

Assessment Cycle 2024-2025 – End-Year Report

Office of Admissions

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Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

The Student Experience Mission Statement. 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 provide equal access to education for potential students throughout the state and region and promote 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.

Enrollment Management. 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 programming 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.

Office of Admissions Mission. The Office of Admissions seeks to enroll a full class of career-oriented students by delivering quality service and support to prospective students, faculty, and staff through interpretation of the admission criteria for Northwestern State University. Admissions also provide quality assistance to our stakeholders to assure a diverse student population has access to higher education by demonstrating consistency and fairness in the application review process. The Office of Admissions is committed to providing access to educational opportunities to meet students' academic needs.

Assessment Cycle 2024-2025 – End-Year Report

Methodology: The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative, and qualitative) are collected and returned to the executive director.
- (2) The executive director will analyze the data to determine whether the applicable outcomes are met.
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the appropriate staff.
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with staff as required (show cause).
- (5) The executive director, in consultation with the staff and senior leadership, will determine proposed changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, service changes.

Office of Admissions Effectiveness

Student Learning Outcomes

SO 1 The Office of Admissions will ensure applicants, prospective students, faculty, and staff are provided with quality service and support.

Measure 1.1

As a result of ongoing efforts to provide high-quality service, prospective students, faculty, and staff will be able to easily locate and understand the university's admission criteria. To evaluate the effectiveness of this initiative, a brief survey will be administered to new applicants, gathering feedback on the clarity and accessibility of admissions information encountered during the application process.

The target outcome is that 90% of respondents will indicate no difficulty in understanding the admission criteria, demonstrating the effectiveness of current communication strategies and resource availability.

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis:

In AC 2023–2024, the target was met. Admissions, alongside Recruiting, contracted professional services to assist with necessary updates and upgrades to Ellucian CRM Recruit. The department also experienced additional changes including admission policy updates, procedure adjustments, and an increased workload due to prior staffing reductions. Despite these challenges, improvements to CRM Recruit—such as a more intuitive, mobile-friendly interface—reduced the application submission time from 15–20 minutes to approximately 5 minutes.

Assessment Cycle 2024-2025 – End-Year Report

Admissions continued to refine internal processes to better meet student needs, resolve technical issues, and implement more efficient workflows. As a result of these departmental changes and system enhancements, this learning outcome has now been successfully measured and the target for AC 2023–2024 was achieved.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 data, Admissions implemented the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to create stability, an effective workflow and increase the number of applicants. In AC 2024–2025, the Office of Admissions, in collaboration with Information Technology, continued to leverage contracted professional services to implement critical updates and enhancements to Ellucian CRM Recruit. These efforts, along with positive departmental restructuring and revisions to admissions policies and procedures, have enabled the Director to more effectively manage operations and help alleviate staff workload.

Data collected through applicant surveys and feedback confirm that the application submission process remains efficient, with an average completion time of five minutes or less. The updated system is significantly more user-friendly and mobile-accessible. The Admissions Office continues to refine its processes within CRM Recruit to better meet student needs, resolve technical issues, and improve response times. As a result, this learning outcome has been successfully measured.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2024-2025, the target was met.

Decision or Recommendation:

In AC 2024-2025, the target was met.

Based on information gathered from the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 data, Admissions successfully maintained an effective workflow while implementing improvements to support departmental operations. Collaborating with Information Technology and Institutional Research, the office continued addressing system issues, upgraded functionalities in Ellucian CRM Recruit, and sustained the use of a streamlined, mobile-friendly application process. A brief applicant survey was developed and deployed to gather feedback on admissions services, contributing to data-informed decision-making. Additionally, efforts were made to restore a previously eliminated staff position to improve departmental efficiency and service delivery.

For AC 2025–2026, the Office of Admissions will continue optimizing its use of Ellucian CRM Recruit by implementing advanced automation features and refining communication workflows. The department also plans to expand the applicant survey to include more targeted questions related to customer service and the overall admissions experience. Further collaboration with campus partners will support continuous process improvement and ensure consistency with institutional enrollment goals. These efforts will help increase applicant satisfaction, support staff effectiveness, and maintain the department's commitment to providing high-quality, student-centered admissions services.

Assessment Cycle 2024-2025 – End-Year Report

Measure 1.2

Student satisfaction with the admissions process will be evaluated through a survey distributed via email to all new applicants. The survey will gather feedback on the overall effectiveness of the admissions experience and the clarity of admission criteria. The target outcome is for 90% of respondents to report no issues with the effectiveness of the admissions process.

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis:

In AC 2024–2025, the target was met. Admissions continued to implement improvements based on data collected during AC 2023–2024, including survey feedback and system performance metrics. Policy and procedural changes were aligned with updated institutional guidelines, and departmental restructuring allowed for more efficient resource allocation.

The continued enhancement of Ellucian CRM Recruit—now fully integrated and refined—has significantly improved the applicant experience. The application submission process remains streamlined, with the average completion time consistently reduced from 15–20 minutes to approximately 5 minutes. These improvements, along with increased mobile accessibility and clearer communication workflows, have contributed to greater applicant satisfaction and operational efficiency.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2024-2025, the target was met.

Decision or Recommendation:

In AC 2024-2025, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of AC 2024–2025 data, Admissions will implement several initiatives in AC 2025–2026 to further enhance workflow efficiency and support continued growth in student enrollment. Building on the successful integration of updated admission standards and technological enhancements in AC 2023–2024 and AC 2024–2025, the department will maintain its collaboration with Information Technology and Institutional Research to resolve any remaining system issues and ensure stable operations.

In AC 2025–2026, Admissions will expand its assessment strategies by refining and distributing an online survey to all applicants. The updated survey will include targeted questions to measure applicant satisfaction, clarity of admission criteria, and the overall effectiveness of the admissions process. These efforts aim to inform continuous improvement, increase transparency, and ensure that the department remains aligned with institutional goals and student needs.

Assessment Cycle 2024-2025 – End-Year Report

Measure 1.3

Students will demonstrate satisfaction with the quality of service provided by the Office of Admissions. The target outcome is for 90% of respondents to indicate they were satisfied with the level of service received during the admissions process.

Finding: Target was not met.

Analysis:

In AC 2023–2024, the target was not met. Although the department experienced policy changes that required the prioritization of other operational areas, a student survey specifically measuring satisfaction with the quality of admissions services was not administered. Despite this, the Office of Admissions received minimal complaints related to service quality, indicating a generally positive perception. However, due to the absence of measurable survey data, the learning outcome could not be formally assessed.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2024-2025, the target was not met.

Decision or Recommendation:

In AC 2024-2025, the target was not met.

Based on the analysis of AC 2024–2025 data, the Office of Admissions will implement strategic changes in AC 2025–2026 to further enhance departmental workflow and student engagement. With the university now operating under stable admissions standards, the department will continue collaborating with Information Technology and Institutional Research to resolve outstanding system issues and ensure the admissions process remains efficient and accessible.

A key focus for AC 2025–2026 will be the development and deployment of a comprehensive online survey for all applicants. This survey will specifically measure satisfaction with the quality of service provided by the Office of Admissions, allowing for the formal assessment of this learning outcome. The results will be used to identify areas of strength and improvement, support data-informed decision-making, and maintain the department's commitment to delivering high-quality, student-centered service throughout the admissions process.

Assessment Cycle 2024-2025 – End-Year Report

SO 2.1 Decrease the processing time of applications to admit students more efficiently, thereby increasing university enrollment and staff efficiency.

Measure 2.1

Increase the number of freshmen students by 5% per semester.

Finding: Fall target was not met. Spring target was met.

Analysis:

	New Freshmen	% Increase or Decrease
Spring 2025	44	33% increase
Spring 2024	33	
Fall 2024	1052	2% decrease
Fall 2023	1070	

In AC 2023–2024, new freshmen enrollment increased by 38 students from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023 (+3.7%), but the 5% growth target was not met. Spring 2024 saw a significant decline of 25 students (–43%), missing the target as well. Contributing factors included department downsizing, revised job duties, and policy changes that strained staff capacity and slowed processing.

To improve operations in AC 2024–2025, a new staff member was hired to help manage increased workloads. This addition supported daily application processing, applicant communication, and front desk coverage, especially during peak cycles.

Alongside staffing improvements, Admissions continued partnering with Recruiting and IT to enhance Ellucian CRM Recruit—reducing application completion time to 5 minutes, automating applicant notifications, and improving reporting to identify and prioritize incomplete files.

With stabilized admissions standards and improved support, the department upheld processing timelines and communication goals. As a result:

- Spring 2025 enrollment rose to 44 students (+33%), surpassing the 5% target.
- Fall 2024 enrollment declined to 1,052 students (–2%), falling short of the target.

These results highlight progress in Spring admissions and underscore the need to strengthen Fall recruitment and early engagement efforts. As a result of these changes, in AC 2024-2025, the target for Fall was not met and Spring target was met.

Assessment Cycle 2024-2025 – End-Year Report

Decision or Recommendation:

In AC 2024–2025, the Spring target was met, while the Fall target was not.

The improvement in Spring enrollment reflects the positive impact of enhanced workflows, system upgrades, and applicant engagement efforts. However, challenges in meeting Fall enrollment targets could possibly persist due to external factors such as fluctuating applicant preparedness, continued ACT/SAT performance gaps, and evolving admissions standards.

For AC 2025–2026, the Office of Admissions will build on the progress made by:

- Continuing collaboration with Information Technology to enhance automation and address remaining issues in Ellucian CRM Recruit.
- Providing routine staff training on new policies, system functionality, and workflow improvements.
- Launching a short, targeted applicant satisfaction survey (3–5 questions) to gather feedback on service quality and the clarity of admissions criteria.
- Proactively identifying and notifying applicants with incomplete or incorrect applications, with guidance on reapplication.
- Maintaining a five-business-day processing timeline for completed applications and improving outreach efforts through Recruiting.

The consistent measurement of applicant feedback will allow the department to assess service effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and support increased enrollment through a more responsive and student-centered admissions process.

Measure 2.2

Increase the number of transfer students by 2% per semester.

Finding: Fall target was not met. Spring target was met.

Analysis:

	New Transfer	% Increase or Decrease
Spring 2025	245	3% increase
Spring 2024	237	
Fall 2024	384	13% decrease
Fall 2023	441	

Assessment Cycle 2024-2025 – End-Year Report

In AC 2024–2025, the Spring target was met, with an increase from 237 to 245 transfer students (+3%), surpassing the 2% goal. However, the Fall target was not met, as transfer enrollment declined from 441 to 384 (–13%), reflecting a loss of 57 students.

This trend follows a similar pattern seen in AC 2023–2024, where:

- Fall 2023 showed a modest increase from 432 to 441 transfer students (+2%, target met).
- Spring 2024 saw a slight decline from 238 to 237 (–0.4%, target not met).

Throughout these cycles, the department continued to encounter workload challenges stemming from departmental restructuring, updated job responsibilities, and increased applicant volume. To help alleviate these challenges, a new staff member was hired during AC 2024–2025. This strategic addition supported several key functions:

- Assisting with the daily processing of applications.
- Following up with students who had incomplete or incorrect submissions.
- Reducing the processing burden on existing staff by taking on direct applicant communication tasks.
- Supporting outreach during peak application cycles.

In addition to staffing, technological improvements also continued. Admissions worked closely with Information Technology and Recruiting to enhance Ellucian CRM Recruit, resulting in:

- A more intuitive, mobile-friendly application system.
- Automated communication workflows to notify students of missing documentation.
- Improved reporting to identify bottlenecks and prioritize complete applications.
- A reduction in submission errors and faster resolution times.

These combined efforts contributed significantly to processing efficiency and helped ensure that student inquiries were addressed promptly. Despite the Fall decline, the Spring increase is a strong indicator that the department's operational and staffing changes are beginning to yield positive results.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2024-2025, the target for Fall was not met and the target for Spring was met.

Decision or Recommendation:

In AC 2024-2025, the target for Fall was not met and the target for Spring was met.

In AC 2024–2025, the Spring enrollment target was achieved, demonstrating measurable progress in transfer admissions. The 3% increase reflects the positive impact of the department's continued investment in system enhancements and the onboarding of a new staff member to help meet growing operational demands. However, the Fall enrollment target was not met, underscoring ongoing challenges related to external factors, such as:

Assessment Cycle 2024-2025 – End-Year Report

- Transfer students' prior academic standing or financial holds.
- Uncertainty about their academic success at a new institution.
- Application delays or incomplete submissions, especially during the peak term.

Based on the analysis, the Office of Admissions will implement the following strategies for AC 2025–2026:

1. Maximize the effectiveness of the new hire by expanding their role in outreach, follow-up, and applicant engagement, with the capability of advising transfer students as well.
2. Continue collaboration with IT to fine-tune CRM Recruit, leveraging automation to reduce manual processing, generate real-time data reports, and flag incomplete applications earlier.
3. Launch a short 3–5 question transfer applicant satisfaction survey to capture feedback on the quality of service, clarity of transfer criteria, and timeliness of communication.
4. Develop strategic messaging campaigns to re-engage students who started but did not complete the application process.
5. Strengthen staff development efforts to ensure all team members are consistently trained on new policies, system changes, and transfer-specific best practices.
6. Utilize CRM data to target populations with high transfer potential and improve communication timelines during peak months.

Ongoing Timeliness Goals:

- Peak periods (April–August): 75% of completed transfer applications will be processed and converted to admits within 5 business days of receiving all required documentation.
- Non-peak months: 75% of applications will convert to admits within 3 business days.

Survey results and CRM analytics will be used to continuously evaluate and refine processes. The goal remains to increase transfer student enrollment by at least 2% each semester while improving service quality and operational efficiency.

Assessment Cycle 2024-2025 – End-Year Report

Comprehensive Summary of Key evidence of improvement based on analysis of results. The following reflects all the changes implemented to drive the continuous process of seeking improvement in AC 2024-2025. These changes are based on the knowledge gained through analyzing the AC 2023-2024 results and lessons learned.

- Admissions paperwork and emails were processed and returned within 1–3 business days, and within 3–5 business days during peak periods.
- Customer service was enhanced by ensuring prompt responses to phone calls and consistent front desk coverage to assist all visitors.
- Admissions criteria were revised by the ULS System and promptly updated on the NSU Admissions website.
- Admission forms were updated and created as needed, while various reports were developed to expedite the applicant admission process.
- Graduate implementation in Ellucian CRM Recruit disrupted Admissions' workflow, but collaboration with IT resolved the issues and restored efficiency.
- New processes and automated email communications were implemented to notify applicants of any missing admission requirements.
- Acceptance letters were redesigned for greater appeal and are now generated by a third party, with ongoing enhancements in Ellucian CRM Recruit to provide applicants with faster admission status updates

Plan of action moving forward:

In collaboration with the Offices of Information Technology and Institutional Research, the Office of Admissions will develop a concise survey consisting of 3–5 targeted questions. This survey will be distributed to new applicants from the current fiscal year to assess the quality of services provided during the admissions process.

The Office of Admissions will continue to monitor and update the admissions website regularly to ensure all applicants have access to the most current and accurate information.

Beginning with the 2025–2026 cycle, the survey will include additional questions to capture student input specifically related to the quality of service experienced during the application process. Feedback collected will be used to guide improvements, support efforts to meet or exceed enrollment goals, and enhance overall student satisfaction.

The Office of Admissions remains committed to delivering an efficient, student-centered admissions experience and to expanding access to educational opportunities aligned with students' academic goals.