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For Discussion Only

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN • CHICAGO • SPRINGFIELD

The Public's University:

**Strategic Framework for the
University of Illinois System**

About this Strategic Framework

This UI System's Framework is not a substitute for the strategic plans and core priorities developed by the individual Universities. Instead, the Framework points to the broad collective priorities of the System. It aims to contribute added value to the Universities, by developing appropriate synergies between them, building bridges between them and external entities, and providing them essential support in reaching their goals.

This Framework is a description of the System's relationship with and benefits for external stakeholders, including state and local government, business and industry, Illinois' communities, and the like.

Introduction

Seeking his first seat in the Illinois General Assembly at the age of 23, Abraham Lincoln envisioned a future—he called it “the happy period”—when education would become widespread and widely regarded as a public good: “I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in.”

With this Strategic Framework, the University of Illinois System—**the Public's University**—reaffirms the central role that education, and higher education in particular, can play in promoting the public good.

We start with a single, powerful idea: That the State of Illinois can grow its way to prosperity and global significance, and that we are ready to lead the way. In the next decade, The University of Illinois System will build on our magnificent traditions—academic excellence, the world-class talents of our faculty, the aspirations and energy of our students, and the dedication of our staff—to make an enduring impact on the public good.

We know this is an ambitious promise—and one that encompasses the concerns and hopes of many stakeholders. Foremost among those stakeholders are the people of Illinois, whose financial support and high expectations continually inspire us. Little plans have never been the Illinois way. We know we serve Illinois best when we are active and acclaimed on a global scale—recruiting the best minds anywhere and bringing them to bear on the complex interdependencies and challenges confronting our state and the world.

We start from a position of extraordinary strength. Every day, across the University of Illinois System, we are making the world more imaginative, more equitable, and more sustainably productive. The learning and discovery that unfold on our campuses fuel growth in all its dimensions, from the personal to the societal. We are a breakthrough juggernaut, erasing the boundaries of knowledge; a pathway for transformation and opportunity; an engine of well-

being and social mobility for communities of all sizes; a large-scale incubator of innovation; a launch pad for the next generation of professionals in every field; a catalyst for creativity and inclusivity, bringing fresh voices to the forefront.

This Framework leverages all these strengths, while also showing how the University of Illinois System as a whole can add critical value for each of our members—providing the leadership, focus, synergies, and essential support to help them achieve their individual goals. Equally important, this Framework identifies where and how we must improve: finding new efficiencies, forging new partnerships and collaborations, and defining new ways of operating within both physical and virtual landscapes. We have a long history of offering a return on investment that can be measured in global terms. But we can, and will, do better.

An undertaking this comprehensive and cohesive is only possible because every member of the University of Illinois System contributes a unique and complementary set of talents and expertise:

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a world-class research institution ranked the 11th best public university in the nation. As one of the original land-grant schools, UIUC is testimony to the benefits and impact of collaboration between the academy and the state.

The University of Illinois at Chicago, an institution on the leading edge of scholarship and practice that respond to a rapidly globalizing and urbanizing world. UIC is also Illinois' largest public health care provider and one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse universities in the country.

The University of Illinois at Springfield, distinguished by its strong liberal arts core and professional programs, close student-faculty interaction, and emphasis on public policy and service.

The University of Illinois regional campuses in Peoria, Rockford and the Quad Cities, which, in conjunction with University of Illinois at Chicago, train the lion's share of the state's medical professionals and researchers, while providing local communities with essential, leading-edge health care services.

The University of Illinois Extension, which reaches all 102 Illinois counties and offers people, businesses, and communities best practices for solving problems, developing skills, and creating brighter futures.

Together, the members of the University of Illinois System commit to the guiding principles, which have driven the development of this Strategic Framework:

We will be relentlessly student-centered, offering personal and professional value to young people at the most formative time of their lives. We want our graduates, wherever they come from, to see Illinois as the place to live out their dreams and become the next generation of leaders.

We will be where the world looks first for new ideas, creativity, and innovation, from the social sciences and humanities to engineering, business, health care, and agriculture. Our unwavering academic excellence produces knowledge that has both intrinsic and practical value—the very definition of world-changing.

We will be on the front lines of protecting the public interest, a vigilant and trusted source of knowledge, expertise, and advocacy.

We will help Illinois regain its resilience and global significance, moving forward as a hub of innovation and a formidable competitor in the global economy. A stronger Illinois can also reinvigorate the Midwest, recapturing the spirit of the region as a place of egalitarian ideals, new beginnings, hard work, and limitless possibilities.

We will act with integrity, accountability and transparency, because these are the imperatives of sound stewardship of the resources entrusted to us.

What we achieve with this Framework will resonate far beyond our state's borders. We believe the University of Illinois System will become a model for the very best in research-intensive public higher education anywhere. Illinois is not only at the center of America, it is also a geographic, demographic, and economic microcosm of America. Its challenges and opportunities are echoed across the nation and around the world. By realizing this Framework, we create a toolkit of reforms and solutions that are scalable and replicable everywhere.

We are proud to be the Public's University, inspired by both the responsibilities this entails and the possibilities it offers. We invite you to help us take this Strategic Framework forward—fulfilling the public's trust in us, and insuring that the academic excellence and impact of our campuses continues to be recognized worldwide.

Strategic Goals

I. An Institution of and for Our Students

The State's investment in U of I is a commitment to students and, thereby, the future of Illinois, as our graduates go on to become the State's business leaders, inventors, policymakers, and engaged citizens. We are thus accountable to our students first and foremost. We will ensure that U of I faculty work in partnership, as teachers, mentors, and colleagues so that students leave the U of I with the knowledge, adaptability, and empathy to succeed as individuals and members of their communities.

1. Reimagine student-focused teaching and learning

We will bring together the many faculty engaged in pedagogical innovation among our universities and regional campuses to identify innovative current approaches that might be brought to scale across the entire University System, provide incentives for the development and testing of new learning approaches, and serve as a national resource on effective teaching and learning. In particular, we will:

- Harness technology to enhance pedagogy, viewing technology not only as a tool, but as an essential capacity for faculty and students—a “language” that informs the entire teaching & learning enterprise and helps us make sense of an increasingly digital world.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy for online and hybrid learning that attracts large numbers of new students who would not otherwise enroll and improves timely graduation by increasing the availability of required coursework.
- Create programs, tools, and information that extend the full resources of the University (courses, research opportunities, service-learning experiences, etc.) to students regardless of which U of I university they attend, making Illinois a next-generation model for the distributed public university system.
- Develop online tools similar to that used for degree auditing that provide automated progress tracking of career development; academic and personal advisement; preparation for graduate study, and the like.

2. Build a diverse and inclusive University community

We believe the benefits of diversity accrue from not only the number and variety of different people and cultures present at U of I but also the quality and depth of their interactions. We will aim to create an inclusive community that reflects a vast range of human differences and develop academic and co-curricular programs, settings, and expectations that encourage formal and informal exploration of these differences. We will:

- Bring to bear U of I's diverse expertise on the grand societal challenges of race, ethnicity, and inequality in America.

- Build strong connections between our universities and their nearby immigrant and minority communities.

3. Provide rich and varied cultural experiences at home and away

U of I is distinctive in comprising universities that span a world-class city, smaller metropolitan areas, and iconic mid-western rural locations. At the same time, we are home to an exceptionally large and diverse population of international students. We will take full advantage of these attributes to ensure that our graduates possess cultural competencies and experiences that span rural, urban, international environments. In particular, we will:

- Ensure that our students experience both vibrant on-campus life and experiences that connect them to the communities and cultures surrounding their universities—as well as to similar communities worldwide.
- Develop strong global competencies among our students through on-campus academic and co-curricular programming, study and living experiences abroad, “internationalization at home,” and foreign language study.

4. Grow and diversify experiential learning and career guidance

The scope of the U of I’s connections with employers across the State and all sectors offers our students extraordinary opportunities to explore numerous career possibilities during their education. To enhance these opportunities, we will:

- Develop a University-wide database of internships, co-ops, service-learning options, volunteer roles, and short- and long-term employment opportunities that can be easily accessed by students at all of our universities and campuses. This will include the capability for students to create online resumes/portfolios and identify their job and volunteer interests, and for employers and volunteer-seeking organizations to provide specific criteria and be matched with students who meet their needs.
- Actively promote the capabilities and job preparation of our students to employers in Illinois and beyond the State’s borders.

5. Strengthen intercollegiate athletics.

Thanks to the tenacity and inspiring achievements of our student athletes, intercollegiate athletics is a highly visible “front porch” for our universities. Competitive play raises our state and national profile, energizes and unifies our students, strengthens relationships with local communities, and provides us with valuable opportunities to showcase our campuses to prospective students, alumni, and donors. Given all that student athletes do for campus life, we have a responsibility to create environments where they can achieve peak performance both on the playing field and in the classroom. We will:

- Recruit student-athletes who are ready to be involved in all aspects of their college experience—and provide them with the resources and support to help them succeed.

- Recruit coaches who are committed to our mission of academic excellence.
- Be recognized as fierce competitors in all our leagues and conferences, with championship mentality that encompasses “fair play” as well as personal and academic integrity.
- Leverage the vibrancy of intercollegiate athletics to build visibility for and loyalty to our universities.

6. Strengthen engagement with alumni of the University of Illinois System worldwide

Collectively, our universities have over 700,000 living alumni worldwide. By identifying and strengthening connections with and among them, we will make our programs and resources available for the lifelong benefit of our graduates; engage them more fully as resources, guides, and mentors to current students and faculty; and enhance their quality of life by connecting them with fellow alumni.

Their expanded involvement with and deepened loyalty to U of I will help us promote the University to prospective students and their families and elevate our profile with others who have a stake in our success, including local communities, business leaders, government officials, and the media.

- Take advantage of the enhanced connectivity offered by social media and other digital technologies to deepen local and global alumni engagement.
- Improve the alignment of the University of Illinois Foundation and the University of Illinois Alumni Association with each other and the University in order to improve efficiency, maintain the highest level of effectiveness, and prepare for the next capital campaign.
- Enhance opportunities for alumni and students—our future alumni—to engage with and provide philanthropic support to the U of I.

II. Research and Scholarship with Excellence and Global Impact

U of I is a powerhouse of research, scholarship, and creative production. The caliber of our scholars is represented in the awards they have won, their places in professional academies, and the recognition accorded them among their colleagues worldwide. More importantly, their impact on our world, its societies, and our daily lives is unquestionable—the invention of Mosaic, the web browser that led to exponential growth in Internet use; of Prezista, an antiviral drug that has been shown to slow HIV disease progress and prolong life; of LED technology, which dramatically enhanced digital displays and consumer electronics. We will enhance this impact by facilitating research and scholarly connections within U of I and between the University and selected outside partners—convening and enabling our best scholars, researchers, and artists and promoting the results of their creativity.

1. Build a culture of discovery, innovation, entrepreneurship, and thoughtful risk-taking across U of I

We will be a catalyst for creative experimentation among our universities and campus, building a System-wide culture of bold thinking, problem solving, and action. We will convene members of the entire U of I community around issues of common interest; provide incentives that encourage them to cross disciplinary and geographic boundaries; and remove administrative and structural barriers in order to improve efficiency and encourage collaboration. We will:

- Identify and coordinate related research and scholarship across U of I to create critical mass and enhance national recognition and prominence.
- Inventory the full breadth of U of I expertise and make it accessible and easily navigable by faculty, students, staff, alumni, and outside partners.

2. Identify a set of major sociotechnical problems—*Grand Challenges*—that the U of I is especially well suited to solve

Convene faculty from across U of I to map out a plan to bring the full extent of our intellectual capital and infrastructure to bear on these challenges with ambition and purpose. We will develop new solutions for complex contemporary problems such as:

- Generating renewable and plentiful low-cost energy
- Providing food and agriculture pathways to serve the growing human population
- Ameliorating socioeconomic disparities and racial tensions
- Mitigating global environmental degradation

3. Build understanding of and empathy with the human condition

As a comprehensive public research university, Illinois has an obligation to cultivate graduates with broad horizons, who are able to recognize and tackle the grand challenges facing them in the workplace or the world at large, not only via technological fixes but also imaginatively. Studies in the humanities and the arts aim to equip students with a

diversity of approaches to navigate the terrain of the human in all of its manifestations. We will:

- Ensure that our students learn to reason and weigh evidence and arguments, pursue research questions, and develop local and global approaches. These skills will result in a solid foundation for future professional training, enabling them to springboard to the whole gamut of employment sectors including business, law, international relations, medicine, and community service.
- Endeavor to create interdisciplinary enterprises that entail cross-campus collaborations in the classroom, the studio, and the archive. Whether via deep knowledge of the past or expertise in an instrument or language, our students will learn how to think about complex problems through a variety of lenses and voices.
- Be leaders in the area of digital humanities, by building collaborations between the disciplines of the humanities, the social sciences, and computing, in order to pioneer new approaches, answer important questions, and challenge long-established theories.

III. A Healthy Future for Illinois

We are *The Public's University*—the leader in higher education, the largest public healthcare provider, and an engine for economic growth and improvement in the quality of life for all Illinois citizens. U of I's achievements and impact are now recognized worldwide and represent an enormous return on the public's support and commitment. We are grateful for this trust and, mindful of the responsibility that comes with it, will continue to serve the State's needs in the following ways.

1. Develop and invest in our human capital.

Our students should graduate with an appreciation for their capacity to contribute to and transform the world—bringing value to their communities because they are not simply responsive to, but proactive about, the dynamic environments in which we live. Individual professional success is important, and we excel at preparing our students to achieve it. But we also want them to go on to lives of consequence, shaped by an appreciation of knowledge for its own sake and a sense of responsibility for the greater good. Our academic excellence will be critical to encouraging this habit of mind. We will:

- Ensure students possess fundamental creative and critical-thinking skills, as well as global and cultural competencies, that will make them adaptable, confident life-long learners.
- Nurture a problem-solving, entrepreneurial mindset through curricular opportunities, “maker spaces,” and other experiences that will provide our students the skills and flexibility to create the next generation of businesses, organizations, and institutions for Illinois and the nation.
- Work with the Illinois Board of Higher Education to develop new approaches that encourage degree completion for the 1.3 million Illinois residents who have some college credit.

2. Increase U of I's power as an engine for statewide economic development

As *The Public's University*, we are committed to serving the people and industries of the State across its vast geography—in small towns, Chicago's urban neighborhoods, and the many other metropolitan and suburban areas. But as the State's economy and demographics continue to change, the University must evolve as well. We already have an impressive infrastructure in place, thanks to our campuses and University Extension sites in every county. By seeking new partnerships and thinking about our role in new ways, we increase our ability to catalyze economic growth. We will:

- Establish a new entity, the *University of Illinois Innovation Network*, a set of virtually connected clusters across the State. Our efforts will begin with partnerships in Peoria, Rockford, Quad Cities, and Southern Illinois—communities and regions that are homes to both U of I System members and key industries in Illinois' economy. The Network will address a wide range of issues, including health care, education, and economic opportunity.

- Develop, in partnership with the City of Chicago and private developers, a dynamic “Innovation City” for Chicago—an urban, mixed-use neighborhood comprising interdisciplinary programs, innovation partnerships, industrial joint ventures, incubators, and potentially U of I education partners from K-12 schools, community colleges, and other public universities. The “IC” will also provide our students and faculty short- and long-term opportunities for experiential learning in a vibrant setting that will include retail and entertainment establishments, creating a spirited experience in the City of the Big Shoulders.
- Reimagine and re-engineer the University Extension—historically focused on Illinois’ agricultural sector and rural communities—to reach more Illinois residents and industries regardless of their location and to expand Extension services in healthcare and health education, youth development, education, financial literacy, digital literacy, career planning, food/nutrition, and agriculture (both rural and urban).
- “Scout” Illinois’ private, public, and nonprofit sectors, as well as other universities, to identify potential partners who can work with our faculty to accelerate the translation and commercialization of ideas.

3. Improve college readiness and outcomes by building strong vertical and horizontal connections with other educational institutions in Illinois

By establishing relationships “vertically” with K-12 schools and community colleges and “horizontally” with the State’s other public colleges and universities, we can enhance access and success for all Illinois students. We will:

- Lead an initiative among U of I and the State’s other public universities and community colleges to strengthen the college pipeline and implement practices that improve college preparation and completion.
- Establish a more predictable, streamlined transfer protocol for students at Illinois community colleges and public baccalaureate universities.

4. Foster strong civic engagement among students, faculty, staff and residents of Illinois

To create an engaged citizenry for the State, nation, and world, we will encourage critical discussion of civic values and responsibilities, build enduring connections with community organizations across Illinois, and connect the people of the University with opportunities for service. We will:

- Identify significant community/societal challenges facing Illinois that the U of I can have significant impact on in a relatively short period of time.
- Explore how the activities of the University—coursework and pedagogy, research experiences, service-learning, co-curricular activity—can be connected to civic engagement and civic education.

- Build on existing System-wide strengths—and a proud legacy of acting in the public interest—to make U of I the go-to source for unbiased public policy research and development on key issues where we have deep expertise, such as criminal justice, K-12 education, economic development, and technological innovation.

5. Create national models for affordability and positive outcomes in health care

The University of Illinois Hospital & Health Sciences System (UI Health) includes a full complement of health sciences colleges and offers primary and specialty care services to patients throughout Illinois, including those traditionally at risk for poor health outcomes. Together with the newly created engineering-based College of Medicine at UIUC, the breadth UI Health's clinical, research, and educational activities presents an unparalleled opportunity. We will:

- Develop and nurture partnerships with other Illinois academic institutions, healthcare providers, and community organizations in order to improve the quality of life and equity of care for communities served by UI Health.
- Test and implement care delivery models that emphasize population health and high quality, cost-effective care.
- Train the next generation of healthcare professionals in inter-professional models of care.
- Develop outreach and education programs to increase patient access to primary, specialty, and acute care services in our Chicago hospital and outpatient clinical sites.
- Leverage the academic and clinical resources and expertise of UI Health to pursue health equity.

IV. Tomorrow's University Today

The traditional models of public higher education are being challenged as never before. Policy makers and public officials as well as students and families are raising serious and appropriate questions about the escalating cost of college, unacceptable levels of student debt, the readiness of graduates to enter a rapidly changing workplace, and the management practices employed at every level of the academic enterprise. In short, the *value* of a college degree in general and the return on investment of public monies in state higher education specifically are under intense scrutiny.

In this context, it is our duty as the public's university to be responsible stewards of our resources. We must take greater advantage of our status as a system of complementary and distinctive universities with expansive reach. We must leverage technology to knit our universities together in a network that is complex yet accessible and which strengthens our connections with other organizations, institutions, agencies, and businesses across the State. In this way, the U of I will become a system far greater than the sum of our physical campuses. To these ends, we will:

1. Ensure affordability, access, and completion, with a U of I degree of ever-increasing value

It is our continued commitment to use our public funding wisely and strategically to ensure that every U of I student receives a first-class education at a reasonable cost. We will:

- Develop a System-wide strategy for affordability and access and create an advocacy plan aimed at Illinois' leaders.
- Lead a Statewide discussion of how best to provide accessible, affordable public higher education throughout Illinois.
- Conduct a comprehensive analysis of retention and completion across the University and convene enrollment and student development leaders to consider the results, share successful approaches for enhancing student success, and devise new strategies.

2. Develop a University-State compact

We will develop and propose a "compact" to the State—*The University of Illinois 2021 Initiative*—a multi-year agreement that would provide predictable funding for the University and avert the year-to-year uncertainty that hinders our ability to plan ahead.

- The compact would call on the State to ease unnecessary regulatory requirements that often impede efficiency, such as complex procurement guidelines.
- In exchange, U of I would pledge to meet tangible objectives that serve the State's needs in critical, measureable areas such as enrollment, graduation rates, and affordability.

- In essence, the *University of Illinois 2021 Initiative* would provide for a shift to performance-based funding, a concept that we welcome and one that would reinforce our value to the people of Illinois.

3. Enhance technology to increase access, support research, build global alliances, and ensure digital literacy

We will build a technology platform that touches every function of the modern university environment—enhancing communication, reducing unnecessary effort, and increasing nimbleness. In particular, we will:

- Expand and enhance tools and technologies for on-line learning, research, and service to create a truly University-wide crucible for innovation in every aspect of the educational enterprise.
- Develop a U of I System strength in data analytics that draws on the numerous efforts across the universities, informs University planning, and serves as a comprehensive repository easily accessible by all of our universities.
- Identify digital/computational capabilities critical for student learning and future careers, and develop programs that ensure all of our graduates can maneuver adroitly in a world where huge amounts of information are created, organized, and distributed digitally.

4. Incorporate sustainable environmental practices throughout the University

Become a model of institutional sustainability by reducing our carbon footprint, incorporating the best environmental approaches, building a System-wide culture of environmental care.