					
Pell	619	1%					

The equity gaps among African Americans, Latinos, and Pell eligible students from highlight the critical need for a university-wide commitment and specific actions to eliminate academic equity gaps and to achieve equal outcomes for all NIU students. Achieving academic equity has become an institutional priority, with the Board of Trustees identifying diversity, equity, and inclusion as a cornerstone of the presidential goals for the 2018-2019 academic year and beyond.

3. Future Vision

Goal

The goal of this equity plan and the Illinois Equity in Attainment Initiative is to eliminate disparities in degree completion rates on our campus between African American and White students, between Latino and White students, and between Pell-eligible and non-Pell eligible students. Closing equity gaps occupies a central and prominent position in the newly developed NIU Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan. The SEM plan prioritizes supporting equitable access, opportunity, and success for students from diverse backgrounds where diversity is defined broadly. The interim benchmark goals below represent the specific objectives identified in the SEM plan that align with the strategies to (1) clearly define retention and completion goals and create tailored and comprehensive plans to best support the specific needs of our diverse student population; and (2) clearly identify gaps in academic achievement and create tailored and comprehensive plans to reduce these gaps.

Interim Benchmark Goals

- Increase the six-year graduation rates by reducing equity gaps for both Black new freshmen and transfer students to 10 percent or less by fall 2023; understanding that success will mean consistently staying with 1 percent to 2 percent of that range for at least three years
- Maintain the first-year retention rates for Latinx and Asian-American students at or above the institutional average (Note: “At average” can fluctuate annually by 1% or 2%).
- Reduce the 6-year graduation rate gap for Latinx students to 5% or less within three years and sustain gaps no greater than 5%.
- Reduce the first-year retention rate gaps for new Black freshmen to 10% or less within three years, understanding that success will mean consistently staying within 1% to 2% of that range for at least three years.
- Reduce the first-year retention rate gaps for Black transfer students to 6% or less within three years and sustain gaps no greater than 6%.

Note: As these are three-year goals, they serve as the interim benchmarks; they are in progress and early results show some signs of progress toward achievement

Based on the equity gap data for African American, Latino and Pell-eligible students, NIU will focus on (1) the elimination of all below college level math courses and revising repeat policies; (2) providing supplemental instruction in all gateway courses with high D/F/W rates and/or high equity gaps; (3) developing contextualized math pathways for meta-majors and increasing access to adaptive learning math labs; (4) invest in an inclusive teaching and learning model that promotes curricular redesign, culturally responsive teaching strategies, and innovative professional development; (5) remove bias processes that hinder access to financial aid and influence admissions decisions; (6) leverage financial aid to support affordability ; (7) implement the use of NIU Navigate for supportive interventions; and (8) build capacity in mentoring programs for students of color.

4. Institutional Strategies

The following institutional strategies will be put in place to enhance support for African American, Latino, and Pell-eligible students to improve success, reduce high rates of DFW and reduce equity gaps for African American and Latino students at NIU.

Strategy 1: Elimination of Below College Level Math Courses and Revise Repeat Policies

Remedial courses, courses with high D-F-W rates, and courses with high enrollment that impact large numbers of students are a primary focus. National research reveals that remedial coursework, particularly in math, at both 2- and 4-year institutions are not adequately preparing students to be successful in college courses. NIU has had success with students in introductory English courses, and as a result, has decided to focus our efforts on lower level math courses.

NIU data show that our current remedial math courses are not producing the desired impact on student success. As a result, we launched a co-requisite pilot for a gateway foundational studies math course that featured the following components:

- Inquiry-based Learning pedagogical approach
- Six contact hours of coursework in a co-requisite model
- Two hours per week of Supplemental Instruction (SI) support
- Enrollment cap of 20

In this pilot, students whose math placement suggests a need for remediation in math enroll in a college-level math course and have co-requisite academic sessions built into their schedule to provide the support necessary to succeed in the class. Additionally, Supplemental Instruction (SI), which is a form of tutoring that is intentionally paired with more traditionally challenging courses, is embedded in the pilot section. (See “Interim Benchmarks” for outcomes for the pilot.) Further, leadership in Academic Affairs, will review all policies, including the repeat policies associated with math courses in an effort to review relevance of

the current policy and to identify opportunities to reduce potential barriers to persistence.

Math placement exam scores of the students assigned to the pilot would have placed them in a remedial class (MATH 109) they are required to complete successfully before being allowed to attempt a MATH 110 (College Algebra). The success rate for the co-requisite students (75%) was not statistically different from the success rate for students enrolled only in MATH 110 (62.5%). Given the lack of statistical evidence of an effect of the pilot relative to enrollment solely in MATH 110, NIU will refocus its efforts on alternative approaches to MATH 108/MATH 109 by:

Inside of the Classroom

- Assessing lessons from Spring 2020
 - In Spring 2020, math courses were taught without the Math Emporium and with more online learning. NIU will assess the effect of these changes on success in math courses.
- Building-in academic support/supplemental instruction for select Targeted Gateway Courses.
 - Supplemental Instruction (SI) was deployed in the following classes: MATH 108, MATH 109, PSYC 102, CHEM 110, and LTRE 100 (literacy). The Director of Tutoring Services and the coordinators of the tutoring programs are meeting with department chairs and course instructors in the targeted classes to strengthen the relationship between tutors and instructors and refine how tutoring services are implemented.
- Identifying strategies to address equity gaps and high DFW rates in the top 5 courses in each college and implement strategies that will improve student success in these courses.
 - The Psychology department did an in-depth study of the factors that predict student success in PSYC 102, one of the most required and frequently taken classes at NIU. The results of the study are revealing and targeted interventions to bolster reading comprehension of the course textbook are being developed and will be deployed in Fall 2020.

Outside of the Classroom

- Increasing tutoring services assigned to specific gateway and foundational-studies courses (GWFS) with high enrollments or significant equity gaps.
- Increasing the use of the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Program by building it into student's schedules.

Strategy 2: Providing Supplemental Instruction in High DFW and High Equity Gap Gateway Courses

Supplemental instruction (SI) provides more intentional and direct support to students in traditionally more difficult courses. This national best practice has been proven to help reduce academic achievement gaps and has a long-standing tradition of being deployed in key NIU courses. As noted, in order to address this with intention, gateway courses with high equity gaps and high DFW rates, NIU will align SI with these courses to increase the support available to students and will actively measure outcomes.

Strategy 3: Developing Contextualized Math Pathways

Math is best learned when contextualized within a discipline. For example, the math course that will benefit an art major may be much different than the math course that will benefit an engineering major, but both can benefit from the subject matter and skill and both can benefit from understanding how it applies within their discipline. To that end, NIU will invest time and energy into identifying the potential to provide contextualized that better aligns with the goals and skills needed in each discipline. In doing so, students will be better able to apply math knowledge to their field and will be better able to understand its relevance and use.

Strategy 4: Investing in an Inclusive Teaching and Learning Model that Promotes Curricular Redesign, Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies, and Innovative Professional Development

To address the needs of students in math and other courses, NIU will invest in faculty professional development that will provide strategies for inclusive teaching and learning, and training on culturally responsive pedagogy and cultural competence. This will include:

- Working with departments and colleges to identify the appropriate quantitative reasoning learning outcomes needed for success in career pathways and majors. Create quantitative reasoning pathways that contextualize those skills for difference majors.
- Eliminating all developmental math courses by Fall 2021.
- Investing resources in practices that are supported by data and research.
- Providing supplemental instruction in college level math courses to support student success in the college-level math.
- Developing an inclusive teaching and learning model that supports inclusive pedagogical strategies, classroom engagement strategies, course design, culturally responsive teaching to support diverse student groups. The model will:
 - Engage faculty who teach gateways courses with high DFW and equity gaps
 - Be integrated with the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning
 - Encourage faculty who teach these courses to participate in ACUE development program.
 - Integrate with faculty mentoring program

Strategy 5: Remove Bias Processes that Hinder Access to Financial Aid and Influence Admissions Decisions

- Eliminate standardized test scores as a criterion for undergraduate admission to NIU (*Effective for new students entering Fall 2021 semester*)
- Develop holistic admission review process effective Spring 2020.

Strategy 6: Leverage Financial Aid to Support Affordability

- **Alternative Financial Aid Options:**
 - As part of the newly created Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan, one of NIU's objectives is to "pilot alternative means of student financial aid support".
 - Many of the students who attend NIU are lower to middle income with a high need for financial assistance (more than 40 percent are eligible for federal Pell Grants and 94% receive some form of financial aid). Despite the actions taken by NIU to hold tuition and fees constant for multiple consecutive years, and their access to institutional aid, MAP (Monetary Assistance Program) and Pell Grant programs, many of our students still have unmet need that prevents them from remaining enrolled through completion of their degree programs. On average, about 10 percent of those eligible for MAP each year do not receive it. Additional financial aid options would be helpful and NIU constantly explores such options.
 - One such option is participation in income-share agreements, a mechanism that provides additional funding to specific students who agree to make payments after graduation based on a percentage of their income for a period of time. Income-sharing agreements are gathering momentum nationally as a way of filling a gap in financing an education.
- **Launch a Financial Literacy Program**

Identify scalable, evidence-based practices for an effective financial literacy program

- Collaborate with fellow members of the High Pell transformation cluster of APLU Powered by Publics to identify scalable, evidence-based practices that can be used to develop and implement an effective financial literacy program, aligned with NIU's SEM Plan and guided by the following key components developed by the Financial Wellness sub-group.
- Financial Wellness Programs should employ these seven guidelines:
 1. Designed using a developmental lens recognizing the unique needs of students at each academic level.
 2. Designed using a culturally competent lens that recognizes the diverse life experiences of students and their families.
 3. Include opportunities to incorporate peer-to-peer engagement and

- dedicated professional staff.
4. Holistic and inclusive in its approach using a coordinated approach that provides both centralized service and extensions of services in key areas including administrative service units, student affairs and student services and academic curriculum.
 5. Tied to career preparation opportunities as well as scholarship and financial services.
 6. Connected to an overarching wellness framework that includes strategic dosing of information and that incorporates financial wellness education for students and their families.
 7. Accessible for students using multiple modes of delivery, including face-to-face and electronic delivery of content.
- To that end, the financial wellness model that NIU has begun to develop seeks to achieve these elements:
 1. Prioritizes student and family services, curricular content and programming and outreach.
 2. Includes resources for families, faculty, staff, and students.
 3. Embedded in UNIV 101/201 (First-year Seminar) curriculum.
 4. Includes a peer-to-peer financial wellness education program.
 5. Explore the possibility of leveraging technology to support our efforts.
 6. Tie financial wellness education to administrative services like financial aid and bursar's activities.
 7. Thoughtfully incorporates resources and services for special populations (e.g., undocumented students, underserved students, etc.).
 8. Includes a comprehensive website with resources, education, and services available to students, faculty, staff, and families.
 9. Includes an assessment strategy and a plan for continuous improvement.
 10. Incorporates strategic messaging and educational materials/workshops based on key milestones (e.g., FAFSA filing, graduate and after-college life, refund check periods).
 11. Includes potential partnerships with financial services institutions and Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC).

Strategy 7: Build Capacity in Mentoring Programs for Students of Color

In addition to the investment in these strategies developed to close equity gaps for African American and Latino students, we will build capacity in our existing mentoring programs for African American and Latino students, especially males. Peer-to-peer support has traditionally been effective at increasing a sense of belonging and connection to the campus community particularly for underrepresented students.

Two mentoring programs are identified for this plan related to serving Black (non-Latinx) and Latinx students: Black Male Initiative (BMI) and Supporting Opportunities for Latinos (SOL). The current number of students served by each, along with retention rates are provided for establishing context before the goals for strategy three are presented:

Black Male Initiative

The mission of Black Male Initiative (BMI) is to provide accountability, proactive leadership, and support for Black males on the campus of Northern Illinois University. Our focus is:

- Academic: Ensuring that we are scholars through academic excellence
- Community service: Serving and leading in the community
- Social interaction: Building lasting relationships
- Mentoring: Lifting as we climb
- Image Busting: Destroying negative stereotypes.

Although student membership in BMI was 65 at the start of fall 2019 (fiscal year 2020), there currently are 43 student members as of spring 2020. The retention rate within BMI changes every semester due to students' finances, major and engagement with the organization. At present a comparison between BMI members and non-BMI students has been discussed among the Center for Black Studies, and a survey is planned to gain an understanding of why students stay engaged with BMI in order to enhance membership through retention.

Realistically 20-25-member increase in the fall and 10-15-member increase in the spring is ideal. The main issue to address is the retention of approximately 25 members from fall to fall.

Supporting Opportunities for Latinos

Supporting Opportunities for Latinos (SOL) is a network of students, staff and faculty dedicated to assisting Latino males in navigating their academic pursuit and attaining the degree of their choice. The men of SOL engage in career preparation, community service, and social interaction in an effort to maximize their own personal and professional development.

SOL currently has 15 active members, including the executive board and general members. The retention rate for SOL has been substantial for members that commit to SOL since its inception over a decade and a half ago.

Many students that are not active with SOL or our community tend to not succeed as well with a Latino retention rate around the 50%. We encourage many students to participate in SOL, and if not, in our Latino community in some way or organization in order to get the skills to succeed.

Methods to address this strategy

- Increase the number of males who participate in Black Male Initiative (BMI) and Supporting Opportunities for Latinos (SOL)

- Scale up the career development programming for both SOL and BMI.
- Scale up the leadership development programming for both SOL and BMI.
- Develop a coordinated approach for early alerts/progress reports utilizing NIU Navigate, the cultural resource centers by monitoring the gateway courses enrolled in by members of these organizations.
- Increase the number of male students of color engaged in the high impact practices and other research opportunities.

Strategy 8: Implement the Use of NIU Navigate for Supportive Interventions

Staff in the cultural resource centers will be trained on how to use the NIU Navigate platform to respond to and develop strategic interventions to support the success of students in their program. NIU Navigate is the campus' retention and advising platform that allows for tracking and reporting and is utilized as part of the NIU referral network which ensures that students are immediately able to access identified supports including tutoring and other support.

5. Evaluation Plan

Strategy 1. Elimination of Below College Level Math Courses and Revise Repeat Policies				
Objective	Method(s)	Expected Result (Target)	Responsible Personnel	Goal(s) Addressed
<i>In the Classroom</i>				
Assess lessons from Spring 2020 to inform alternative approaches to MATH 108/MATH 109	NIU will assess the effect of spring 2020 teaching— more online learning and without the Math Emporium— on success in math courses.	Recommendations for alternative approaches to MATH 108/MATH 109	Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies NIU College Deans	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for Black students, Latino students, and Pell recipients <input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of D/F/W <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Black students at NIU <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU
Built-in academic support/supplemental instruction for select Targeted Gateway Courses.	<p>The Director of Tutoring Services and the coordinators of the tutoring programs will</p> <p>(1) Strengthen the relationship between tutors and course instructors in the targeted classes of MATH 108, MATH 109, PSYC 102, CHEM 110, and LTRE 100 (literacy)</p> <p>(2) Refine how tutoring services are implemented.</p>	<p>Strengthened relationships between tutors and course instructors in the targeted classes of MATH 108, MATH 109, PSYC 102, CHEM 110, and LTRE 100 (literacy);</p> <p>Define and document how tutoring services are implemented as part of the strengthened relationships.</p>	<p>The Director of Tutoring Services</p> <p>Department Chairs</p> <p>Course Instructors</p> <p>Tutoring Program Coordinators</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for Black students, Latino students, and Pell recipients <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Improve student success <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of D/F/W <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Black students at NIU <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU

Strategy 1. Elimination of Below College Level Math Courses and Revise Repeat Policies

Objective	Method(s)	Expected Result (Target)	Responsible Personnel	Goal(s) Addressed
<i>In the Classroom</i>				
Identify strategies to address equity gaps and high DFW rates in the top 5 courses in each college and implement strategies that will improve student success in these courses.	<p>NIU's six colleges each will identify the top five courses (determined by large equity gaps and high DFW rates). Each college will review equity-gap and D/F/W data related to the courses identified in step 1.</p> <p>Each college will identify strategies to address (1) equity gaps and (2) high D/F/W rates in those courses.</p> <p>NIU's six colleges each will draft an implementation plan for the strategies identified.</p>	<p>A working list of courses in which targeted interventions will be deployed to reduce DFW rates will be established.</p> <p>Improvement targets will be established based on data provided during pilot interventions</p> <p>Student success will improve in the identified courses as a result of implementing targeted interventions</p>	NIU Associate Deans College SEM Teams	<p>Addresses these institutional strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for Black students, Latino students, and Pell recipients <input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of DFW <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Black students at NIU <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU

Strategy 1. Elimination of Below College Level Math Courses and Revise Repeat Policies

Objective	Method(s)	Expected Result (Target)	Responsible Personnel	Goal(s) Addressed
<i>Outside of the Classroom</i>				
Increase tutoring services assigned to specific gateway and foundational-studies courses (GWFS) with high enrollments or significant equity gaps.	<p>Establish a regular reporting of GWFS courses with high enrollments or significant equity gaps.</p> <p>Identify current state of tutoring for the specific GWFS courses</p> <p>Identify a best-practice approach for tutoring services to improve course performance in the GWFS courses</p>	<p>Student performance will improve in GWFS courses.</p> <p>Piloted interventions will result in useful data to identify which approaches have potential to make the greatest improvements on student success.</p>	<p>Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies</p> <p>Associate Vice Provost</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for African American students, Latino students, and Pell recipients <input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of D/F/W <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for African American students at NIU <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU

Strategy 1. Elimination of Below College Level Math Courses and Revise Repeat Policies

Objective	Method(s)	Expected Result (Target)	Responsible Personnel	Goal(s) Addressed
<i>Outside of the Classroom</i>				
Increasing the use of the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Program by building it into students' schedules.	<p>Identify the capacity boundaries for effective student service in PAL program.</p> <p>Connect/Build-in PAL program into students' schedules that align with the ability for these programs to serve students effectively.</p> <p>Assess staffing needs to meet the goal and objective.</p>	<p>Use-rate baseline established for student usage in FY20 of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Program</p> <p>Disaggregated data reported to illustrate distribution of reach across course types and student cohorts.</p>	<p>Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies</p> <p>Associate Vice Provost</p> <p>NIU Colleges</p> <p>NIU Academic Departments</p> <p>ACCESS</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for African American students, Latino students, and Pell recipients</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of D/F/W</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for African American students at NIU</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU</p>

Strategy 2. Providing Supplemental Instruction in High DFW and High Equity Gap Gateway Courses

Objective	Methods(s)	Expected Result (Target)	Responsible Personnel	Goal(s) Addressed
Increase the support available to students enrolled in high DFW and high equity gap gateway courses.	<p>Align Supplemental Instruction (SI) with high DFW and high equity gap gateway courses</p> <p>Measure student performance outcomes in high DFW and high equity gap gateway courses</p>	<p>Measurable increase in the support available to students enrolled in high DFW and high equity gap gateway courses</p> <p>Increase in student performance within high DFW and high equity gap gateway courses</p>	<p>Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies</p> <p>Department Chairs</p> <p>ACCESS Supplemental Instruction</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for African American students, Latino students, and Pell recipients</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of DFWs</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for African American students at NIU</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU</p>

Strategy 3. Developing Contextualized Math Pathways

Objective	Methods(s)	Expected Result (Target)	Responsible Personnel	Goal(s) Addressed
Work with the math department and colleges to identify the appropriate math needed for career pathways and majors	Course-content and industry-needs analysis	<p>Math pathways created that contextualize math for different majors</p> <p>Map math courses to needs of one of six career-related clusters (e.g., math for Arts, Media, and Communications; math for STEM; math for Business and Entrepreneurship)</p>	<p>Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies</p> <p>College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (dean and associate dean)</p> <p>NIU Department of Mathematics (department chair)</p> <p>Other collaborators including Career Services, external employer partners, NIU Alumni Association</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for African American students, Latino students, and Pell recipients</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of D/F/W</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Black students at NIU</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU</p>

Strategy 4: Investing in an Inclusive Teaching and Learning Model that Promotes Curricular Redesign, Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies, and Innovative Professional Development

Objective	Methods(s)	Expected Result (Target)	Responsible Personnel	Goal(s) Addressed
<p>Eliminate all developmental math courses by Fall 2021.</p> <p>Embed supplemental instruction in college-level math courses to support student success in college level math.</p>	<p>Establish an implementation plan to decommission developmental math courses.</p> <p>Identify the infrastructure needed to support SI embedded in all college-level math courses</p>	<p>No development math courses will be offered beginning in fall 2020.</p> <p>Embed supplemental instruction in college-level math courses</p>	<p>Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies</p> <p>College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (dean and associate dean)</p> <p>NIU Department of Mathematics (department chair)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for Black students, Latino students, and Pell recipients</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of D/F/W</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Black students at NIU</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU</p>

Strategy 4: Investing in an Inclusive Teaching and Learning Model that Promotes Curricular Redesign, Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies, and Innovative Professional Development

Objective	Methods(s)	Expected Result (Target)	Responsible Personnel	Goal(s) Addressed
Develop an inclusive teaching and learning program/model that supports inclusive pedagogical strategies, classroom engagement strategies, course design, culturally responsive teaching to support diverse student groups.	<p>Engage faculty who teach gateways courses with high DFW and equity gaps.</p> <p>Be integrated with the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning.</p> <p>Encourage faculty who teach these courses to participate in ACUE development program.</p> <p>Integrate with faculty mentoring program.</p>	<p>Implement an NIU Inclusive Teaching and Learning Model.</p> <p>Increased student satisfaction in select/pilot courses.</p> <p>Increased faculty satisfaction Ratings.</p>	<p>Chief Diversity Officer Provost</p> <p>Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies</p> <p>Vice Provost of Faculty Affairs</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for Black students, Latino students, and Pell recipients</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of D/F/W</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Black students at NIU</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU</p>

Strategy 5. Remove Bias Processes that Hinder Access to Financial Aid and Influence Admissions Decisions

Objective	Method(s)	Expected Result (Target)	Responsible Personnel	Goal(s) Addressed
Eliminate standardized test scores as a criterion for undergraduate admission to NIU <i>(Effective for new students entering Fall 2021 semester).</i>	Make scores a non-reviewed criterion for new student applications.	<p>Increase the number of applications, especially from underrepresented students.</p> <p>Increase enrollment, especially from underrepresented students.</p>	<p>Vice President of Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications</p> <p>Director of Admissions (Undergraduate)</p> <p>Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for African American students, Latino students, and Pell recipients</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of D/F/W</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for African American students at NIU</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU</p>

Strategy 5. Remove Bias Processes that Hinder Access to Financial Aid and Influence Admissions Decisions

Objective	Method(s)	Expected Result (Target)	Responsible Personnel	Goal(s) Addressed
Develop holistic undergraduate admission review process	<p>Identify the primary criteria to render admission decisions as the high school GPA.</p> <p>Through a flexible, individualized review, identify and evaluate academic and contextual factors, such as: high school GPA; academic course rigor pursued compared to available courses; academic performance and grade trends in core courses; 7th semester high school grades; personal statement or admission interview, which look for characteristics that may include special talents, significant activities and accomplishments, leadership experience and potential, personal commitment and goal orientation.</p>	<p>Average high school GPA and numbers of students taking AP/Honors courses will hold steady from prior years.</p> <p>NIU student performance (e.g., college GPA, retention and graduation rates, DFWs) will at least hold steady or show improvement.</p> <p>Increase enrollment, especially from underrepresented students.</p>	<p>Vice President of Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications Director of Admissions (Undergraduate) Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies</p> <p>Various academic and student-support units* at NIU (and identified throughout this plan) *(These areas will provide the appropriate academic-support outlets and opportunities for student success).</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for African American students, Latino students, and Pell recipients</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of D/F/W</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for African American students at NIU</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU</p>

Strategy 6. Leverage Financial Aid to Support Affordability

Objective	Method(s)	Expected Result (Target)	Responsible Personnel	Goal(s) Addressed
Pilot alternative means of student financial aid support	<p>Income-share agreements- provides additional funding to specific students who agree to make payments after graduation based on a percentage of their income for a period of time.</p> <p>Compare retention rates for those participating in Income-sharing and those who are not (FYs 21-23)</p> <p>Compare completion rates for those who participated in Income-sharing and those who did not (FYs 22 and 23)</p>	<p>Reduce the number of students with unmet financial need</p> <p>Reduce the amount of per- student unmet need</p> <p>Increase retention rate for students with unmet need</p> <p>Increase completion rates for students with unmet need</p>	<p>Vice President of Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications</p> <p>Directors of Financial Aid & Scholarship Office</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for African American students, Latino students, and Pell recipients</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of D/F/W</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for African American students at NIU</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU</p>

Strategy 6. Leverage Financial Aid to Support Affordability

Objective	Method(s)	Expected Result (Target)	Responsible Personnel	Goal(s) Addressed
<p>Launch a Financial Literacy Program</p>	<p>Identify scalable, evidence-based practices for an effective financial literacy program.</p> <p>Collaborate with fellow members of the High Pell transformation cluster of APLU Powered by Publics to identify scalable, evidence-based practices that can be used to develop and implement an effective financial literacy program, aligned with NIU's SEM Plan and guided by the following key components developed by the Financial Wellness sub-group.</p>	<p>Prioritize student and family services, curricular content and programming and outreach.</p> <p>Include resources for families, faculty, staff, and students.</p> <p>Embed content within UNIV 101/201 (First-year Seminar) curriculum.</p> <p>Include a peer-to-peer financial wellness education program.</p> <p>Tie financial wellness education to administrative services (e.g., financial Aid, bursar).</p> <p>Incorporate resources and services for special populations (e.g., undocumented students, underserved students, etc.).</p> <p>Include a comprehensive website with resources, education, and services available to students, faculty, staff, and families.</p> <p>Includes an assessment strategy and a plan for continuous improvement</p>	<p>Associate Vice Provost for Student Engagement and Success</p> <p>Associate Vice President Student Affairs and Dean of Students Directors of Financial Aid and Scholarship</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for African American students, Latino students, and Pell recipients</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of DFWs</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for African American students at NIU</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU</p>

Strategy 7. Build capacity in mentoring programs for students of color				
Objective	Method(s)	Expected Result (Target)	Responsible Personnel	Goal(s) Addressed
Increase the number of males who participate in Black Male Initiative (BMI) and Supporting Opportunities for Latinos (SOL)	<p>Assess the member recruitment process with current members to identify methods to reach students who have not participated. Review partnerships and collaborations to develop sources that could yield more members</p> <p>Assess why BMI members do not return for spring terms after being active members in fall.</p>	<p>Stabilize BMI membership fall-to-fall at 60-70 members. <i>(At present, approx. 30% fewer members in spring than fall).</i> Increase on-campus partnerships with BMI by 10% (five additional by fall 2021) 10% increase in SOL membership by fall 2021 due to the new online implementation</p> <p>Host 1-3 weekly social gatherings for SOL members and students by 2021.</p> <p>Increase on campus partnerships with SOL by 2 or 3 more organizations</p> <p>Institute SOLs Alumni networking</p>	<p>Chief Diversity Officer Director, Center for Black Studies Director, Latino Resource Center</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for African American students, Latino students, and Pell recipients</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of D/F/W</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for African American students at NIU</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU</p>
Scale up the career development programming for both SOL and BMI.	<p>Set expectation for members to attend career events (e.g., workshops, resume writing, Internship 101) throughout both terms each year they are members</p> <p>Increase the number of and representatives from student organizations at the Diversity-Reverse Career Fair (Fall 2020)</p> <p>Host career speakers (e.g. Career Services, BMI, and SOL alumni, employer partners) during meeting(s) once each term.</p>	<p>100% of BMI members will attend at least one career event each term while they are members (starting in Spring 2020).</p> <p>100% of SOL members will attend at least one career event each term while they are members (starting in Spring 2020).</p> <p>BMI will host at least two career speakers annually (by May 2021)</p> <p>SOL will host at least two career speakers annually (by May 2021)</p>	<p>Chief Diversity Officer</p> <p>Director, Center for Black Studies</p> <p>Director, Latino Resource Center</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for African American students, Latino students, and Pell recipients</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of D/F/W</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for African American students at NIU</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU</p>

Strategy 7. Build capacity in mentoring programs for students of color

Objective	Method(s)	Expected Result (Target)	Responsible Personnel	Goal(s) Addressed
<p>Scale up the leadership development programming for both SOL and BMI.</p>	<p>Set expectation for members to attend leadership events throughout both terms each year they are members</p> <p>Increase the number of and representatives from student organizations participating in USOAR, Research Rookies, Orientation Leaders, Hall CAs, etc.</p> <p>Establish a student leader profile or leader of the week, month, year to recognize the wide array of leadership.</p>	<p>100% of BMI members will attend or be involved in at least one leadership event or position each term while they are members (starting in Spring 2020).</p> <p>100% of SOL members will attend or be involved in at least one leadership event or position each term while they are members (starting in Spring 2020). A Website will be established to feature leaders identified from the organizations.</p>	<p>Chief Diversity Officer Director, Center for Black Studies</p> <p>Director, Latino Resource Center</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for African American students, Latino students, and Pell recipients</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of D/F/W</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for African American students at NIU</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU</p>
<p>Develop a coordinated approach for early alerts/progress reports utilizing NIU Navigate, the cultural resource centers by monitoring the gateway courses enrolled in by members of these organizations.</p>	<p>Replicate or collaborate with the early-alerts system in place with academic departments (Fall 2021).</p> <p>Establish a retention and course completion baseline among students in need of early alert interventions.</p>	<p>Reduce the number of students' DFW, where students identified to the centers receive support. Improve the retention and course completion rates among students in need of early alert interventions (by May 2021).</p>	<p>Chief Diversity Officer Associate Vice Provost for Student Engagement and Success</p> <p>Asian-American Resource Center (AARC)</p> <p>Center for Black Studies (CBS)</p> <p>Gender and Sexuality Resource Center (GSRC)</p> <p>Latino Resource Center (LRC)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for African American students, Latino students, and Pell recipients</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of D/F/W</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for African American students at NIU</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU</p>

Strategy 7. Build capacity in mentoring programs for students of color				
Objective	Method(s)	Expected Result (Target)	Responsible Personnel	Goal(s) Addressed
Increase the number of male students of color engaged in the high impact practice of undergraduate opportunities through OSEEL and other research opportunities.	NIU will host a panel luncheon focused on research opportunities at NIU (Presented by male faculty of color).	<p>100% of AAC members will attend the Men of Color Research Panel Discussion.</p> <p>100% of BMI members will attend the Men of Color Research Panel Discussion.</p> <p>100% of SOL members will attend the Men of Color Research Panel Discussion.</p>	<p>Asian-American Resource Center (AARC)</p> <p>Center for Black Studies (CBS)</p> <p>Latino Resource Center (LRC)</p> <p>Honors</p> <p>Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for African American students, Latino students, and Pell recipients</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of D/F/W</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for African American students at NIU</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU</p>

Strategy 8. Implement the Use of NIU Navigate for Supportive Interventions				
Objective	Method(s)	Expected Result (Target)	Responsible Personnel	Goal(s) Addressed
NIU cultural resource centers will utilize the NIU Navigate platform to respond to and develop strategic interventions to support the success of students in their programs.	<p>Staff in the cultural resource centers will be trained on how to use the NIU Navigate platform.</p> <p>A process for responding to student needs will be identified and implemented.</p> <p>Strategic interventions will be identified to support the success of students in their programs.</p>	<p>Staff in the cultural resource centers will use the NIU Navigate platform effectively for identifying needs of students in their programs.</p> <p>NIU Cultural Centers will respond to student needs using strategic interventions.</p>	<p>Chief Diversity Officer</p> <p>Associate Vice Provost for Student Engagement and Success</p> <p>Asian-American Resource Center (AARC)</p> <p>Center for Black Studies (CBS)</p> <p>Gender and Sexuality Resource Center (GSRC)</p> <p>Latino Resource Center (LRC)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhance support for Black students, Latino students, and Pell recipients</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve student success</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduce high rates of D/F/W</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce equity gaps for Black students at NIU</p> <p>Reduce equity gaps for Latino students at NIU</p>

6. Budget

Institutional Strategy	Budget Implications	Revenue Source (New/Existing)	Sustainability Plan
<p>Develop curricula revisions in gateway courses with high D/F/W and equity gaps</p> <p>Develop faculty development workshops on inclusive teaching and learning for faculty teaching focused on faculty teaching gateway courses wit high D/F/W and equity gaps</p> <p>Eliminate all development education Math courses at NIU</p>	<p>No budget implications</p> <p>Reallocate funds to specifically fund faculty to attend professional development workshops</p>	<p>Redirect funds to support faculty development and to establish adaptive learning labs</p>	<p>Target funds for faculty development and integrate into Faculty Development program.</p> <p>College Deans will work with Provost office to allocate funds and assign space for new adaptive learning spaces</p>
<p>Strategy 4c – Pilot income-share agreements as alternate aid option for students with financial gaps</p>	<p>It is not likely there will be budget implications on the University, but will be looking for the NIU Foundation to identify budget and funding</p>	<p>NIU is looking at using private funding from donors (corporate or philanthropic foundations with similar missions, or from private individuals)</p>	<p>Over time (the length of the agreement; generally, 5-7 years), the income payments will equal the total amount of funds expended, thus making the funding more sustainable.</p>
<p>Financial Literacy</p>	<p>Funds may be needed to support staffing of the peer-to-peer coaching program in the form of a graduate assistantship</p>	<p>Repurpose an existing and/or partner of one of the colleges to provide a hands-on learning opportunity for one of their students.</p>	<p>Over time, we hope the peer-to-peer café (creating a financial ecosystem) will be sustained by the opportunity it provides for a graduate student to gain real world financial wellness experience.</p>

7. Timeline

8. ILEA Team

ILEA Core Team

Beth Ingram	Provost
Vernese E. Edghill-Walden	Senior Vice President, Chief Diversity Officer
Omar Ghrayeb	Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies

ILEA Leadership Team

Kelly Wesener Michael	Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students
Sol Jenson	Vice President for Enrollment Management and Marketing
Ed Klonoski	Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Curriculum
Renique Kersh	Associate Vice Provost for Student Engagement and Success
Greg Barker	Director of Testing Services

Key Campus Leaders Consulted for Equity Plan Development

College Deans and Faculty Senates

Staff Council

Student Government

9. Glossary

Cohort – A way of grouping students to compare across a number of access, performance, persistence, and completion indicators. In the Excel file that accompanies these documents and is used to set disaggregated early momentum and degree completion targets in service of eliminating gaps among target student groups, cohort refers to when students entered the college/university (e.g. Fall 2019 cohort is the student group that entered the institution in the fall of 2019). Secondly, we also refer to the ILEA cohort as the group of 25 member colleges and universities.

Completion Gap – The difference in college completion rates between student groups at the same college or university. ILEA is focused on the completion gap between African American and White students, Latino/a, and White students, and low-income and higher-income students (as indicated by Pell receipt).

Equity – A campus culture and environment in which every student receives the supports they need to complete their degree equitably and in a timely manner when compared to their peer in other racial or socioeconomic groups. PCC is interested in supporting ILEA cohort members as they refine how they support African American, Latino/a, and low-income students on their campuses. This can include redesigning existing supports, creating new supports and eliminating seen and unseen barriers for student success.

Equity Plan – A roadmap that outlines how each ILEA cohort member plans to close gaps in degree attainment for low-income, African American, and Latino/a students. The ILEA Equity Plan will describe how each cohort member plans to close gaps in degree attainment for the target student groups.

Graduation Rate – The percentage of students that complete their degree. For students enrolled in community college, completing their degree in 2 years is 100% time and completing their degree in 3 years is 150% time. For students enrolled in a four-year institution, completing their degree in 4 years is 100% time and completing their degree in 6 years is 150% time. There is specific time to degree periods for analysis, goal setting, and reporting within the Equity Plan for different target populations (e.g. entering freshmen, transfer students, part-time students).

Illinois Equity in Attainment (ILEA) – A Partnership for College Completion (PCC) initiative that aims to close gaps in degree attainment among different racial and socioeconomic groups at 25 two-year and four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities in the state of Illinois. We aim to accomplish this goal by supporting, convening, and providing targeted

resources, training, and support to the 25 ILEA cohort members, and facilitating the process of developing and executing on a campus-wide equity plan.

Lagging Indicator – A metric that represents the measurement of a specific output over time.

For ILEA, an example of a lagging indicator is the graduation rate by time to degree and the particular student population. Increase graduation rates are our ultimate goal.

Leading Indicator – A metric that has evidence of being a predictor of a specific outcome.

A leading indicator is often referred to as an early momentum indicator. We are interested in tracking a set of metrics that have evidence of predicting degree completion and measuring progress toward that goal. For community colleges, these metrics include credits accumulated first fall, credits accumulated first year, gateway course completion, and Fall 1 to Fall 2 persistence. For 4-year universities, these metrics include: credits accumulated first fall, credits accumulated first year, gateway course completion in year 1, Fall 1 to Fall 2 persistence, credits accumulated by end of second year, and Fall 2 to Fall 3 persistence.

Institutional Strategy – A reform strategy that affects at least 50% of the total targeted student population that it aims to serve.

For ILEA, we are interested in implementing institutional strategies we believe they have the requisite scale to significantly impact equity in degree completion.

150% Time – Refers to students' time to degree. 150% time refers to the percentage of students that complete their degree within three years for associate degree seekers and within six years for bachelor's degree seekers.

References

Halikias, D. & Reeves, R.V. (2017). Ladders, labs, or laggards? Which public universities contribute most. *Social Mobility Papers* (July 11, 2017). Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/ladders-labs-or-laggards-which-public-universities-contribute-most>

Appendix
