<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message from President James Smith</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About this Plan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for the Future</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission, Vision, and Values</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Plan 1: Recruitment, Retention, and Completion</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Plan 2: Building Tomorrow’s Leaders</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Plan 3: Excellence in Delivery</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Plan 4: Communicate to the World</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Plan 5: Practice Stewardship</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I am pleased and proud to introduce this Mission Forward strategic plan, which is deeply rooted in Northern State University’s history and has grown organically from previous plans and strategic priorities. At the heart of this plan lie newly developed core values, updated vision and mission statements, and five key strategic priorities. It represents a truly collaborative effort.

The values, vision, mission, and key strategies resulting from this process were shared and revised based on feedback from the University’s key stakeholders: faculty, staff, students, the community, and alumni. It also embodies a thoroughly practical, in-depth assessment of the world of adult higher education — now and in the future. The strategic planning process included extensive analyses of data on the distance education market, our competition, and the changing environment in which we operate.

While this final document is the result of a great deal of care and forethought, it must be noted that we have developed this plan with a sense of urgency. If Northern State University is to continue to be a major provider of multi-faceted educational delivery, including distance education, it needs to adapt to a very dynamic and international marketplace.

We will monitor progress using measurement matrices for the University. Only by being constantly vigilant and making difficult decisions among competing priorities will we be able to achieve our key strategic priorities. I believe this strategic plan will not only stand as a significant first step toward achieving those strategies, but as a roadmap to guide this remarkable university toward the next century.

James Smith, PhD.
Northern State University (NSU) retained the consulting services of Sioux Falls-based Sumption & Wyland, LLC and Sage Project Consultants, LLC, to conduct a multi-phase strategic planning process on its behalf. Beginning in May 2014, the process was initiated with a preliminary environmental scan of comparable institutions within the region, and then followed up with a Senior Cabinet Retreat wherein high-level areas of inquiry were defined and the basis for the data collection phase of the process was established. The data collection elements were designed based on best practices from the industry of strategic planning, and relative experience of the consultants. The methods were later adapted to best fit the availability of data and participation of stakeholders.

Upon initial project design (Fall 2013 with revisions April 2014) a series of activities were identified by the consultants that would collectively inform the formulation of goals and objectives for the new strategic plan of NSU. These activities as noted in the proposal included a number of key outcomes and deliverables. The activities were adjusted to best match the availability and accessibility of data.

A total of 10 focus groups were conducted in support of the strategic planning process, including the following key constituency groups:

- Athletics (1 focus group)
- Current sophomores and juniors (2 focus groups, 68 surveys)
- Current international students (6 focus groups, 2 surveys)
- Current student senate members (5 focus groups, 4 surveys)
- Faculty (2 sessions) (9 focus groups, 45 surveys)
- Staff (2 sessions) (3 focus groups, 63 surveys)
- Parents of Prospective Students (anecdotal; few participants)
- Prospective Students (anecdotal; few participants)
From humble roots as the Northern Normal and Industrial School established in 1901, progress has been a constant in curriculum and life at Northern State University. In our 114-year history, our faculty and staff have continued to meet the needs of students at the university level and those in K-12 education through traditional, video, and online teaching.

The pursuit of our mission is as strong as the bricks that built our historic facilities on campus. It is through the exercise of our mission, vision, and values that will allow our students to be successful in a global and ever-changing environment. As time passes, and technologies and economical advancements have happened, Northern State University remains dedicated to providing superior and affordable education to students.

The Mission Forward™ strategic plan is designed to provide clear guidance as Northern State University endeavors to graduate global citizens to make a difference in the world. The changing needs of our students, faculty, and community have been considered during the planning process. An overview of our five strategic goals found in this plan include:

- Recruitment, retention, and completion of students
- Building tomorrow’s leaders
- Excellence in delivery of learning
- Communicate our identity to the world
- Stewardship

Let’s continue to work together in enabling our students to become the future leaders of our world. Be You. Be Us. Be Northern.
The legislature established Northern State University to meet the needs of the State, region, and nation by providing undergraduate and graduate programs in education and other courses or programs as the Board of Regents may determine. (SDCL 13-59-1)

The NSU Board implemented SDCL 13-59-1 by authorizing graduate and undergraduate programs in education to promote excellence in teaching and learning, to support research, scholarly and creative activities, and to provide service to the State of South Dakota, the region, and the nation. The Board approved a special emphasis on E-learning in the university curriculum and service.

MISSION, VISION, & VALUES

NSU is a university dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in the liberal arts and in graduate and professional education. Its distinctiveness in its pursuit of mission derives from its coeducational and residential character; its size and location; and its role as a comprehensive public, state-sponsored university.

NSU will be a nationally-recognized student-centered institution committed to academic and extracurricular excellence, and global learning opportunities in a beautiful Midwestern setting.
NSU’s students, faculty, and staff are drawn together by the following values:

**CONNECTION**
- Valuing relationships by maintaining the highest ethical integrity in all we do.
- Valuing our community through a commitment to responsible stewardship.
- Valuing the future through the development of human, intellectual, cultural, financial, and environmental resources.

**COMMUNITY**
- Creating a vibrant community through teamwork, cooperation, and mutual respect in an environment that is diverse in knowledge, culture, and worldview.

**EDUCATION**
- Expanding research and teaching to/for issues of importance to our community, state, and region.
- Assuring academic rigor and the highest standards of excellence in all forms of intellectual inquiry.

We believe the following principles will guide us as we work to uphold those values:

**MAINTAINING EXTRAORDINARY STANDARDS IN:**
- Academic rigor
- Intellectual inquiry
- Rich life experiences

**FOSTERING ENGAGED LEARNING THROUGH:**
- Evidence-based inquiry
- High integrity
- Global experiences
- Traditional and nontraditional teaching/learning opportunities

**CULTIVATING STEWARDSHIP THROUGH:**
- Beneficial partnerships
- Responsibility
- Efficiency
STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Recruit, retain, challenge, and graduate students possessing the skills for success and leadership in a changing global economy.

1. Grow undergraduate total full time on-campus student population by 15 percent.

2. Grow total student enrollment to 4,000 students.

3. Grow total graduate student enrollment by 10 percent.

4. Increase student retention from freshman to sophomore by 7 percent.

5. Grow enrollment in online course instruction by 20 percent.

6. Provide comprehensive campus experience for all students through academic, social, residential, athletic, learning, and arts engagement opportunities.

7. Increase the quality of student life through enhanced safety, aesthetics, and functionality of campus-based residential services.
1. Direct curricular emphasis toward career and placement readiness for all undergraduate programs.

2. Assure all students have at least one opportunity for employment-based engagement and application of knowledge and skills as part of their undergraduate program.

3. Develop, deliver, and reinforce leadership, change management, and career pathways competencies across all elements of the University.

4. Maximize opportunities for international study to build understanding of a global world for all students.

Prepare students for careers of today while equipping them for a changing future marketplace.

Building tomorrow’s leaders
STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Meet or exceed the highest level of excellence in academic programs.

1. Sustain regional institutional accreditation

2. Seek, secure, and retain maximum accreditation status in Business, Arts and Sciences, Fine Arts, and Education programs of the University with emphasis on securing both ACBSP and CACREP accreditation.

3. Increase capacity of the University to provide research and research-based learning in various academic programs.

4. Increase capacity and resources of University faculty to teach, support, mentor, and motivate students to meet their individual goals of successful program completion in both on-line and face-to-face teaching opportunities.
STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

Communicate the identity of NSU as the higher education institution of choice for students seeking a career for today and stepping stones for tomorrow’s world.

1. Promote an identity that differentiates NSU and the community of Aberdeen as an academic institution and community of choice.

2. Enhance understanding of NSU as a global university with countless opportunities for international experience.

3. Create unique learning opportunities that have a service-learning or self-exploration focus; bring the world to the NSU classroom and the NSU classroom to the world.

4. Build a legacy for the NSU Honors Program that includes myriad student recipients of the Truman, Eisenhower, Mitchell, and Fulbright Scholarship.
STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5

Assure NSU’s sustainability through stewardship of financial, human, and cultural capital.

1. Provide top-level professional services to every visitor, student, faculty, staff, and community interaction carried out in the name of NSU.

2. Encourage and reward all who promote the vibrancy of NSU.

3. Seek out, build, nurture, and reinforce lifelong relationships that partner in the future of NSU.

4. Actively partner with the Northern State University Foundation in the promotion of its philanthropic work so as to allow the University to produce graduates who shape and reshape the world around them.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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