

**Academic Master Plan
Five Year Report to Campus
2015-2020**

DRAFT for Campus Feedback, December 4, 2019

The University of Northern Iowa (Who We Are)

We are a comprehensive university offering a distinctive educational experience at the undergraduate and graduate levels that engages students inside and outside the classroom. Students encounter a rigorous curriculum in a supportive environment and opportunities for applied learning outside the classroom that are intentional and developmental, ensuring academic success and preparation for professional careers.

Consistent with its heritage since its founding in 1876, the university has a strong emphasis on teacher education. Building on this historic foundation, the university has also developed nationally recognized programs in arts and sciences and business, all with a strong foundation in the liberal arts. As a community, faculty, staff, and students collectively commit to the advancement of knowledge, service to a diverse society, and the pursuit of truth and wisdom.

Vision (Who We Aspire to Become)

The University of Northern Iowa will achieve national prominence as a premier comprehensive university for an engaged, integrative education that promotes academic and professional success, civic responsibility, and a fulfilling life in a diverse and dynamic world.

Mission (How We Will Get There)

The University of Northern Iowa is dedicated to providing an engaged and integrative education that connects our curriculum to applied, experiential learning and that educates the whole person. Grounded in the liberal arts, our academic programs develop critical thinking and creative abilities, advance intercultural literacy and a global perspective, foster community engagement and civic responsibility, and nurture curiosity, imagination, and lifelong learning. Faculty, staff, and students promote and respect diversity, foster environmental sustainability, and engage in service with others. With its emphasis on teaching and learning, the university pursues academic excellence, supports research, scholarship and discovery, and recognizes scientific, artistic, humanistic, and other modes of expression.

Core Principles and Initiatives

Core Principle 1: Foster an Engaged and Integrative Learning Environment. We will develop teaching and learning practices that will emphasize academic and intellectual integration and innovation in an environment that elevates applied learning experiences. We will rejuvenate and invest in our curriculum and our scholarly and service activities to be forward looking.

Report on Initiatives

1. Cultivate and support intentional and developmental engaged learning experiences.

Employers regularly report that the key to employment is not simply mastering content knowledge and skills within the classroom, but to apply that learning in real world settings solving real world problems. The University of Northern Iowa provides students rich applied learning experiences outside the classroom, many of which are intentional and developmental.

As one example, the Office of Undergraduate Studies, working with the Office of Student Success and Retention, has developed a developmental model for peer mentoring that has received national recognition, winning the [American Association of State Colleges and Universities Excellence and Innovation Award for Student Success](#). The peer mentoring model is connected to our First Year Only courses and will include a Graduation with Distinction in Peer Education notation on the transcript.

In teacher preparation, the four levels of student teaching in our teacher education program provides a model for intentional and developmental applied learning experiences. As the College of Education Department of Teaching [website](#) explains: the first three field experiences allow students to explore the teaching profession, to develop an understanding of the teacher as an agent of change, and to undergo an immersive experience in the field. The final experience is placement in the field in a classroom across the state of Iowa, the United States, or internationally.

Within the College of Business Administration, the Professional Readiness Program (PRP) requires students to complete the first two of four levels of career readiness training. As the [PRP website](#) explains, students receive mentorship from professionals, experience with interviewing, and the development of an elevator pitch. The program has been recognized by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.

Both the four levels of student teaching and the PRP have been in place for many years at UNI.

Within the [Office of Community Engagement](#), we have developed a [Service Learning Institute](#) for the revision of courses to include a community engagement component to the course. The model includes a phased approach to introducing students to and preparing them for robust community engagement projects.

Beyond these efforts, we have not made a concerted effort to create or document intentional and developmental engaged learning experiences at UNI for each distinct major; such work would allow us to attain our vision of achieving national prominence as a premier comprehensive university for an engaged, integrative education and could become a component of Academic Positioning.

2. Create university wide learning outcomes that integrate the entire university experience and guide a student's journey.

The faculty at the University of Northern Iowa developed and approved university-wide student learning goals that provide a foundation for student learning across the undergraduate and graduate curriculum. Three goals were adopted:

- Critical Thinking
- Communication
- Program Content Knowledge and Skills

See [Student Learning Outcomes Assessment](#) page for more information. The university level student learning goals were adopted by the Faculty Senate on April 10, 2017.

3. Develop a Liberal Arts Core that provides a strong foundation for an engaged and integrative education.

The Faculty Senate approved a General Education Revision Committee to oversee the process for revising the General Education curriculum. Faculty leaders at the time selected the individuals for the committee, working with the Provost and the Deans, and Faculty Senate approved the committee and the process on November 13, 2017.

The General Education Program revision process includes two phases: (1) the development and adoption of student learning outcomes and (2) the creation of a structure. The first phase included robust engagement of the faculty across campus and was approved by the Faculty Senate on February 11, 2019. The second phase began in the spring 2019 semester with the development of three possible structures. After feedback was gathered from campus, a proposed structure was shared with campus for feedback in the fall 2019 semester.

The goal is for the new structure to be adopted by spring 2020, when we will begin to populate the structure with courses.

See [General Education Revision Updates](#) page for more information.

4. Invest in an integrative curriculum that includes diverse pathways for student success.

In the 2018-2019 academic year, the Faculty Senate charged a group of faculty to begin to catalog our work with interdisciplinary curriculum and then make proposals for how we might move forward. Interdisciplinary curriculum is intent on building connections across disciplines and programs. Interdisciplinary curriculum is one way of achieving an integrative curriculum, which is focused on the development of the whole person, including intellectual, social-emotional, psychological, and civic capacities.

One model for an integrative learning experience on campus is the [peer mentoring](#) process developed by the Office of Undergraduate Studies and the Office of Student Success and Retention. The four stage model charts the development of the capacities of our students in the four domains of the intellectual, the social-emotional, the psychological, and the civic. Students who complete the entire process, including the peer mentoring training and course work, will have a notation on their transcript.

As noted, the Faculty Senate approved a workgroup to conduct a survey of current activities relating to interdisciplinary learning across camps in the academic curriculum. The survey will be completed in the Fall 2019 semester and will provide a foundation for considering the work that we might do in this area. This work could be furthered as a component of the Academic Positioning process.

5. Practice meaningful and sustainable assessment that informs changes to curriculum and pedagogy for improved student learning.

Robust and meaningful learning outcomes assessment has been instituted across nearly all programs in Academic Affairs. While program assessment is a requirement of the Higher Learning Commission, the focus of learning outcomes assessment at UNI is on discerning what our students are learning from the curriculum so that we can improve that student learning.

The Offices of Undergraduate Studies and Institutional Research and Effectiveness have developed a rich resource page for [Student Learning Outcomes Assessment](#), which includes assessment plans, reports, and results. As a result of this outstanding work, the University of Northern Iowa has received a [National Excellence in Assessment Designation](#) from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.

Core Principle 2: Advance Student Engagement and Success. We will demonstrate strong support for advancing the academic, professional, and personal success of our students. We will emphasize holistic and integrative education, seeking to assist students in finding purpose and meaning in their lives.

Report on Initiatives

1. Develop a pedagogy of engagement that deepens the emphasis on applied learning in the curriculum, co-curriculum, and extra-curriculum and develops explicit connections for students across these learning experiences.

The University of Northern Iowa enjoys a strong pedagogy of engagement. In the last four years, we have focused on elevating community engagement and service learning, creating the [Service Learning Institute](#) which partners faculty and community agencies to develop projects as part of a class to deepen student learning.

Four cohorts that have included a total of 42 faculty have completed the Institute, which has become a model for institutions across Iowa. UNI has worked with Iowa Campus Compact to develop and deliver these Institutes and to bring this model to other campuses. As a result of this work, UNI has built partnerships out into the Cedar Valley and offered students an opportunity to apply their learning in real world settings.

2. As part of the focus on Engaged Learning, strengthen student leadership and professional development opportunities through intentional collaborations between academic affairs and student affairs, as well as other divisions on campus.

One of the most robust collaborations across Academic Affairs and Student Affairs is the Peer Mentoring Program noted above. The program begins with the establishment of [First Year Only](#) (FYO) courses which register only incoming freshman. Each FYO section includes a peer mentor—a sophomore who successfully completed that course the year before, was nominated by a professor, and who was awarded the role of peer mentor after an interview. Junior level students act as mentors for sophomores, and Seniors assist in creating and running the mentoring program. This developmental model allows freshman students to deepen their classroom learning through the application of that learning and upper level students to enhance their leadership and professional skills.

Additional partnerships exist with the [Center for Multicultural Education](#), [Career Services](#), [Financial Aid](#) (with [Live Like a Student](#)), and other offices.

3. Promote a developmental model of academic advising that values the impact of professional and faculty advisors on student success.

The University of Northern Iowa utilizes a hybrid model of advising, with centralized advising in some areas and dispersed advising in others. The [Office of Academic Advising](#) provides resources for all advisors across the campus and leads the advising network. However, we have not engaged in the creation of more intentional advising at UNI.

This is work that remains incomplete and could be taken up through the Academic Positioning conversation.

4. Create targeted workshops, advising, and mentoring for special populations (e.g., first generation students, underrepresented students).

During the 2018-2019 academic year, Jamie Chidozie, Director of Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice and Kristin Woods, Director of Student Success and Retention led a campus-wide conversation on developing intentional advising and mentoring programs for special populations. As a result of this work, UNI has developed specific pathways for student populations that will grow in the 2019-2020 academic year and beyond. These include:

- Mentoring for Student Success Program (M2S2)—this program operates through the Center for Multicultural Education and offers mentoring for multicultural students.
- Supplemental Advising—through the Office of Undergraduate Studies, UNI has developed targeted supplemental advising for student populations that are not served through M2S2 or Student Support Services.
- [JumpStart](#)—through Student Success and Retention, our JumpStart program has been evaluated to discern its capacity and find ways to increase the capacity as our multicultural student population increases.
- [Panther Promise Program](#) (3P)—students who enroll through 3P and who are not enrolled in another program will be provided assistance and support through the 3P office.

5. Develop a comprehensive enrollment management master plan.

In the summer of 2016, the University of Northern Iowa created a comprehensive and strategic Enrollment Master Plan, with input from the [SEMP Working Group](#). Initially, the plan was used to provide guidance to the Admissions office in order to determine how to deploy admissions counselors. Unfortunately, a close relationship with University Relations did not exist at that time, so the efforts to recruit students through Admissions was not connected to marketing and advertising.

In the spring and summer of 2019, Admissions partnered with University Relations to begin developing an Integrated Recruitment and Marketing Plan; this plan was shared with several constituencies to get feedback, including deans, department heads, academic affairs council, university council, and senior leadership. The plan has been activated for the Fall 2019 recruitment cycle and will continue to evolve during the coming year. As the plan continues to be developed, it will be continuously shared with the campus constituencies.

Core Principle 3: Value Faculty and Staff Excellence. We will nurture an outstanding work environment that demonstrates a commitment to faculty and staff professional knowledge, continuing career development, and personal growth. The University recognizes that employees who are highly prepared and deeply appreciated promote a productive learning environment.

Report on Initiatives

1. Promote an environment that attracts, develops and sustains the highest quality faculty and staff and
2. Provide resources for faculty and staff for continued professional development and for success in different career stages.

In the spring of 2017, faculty rights underwent a major revolution with the Iowa legislature's changes to Chapter 20, which governs collective bargaining in the state. The end result of these legislative changes was to reduce the Master Agreement from a historically robust document to one page (base wages).

In response, faculty leaders and the Provost's office worked together to convene a [Faculty Handbook Committee](#) (FHC): six faculty and six administrators. The FHC rolled the Master Agreement into a handbook and took on the task of revising and updating the processes for faculty evaluation with a goal of rewarding and celebrating faculty excellence over the arc of their careers.

As a result of this two year process, several significant and positive changes have occurred for faculty:

- Criteria for annual, tenure, and promotion evaluation are now transparently shared with all faculty;
- Post-tenure review has been instituted with a reward system for outstanding work in teaching, scholarship, and service;
- A merit system has been created; this system will need to be evaluated and refined as it is put to use to make certain that it rewards meritorious performance;

- Renewable Term Instructors have career ladders with promotion increases; and
- Adjunct faculty who meet certain criteria have career ladders with promotion increases.

In addition to providing support for faculty during the year for professional development in teaching, largely through the [Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning](#), and for scholarly pursuits as a significant portion of the faculty portfolio, faculty have access to Professional Development Assignments, Pre-Tenure Awards, and Summer Research Fellowships. In addition, for faculty interested in service learning, a Service Learning Institute is offered every year.

Finally, while the benefits package for faculty and staff at the university continues to be very strong, changes that have reduced the benefits have been made in recent years for financial viability. Additionally, faculty receive raises through the biennial collective bargaining process led by [United Faculty](#), and have received marginal raises over the last four years as a result of the state budget. In the coming years, it will be important to monitor faculty salaries so that we can attract and retain the highest quality faculty.

3. Promote a culture of cross-campus collaboration for faculty and staff that leads to the development of a unique, transdisciplinary community.

As noted above and throughout this narrative, we have had several major initiatives over the last four years that have developed cross-campus collaboration, including the development of this Academic Master Plan, the University Strategic Plan, and the General Education Program.

In addition, our [Higher Learning Commission](#) reaccreditation process has been highly collaborative across all divisions and departments, building a unique culture of interconnectedness. Over 100 faculty, staff and students participate on the six criterion committees, each of which is co-chaired by individuals across two divisions. The co-chairs comprise the steering committee, so that high representation and interaction exists across all divisions.

The [Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning](#) also runs a meaningful and engaging New Faculty Workshop which builds collegiality across departments and a New Faculty Colloquium in the fall semester of a faculty member's first year. Additionally, regular meetings of the Academic Department Heads builds relationships across departments and colleges; the department heads also completed a two day training through the American Association of State Colleges and Universities in May 2019.

Finally, the [Provost's Leadership Academy](#) has also built an engaged community to address challenges across campus. As the website notes, "The Provost's Leadership Academy seeks to build leaders-in-place who reflect on deep questions of the meaning and purpose of their work and leadership, their capacity to make a difference in the lives of others, and the connections between the 'inner and outer landscapes' of their personal and professional lives. They consider skills and qualities of adaptive leadership (and similar leadership

models); their unique giftedness to be of service in the world; the overall shape of a well-integrated life that balances work, family, and civic engagement; and self-identified challenges and opportunities they wish to address related to their particular contexts at the University. The catalytic combination of vocational reflection (where ‘vocation’ means life-calling, one’s sense of identity and contribution, meaning and purpose) and leadership development strengthens participants’ ability to lead ‘from within’ in service to the University’s mission on behalf of the public good.”

Finally, the Academic Positioning for the Future initiative will transparently and collaboratively engage the entire campus community in imagining UNI’s future. As the [website](#) states, Academic Positioning will be a “deliberate process by which we can kick-start a campus-wide conversation about our curricular and co-curricular offerings and institutional structure, centered on ensuring we are providing what students will need in the future. This capacity-building will ensure we maximize our creative capital and that we have the programs to attract a dynamic student body. The process will engage constituents thoughtfully, setting our foundation for the future. It will surface new and innovative programs and curriculum; realize the best alignments of colleges, departments, and offices within academic affairs; and establish new processes to sustain efforts to maintain a responsive curriculum. This work is a primary mechanism by which faculty can directly engage with enrollment and recruitment efforts, by focusing on capacity building and the development of creative capital to re-envision our academic position in the state and region.”

4. Create a shared governance model that is inclusive and collaborative in nature and that involves the campus community in owning the vision of the university.

True shared governance begins with the collaborative development of a Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan. Without a process that allows the campus community to broadly own the vision of the university, it remains words on a page. The University of Northern Iowa used a very rich process to develop the [Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan for 2017-2022](#).

As described in UNI’s Higher Learning Commission assurance argument, “the UNI [2017-2022 Strategic Plan](#) was developed through a [process](#) that included broad participation by our campus and greater communities. It began with a leadership retreat that included 160 students, faculty, and staff participants representing a broad cross-section of the campus community. Following the retreat, the president appointed a 30-member [Strategic Planning Committee \(SPC\)](#) comprised of representatives from all areas of the campus and from the Cedar Valley communities. Eight public input sessions were conducted in five Iowa communities with nearly 150 participants attending. Representatives from economic development organizations, non-profit organizations, K-12 teachers and administrators, community leadership, alumni, elected local and state officials, members of the Board of Regents, and Foundation Trustees attended. In addition, an online survey gathered input from more than 300 UNI students, parents, and representatives from the broader community. Campus-wide Town Hall Meetings were held to review the revisions and prepare a final draft. The Iowa Board of Regents approved the strategic plan on October 20, 2016.”

In order to create a process to monitor implementation and measure success, faculty and staff members from divisions across campus were appointed to a [Strategic Plan Action Committee \(SPAC\)](#) and prepared a set of metrics and targets for each goal area. [Metric and target updates](#) to demonstrate progress are graphically displayed on the UNI Strategic Plan website.

Development of a communally owned Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan is a first step towards robust shared governance, but it is not sufficient to bring it to life on a campus. During summer 2019, faculty leaders and members of the Provost's office engaged in a discussion of shared governance, including sharing several articles on shared governance and models for holding shared governance conversations on university campuses. Further conversations are ongoing and may lead to a campus conversation in the coming semesters.

Core Principle 4: Elevate Diversity, Sustainability, and Community Engagement. We will create an atmosphere where diversity, sustainability, and community engagement are integrated across the campus as central values of a forward looking educational experience and workplace environment.

Report on Initiatives

1. Through the Diversity Advisory Committee, working with the Diversity and Inclusion Council, the Chief Diversity Officer, and the campus community, finalize an action plan for diversity.

The University of Northern Iowa pursues many activities related to diversity and inclusion, including events originating from the [Center for Multicultural Education](#). While we have not finalized an action plan for diversity, one was drafted in the spring of 2016 by the Diversity and Inclusion Council. Work needs to continue on diversity, inclusion and equity; the [Fall 2019 Faculty Workshop](#) by Dr. Saran Stewart provided a foundation for continued thinking about how the university can change systems, structures and culture to become more inclusive.

In the spring 2019 semester, before the fall faculty workshop, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning ran two half day workshops for about a dozen faculty on how to diversify their curriculum and pedagogy; those faculty then revised their courses and offered them in a new format in the fall 2019 semester. Five of the faculty presented their work in a panel session for CETL in September 2019.

We are currently discussing ways in which we can more systemically change the curriculum to elevate diversity, inclusion, and equity, including possibly offering a more intensive institute in the summer (similar to the Service Learning Institute). Additionally, a group of faculty, staff, and administrators will be attending the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) [annual meeting](#) in January of 2020, which always includes an emphasis on [Inclusive Excellence](#).

Within Academic Affairs, we continue to build initiatives and structures that will systemically and strategically address these issues in a way that will create meaningful and lasting change.

2. Activate a Sustainability Advisory Committee and develop an action plan for sustainability.

In the 2016-2017 academic year, we developed a [UNI Sustainability and Environmental Faculty Advisory Board](#) which is composed of up to ten faculty members who provide “leadership in the strategic plan’s call to build a vibrant campus community that is economically sound, environmentally responsible, and socially just. According to the Sustainability website, faculty whose research, teaching, and service touch on at least one of the three pillars of sustainability – social, economic, and environmental aspects of sustainable systems – make up this board.”

The objectives of the Advisory Board include:

- Define the goals and mission for interdisciplinary initiatives on sustainability curriculum, community engagement, and diversity.
- Work with the Provost’s Sustainability Fellow in fostering those sustainability initiatives across campus and throughout our local and regional community.
- Help broaden ownership across the curriculum and second providing guidance in managing the Certificate in Sustainability.

Terms on the board are to be for two academic years, with a minimum of one meeting per semester.

In its initial years, the Sustainability Advisory Committee has focused on two initiatives: the development of a [Sustainability Certificate](#) and launching a comprehensive set of events that create a connection across the university community and out into the Cedar Valley. The [Aldo Leopold Distinguished Lecture Series](#), launched in the Fall of 2018, has provided a rich array of speakers and events to broaden the campus’s knowledge of and involvement with sustainability understood broadly.

In the fall 2019 semester, faculty and staff have been visiting various departments across campus to discuss the development of a curriculum and pedagogy that engages climate change. The CETL will offer two half-day workshops for the cohort of faculty interested in this type of work. Faculty will work together to identify the most impactful ways to bring the topic of climate change into their courses, especially courses outside of the natural sciences. Workshops will occur in November and January, and are intended to result in specific action plans (assignments, units, topics, etc.) for incorporation into spring 2020 and fall 2020 courses. Like service learning and diversity, a summer institute is being discussed to deepen this work.

3. Activate a Community Engagement Advisory Committee and develop an action plan for community engagement.

In the 2016-2017 academic year, the University of Northern Iowa created a Community Engagement committee to develop a [Civic Action Plan](#). As part of Campus Compact’s

work, UNI's Civic Action Plan is a model for engaging the community in meaningful and impactful experiences, allowing our students to develop their civic agency and for the university to realize the public purposes of our institution.

Additionally, UNI focused on enhancing service learning in its Quality Initiative for the Higher Learning Commission ([QIP for HLC](#)) which also dovetailed with the third goal of the UNI Strategic Plan. Several elements were central to this work: (1) creating a Service Learning Institute, which has run for four consecutive years and included 42 faculty; (2) implementing the Community Engagement Celebration, which has also run for four years; and (3) designating courses as Service Learning courses, which will roll out the fall 2019 semester.

Other community engagement work was completed by the [American Democracy Project](#), which is currently housed in the Department of Political Science and which offers several initiatives during the course of the year such as Constitution Day, and the MLK Day of Service that is run through Student Affairs. Additionally, the university used an inclusive process to determine whether or not to join [Imagining America](#). "The mission of the Imagining America consortium (IA) brings together scholars, artists, designers, humanists, and organizers to imagine, study, and enact a more just and liberatory 'America' and world. Working across institutional, disciplinary, and community divides, IA strengthens and promotes public scholarship, cultural organizing, and campus change that inspires collective imagination, knowledge-making, and civic action on pressing public issues. By dreaming and building together in public, IA creates the conditions to shift culture and transform inequitable institutional and societal structures." A group of faculty and staff have convened to lead these efforts for this initiative.

Lastly, UNI has received national recognition for its [Panthers Vote](#) program, a "voter engagement initiative created by Director of Government Relations Matthew Johnson. This two-part campaign is aimed at creating a cohesive, non-partisan effort to get college students registered to vote and bring them to the polls in November. The 2016 election showcased UNI's previous success with these kinds of initiatives, bringing in a 67.5% student voting rate. This was second best in the entire nation and creates a motivation for Johnson, Wolfe, and other campus leaders to bring UNI to the top."