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**For Discussion Only**

**UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS**  
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN • CHICAGO • SPRINGFIELD

**The Public's University:  
Optimizing Impact for the Public Good**

**Strategic Framework for the  
University of Illinois System  
2016 - 2026**

## About This Strategic Framework

This Framework sets forth the broad collective priorities of the University of Illinois System. *It is not a substitute for the strategic plans and core priorities developed by the System's individual members.* An important next step will be for our universities and regional campuses to consider how their priorities align with the Framework: identifying where the System's goals provide support for initiatives they wish to undertake and where their plans support the overarching U of I vision described here.

Our aim is to show how the System as a whole can add critical value for our member institutions—providing the leadership, focus, synergies, and essential support to help them achieve their individual objectives. We are committed to revisiting our goals and reporting on progress on a regular basis.

The comprehensive and cohesive strategic planning process that produced this framework has been possible only because every member of the University of Illinois System contributes a distinctive and complementary set of talents, resources, and expertise:

**The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**, ranked among the 40 best research universities in the world. UI-Urbana-Champaign also directly serves all 102 Illinois counties through the offices and education programs of its Extension. As one of the nation's original land-grant institutions, UI-Urbana-Champaign is testimony to the benefits and impact of collaboration between the academy and the State.

**The University of Illinois at Chicago**, located in the heart of one of the world's great cities and a research institution on the leading edge of scholarship and practice for a rapidly urbanizing world. UI-Chicago is also one of Illinois' leading health care providers and one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse universities in the country.

**The University of Illinois at Springfield**, offering students a strong liberal arts core, a wide range of professional programs, and close faculty interaction. Making the most of its location in the state capital, UI-Springfield is broadly engaged in public policy and service.

**The University of Illinois regional campuses in Peoria, Rockford and the Quad Cities**, which train a significant number of state health care professionals and researchers, while providing local communities with the highest standard of health care services.

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## 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 can do this because of who we are and where we are.

Our System includes *two* world-class research universities with extraordinary depth and breadth, a regional university in the State capitol, and an expansive health care training and services enterprise. We are an indispensable presence in a global city, smaller metropolitan areas, and rural locations. We carry out our mission in the American heartland—not just the iconic center of our nation, but also a geographic, demographic, and economic microcosm for many of the challenges facing the world. Indeed, part of what will differentiate U of I will be our leadership among midwestern universities and other surrounding institutions in the economic revitalization of our region—a goal that none of us can accomplish alone.

This Framework is designed to unleash the collective potential of our institutions and our geography, creating an array of reforms and solutions that are scalable and replicable elsewhere. In doing so, the University of Illinois System will become a model for the very best in research-intensive higher education.

We have a magnificent tradition to build on. Every day, across the System, we make the world more imaginative, more equitable, and more sustainably productive. We are a breakthrough juggernaut, expanding the boundaries of knowledge; a launch pad for the next generation of professionals in every field; and a catalyst for well-being, social mobility, creativity and inclusivity. The University of Illinois name is a guarantor of excellence around the world—we are among the top five American university destinations for the very best students from abroad.

The Framework provides a plan for how, over the next decade, we will leverage all our strengths: academic excellence and world-class faculty; the aspirations and energy of our students; the dedication of a staff that encompasses thousands of people—from facilities and services personnel to lab technicians to county extension officers. The Framework also identifies where and how we will 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 providing a return on investment that can be measured in global terms. But we can, and will, do even better.

Together, the member institutions of the University of Illinois System commit to these guiding principles, which have driven the development of the Framework:

**We will be relentlessly student-centered**, offering personal and professional value to young people at the most formative time of their lives, as well as our graduates throughout their lifelong learning. We want our students, 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 humanities and social sciences to engineering, business, health care, and agriculture. We will be known as an incubator, champion, and magnet for talent, and produce 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 on issues of broad social concern.

**We will secure Illinois' reputation as a hub of innovation**—a formidable competitor and sought-after collaborator in the global marketplace. We believe a stronger Illinois can lead the way for the revitalization of the entire 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.

We launched our work on this Strategic Framework in June 2015 with a process defined by openness, inclusiveness, and transparency. The ideas advanced here are the product of insights, debates, and unprecedented consensus building involving every part of the University of Illinois System as well as constituencies beyond it. We held town hall meetings throughout the State and spoke with individuals and groups at each University of Illinois institution. We also solicited feedback from our university communities and the general public—and will continue to do so—via [https://www.uillinois.edu/strategic\\_plan](https://www.uillinois.edu/strategic_plan).

What you are reading now fully reflects what it means to be The Public's University, with all the responsibilities this entails and possibilities it offers. Every line has been informed by the concerns and hopes of many stakeholders; foremost among them are the people of Illinois, whose financial support and high expectations inspire the very best in us. This is a plan for us all.

## Strategic Goals

### I. An Institution of and for Our Students

Our world-class faculty, and the many staff members that support them, are entrusted with a critical and enormously rewarding responsibility: to expand our students' understanding of life and work, equip them to be civic-minded, resourceful problem-solvers, and broaden their appreciation of culture, history, and the arts. Our success in fulfilling this commitment can be seen in the lives of our 700,000 living alumni around world. They are members of local school boards and heads of state; they are small business owners and lead central banks of some of the world's largest economies; they open up our perspectives with their inventiveness and creativity; they teach our children, and care for those who are ill and vulnerable.

#### 1. Reimagine student-focused teaching and learning

Building on U of I's breadth of excellence, we will identify innovative instructional approaches that can 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 model of exemplary teaching and learning.

- Harness technology not only as a tool but as an essential capacity for faculty and students—a “language” that informs the entire teaching and learning enterprise and helps us navigate in a world where huge amounts of information are created, organized, and distributed digitally.
- Develop innovative strategies for online and hybrid learning that attract large numbers of new students who would not otherwise enroll and improve timely graduation by increasing the availability of required coursework.
- Develop information and tools that make the full resources of the University (courses, research opportunities, service-learning experiences, etc.) accessible to students—regardless of which U of I institution they attend—so that we become a next-generation model for the distributed public university system.

#### 2. Enhance the diversity and inclusiveness of the University community

We will create inclusive campus communities that mirror and celebrate human differences and encourage the exploration of how diversity makes us all smarter and stronger.

- Set and pursue aggressive goals to enroll students and hire faculty and staff at all levels of the U of I who reflect the racial and ethnic composition of our society.
- Make appropriate investments in student affairs and in employee support and professional development resources to ensure a welcoming atmosphere for historically marginalized and underrepresented populations who join our community.

- Continue the University of Illinois’ trailblazing legacy of accessibility for people with disabilities.
- Be an exemplar of effective and consistent efforts to ensure that minority-owned firms are fairly represented in contractual university work.
- Build strong connections between our universities and their increasingly diverse hometowns.

### **3. Fully integrate global perspectives and international experience into our academic and co-curricular offerings**

We must ensure that our graduates possess cross-cultural competencies so they can be confident, productive citizens of the world. Graduates with these skills will be a critical factor in the State’s ability to attract multinational companies, who seek a highly trained and globally sophisticated workforce.

- Conduct a faculty-led identification and dissemination of practices that effectively introduce global perspectives into curricula across the disciplines.
- Ensure that all of our students experience genuine connections to the diverse communities and cultures surrounding their universities—as well as to similar communities worldwide.
- Expand opportunities for study and living experiences abroad, “internationalization at home” programs, and foreign language study.
- Provide internships and other professional international experiences for our students by partnering with alumni who hold leadership positions in governments around the world, the United Nations, leading global corporations, and internationally minded organizations such as the Chicago Council for Global Affairs.

### **4. Grow and diversify experiential learning and career guidance**

The scope of the University of Illinois’ connections with employers across the State and in all sectors offers our students extraordinary opportunities to explore numerous career possibilities during their education.

- Link our universities’ databases of internships, co-ops, service-learning options, volunteer roles, and short- and long-term employment opportunities, so that they can be accessed by all of our students. Students should be able to easily create online resumes/portfolios, and match their skills to employers and volunteer-seeking organizations.
- Actively promote the capabilities and job preparation of our students to employers in Illinois and beyond the State’s borders.

### **5. Strengthen opportunities for students to excel in the public realm**

Our students are driven to excel beyond the classroom: they are high achievers in academic competitions, the arts, intercollegiate athletics, volunteerism, and other public-facing endeavors. Their tenacity and inspiring accomplishments help create a highly visible “front porch” for our universities—raising our state and national profile, energizing and unifying our universities and strengthening relationships with local communities. Their talents also provide us with valuable opportunities to showcase the U of I institutions to prospective students, alumni, and donors.

- Invest in our auditoriums, performance venues, galleries, stadiums, arenas, fields, and courts, creating environments that are well equipped to help our students shine; attract artists, athletes, performers, and public intellectuals from around the globe; and encourage our communities’ engagement with their local U of I institutions.
- Provide coaching and mentoring for students that brings out the best of their talents and character and reflects the values of the University.
- Expand our support for volunteer and service-learning opportunities that connect students to the worlds beyond their universities, address real needs of the communities in which we reside, and embody U of I’s commitment to the people of Illinois.

**6. Promote engagement with alumni of the University of Illinois System worldwide**

By strengthening connections with and among our 700,000 living alumni worldwide, we will engage them more fully as resources, guides, and mentors to current students and faculty, while building a proud and responsive network that graduates can be part of throughout their lives. Deeper alumni loyalty to U of I will also play an important role in promoting the University to prospective students and their families and elevating our profile with 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 to maximize efficiency and reach, 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 Global Impact

The University of Illinois System is a powerhouse of discovery, problem-solving, innovation, and creative production. We have given the world the web browser that led to exponential growth in Internet use; created an affordable, accessible treatment for multi-drug resistant HIV that has saved countless lives worldwide; and exonerated the wrongly convicted and imprisoned through our Innocence Project. The awards our scholars have won, their reputation in professional academies, and the recognition accorded them worldwide affirm the excellence and power of University of Illinois people and ideas.

### 1. Build a system-wide culture of innovation, collaboration, entrepreneurship, and thoughtful risk-taking

Our faculty and students should feel empowered to study, understand, and change the world. We will be a catalyst for creative experimentation among our universities and regional campuses. 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.

- Cultivate, recognize, and reward excellence in research and scholarship across the U of I System.
- Identify and enable opportunities for scholars and researchers across the University System to collaborate, build critical mass, and enhance global 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.
- Provide resources and support necessary for all members of the university community to maximize their potential contributions to scholarship, research, and creative production.

### 2. Identify a set of significant sociotechnical problems that the University of Illinois is particularly well-suited to solve

By convening faculty and coordinating the full extent of our intellectual capital and infrastructure, we can have a transformative impact on a number of critical challenges such as:

- Addressing the root causes of disparities in health, education, economic opportunity, social justice, and civic participation.
- Creating a more sustainable food supply chain to serve the planet's growing population.
- Developing diverse and renewable energy sources and responding to accelerating climate change.

- Ensuring that global cybersecurity balances privacy rights with the safety of our communities.
- Personalizing medicine through a greater understanding of the brain.

### **3. Deepen understanding of and empathy with the human experience**

In a technologically driven age, our research and scholarship in the humanities and arts are even more essential. We are a wellspring for fresh insights and new, multicultural voices. We support creative work that reimagines the environment, nourishes the soul, and expands our thinking beyond the horizon of the present.

- Sustain and promote scholarship in the humanities and the arts that enriches our perspectives on the enduring challenges of justice, violence and poverty; health, race, identity and religion; and global and local citizenship.
- Stimulate interdisciplinary and cross-institution collaborations of all kinds: among faculty and students; in the classroom, studio and archive; and within and among the humanities, social sciences, and STEM fields. We want to pioneer new approaches to critical inquiry, shed new light on enduring questions, and challenge longstanding paradigms.

### **4. Forge new research and development partnerships around the world**

Increasingly, research and development will rely on a diverse base of external funding and support from non-governmental organizations and corporations outside the U.S.

- Establish and showcase public-private partnerships with companies that have significant global reach, building on existing relationships such as those connected to the University of Illinois Research Park.
- Use these relationships to commercialize U of I research discoveries; incubate innovations; accelerate tech transfer; and provide training, leadership development, and internship/job opportunities for students and alumni.

### III. A Healthy Future for Illinois and the Midwest

As The Public's University, we are committed to serving the people and industries of Illinois across its vast geography—in small towns, Chicago's urban neighborhoods, and our State's many other metropolitan and suburban areas. We already provide pathways for transformation and opportunity by virtue of our academic excellence and our role as a major health care provider. But as the State's economy and demographics continue to change, U of I's approach to economic development must evolve as well. At the same time, we have the opportunity to take on a leadership role among other midwestern institutions in reinvigorating the region's economy, making it an international magnet for investment and talent.

#### 1. Develop and invest in our human capital

We must ensure our students graduate knowing they have the capacity to contribute to and transform their communities and the world. 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.

- Nurture a problem-solving, entrepreneurial mindset through curricular opportunities, “maker spaces,” and other experiences. We want our students to have the confidence, skills and flexibility to be life-long learners and next-generation leaders of businesses, organizations, and institutions for Illinois and the nation.
- Leverage the world-class research strengths of our universities to enhance the education of University of Illinois undergraduate students by providing them direct exposure to cutting-edge research and scholarship.
- Create a culture of health and well-being for our students, faculty, staff—one they can draw on for the rest of their lives—by modeling responsible decision-making and offering easily accessible medical and mental health services.
- Establish and coordinate a coalition of universities across the State 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 and regional economic development

Our universities, regional campuses and Extension sites in every county are the foundation for new partnerships and approaches that catalyze economic growth.

- Explore the creation of a new entity, the *University of Illinois Innovation Network*, a set of virtually connected clusters across the State. Our efforts will begin with public-private 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. These partnerships will be dedicated to promoting local development, renewing communities, and improving schools. By connecting

these sites and sharing best practices and resources, the Network will help address a wide range of issues, including health care, education, and economic opportunity.

- Leverage our physical centers of education, research and innovation to promote neighborhood development. We know from experience that the presence of a U of I entity can spark an influx of new residents, along with housing, retail and commercial development. By listening and responding to local needs, we can become an integral partner in helping communities become true “Innovation Cities.”
- Contribute to the economic, social and political health, and vitality of greater “Chicagoland” through the University’s research, teaching, service, and partnership with local governments, businesses, community and civic organizations.
- Reengineer the University Extension to reach more Illinois residents and industries regardless of their location. We will also expand Extension services in healthcare and health education, youth development, education, financial literacy, digital literacy, career planning, food/nutrition, agriculture (both rural and urban) and other areas that focus on improving human lives and building stronger communities.
- Scout Illinois’ private, public, and nonprofit sectors to identify potential partners who can work with our faculty to accelerate the translation and commercialization of ideas.

### **3. Create national models for professional training, affordability, access, and positive outcomes in health care**

The U of I System is a remarkable health sciences and health care ecosystem of expertise, clinical care, and resources that extends across the state. We will forge new connections among the University of Illinois Hospital & Health Sciences System, our medical campuses in Chicago, Peoria and Rockford, the newly created engineering-based College of Medicine at UI-Urbana Champaign, and all the Colleges involved in health-related research.

- 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 we serve.
- Partner with the University of Illinois’ major Academic Affiliate Institutions at our regional campuses to enhance patient care, conduct research and educate medical students, residents, nurses and other providers.
- Test and implement care delivery models that emphasize population health and high quality, cost-effective care.
- Train the next generation of healthcare professionals in team-based 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 our academic and clinical resources and expertise to work for health equity.

#### **4. 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 will enhance access and success for all Illinois students.

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

#### **5. Promote 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.

- Explore the establishment of a *Lincoln Institute of Government* that would draw together and coordinate the work of centers and programs across the System that focus on public policy research and civic leadership, including for example, the System-wide *Institute of Government and Public Affairs*, UI-Springfield’s *Center for State Policy and Leadership* and its *Illinois Legislative Staff Intern Program*, and UI-Chicago’s *Institute for Health Research and Policy*.
- Explore how the activities of the University—coursework and pedagogy, research experiences, service-learning, co-curricular activity—can be better connected to civic engagement and civic education.
- Build on existing System-wide strengths—and our proud legacy of acting in the public interest—to make University of Illinois the go-to source for unbiased public policy research and application on key issues where we have deep expertise, such as criminal justice, K-12 education, economic development, and technological innovation.

## IV. Tomorrow's University Today

The traditional models of public higher education are being challenged as never before. State funding has become more uncertain at just the time that more is being expected from universities. The higher education marketplace has become more competitive and more global. 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. It is our duty as The Public's University to offer the best possible return on investment for all our stakeholders and to ensure that we are efficient, competitive, and constantly improving.

### 1. Ensure affordability, access, and completion, offering a U of I degree that increases in value

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

- Develop a System-wide strategy for affordability and access and create an advocacy plan aimed at Illinois' leaders.
- Lead a statewide discussion on how to best provide accessible, affordable public higher education throughout Illinois.
- Conduct a comprehensive analysis of retention and completion across U of I and convene enrollment and student development leaders to consider the results, share successful approaches for enhancing student success, and devise new strategies.
- Expand and promote opportunities for lifelong and "life-wide" learning.
- Continue to promote our reputation as a leading global brand in higher education and a preeminent destination for the world's best students and scholars.

### 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--such as complex procurement guidelines—that often impede efficiency and discourage smart risk-taking.
- In exchange, U of I would pledge to meet tangible objectives that serve the State's needs in critical, measureable areas, including enrollment, graduation rates, and affordability.

### 3. Create a technology platform that touches every function of the modern university environment

Our System-wide use of technology should touch every function of the modern university environment—enhancing communication, reducing unnecessary effort, improving responsiveness and service, and strengthening connections with other organizations, institutions, agencies, and businesses across the State and around the world.

- Leverage the U of I's expertise in online education to increase access to higher education and degree completion for Illinois residents.
- Develop a System-wide strength in data analytics that draws on the numerous efforts underway across our universities, informs planning, and serves as a comprehensive repository of reliable data that is easily accessible by all of our universities, regional campuses, and Extension sites.
- Develop online tools, similar to those used for degree auditing, that provide automated progress tracking of career preparation; academic and personal advisement; and preparation for graduate study.

### 4. Become a model of institutional sustainability

We will incorporate practices that reduce our carbon footprint and build a System-wide culture of environmental care, supporting the efforts of our universities and campuses to achieve carbon neutrality over the next three to four decades. To do this, our universities and regional campuses will actively seek:

- *Climate neutrality* by increasing building energy efficiency, achieving LEED certification for construction and renovations, enhancing the efficiency of campus fleets and shuttle buses, and becoming more pedestrian and bicycle friendly.
- *Zero waste* by increasing waste diversion rates, reducing bottled water use, and increasing the number of green-certified campus events.
- *Net zero water use* by managing and reduce storm water runoff within parking lots and structures and reducing water use through more efficient technology and practices.
- *Campus biodiversity* by promoting the use of local produce, increasing tree canopy size and the diversity of plants on campus, and using sustainable landscaping practices.

**FORWARD TOGETHER**

Little plans have never been the Illinois way.

The University of Illinois System serves Illinois best when we support growth in all its dimensions, from the personal to the societal. Doing so requires us to be active and visible on a global scale—recruiting the best minds anywhere and inspiring them to take on the complex challenges confronting our State and the world. This Strategic Framework will be our roadmap.

We invite you to join us as we embark on shaping a new future together. It will be a demanding, exhilarating journey. As The Public's University, we must affirm and earn the public's trust every day. We must take smart risks, learn from setbacks, and be more accountable and agile than ever before. The rewards for this level of dedication will be great. We will amplify our excellence in education, research, service, civic engagement and economic development. And we will secure our role as a force for transformation and revitalization, throughout our State and around the world.

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