

Higher Learning Commission 4- Year Assurance Review (2018)

**Presentation to the
Board of Trustees
September 13, 2018**

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Northern Illinois University
Your Future. Our Focus.





NIU has successfully completed its 4-Year Assurance Review with all 5 criteria and 21 core components met!

Presentation Overview

- Why this is important
- Assurance Review strategy
- Significant findings from HLC peer review
- Next steps

Why This is Important

- NIU's assurance narrative attests to focused alignment of institutional priorities across the university
- NIU demonstrated its commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement efforts for academic and co-curricular programs, and institutional functions
- NIU's excellent standing with HLC directly influences Title IV funding, transfer agreements, certifications and licensure efforts, and enrollments

Assurance Review Development Strategy

- Addressing external stresses and internal challenges
- Demonstrating transparency
- Applying a project management approach to manage over 1,000 pieces of evidence
- Including a broad constituency and communications reflecting shared governance
- Leveraging NIU websites to communicate operations and culture
- Highlighting five themes through all five criteria

Five Criteria of the Assurance Review



I.
Mission

II. Integrity:
Ethical &
Responsible
Conduct

III. Teaching
& Learning:
Quality,
Resources,
Support

IV. Teaching &
Learning:
Evaluation &
Improvement

V. Resources,
Planning, &
Institutional
Effectiveness

Highlighted Institutional Themes

1. Program Prioritization Process and Outcomes
2. Transparency
3. Diversity
4. NIU PLUS
5. Engagement

Within the context of a state budget impasse

Overall Findings from 4 Year HLC Assurance Review

- *“NIU is a public regional institution that has suffered recent financial stress due to the **State of Illinois' budgetary hiatus**, which lasted just over two years, and internal disruption due to **leadership transitions**”*
- *“Nevertheless, during the four years since the last HLC visit, NIU developed and implemented a comprehensive **Program Prioritization** process which has shaped and guided the institution, and **tied strategic planning and budgeting together**”*
- *“NIU has improved on its **transparency and strengthened its shared governance mechanisms**, and is now preparing to launch a **search for its next president**”*

Overall Findings from 4 Year HLC Assurance Review

- *“NIU provided sufficient evidence that it continues to **meet all criteria** for HLC accreditation”*
- *“**Issues raised during the last comprehensive evaluation, namely budgeting and planning processes related to Core Components 5.A and 5.C, have been resolved** by the establishment and implementation of **Program Prioritization** and the new **transparent and effective budgeting model**”*
- *“Improvements being made are **shaping institutional focus in strategic ways**, and have **enhanced effectiveness and efficiency** of NIU in delivering on its mission”*

Criteria I Mission: HLC Findings



“NIU has stayed true to its mission and role in the region”

- New initiatives and organizational structures have emerged to improve efficiency and impact of services to constituents
- Institution has expanded its emphasis on diversity, engagement and transparency in alignment with its mission as a public institution



Criteria II Findings: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

“...the institution is in a remarkably good position given external pressures endured, speaking to the integrity of its people and operations”

- NIU demonstrates evidence of ethical and responsible conduct in operations, policies, procedures
- Board consults with stakeholders before making decisions involving substantial changes at NIU
- NIU has directly addressed issues when they have arisen, ***with transparency and positive results...validation that NIU acts with integrity***

Criteria III Findings: Teaching and Learning- Quality, Resources, and Support

“A strong collection of student support services, and co-curricular education, enhance the prospects of student success and holistic learning”

- Program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modalities
- NIU supports faculty and staff to create high-impact practitioners
- NIU PLUS engages students in key learning outcomes, NIU is ***developing a database to store all general education assessment data***



Criteria IV Findings: Teaching and Learning- Evaluation and Improvement

“NIU has an extensive faculty-driven assessment process...a campus culture of assessment...continuous improvement of academic and co-curricular programs”

- Program Prioritization evaluated all programs and aligned institutional support and decision-making with outcomes
- Shared governance in assessment processes and structures encourages continuous improvement
- Applauded NIU’s intentional transparency in publically sharing appropriate data
- Reviewers applauded recent efforts in collecting, analyzing, and using data on retention, persistence, and completion and encouraged ***more ambitious goals and KPIs in these areas***

Criteria V Findings: Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

“...the institution is to be commended for its activities during times of stress and is encouraged to continue on its path of making strategic resource allocation decisions to further strengthen the institution for the future”

- Program Prioritization significantly influenced alignment of resources with mission and helped identify priorities to improve strategic balance
- Significant administrative restructuring in diversity and inclusion, enrollment management and marketing, student affairs, ethics and compliance, and institutional effectiveness
- Holistic review of each unit across identified criteria created a robust system for integrated planning, budgeting, and decision-making

Next Steps: HLC Open Pathway Timeline Years 1-4 of 10-Year Cycle

Reaffirmation of Institutional Accreditation in 2014

Years 1-3: Annual Assurance Updates

2014- 2017

- ✓ Following 2014 Comprehensive Site Visit
- ✓ Contribute documents to Evidence File annually

Year 4: Assurance Review; Interim Monitoring Report

June 2018

- ✓ Assurance Argument and Evidence File
- ✓ Assurance Review-no Site Visit
- ✓ Embedded Interim Report on Budgeting and Planning

Next Steps: HLC Open Pathway Timeline



Next Steps: Quality Initiative



- Major Quality Initiative (QI) designed to suit NIU's present concerns or aspirations
- Takes place between years 5 and 9 of Open Pathway
- QI is designed to allow institutions to take risks, aim high, and learn from success or failure based on evaluation of the initiative

THANK YOU
to NIU's Leadership, Faculty,
Staff, Students, and all
Constituencies

Questions?

