

# **NORTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY**

Campus of Distinction:  
A Framework for Strategic Action

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*Effective: Fall 2020*



# NORTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY

## Campus of Distinction: A Framework for Strategic Action

### MISSION

Northern State University will provide diverse academic, civic, social and cultural opportunities that prepare students through the liberal arts and professional education for their future endeavors, while also enriching the local and regional community.

### VISION

Northern State University will be regionally recognized as a student-centered, diverse community dedicated to excellence in teaching and learning, creativity and global awareness.

### VALUES

Northern State University's students, faculty and staff are committed to the following values:

#### > COMMUNITY

Building a culture of inclusion, belonging and collegiality that respects diversity in knowledge, culture and world view

#### > DISCOVERY

Pursuing rigor and excellence in education, inquiry and engagement for the benefit of our students, state and region

#### > INTEGRITY

Adhering to the highest standards of honesty, fairness and transparency with a commitment to responsible stewardship of resources

### PILLARS OF EXCELLENCE

#### DISTINCTIVE LEARNING

Active, innovative, interdisciplinary and relevant

#### DISTINCTIVE EXPERIENCE

Diverse, engaged, inclusive and welcoming

#### DISTINCTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Collaborative, entrepreneurial, supportive and sustainable

#### DISTINCTIVE LEADERSHIP

Accountable, ethical, responsive and transparent

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## BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Northern State University began discussing next steps regarding strategic planning in spring 2019 as the current Mission Forward plan sunsets on schedule in June 2020. These discussions, coordinated by the university Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) and campus leadership, led to a fundamental belief that traditional approaches to strategic planning, which emphasize static, linear plans and tend to produce shelf documents, are no longer conducive to meeting the challenges and opportunities of the rapidly changing landscape of higher education. The university Strategic Planning Committee opted to investigate a new model called Strategic Doing. In contrast to traditional strategic planning, Strategic Doing prioritizes action on shorter timelines driven by continual engagement, reflection and adjustment to realize pathway projects supporting the university's mission, vision, and values. As a result, Strategic Doing is a continuous, dynamic and iterative process.

After completing an introductory workshop on Strategic Doing, facilitated by Dr. Sona Andrews, the SPC recommended that Northern adopt Strategic Doing as a framework for facilitating agile, results-orientated strategic action. Senior Cabinet approved this recommendation in May 2019. During summer 2019, the SPC conducted a campus-wide survey, soliciting feedback on Northern's current mission, vision and values. The SPC utilized that information during a workshop, held in July 2019, to reimagine Northern's mission, vision and values. Senior Cabinet approved this new mission, vision and values statement in August 2019. The SPC presented the new mission, vision and values during campus forums held during in-service week in August 2019 and solicited additional feedback.

The SPC met three times during the fall 2019 to review subsequent feedback. As a result, the SPC proposed a framework for strategic implementation focused on creating four Pillars of Excellence dedicated to learning, experience, partnerships and leadership. A Pillar Team will be responsible for coordinating the characteristics, pathway projects and metrics for each Pillar of Excellence, as well as a Communications Team to facilitate communication and transparency. The SPC was renamed the Strategic Action Team (SAT) and will be responsible for guiding and coordinating the university's overall Strategic Action initiative. This basic blueprint, titled Campus of Distinction: A Framework for Strategic Action, was approved by Senior Cabinet in November 2019.

The SAT launched campus wide outreach through November and December 2019 to identify members of the Pillar Teams. In January 2020, the SAT and campus leadership presented this new framework to campus. Pillar Teams developed and presented characteristics, pathway projects and metrics for their respective themes by April 2020 and prepared to begin implementation in fall 2020.

This framework and its Pillars of Excellence directly support the four major goals outlined in the SDBOR Strategic Plan 2014-2020. The Pillar of Distinctive Learning emphasizes active, innovative, interdisciplinary and relevant teaching and learning in alignment with the SDBOR's goal of Academic Quality and Performance. The Pillar of Distinctive Experience focuses on building a diverse, engaged, inclusive and welcoming campus as the foundation for Student Success. The Pillar of Distinctive Partnerships advances the goal of Research and Economic Development by forging collaborative, entrepreneurial, supportive and sustainable partnerships with the community and region. Finally, the Pillar of Distinctive Leadership promotes accountable, ethical, responsive and transparent leadership aligned with the goal of Affordability and Accountability.

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## OVERVIEW OF CAMPUS OF DISTINCTION

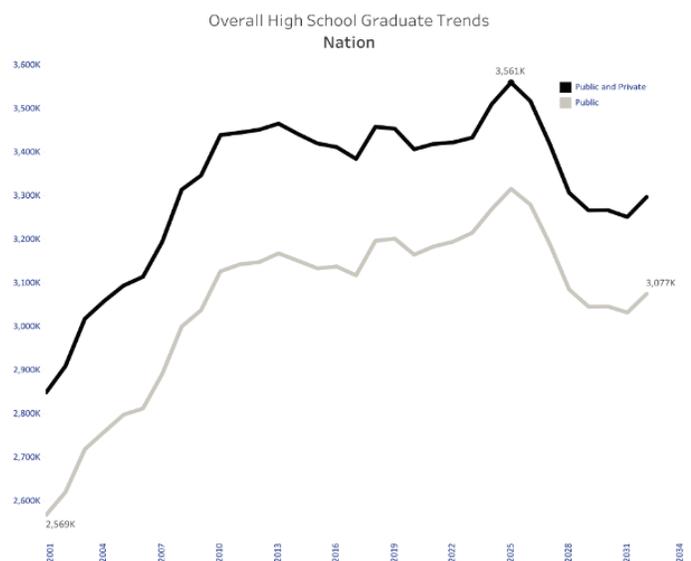
Northern State University recently adopted a new framework for strategic planning and implementation, titled Campus of Distinction: A Framework for Strategic Action. Coordinated by the Strategic Action Team, these efforts led to the approval of a revised mission, vision and values statement and the creation of four “Pillar Teams” responsible for developing the characteristics, pathway projects and metrics supporting distinction in learning, experience, partnerships and leadership, as well as a communications team. This document provides some background and context for these efforts in relation to the rapidly changing landscape of higher education.

To summarize, higher education in the USA faces a confluence of challenges that will persist through the 2020s and beyond. Declining fertility rates will lead to smaller cohorts of high school graduates and by extension smaller populations in traditional college-age groups. Simultaneously, those cohorts will become more diverse in terms of race, ethnicity and socioeconomic background. These demographic trends intersect with longer-term social and political trends.

High school and college-age cohorts will peak nationally around 2025 and then drop by around 15 percent by 2030 with further declines expected through the following decade. Graduating high school cohorts across the Midwest region are expected to decline by about 14 percent from 2010 to 2030, but those declines are concentrated in the periods 2010-2015 and 2025-2030, with cohort sizes relatively stable from 2015-2025. Cohorts will also become more diverse, with non-White students rising from 6 percent of South Dakota high school graduates in 2000-2001 and 14 percent in 2012-2013 to 26 percent by 2031-2032.

To prepare for this confluence of challenges, Northern will shift from conventional approaches to strategic planning as a periodic endeavor to thinking of “strategic action” as a proactive and ongoing process of inquiry, engagement and reflection responsive to the evolving needs of the university, its students and the local and regional community. As such, Northern will focus on four distinctive Pillars that support our Campus of Distinction.

1. The Pillar of Distinctive Learning emphasizes active, innovative, interdisciplinary and relevant teaching and learning to promote academic quality and performance.
2. The Pillar of Distinctive Experience focuses on building a diverse, engaged, inclusive and welcoming campus as the foundation for student success.



Source: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates, 2016.  
Notes: Projections begin with Class of 2012 for Public and Private together, 2014 for Public only.

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3. The Pillar of Distinctive Partnerships advances the goal of research and economic development by forging collaborative, entrepreneurial, supportive and sustainable partnerships with the community and region.

4. The Pillar of Distinctive Leadership promotes ethical, responsive and transparent leadership aligned with the goal of affordability and accountability.

Northern has demonstrated great resilience over the last century while facing two World Wars, economic downturns and significant social change. Given that record, there is considerable reason for optimism as Northern prepares to meet these latest challenges. Northern is moving proactively to position the institution for success amid the rapidly changing landscape of higher education. Northern already has most of what it needs to navigate this confluence of challenges over the next decade while striving to become a campus of distinction built around excellence in learning, experience, partnerships and leadership aligned with the university's mission, vision and values.

## **TIMELINE**

### **2019**

- SAT conducts campus and community survey soliciting feedback on current mission, purpose, vision and values statement.
- Strategic Action model approved by President and Senior Cabinet based on SAT recommendation.
- New mission, vision and values statement approved by President and Senior Cabinet based on SAT recommendation.
- SAT conducts campus forums to present new mission, vision and values statement and solicit additional feedback.
- Working blueprint titled Campus of Distinction: A Framework for Strategic Action approved by President and Senior Cabinet.
- SAT conducts campus survey soliciting volunteers for Pillar Teams.

### **2020**

- Pillar Teams formed.
  - SAT and Senior Leadership present new framework to campus, report progress and solicit feedback.
  - Pillar Teams develop characteristics, pathway projects and metrics.
  - Implementation begins.
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