

Assessment Cycle 2023-2024

Recruiting Office

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Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, Student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. Northwestern State University prepares its Students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.

The Student Experience provides the University community with programs and services to support the academic mission of creating, disseminating and acquiring knowledge through teaching, research and service while empowering a diverse student population to achieve their highest educational potential. The Student Experience creates a stimulating and inclusive educational environment that is conducive to holistic personal growth. The commitment to students initiates prior to entrance, sustains throughout the college experience and continues beyond graduation. Enrollment Services provides equal access to education for potential students throughout the state and region and promotes economic stability and financial access to citizens. Student Affairs enhances student development and broadens intellectual, social, cultural, ethical, and occupational growth. The Student Experience works closely with faculty, staff, students, and the community to ensure graduates have the capability to promote economic development and improvements in the region.

The Office of Enrollment Management is a student-centered division that is future focused providing educational access to students in our region to improve the lives of our citizens. High School Relations, Financial Aid and Scholarships, and Admissions work collaboratively with University faculty and staff to provide services and programing that are innovative and surpasses state and federal guidelines. Enrollment Management fulfills the university's mission and commitment to academic quality, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The mission of Recruiting is to increase the quantity and quality of all new student enrollment to Northwestern State University. New student enrollment includes all first-time freshmen, transfer students, and new graduate students. Increase in quality is determined by increased ACT/SAT composite scores, GPA and leadership skills. In support of this mission, the Recruiting staff provides prospective students with accurate information necessary to the admissions and enrollment processes, while presenting the public with a positive image of Northwestern State University. The Recruiting staff are always focusing on an increase in diversity and access to higher education for all populations.

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Methodology: The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from weekly applicant and admission reports that compares applicants and admits from each parish and state to the application and admissions numbers from the previous year on the same date.
- (2) The Director, along with the Enrollment Manager, will analyze the data and determine whether the applicable outcomes are met.
- (3) Results from the assessment will be disseminated and discussed with the appropriate staff.
- (4) Weekly staff meetings will be held to discuss the progress.
- (5) The director, in consultation with the staff and senior leadership, will determine and propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, service changes

Service Outcomes:

SO 1. Recruitment efforts will lead to an increase in student enrollment and be representative of the regional community.

Measure.1.1 Student enrollment will increase by 8% per freshmen class. 6% is acceptable.

Finding. Target not met.

Analysis. In Fall of 2021, there were 1246 entering freshman, while in Fall of 2022 there was 1020, a decrease of 226. In 2023, there was an increase to 1067, of 47 students. This is a 4.7% increase, falling just shy of our goal. This is the first increase in three years. Based on the analysis of these results, a continued overhaul in recruiting tactics, strategies and implementation would be needed in unprecedented times to continue the momentum.

Action. Based on the analysis of the 2023-2024 results, in 2024-2025 recruiting strategies for Fall 2024 will be to continue the development of a communications plan throughout the year with mail, email, social media, texting, and other platforms. The base of the plan is now implemented, and now can be customized and grown with specialization. We're also looking to partner with Common App as the second UL System school to do so, which would allow us to receive more applications as warmer leads in the funnel. Other third-party companies are being considered, such as College Vine, as a way to generate leads to meet students where they are located on social media platforms. The Director of Enrollment will also continue to visit specific parishes and schools within our 10 parish service area to increase applicant size.

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Measure 1.2. New Graduate student enrollment will increase by 3% per academic year.

Finding. Target not met.

Analysis. In 2023-24 the target was not met. For the Fall of 2023, new graduate enrollment decreased from 1,031 students to 987 students, or 44 students. This decrease can still be attributed to similar reasons as last assessment cycle, similar to last year with outdated admissions processes using virtually no electronic system and shifts to a more competitive marketing environment.

Action. Based on the analysis of the 2023-2024 results, in 2024-2025 we will continue to have conversations with Academic Affairs and the Graduate School. Though it was less of a decrease than in years past, it's still a decrease. While this measure falls under the Recruiting assessment, University Recruiting only controls the recruitment of graduate students, not the admissions process or the latter section of the enrollment funnel, which the Graduate School has oversight. Large strides have been made using suggestions from last year's assessment, and a new application for graduate school will be applied utilizing Banner CRM in August. This process started nine months ago and has been a combined effort with Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management. The new application will allow for customized communication through every academic area through texting and emails, as well as built-in strategy through every point in the graduate school funnel. Prior to these changes, none of this has existed for graduate school in years prior, which will catapult graduate school results significantly in the coming years. We will continue to pursue new ways of gaining warm leads through name purchases and events and continue innovating graduate student recruiting practices. Marketing has been involved more with graduate school recruiting and has launched eight unique digital advertising efforts on social media and SEO paid searches. This should also help yield new graduate school students.

Measure 1.3. The student body will be representative of university's regions in terms of diversity.

Finding. Target met.

Analysis. In Fall of 2022, we were able to enroll students from 52 of 64 of the parishes, while in Fall of 2023, this was raised to 56 of 64 parishes, gaining 4 parishes, meeting the target. The number of parishes we had represented in Fall of 2021 was 55, gaining 1 higher this past year. Based on the data, we're still lacking students from Caldwell, East Feliciana, Franklin, Madison, Plaquemines, Saint Helena, Tensas, and West Baton Rouge. We have not enrolled students from Saint Helena and Tensas in quite some time, where we also didn't have students in Fall of 2021 from East Feliciana, Franklin, and Plaquemines. Caldwell, Madison, and West Baton Rouge are the first time we see no students enrolled from these parishes. As stated previously, we're also looking at race and ethnicity in order to measure diversity in other ways than geography. Based on that, of our true entering freshman, in face-to-face classes that have disclosed race and ethnicity in Fall of 2022, those numbers are as follows: White – 525 (55.5%), Black/African American – 264 (27.9%), Hispanic or Latino – 56 (5.9%), Asian – 10 (1.0%), 2 or more Races – 44 (4.6%), American Indian or Pacific Islander – 13 (1.3%), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander – 1 (0.01%), and Foreign or Resident Alien – 8 (0.8%). In Fall of 2023, those numbers are as follows: White – 548 (57%), Black/African

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American – 287 (30%), Hispanic or Latino – 47 (5%), Asian – 7 (.007%), 2 or more Races – 55 (6%), American Indian or Pacific Islander – 14 (1%), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander – 2 (.002%), and Foreign or Resident Alien – 4 (.004%). A few percentages have changed or swapped places from the previous year, however, we still directly mirror the state of Louisiana demographic make-up.

Action. Based on the analysis of the 2023-2024 results, in 2024-2025 this measure will continue to measure geographic region, race, and ethnicity in order to look at the full picture of diversity. We continued the success this year in all parishes through new recruiting initiatives, innovative post card mailers, and utilizing new communication plans in our CRM system, now including geofenced social media advertising. Parish numbers should continue to trend upward, as well as demographic numbers. The Director of Enrollment has made personal visits in over 30 parishes this year, including 3 parishes where we don't normally enroll students. We will always continue the mantra of recruiting at every school, every parish in Louisiana, and anyone who invites us to their property, in order to give every future demon a chance at higher education regardless of background or circumstances. However, the new approach of recruiting the core 10 parishes in central Louisiana and auxiliary parishes touching those parishes, will continue. Those parishes are where 59% of our enrollment comes from, which demand a larger presence.

SO 2. Students who participate in NSide View Events, personalized campus tours on campus will learn the steps necessary in the admissions process.

Measure 2.1. Ninety percent (90%) of students who participate in Nside View and campus tours will respond that these events are very helpful in understanding the admissions process by responding, "strongly agree" or "agree" on their student survey. Students were able to select from 5 responses from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Finding. Target met

Analysis. In the campus tour surveys for the fall of 2023, in AC year 2023-2024, seniors overall stated that 96.1% strongly agreed the events were helpful and 98.7% agreed or strongly agreed the event was helpful, which was a 1% and 1% increase over the previous year.

Action. In AC 2023-2024 the target was met. We continue to only use recruiters when giving tours, when available, instead of ambassadors, since it seems to help with overall satisfaction. We continue to pair former high school students from the touring high school on tours when available, which creates a great connection from the start. N-Side View Day has continued to be overhauled each session, and provides conference feel instead of a break-up of student type, session style. While keeping the new changes from last year, and adding in new academic session for major exploration, students really get a feel for what it may be like to attend NSU as a student. This helped students view what they wanted, participate when needed, and helped with the overall flow of the event. Satisfaction still continues to rise. New sessions in academics, as well as amenities will continue to be explored.

Measure 2.2. Ninety percent (90%) of students who participate in Nside View Events campus tours & recruiting receptions will respond these events are very helpful in

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understanding the Financial Aid process and associated requirements by responding “strongly agree” or “agree” on their student survey. Participants were given 5 choices on the measurement from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Finding. Target met

Analysis. For fall 2023, the same average of 99% was attained as the previous three years of students and parents indicated that the tour guide was knowledgeable. The best item to note is the qualitative feedback based on tour guides, which allows us to praise recruiters who do well, and fix issues that arise.

Action. Based on the analysis of the 2023-2024 results, in 2024-2025, we will continue to utilize more financial aid information in the discussion during tours and preview events, especially with the new website and flyer tools that have previously been developed. We will also add more stops on the tours, including the cafeteria, which now provides a free lunch to tours to help sell NSU. We will also add more stops at potential clubs and organizations, not just academics, to showcase involvement at NSU. A new communication plan will also be developed that will send automated emails and texts to students who tour, to follow up throughout the funnel process. Our data indicates that students who tour commit to NSU at a 71% rate, so we want to hone in better in the recruiting of those students.

SO 3. Enrollment of Transfer students will increase each year.

Measure 3.1. Transfer student enrollment will increase by 2% each year.

Finding. Target Met.

Analysis. After declining transfer enrollment dipped to 471 in the Fall of 2021, University Recruiting addressed lead generation practices, ROI from transfer fairs, and innovated recruiting practicing, boosting transfer student enrollment to 551 for Fall 2022 for an 85% increase. This has now increased again in Fall of 2023 to 580, adding an additional 29 students.

Action. Based on the analysis of the 2023-2024 results, in 2024-2025 we will continue to increase our recruiting efforts by expanding our territory and increase the number of junior and community college agreements across our state and out of state. We will still try to create a transfer portal where students can complete degree audits in minutes, as opposed to waiting days, if not weeks. This will be reliant in IT infrastructure and has been an ask now for over two years with IT. The new transfer scholarship has helped tremendously in recruiting efforts and will now be advertised on more outlets. The internal goal was set at 600 last assessment cycle, and we fell 20 students short. The internal goal will remain at 600, as a healthy goal.

SO 4. Entering freshmen will have scores and grade point averages that are above the state average and have cited leadership skills.

Measure 4.1. Freshmen ACT average for fall 2018 is 21.67. We will increase the average ACT for fall 2019 to 22.5. Acceptable targets are 22 ACT composite averages.

Finding. Target not met.

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Analysis. Since 2019, we have purchased ACT names in bulk with a 20 ACT average and above, and we will continue that practice, however, we focused on geographic regions in Texas, Arkansas, and Mississippi as well. In Fall of 2021, the ACT average was 20.1, and we have raised that to 20.72 in Fall of 2022. In Fall of 2023, that average has now risen to 21.2. While we're closer to our goal of 22, we have still not met the target. With the holistic admission policy by the Board of Regents is now in place, it will make efforts of raising average ACT harder due to only GPA needed for admission, however, our average still continues to rise.

Action. Based on the analysis of the 2023-2024 results, in 2024-2025 to meet our 22 ACT goal, we will re-work and analyze our scholarship packaging to aggressively increase the higher ACT students to be more competitive with other universities, while leaning on creative scholarship packing and matching with NSU Foundation monies. We are now the only UL System school blanketly awarding on superscores on the ACT, which has really drawn student interest at NSU. Louisiana Scholars College continues to be the natural landing spot for higher ACT scores. It was reported that last year, the Scholars' College enrolled 68 students, a recent high, and as of this moment we look to enroll around 80 students this year through concise recruiting efforts. This will drastically increase the ACT average, as many of those students are above the 30 ACT composite thresholds. We have also implemented new Dual Enrollment scholarships for participation to increase matriculation with Dual Enrollment students, who also tend to have robust ACT scores. That addition has helped gained even more students. We now look to partner with key organizations to offer scholarships, such as Louisiana Association of Student Councils and Distinguished Women of America, which can high caliber students to NSU. Both of those partnerships are now set and start this fall. We will also look to other third parties like CollegeVine, which will allow us to find students with high ACT scores that may not be interested in NSU at first glance. We look to seek more innovative ways to encourage higher ACT scoring students to attend NSU.

Measure 4.2. Ten percent (10%) of entering freshmen will have documented leadership skills as part of their application process for programs like the Presidential Leadership program, Louisiana Scholars' College and the student ambassador program.

Finding. Target met.

Analysis. In Fall of 2022, there was a concise recruiting effort to identify more students with documented leadership capabilities in all areas. There were 64 PLP students, 36 ambassadors, and 35 Scholars' students. PLP rose by 1, ambassadors remained consistent, and Scholars' student fell, for a total of 135 students, which was 15% of the entering freshman class. In Fall of 2023, there were 72 PLP students, 51 ambassadors, and 68 scholars' students, rising in all categories with over 25% of the freshman class.

Action. Based on the analysis of the 2023-2024 results, in 2024-2025 moving forward, we will strive to recruit more students to all the aforementioned programs in the measure through tactics previously discussed. As previously mentioned, Scholars' students should continue to rise through recruiting efforts, and the same should apply for ambassadors and presidential leadership students as early identification recruiting tactics were used through this assessment cycle.

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Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvements based on analysis of results.

- We achieved a great foundation in our Banner CRM system, and look to now take more innovative measure going forward with custom communication plans built around academic and extracurricular activities. That will also now continue with the Graduate School application
- Continued to redevelop all recruiting materials to be more cohesive, less wordy, and more attractive, while building a comprehensive website alongside.
- Continued to develop social media campaigns along with digital advertising and SEO paid searches to enhance strategy and campaigns from recruiting office to be geared towards goals.
- Added a new key position through grant opportunity of Beyond Graduation Coach Support Specialist to further help with recruitment of key central Louisiana parishes, which has expanded in Fall of 2023.
- Created key partnerships with more community colleges, American Indian Tribes local entities, school districts, etc., and we look to expand even further in the future.
- Created a new Superintendents luncheon to foster partnerships and help understand needs in key school districts.
- Looking to contract with third parties such as Common App and College Vine to increase applicants in future years.
- Attempting to remove all barriers of entry to NSU through the admission process, like arbitrary fees, unneeded paperwork, and digitization efforts of materials through Banner Document Management.

Plan of action moving forward.

In addition to the action plans described above, we will continue to focus on inner office growth of recruiters and ambassadors through improved training methods. We've built many bridges with academic units this year, and will continue to do in the future, as empowering faculty to also recruit, will provide dividends in the future. We will lead the effort across campus in order to break down barriers and work together. We will also continue to provide personalization and customer service to all entering students, as it's the hallmark of NSU, and what attracts many students.