NORTHEASTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

An Institution *of Distinction* | 2023-2028

NORTHEASTERN
STATE UNIVERSITY

A Message from the
NSU PRESIDENT

Northeastern State University has a rich history that began before statehood. Its roots were firmly established when the Cherokee Nation opened the doors of the Cherokee National Female Seminary in 1851. Since then, NSU has been established as a leader in education. Our distinguished faculty, highly qualified staff and exceptional leadership have guided Northeastern throughout our past. They have endured fire, relocation, world wars and global pandemics.

A lesser institution might have folded; however, NSU prevailed due to its people, place and purpose, each of which has played an essential role in the fulfillment of our mission. Building on our Cherokee heritage, NSU is committed to student success and a sustainable future for our diverse communities. As we move forward and seek to advance NSU as a leader in education, we rededicate ourselves to Our People, Our Place and Our Purpose.

A new strategic plan, NSU: An Institution of Distinction 2023-2028, has been developed through the input of over 1,800 NSU employees, students and community members. This plan is supported by four pillars of excellence that identify goals, targets and key performance indicators. Our new strategic plan will ensure that NSU will be the Educational Partner of Choice, Enhance Workforce Connections, Ensure Student Success and Invest in Employees and Facilities.

We are thankful for the tremendous amount of effort spanning two years by the Strategic Planning Executive Committee, which gathered data and interviewed various stakeholders, Dr. Cari Keller, Dr. Kelly Jo Larsen, Dr. Kimberly Williams, Dr. Richard Reif, Dr. Peggy Glenn and Mr. Brian Manley.

I am proud to work alongside the NSU Family as we use this plan to provide direction and help move NSU into a thriving future!

Sincerely,

Rodney S. Hanley, Ph.D.
President

A Message from the
NSU PROVOST

I am pleased to be working alongside my colleagues on our new strategic plan, "NSU: An Institution of Distinction 2023-2028." When I consider what makes our institution distinctive, I think about the unique opportunities that we have on our three campuses in Tahlequah, Broken Arrow, and Muskogee, as well as our online offerings. Our students benefit from a breadth of experiences and environments that broaden their learning and help prepare them for diverse careers. Additionally, being embedded in these communities allows us to form partnerships with individuals, companies, and tribes to meet the needs of our local constituencies. Woven throughout our strategic goals is an emphasis on meeting the needs of both students and our communities, which is at the heart of our mission as a regional university.

Our strategic plan is built around four goals. First, we are committed to offering high-quality coursework in flexible modalities to help students pursue an education despite restrictions on their time and place. Second, we are committed to forging relationships with workforce leaders so we can provide an education that is relevant to today's society. Third, we are committed to helping students succeed no matter their background or level of preparation. Finally, we are committed to giving our employees the tools and training they need to fulfill our goals.

I am proud of the work that we have already accomplished in year one and look forward to the next four years of progress!

Sincerely,

Dr. Carla Swearingen
Provost

INTRODUCTION:

Since fall 2021, NSU's Strategic Planning Executive Committee has gathered feedback on NSU's previous strategic plan, surveyed thousands of stakeholders, hosted town halls on each campus, tasked committee working groups with reviewing, revising and refining the institution's mission, vision, and values and enlisted each of NSU's colleges and administrative divisions to create responsive institutional strategies for the next five years.

The previous NSU strategic plan, "Excellence: The Path to Success," covered eight years (2015 to 2023) in order to implement NSU's 2013 "Destination 2023: A 10-Year Road Map of Distinction through Degree Completion" ("D23"). D23 provided specific goals to increase the number of students who earned degrees from NSU, in response to then-Governor Mary Fallin's Complete College America challenge. While the shrinking demographic pool of potential first-time full-time freshmen was being discussed as that plan was implemented, no one could have predicted a global pandemic that changed the delivery format of all college courses within a few weeks' time in March 2020, leaving rural students without

reliable internet service and unable to complete coursework. While students lost jobs in many service industries, those jobs have returned and are paying hourly rates more than double the current federal minimum wage. Three years later, the impact of the pandemic on higher education is still being felt, analyzed and adjusted to.

At the same time, political and economic forces have focused attention on more than just earning a degree. Skills mapping, badges and micro-credentials have become new buzzwords reflecting what employers are seeking in a productive skilled workforce. NSU, as "Oklahoma's Immersive and Experiential Learning Institution," is already leading the effort to leverage industry advisory boards and workforce connections to create more student internship opportunities and a more responsive curricula.

But, we can do more. This new strategic plan, "NSU: An Institution of Distinction 2023-2028," is more than the precisely selected words and enumerated concepts in this document. It is a solid foundation for a culture of continuous improvement, based on measurable key performance indicators (KPIs) to show where we excel, where we can do better, and how we can achieve that improvement.

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NSU: AN INSTITUTION OF DISTINCTION

To remain competitive in higher education, and more increasingly, to compete with trade education institutions, NSU must distinguish itself from others with a laser focus on the value added through educational achievements. To achieve this, NSU must focus on ensuring that our students are career ready, no matter where they come from, or whether their ultimate aspirations include a degree, certificate, micro-credential or single course. The recommended Mission, Vision, Values, Institutional Goals and Key Performance Indicators provide a foundation for our path to distinction, and a plan to meet the unmet needs of our communities in three key ways:

A focus on caring about our students and each other;

A focus on experiential and immersive learning; and

A focus on Workforce, Tribal and Community partnerships and engagement.

Through the strategic planning process, these focused principles must be integrated into every facet of our institution.

NSU's new Mission, Vision and Values serve as the foundation to the University's four strategic goals, shown as pillars below.

NORTHEASTERN STATE UNIVERSITY
STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2028

Goal 1: Educational Partner of Choice

Goal 2: Enhance Workforce Connections

Goal 3: Ensure Student Success

Goal 4: Invest in Employees & Facilities

Mission: Building on our Cherokee heritage, Northeastern State University is committed to student success and a sustainable future for our diverse communities.

Vision: NSU will support our students' success by adapting to a constantly changing, globally competitive environment, by educating today's learners to be tomorrow's leaders and by being responsive to the needs of our stakeholders and the region's workforce.

Values:

Our People: We are committed to the growth and success of our students, employees and community partners.

Our Place: We honor all who came before us and advance a culture grounded in respect, opportunity and belonging.

Our Purpose: We develop a collaborative environment that cultivates a lifelong pursuit of learning, excellence, creativity and opportunity.

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC GOALS, OUTCOMES & STRATEGIES

GOAL 1: EDUCATIONAL PARTNER OF CHOICE

Provide accessible pathways to high-quality coursework delivered through flexible modalities to be the educational partner of choice in an ever-changing competitive environment.

1. **Through a student and stakeholder lens, identify, document and remove existing barriers to becoming the educational partner of choice.**

   a. Identify policies and procedures impacting NSU's role as the educational partner of choice, including but not limited to: accessible pathways to admissions, high-quality coursework, flexible modalities and workforce partnerships.

   b. Review and revise (as appropriate) these policies and procedures to remove barriers.

   c. Ensure competitive tuition and fee rates to expand our catchment area to potential out-of-state students.

DEGREES & CERTIFICATES OFFERED

60 Undergraduate Degrees
19 Undergraduate Certificates

26 Graduate Degrees
25 Graduate Certificates

1 Professional Degree
(Doctorate of Optometry)

Source: Institutional Effectiveness; Academic Year 2021-2022

2. Implement an institutional integrated enrollment management plan in order to be the educational partner of choice and maximize our potential to meet our enrollment and retention goals.

   a. Identify key stakeholders (including students) in enrollment management, academic and student success, marketing and financial support.

   b. Analyze and integrate strategies for recruitment, admissions, student support, retention, marketing and financial support.

   c. As NSU expands online and flexible programming, ensure the website provides easy-to-find accurate, relevant and current information.

   d. Ensure all majors have corresponding career opportunities and delivery modalities listed on their web page.

   e. Streamline content to facilitate easy access by students, potential students, and stakeholders to current and relevant information and timely support services.

3. Strengthen flexible educational offerings and use digital tools to augment the learning experience.

   a. Invest in technology-enabled student experiences that support the "hybrid campus."

   b. Ensure we are meeting student needs by evaluating all student-facing digital services for access, functionality and ease of use.

   c. Support high-quality online educational experiences through increased professional development opportunities for faculty and instructional staff to increase utilization of Quality Matters standards and best practices.

   d. Facilitate the transition of existing face-to-face courses to online, hybrid and HyFlex templates.
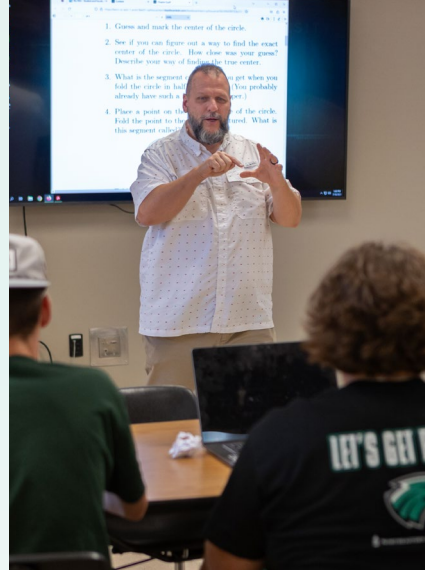
GOAL 2: ENHANCE WORKFORCE CONNECTIONS

Enhance workforce connections by ensuring our students are career ready.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Students "learn by doing" through engagement in real world applications of knowledge. NSU is committed to providing high-impact experiences for every student.

1. **The institution will prioritize experiential learning to foster learning through action.**

   a. Coordinate and develop immersive and experiential learning opportunities through the institutional Experiential Learning Committee.

   b. Partner with employers, stakeholders, career services and alumni to connect students to the workforce through increased availability of engaged learning opportunities.

   c. Develop and maintain a dynamic website dedicated to experiential learning.

   d. Secure funding to develop the Experiential Learning Institute.

2. **Programs will identify, develop and sustain relationships with external partners relevant to their discipline or program offerings.**

   a. Expand micro-credential and badge offerings that provide our workforce the opportunity to upskill while earning stackable credentials.

   b. Utilize advisory boards to facilitate relationships with workforce partners.

   c. Engage external stakeholders in promoting educational opportunities and the value of higher education.

3. Produce workforce-ready graduates.

a. Align academic and co-curricular programming with current workforce demands.

b. Strengthen online education offerings and use digital tools to improve student success and augment the traditional learning experience.

c. Develop, promote and advertise well-defined career pathways for students.

d. Increase recognition of the prior learning, skills and knowledge that students possess by awarding appropriate college credit.

4. Create an institutional infrastructure to support workforce development, connections and increased enrollment.

a. Map workforce development roles and processes (workforce gap analysis) to facilitate efficiencies.

b. Connect continuing education, professional development and for-credit workforce initiatives to drive enrollment.

c. Communicate the workforce development plan to all NSU employees.

GOAL 3: ENSURE STUDENT SUCCESS

Ensure student success through genuine concern and support for students, and early intervention by faculty and staff.

1. **Remove barriers to retention and graduation, including structural, administrative and instructional policies and practices which create roadblocks for student success.**

   a. Fully implement the Retention Priorities at *https://offices.nsuok.edu/studentaffairs/retention.aspx*.

   b. Improve student-facing processes university wide that impact student success.

   c. Align existing practices with relevant high-impact practices, such as those of the Association of American Colleges & Universities, and ensure continuous improvement through ongoing assessment of student participation.

   d. Ensure all departments are continuously evaluating and improving through a lens of fostering student retention and graduation, including engaging in ongoing conversations (with student feedback) of their contributions to student success.

2. **Provide educational opportunities to the campus community regarding student success best practices and student-facing processes.**

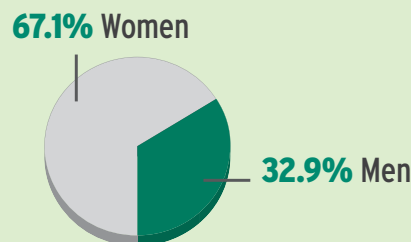   a. Provide weekly notifications of student support services and related events.

b. Increase awareness of services, processes and available resources. Provide faculty and staff training on these topics.

c. Identify, communicate and provide professional development and training to ensure student success best practices.

d. Establish a committee to coordinate cross training, customer service training and front-line support in order to minimize phone transfers, student frustration and to be able to better connect students with accurate information quickly.

e. Review new faculty and new employee onboarding through the lens of ensuring student success.

3. Leverage data more effectively to increase student success and retention.

a. Share retention data internally, as appropriate, to ensure that departments and programs understand their contribution to fostering student success.

b. Create an institutional plan to identify the data points that will allow programs to make impactful program decisions to increase retention, including completion of credentials, student satisfaction surveys and course evaluations.

c. Embed student success and retention data into existing reporting structures, including academic annual reports.

d. Develop and implement interactive dashboards with key performance data to leverage student success metrics and improve data-informed decision-making.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

25⁺ — **35.5% of NSU Undergrads are 25 Years of Age & Older**

91.1% Oklahomans
7.0% Out of State
1.9% International

50.2% Caucasian

20.5% American Indian
(American Indian or Alaska Native Only)

12.8% Two or more Races

6.4% Hispanic

4.8% African American

2.4% Asian

2.8% Unknown/Other

223 CONCURRENT
High School Students

67.1% Women

32.9% Men

Unduplicated headcount

*Source: Institutional Effectiveness;
Academic Year 2021-2022*

GOAL 4: INVEST IN EMPLOYEES AND FACILITIES

Invest in employees and facilities to ensure that both are performing at their best, excelling at their functions, and are outfitted with the tools and technology needed in today's intensely competitive workforce and evolving digital environment.

1. **Increase and improve employee recruitment and retention.**

   a. Adjust employee pay based on College & University Professional Association - Human Resources (CUPA-HR) salary review.

   b. Without decreasing productivity or negatively impacting student success, and as appropriate, evaluate select positions for the potential to effectively work remotely.

   c. Evaluate on-call and holiday pay options and procedures for non-exempt employees who are required to work outside of normal business hours.

2. **Conduct a university-wide facilities and infrastructure audit and prioritize investments based on need, focusing on those impacting student and employee retention.**

   a. Conduct a holistic review of campus infrastructure and determine anticipated costs to eliminate deferred maintenance, as well as savings for unnecessary maintenance, encompassing buildings, HVAC, hot water, safety (sidewalks, lighting, cameras), and invest accordingly.

   b. Evaluate instructional technology to meet 21st century teaching skills and expectations.

   c. Conduct an audit of directional and campus signage to determine what is missing or needs to be updated with appropriate nomenclature.

   d. Upgrade telecommunication, computers and printer technology.

$2.9M FEDERAL TECHNOLOGY GRANT
Received in 2023

3. Establish and implement a campus safety and accessibility plan.

  a. Analyze and address current security and safety needs (e.g., number of buildings, doors, locks, video monitoring, sidewalks, lighting, Title IX, Clery compliance, ADA compliance, etc.).

  b. Ensure that NSU complies with cyber security regulations and protecting the privacy of employees and students.

4. Innovate and automate our processes to improve student success, work efficiency and agility.

  a. Assess and streamline processes across the university.

  b. Develop a digital storage plan across the university.

 **c.** Increase efficiency by digitizing paper-based processes.

5. Provide professional development and leadership opportunities for employees to improve efficacy and accountability.

  a. Provide relevant skills-based training for employees, including trades training and potential certifications with pay/advancement options per certification, license, degree or other training opportunities, considering a commitment to remain at NSU in exchange for such training.

  b. Provide a campus-wide professional development opportunity at least once every two years.

  c. Provide internal leadership training opportunities to qualified employees throughout the university.

  d. Offer and require customer service training for front-line employees, including student workers.

  e. Identify department opportunities for advancement and train/crosstrain current employees accordingly.

6. Ensure a coordinated approach to managing external, private or other alternative funding.

  a. Identify and remove barriers to seeking appropriate external, private or other alternative funding.

  b. Continue improving and streamlining the grants process, from identification to application, and from post-award to final report.

  c. Increase external or alternative funding opportunities by incentivizing grant writers.

  d. Foster improved engagement of stakeholders in both pre and post-award processes through appropriate advisory boards.

$8,109,916.73 IN GRANTS

Received in Academic Year 2022-2023
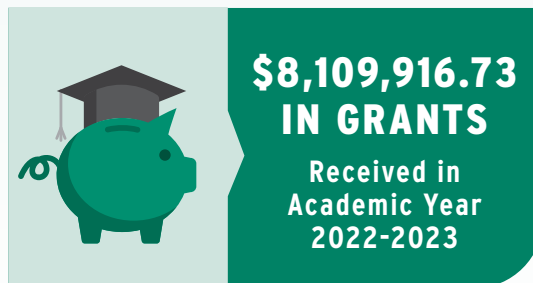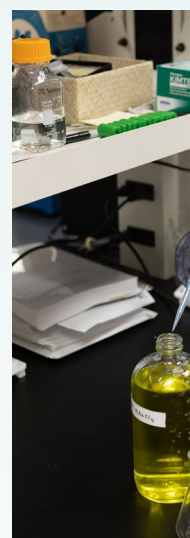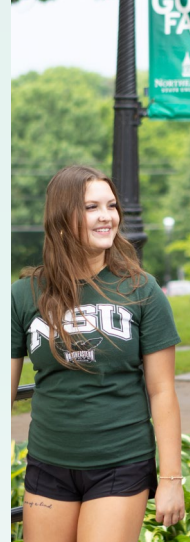
The Path
FORWARD

For each of the four strategic goals on pages eight through 15, as well as for many of the enumerated outcomes, key performance indicators (KPIs) have been identified to measure change year-over-year. Where data is not currently available, key employees have been tasked with compiling that data in 2023-24 and establishing a benchmark accordingly.

Each academic department and administrative division has already developed its own strategic plan for 2023 through 2028, which ties each departmental or divisional outcome and strategy to one or more of the four institutional goals. As with the institutional outcomes, departments and divisions have identified KPIs to measure change from year to year.

NSU is exploring several software programs that provide dashboards, reports, assignments and other strategic plan inputs and outcomes by role and/or department or division. Once purchased and implemented during the 2023-24 academic year, the Strategic Planning Committee will be able to more easily track progress toward goals using the designated KPIs.

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nsuok.edu/StrategicPlan