CSUN Shines for the Next Decade: Planning and Priorities as an Engaged Institution

This document summarizes the California State University, Northridge planning priorities, which encompass priorities identified by President Dianne Harrison, identified through the WASC accreditation process, and utilized in the university’s divisional and college planning.

California State University, Northridge (see institutional profile) exists to enable students to realize their educational goals. The last two WASC reports and university plans since 2005 track how CSUN faculty and staff have become increasingly engaged with student learning and success. This engagement aligns with planning priorities across the divisions and colleges; and it follows from an expectation of collaborative problem-solving that is evidence-based.

Key to fulfilling the university’s mission (i.e., “to promote the welfare and intellectual progress of students”) is our relevance to the region with less fiscal dependence on the state. Essential to relevance is graduating students who are as diverse as the region and are as experienced as possible with the transformative effects of research and service. We provide students with the high-quality learning they need to succeed as engaged citizens of the 21st century and to thrive in an era of global interconnectedness. Essential to less dependence on the state is generating other revenues and the stewarding of those resources productively and sustainably. Today, all of this requires robust and accessible information systems that can scale capacity to link resources and mobile users. We envision new collaborations across teaching and learning centers, the library, information technology, and other campuses.

The overriding university priority is student success. All other priorities exist in support of student achievement. Student success is dependent on engaging and supporting university faculty and staff. Student success will be facilitated and sustained by a focus on the visibility and reputation of the university, by lessening the university’s dependence on state funding, by increasing research and sponsored programs, by attention to sustainability, and by using athletics as a tool for student and community engagement.

1. Student success

An unrelenting focus on student success will be the university’s continued top priority. Academic excellence and student engagement for retention, persistence, and graduation are paramount; and other university priorities and goals exist in primary support of student success. As part of this overarching priority of student success, the university will:

- Continue to provide authentic access by admitting and enrolling students consistent with the university’s resources, CSU policy, and guided by a campus strategic enrollment management plan
- Continue to focus on increasing undergraduate completion rates – retention, persistence, graduation, time to graduation
• Engage students through quality academic programs and engagement in learning, including offering opportunities for both graduate and undergraduate students to engage in research internships, and other hands-on learning
• Continue to focus on effective advising
• Continue to focus on assessment and the use of evidence to demonstrate student success and to improve programs
• Offer programs, services, facilities, and opportunities for co-curricular engagement and learning which build a relationship between the student and the university, enhance student capacity for academic and personal achievement, and are responsive to student needs and expectations
• Leverage technology to improve access to information and services through mobile and web interfaces (e.g., portal, virtual software library, myCSUNtablet, my path to graduation, lecture capture, hybrid and online courses and programs, and the SOLAR student administration system)

2. Focus on employees for success

The university succeeds in supporting student achievement through the commitment and engagement of its employees (faculty and staff). Supporting employee success is key to effective student success initiatives. As a workplace, California State University, Northridge will:

• Continue to focus on ensuring that the university is a destination workplace where every employee recognizes that he or she belongs to a community of educators and is acknowledged as a key participant in advancing student success and in providing exemplary service to all university stakeholders
• Continue to focus on enhancing the sense of employee engagement and campus community
• Continue to foster a culture that facilitates and recognizes employee success, provides opportunities for employees to develop management and leadership skills, and attends to succession planning
• Leverage technology to improve access to information and services through mobile and web interfaces, and utilize technology to streamline and automate business processes
• Continue efforts to attract a diverse faculty and staff who work effectively with our diverse student population
• Maintain and grow the commitment to collaboration across units, departments, and divisions

3. Visibility and reputation of the university

Opportunities for students, employees, and funding are enhanced by the positive visibility and reputation of the university. The university’s capacity to engage both internal and external constituents – students and potential students, parents, faculty and staff, elected officials, donors and potential donors, community partners, and the community at large – is dependent on growing the visibility and positive reputation of the university. California State University, Northridge will:
• Create consistent and engaging communications to tell our story to both internal and external audiences (e.g., using the CSUN Shine communications platform, through an informative and easily navigable website)
• Grow both internal and external awareness of the university’s many distinctions and accomplishments and recognize and celebrate the work of our faculty, staff, and students
• Pursue opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with community partners to make a difference in our region and state

4. Plan for a future less dependent on state funding

The past several years have seen reductions in state funding, and California State University, Northridge does not anticipate a major reinvestment by the state. To safeguard access and quality education for students, the university must be prepared for a future less dependent on state funding. This will be achieved by engaging donors and community partners, by developing and growing alternative sources of revenue, and through conservative financial stewardship. California State University, Northridge will:

• Continue to focus on increasing fundraising activity and attracting philanthropic support
• Continue to build sustainable revenue streams through purposeful growth of non-resident enrollment
• Continue to generate revenue and expand educational offerings through self-support programs
• Increase the volume of grant, contract, and sponsored program activity
• Increase the volume of licensing and other auxiliary activity
• Continue to be conservative in spending and alert to opportunities to reduce costs
• Work with the CSU system to identify opportunities for shared services to increase efficiencies and reduce costs
• Work with the CSU system to identify opportunities to increase flexibility and base the budget on all funds to support ongoing expenses no longer funded by the state

5. Increase research activity and sponsored programs

Basic and applied research is an essential part of the university’s mission. Research engages the expertise of the faculty to address compelling challenges and address problems facing our region, state, and world. When involving students, research activity provides for the highest form of educational experience and mentoring. Funded research is an important source of support for both faculty and students beyond state appropriations. California State University, Northridge will seek to:

• Substantially increase the volume of grant and contract activity over next 5 years
• Continue to strengthen administrative support for Principal Investigators
• Continue to support faculty research through time, space, assistance in pursuing grants, and recognition
• Continue to engage both undergraduate and graduate students in research
6. Sustainability

A focus on sustainability achieves cost savings, represents responsible stewardship of the university’s physical resources, and prepares knowledgeable graduates who will also be leaders and stewards of the earth’s resources. California State University, Northridge is already a leader with sustainable buildings, efficient practices, reduced energy and water usage, and the generation and use of alternative energy. Further, the university’s focus on sustainability promotes educational experiences for students.

- Consider and implement as appropriate recommendations of the campus sustainability plan draft submitted by the Institute for Sustainability, including enhanced curricular offerings
- Continue to advance sustainable and green practices with regard to facilities design and utilization, facilities and grounds maintenance, and business processes, thereby reducing waste and energy consumption
- Continue to move paper-based processes online

7. Using athletics as a tool for engagement

California State University, Northridge engages with our communities via a wide range of programs appealing to our various constituencies. Athletics as a tool for engagement has been under-utilized. Further, the university strives to afford every student a quality experience, including student-athletes and students who desire to participate as spectators. With a heightened focus on athletics as a tool to engage students, employees, and external communities, the university will:

- Consider and implement as appropriate recommendations of the draft Ad Hoc Committee on Athletics Engagement
- Increase focus on the competitive and academic success of the CSUN athletics programs
- Increase engagement with potential donors who have interest in athletics and grow fundraising activity
- Enhance athletics facilities to support the recruitment of student-athletes and community and campus participation