NORTHWESTERN STATE University of Louisiana

**Institutional Review of
Northwestern State University
Natchitoches, Louisiana**

Aaron Thompson, PhD
Meredith E. Gibbs

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I. Introduction

Reviewers were engaged by the University of Louisiana System (ULS) to undertake an institutional review of Northwestern State University (NSU) in anticipation of the arrival of its 18th president, Dr. James Henderson, in January 2015. The professional qualifications of the project team can be found in Appendix A.

The charge was to review all aspects of the University's operations to:

- Assess the overall effectiveness of the academic and administrative operations of the main NSU campus in Natchitoches and its satellite locations in Shreveport and Leesville and to offer recommendations on how the University might strengthen and improve its operations;
- Identify internal and external strengths and weaknesses to inform the incoming president of opportunities that can be of advantage to the University;
- Provide the new president with objective input into areas or issues of concern as he assumes the leadership of the University;
- Highlight action that can be taken at the ULS level to assist NSU in implementing improvements; and
- Assess the overall campus climate.

The review process employed was similar in all key respects to previous campus assessments in the ULS:

- Telephone conferences with ULS liaisons were held in advance of the on-campus visit. These conversations laid the foundation for the on-campus visit, outlined areas of inquiry, identified interview candidates and an agenda for on-campus meetings.
- Reviewers were provided with previous campus assessments and statistical data on enrollment, graduation rates, retention and other key criteria.
- A week-long visit conducted from October 27-31, 2014 included meetings with the following individuals and groups:

  - University leadership including all vice presidents as a group and individually

  - College Deans and academic department heads

  - Directors in academic and student support units

  - Academic and career advisors

  - Athletic staff, including the Athletic Director

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    - Paraprofessional staff

    - Recruitment and retention staff

    - ULS leadership, including a Board member

    - Individual business owners, political and civic leadership

    - Heads of administrative units, both as a group and individually. These included: Information Technology, University Advancement, Marketing, Purchasing, External Relations, Business Affairs, Facilities, Audit, EEO, and other administrative stakeholders

- Faculty/staff and student forums were held at the NSU main campus in Natchitoches and campuses in Leesville and Shreveport
- A community forum with members of the external community including alumni
- On-line surveys were sent to faculty, students, and staff seeking feedback on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the University
- Faculty and staff were invited to submit individual comments to reviewers by email
- Visits and campus tours were conducted at the Shreveport and Leesville campuses

II. Overview

NSU is a welcoming and inviting campus community. It is full of dedicated individuals—faculty, staff, alumni, community members—who want to see the University succeed. NSU is a traditional four-year baccalaureate institution that offers a significant number of master's degrees to a proportionally larger number of part-time and adult learners. It has a good mix of professional and liberal arts programs; the number offered seem to be the "right size" based on population and region (See NSU Fact Book, http://oir.nsula.edu/fact-book/). In addition, NSU serves a significant underrepresented minority population.

Student success is consistently reported as the reason NSU exists. In reviewing the quantitative measurements of student success (i.e., completion data), NSU fared better than anticipated considering a downturn in state funding. Most of the University's trend data in the enrollment management areas, however, are somewhat troubling. From 2008 to 2013, the first- to second-year retention rate increased from 69% to 72%. The 6-year graduation rate has remained constant. The number of completers has increased slightly, but headcount has dropped dramatically. This is an area the University and ULS need to pay close attention to in

both quantitative and qualitative measures (i.e., program offerings and program mode measures). The campus has remained strong in co-curricular offerings with upwards of 120 campus organizations.

The University has been ravaged by budget reductions. NSU's resource base—primarily its state appropriation and tuition and fees—are inadequate to meet the University's operating needs, maintain current assets and fund strategic initiatives. Based on IPEDS FY 2013 final release data, NSU's state appropriation is at the same level of funding as it was in 2001, a time when the University was a very different place. In FY 2013, NSU's state appropriation accounted for only 38% of its total revenues, down from a high of 70% in FY 2008.

A continued low level of funding has forced the University to eliminate programs. Faculty and staff have been laid off.   In order to fund basic campus operations, unfunded mandates and key initiatives, basic expenses are shifted to auxiliary and restricted funds. These funding shifts prevent auxiliary operations from using these resources to enhance and improve their own operations and infrastructure. Much needed investments cannot be made in strategic enrollment management initiatives in Natchitoches, Leesville and Shreveport that could strengthen the University.

Superficial attempts at strategic planning and a non-inclusive budget process have exacerbated the problem. The University has not been able to complete realistic long-term planning, particularly strategic budget planning.   Inadequate communication around resource allocation—and many other areas—has led to a thriving rumor mill, a leadership vacuum, and a climate of suspicion and finger pointing. Overall, morale is low.

There is much strength to be found, however, in a weakened but dedicated University community of faculty and staff. They have enormous pride in the University and possess the tenacity to get things done even with limited resources. There were many examples of ingenuity, resourcefulness and determination:

- Faculty and staff who do touch-up painting of offices because the University lost its painter during budget reductions.
- IT staff who installed software to return computers to a steady state at night because there is inadequate helpdesk staffing to perform the task.
- Development personnel who have organized themselves to handle all aspects of fundraising—annual giving, planned giving and major gifts—rejecting the traditional, albeit siloed, approach to development.

III. Organizational Structure

In reviewing the organizational structure at NSU, ULS provided a list of the University's benchmark institutions. A subset of the list, five institutions in the Southeast: Austin Peay State University (Tennessee), University of Central Arkansas (Arkansas), Jacksonville State University (Alabama), Murray State University (Kentucky) and Western Carolina University (North Carolina) have been referred to, as appropriate, for comparison ("NSU Peers"). Appendix B provides the URLs to the organizational charts of the NSU Peers.

At NSU, there are five divisions headed by five vice presidents: Academic and Student Affairs; Technology, Research and Economic Development; External Affairs; University Affairs; and Business Affairs and Controller. The University's organizational chart can be found on-line at www.president.nsula.edu.

The University is organized into an unusual array of units. It appears this is due to budget reductions and previous reorganizations, personnel departures, history and personal preference and idiosyncrasy. None of the NSU Peers have a similar organizational structure.

The Provost has a large number of direct reports. Managerial responsibility and oversight are significant because these control the direction and priorities of the department, resource allocation and personnel review and evaluation. There is one Vice Provost who is also the Dean of Arts and Letters, Dean of the Graduate School and Research. There is an inconsistent reporting line with the schools and colleges—some report through the Vice Provost and others appear to report directly to the Provost.

Student affairs activities are the responsibility of the Dean of Students, who reports to the Vice Provost.   Other student-related activities—academic and career engagement center, for example—report directly to the Provost.

Responsibility for important functions such as the Office of Equal Opportunity (EEO) and the Office of Institutional Research and Planning are divided between the Provost and Vice Provost. In several of the NSU peers, EEO reports directly to the President.

There is no true enrollment management unit at NSU. In many universities where increasing enrollment is a priority, enrollment management units and divisions headed by a Vice President for Enrollment Management have been created to ensure these critical enrollment and recruitment functions work together as a team. Admissions and recruiting, financial aid, and the registrar are physically co-located, and cross-trained to function as one cohesive group reporting to the same person. New job titles such as "enrollment management specialist" have emerged replacing the old "financial aid officer" or "admissions officer" titles. At NSU, it does not appear that these departments are part of a unified enrollment management unit.

Moreover, recruiting is in a completely different division—External Affairs—apparently because the duties were not re-assigned when the then Head of Recruiting was promoted to an AVP position in University Advancement.

The Technology, Research and Economic Development Division includes multiple units, not all of which involve information technology. None of the NSU peers report this structure for IT operations. Responsibility for research—grants and contracts—does not rest with the Dean of Research, the current Vice Provost. Given the importance technology plays in the overall mission of NSU, IT (including Student Technology and the technical aspects of E-Learning and continuing education) should be the sole focus of this Division.

Most universities with Division I Athletics have it reporting directly to the President. This is true of all of the NSU peers. Given the importance of philanthropy to the University, a move would enable External Affairs to focus on fundraising and the University's external face. While Printing is included in some of the NSU peers marketing divisions, none of the peer institutions have it as a unit in Athletics.

At NSU, the business units of the University are divided between two different vice presidents. For a university of its size undergoing considerable fiscal distress, this organization needs to be evaluated. At four out of five of the NSU Peers, the business units—including facilities and capital budgeting—are consolidated under one vice president.

The following list summarizes the most salient differences between NSU and the NSU Peers in terms of organizational structure:

- All five peer institutions have Athletics reporting directly to the President
- Four peer institutions have an integrated Advancement division for development and marketing activities. One has Development and Marketing & Communications as separate divisions reporting to the President (Central Arkansas)
- Two peer institutions have the EEO office reporting directly to the President
- Four of five peer institutions have a consolidated business affairs office that encompasses all business operations, including facilities (Murray State has a Chief Facilities Officer reporting directly to the President)

The following chart depicts the number of vice presidents/divisions and their titles at NSU Peers:

Jacksonville State -4	Western Carolina -4	Central Arkansas -5	Murray State -4
Provost/Vice President of Academic & Student Affairs	Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs	Academic Affairs	Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Vice President Administrative & Business Affairs	Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs	Advancement	Vice President for Finance and Administrative Services
Vice President University Advancement	Chief Information Officer	Finance & Administration	Vice President for Institutional Advancement
Vice President Information Technology	Vice Chancellor Administration & Finance	Student Services	Vice President for Student Affairs
		University Relations	

IV. Leadership

In his 2013 book, *Presidencies Derailed, Why University Leaders Fail*, former university president Stephen Trachtenberg reports that between 2000 and 2010 more than 29 college presidents were fired or asked to resign. In reporting on the reasons at public masters institutions, the author states that for those whose presidencies failed "all had difficulty building, managing and leading the senior team." (p.36) Creating a cohesive team that works well together will be imperative for the new president.

NSU is led by a senior team that is dedicated to the University and eager to work better as a team. The perception among staff and faculty is that the senior team does not get along and is dysfunctional. In interviews with individual Cabinet members, all reported the desire for more regular Cabinet meetings, and being included in setting the agenda for meetings. Concerns were voiced that "big picture" policy issues that impact all divisions were not being discussed at Cabinet.

The most oft repeated concern, however, was that key policy decisions, particularly around budget issues, were not brought to Cabinet. They report that budget and resource allocation issues are made unilaterally by the Chief Financial Officer and frequently presented as a fait accompli. This observation appears to be consistent with that reported by the National Center for Higher Education Management System (NCHEMS) Team in 2005 during its institutional review, finding that the CFO had an "unusually prominent" role in overall planning.

V. Strategic Planning

NSU's efforts to create and implement a comprehensive and outcome-driven strategic plan has spanned seven years. There are two plans currently available on the University's website. The first, entitled "Go for Greatness (G4G)" was spawned in 2007 from a collective process of focus groups and broad campus input. Despite significant budget cuts in 2008, the process resulted in a strategic plan with four theme areas (Successful Student, Education for a New Tomorrow, Faculty and Staff Leading Together, and Enrichment for Stakeholders). Implementation groups were assigned to work on completing a host of ambitious strategies developed for each goal. Despite a written commitment to "annual reviews and progress reports," it appears that the process stalled and the plan was shelved due to budgetary constraints.

In 2013, the ULS implemented a five-year outcome-driven Strategic Plan with goals for student access and student success. Goals include: improving retention and graduation rates and recruiting better academically prepared students. In interviews with campus leadership, it was reported that the 2013 metric-driven plan was developed to meet ULS requirements and while it contains important priorities for NSU, it does not represent a campus-driven, comprehensive plan embraced by the entire campus community.

VI. Strengths and Weaknesses

Comments received from over 325 participants in faculty and staff forums and responses from surveys demonstrate clearly that NSU's greatest strength is the positive and supportive relationship that exists among faculty and staff with the students. Students echoed this as a key strength. More than 74 students demonstrated the significance of this relationship by participating in a 7:30 a.m. forum.

Other frequently reported strengths are as follows:

> "First and foremost, a determined faculty and staff who have endeavored to persevere these last seven years, to do more as requested with diminished resources and lack of financial support."

> "Faculty care about us."

“They use their own money to assist us.”

The availability of top quality academic programs was also high on the list of NSU strengths. The Nursing program was cited most often, noting that “the College of Nursing is recognized for both state and national achievements and for being the 4th largest nursing program in the United States.” Programs in Education, Criminal Justice, Business, Computing and Information Systems, VET Technology and Psychology were also mentioned consistently as strong ones.

One commentator summed it up particularly well:

“Its heritage, beautiful campus grounds, strong academic programs such as biology, creative and performing arts, nursing and business gives NSU incredible potential.”

Additional strengths:

- AACSB Accreditation (Reaffirmation 2010)
- Three strong business majors—accounting, business administration, and computer information systems—perceived as providing good Louisiana employment opportunities meeting five star jobs
- Reasonable tuition costs
- On-line offerings, face-to-face offerings and compressed video offerings
- International presence in several countries (Colombia, France, Spain and China)
- Computer technology supported from special student fees and lab fees
- Successful internship/co-op program
- Separate business building with small classrooms that complement the teaching mission
- Permanent facilities in Alexandria, Leesville, Marksville and Shreveport
- Leadership in electronic and continuing education for the University of Louisiana System
- Regular and visible recruitment of business graduates by national firms (State Farm, Enterprise, IBM, CenturyLink, USAA, CSC)
- National and regional recognition of Phi Beta Lambda/Business Professionals of America (PBL/BPA) and Association of Information Technology Professionals (AITP)
- Highly motivated, dedicated and diverse faculty who are either academically qualified (57%) or professionally qualified (33%) with international travel exposure
- Sixteen endowed professorships and one endowed chair
- Excellent Regional Small Business Development Center (SBDC) serving the North Louisiana area
- Annual Walter Porter Forum to bring guest speakers to campus
- Historic Natchitoches is an attractive college community with vibrant tourist influx
- Excellent relations with business and community leaders

In considering institutional weaknesses, an overarching theme is a campus searching for clear direction and solid leadership. While there is a strong commitment to NSU among faculty and staff, an overwhelming majority of commentators report a thirst for vision, direction and

confidence in a new leader. There is enthusiasm and hope that the new president will remedy perceived unfairness and communicate directly with campus constituencies. As previously noted, morale among all groups of faculty and staff is low. Many reasons were given for the low morale:

- No raises in six years for faculty or staff but discretionary raises for some units (e.g., Athletics)
- Faculty and staff are expected to do more with much less (i.e., travel funds have disappeared)
- Indirect funds have been taken away, thus no incentive for writing grants
- Pay is significantly lower compared with similar institutions
- Faculty members are expected to publish, teach overloads, and serve to receive tenure yet receive no raises when they do
- Dilapidated work environments
- Fear of retaliation for speaking up
- No role in University governance
- No transparency in resource allocation or budget management
- Loss of faith in the leadership
- A decline in once strong programs
- Lack of diversity in the faculty
- A significant reduction in graduate students, on-line facilitators, library staff and other academic support
- Classes are too large, especially in science areas
- Large increase in part-time faculty has reduced quality
- Too much money spent on BANNER
- Too many ADA issues with not enough assistance in disability care
- Not enough academic advising (only faculty serve on academic advising council) and no real intrusive advising
- Paltry career advising (one advisor)
- No real comprehensive enrollment management plan that incorporates completion strategies with recruitment strategies
- Very few internships, externships and cooperative studies
- No professional development monies in departments
- Website is weak
- On-line classes are not equal in quality partially due to lack of instructional designers

Some areas were mentioned as both strengths and weaknesses, in particular Athletics. Athletics was mentioned as a strength because it enhanced the University's brand, but many expressed concern that it received a larger proportion of budgetary resources at the same time that academic programs were being eliminated.

Shreveport Campus

The faculty and staff at the Shreveport campus also raised concerns about the lack of compensation increases, over-reliance on adjunct faculty (and difficulty in finding them), having to use technology to accommodate more students and inadequate facilities. Despite these significant challenges, the overall sentiment about the campus was far more upbeat than reports from the main campus in Natchitoches. In fact, many were effusive in sharing their successes at the Shreveport campus, in particular:

- Very high pass rates for their associate degree in nursing and the bachelor's degree in nursing programs
- An excellent RN to BSN program
- Six hundred total students at their campus ranging from associate to doctoral degree
- High quality digital equipment in Allied Health
- Excellent relationships with area community colleges

However, there were several concerns expressed:

- Faculty workload is too high
- Lack of faculty in the BSN program
- Lack of funds for travel and professional development
- Need to renovate Warrington campus building
- Lack of support personnel (computer specialist, building supervisor, recruiting and marketing)
- Compressed video does not work much of the time, which impedes learning

Leesville/Ft. Polk Campus

Low morale is prevalent among faculty and staff at the Leesville/Ft. Polk campus. In addition to the challenges cited above at other campuses, the faculty and staff at Leesville feel abandoned and misunderstood by the main campus. In particular, they believe that senior level administration does not fully understand the unique aspects of the population they serve (mainly adult learners) or the dramatic negative impact that a lack of resources has had on the level of service to their campus community. Despite these negative perceptions, they believe that the faculty and staff at their campus have a very strong relationship with students. The positive student rapport was confirmed by some community members who spoke favorably of campus representatives and the service they provide to enable the labor force to hone their skills. Other faculty and staff believe they are losing community support. Issues of concern include:

- Lack of control on scheduling
- Loss of face-to-face instructors on the campus

- No dedicated executive director (especially one with an academic background)
- Very weak communication with main campus
- No dedicated recruiter
- Lower salaries compared to instructors at NSU Shreveport and Natchitoches
- Compressed video doesn't work

VII. Students

Overall, NSU students on the main campus love the University. Almost 75 students showed up at 7:30 a.m. to express their views. When asked what they liked about their campus, frequent responses were:

"It is an open-minded campus with a diverse group of students"

"Professors and students are a close-knit group"

"Faculty care about us"

 There was, however, a long list of concerns:

- No transparency about fees and how they are used
- Lack of communication with students
- No real town-gown relationship (i.e., town is "dead on weekends")
- Dissatisfaction with on-campus housing (i.e., presence of insects and rodents, unreliable internet and cable, impersonal owners and managers not very personal, inadequate climate control)
- Difficult to obtain appointments for mental health counseling
- Science classes are too large
- Food service is bad
- Online courses are significantly inferior to face-to-face classes (i.e., cost more and quality is bad, no interaction with professors, tests are multiple choice, and no opportunity for significant writing)
- Too many adjunct professors who are not trained to use technology
- Commuter students cannot park in lots after 10 p.m. impeding use of 24-hour lab
- Campus police are unfriendly
- Inadequate facilities (e.g., Varnado Hall, Student Union)
- Perception that administrators care more about themselves than students
- Inadequate lighting in areas of campus (e.g., lighting on organizational row)

The students at the Shreveport campus were very complimentary of faculty, staff and programs. They believe they are receiving a top-notch education and that instructors are there to assist them in achieving their educational goals and not "weeding them out." They liked

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their clinical sites and laboratories and the mentoring relationships between upperclassmen and underclassmen. Most of the students report that they came to the Nursing program because of its good reputation and small class sizes. One student stated: "NSU's nursing program is on a pedestal." Other students reported that the Campus could be improved with additional tutors, reliable compressed video and the ability to take the pre-NCLEX earlier in their academic careers.

Overall, at the Leesville Campus, students stated that they "love this Campus!" They did report, however, feeling rejected by Main Campus. Concern was expressed about paying student activity fees and not receiving the associated services. They report dissatisfaction with limited course offerings, co-curricular activities and a general lack of "school spirit." Nursing students expressed frustration with the compressed video service.

VIII. Community "Town/Gown" Relations

There were mixed feelings about the strength of the relationship between NSU and the City of Natchitoches. Several constituents of the University felt that the relationship had been steadily declining over the last decade. A 32-year veteran of the University stated: "The community only supports the arts programs and not the rest of the University." Another University employee and Natchitoches native reported: "They used to support us, but not lately. You don't see water towers with NSU on them. They are not active in homecoming events. I just feel they are taking advantage of the University."

Community members, however, expressed very different opinions. One long-time member of the community and a business owner stated: "The Mayor and City Council are very supportive of Northwestern. We raise money for sports and other events. We are very engaged." The President of the Chamber of Commerce shared this positive felling: "There is room for improvement but the relationship is not disconnected. We have a lot of pride in NSU." The President of the Alumni Board reported "strong support" for NSU: "The relationship is really good. However, this is one of the smallest communities that is home to a university." There was agreement that the new president had to be a leader in engaging both the community and alumni in order to strengthen the relationship.

Other suggestions for improving the relationship are as follows:

- Increase University presence on the Chamber of Commerce
- Increase the number of University graduates working in the community
- Gain a better understanding of the needs of employers in the town/region
- Create a small business incubator
- Engage in "co-branding" between the University and town
- Offer more career and social opportunities for NSU students in the community

On the Leesville Campus, community members reported positive signs of growth between the Leesville/Ft. Polk area and the Leesville Campus. The Economic Playbook Recommendations and the joint strategic planning meetings outcomes are good examples of positive visions of the future.

It is clear that the very existence of the Leesville Campus is dependent upon the presence of Fort Polk. Given its location outside the gates of the largest employer in the state of Louisiana which generates the greatest single economic impact in the state—$1.7 billion annually—the Leesville campus is strategically located to participate in the future growth of Ft. Polk and the civilian community.

The Leesville campus is located in the new Growth Management Area ("GMA"). The GMA was created due to a request of the Army, which asked the community to develop a plan to accommodate the future growth of 1,500 soldiers. After an extensive planning process, the area between Leesville and the NSU campus was designated a future growth area and the State invested $25 million to install infrastructure. Since that time, the City was able to obtain an additional federal/state/local matching grant of $21.5 million to build a new elementary school. There are many program opportunities that exist in this small community for NSU, such as dual enrollment. Furthermore, through new legal authority referred to as "Section 331 Shared Services" the Department of Defense has created an opportunity for NSU and other state and local agencies to provide services that the DOD may currently be providing on base to reduce the cost to the military.

IX. Budget and Finance

The University has experienced deep and prolonged budget reductions. Like most public universities, the main sources of NSU's funding come from a state appropriation, tuition and fee revenue, and other sources of revenue (i.e., indirect cost recovery from research grants, dollars raised through private philanthropy, auxiliary operations).

In a nutshell, NSU has experienced a dramatic reduction in state funding and an increased reliance on tuition and fee revenue to support the University's operating expenses. The coupling of reduced state appropriations for higher education with dramatic tuition increases represents a structural shift in funding and is, regrettably, a national trend.

Since FY 2008-09, NSU has experienced a 56% reduction in its state appropriation having gone from a high of $49.7 million in FY 2008 to $21.7million in FY 2014-15. During the same period, tuition and fee revenue increased a staggering 69.9%, from $30 million to $49.9 million. Headcount enrollment for the University, however, has decreased to 9,002 in fall 2014. Where state support accounted for 62% of its revenues in 2008, NSU now relies on the State for only

38% of its total budget. Tuition and fees, which used to represent 38% of revenue, now account for 70%.

Based on information provided by the University's Budget Office, budget reductions, unfunded mandates and shifting general fund budget expenditures to auxiliary and restricted accounts have reduced NSU's operating budget by $25.2 million since 2008.

To manage the budget crisis and reduce expenses, NSU has eliminated programs, re-organized and restructured its operations, and eliminated positions. To enhance revenues, the University has completed two capital campaigns to augment student scholarships, and through endowed professorships, to provide faculty development funds.

In town hall meetings and other on-campus interviews, faculty and staff report feeling demoralized from continual budget reductions. Deans and department chairs were vocal in their concern about the lack of priority given to academic programming (in favor of athletics), the heart of the University, and their ability to deliver quality instruction and programming to students with significantly reduced resources. There is considerable criticism about the way budget reductions have been handled and concern that decisions are being made unilaterally by the CFO/Budget Office without input from key stakeholders or sufficient communication. In attempting to manage their departmental budgets, unit heads report that they have inadequate resources to do so only receiving miniscule amounts for basic operating expenses.

The measures taken to reduce operating expenses during a budget crisis are not unusual (i.e., curtailing overtime, freezing hiring, reducing or eliminating travel, centralizing indirect cost recovery), but it appears that the way in which the cuts were communicated did not reflect principles of shared governance and the collaborative decision making that characterizes the academic enterprise.

X. Information Technology and Banner Implementation

The Office of Information Technology is a unit within the Division of Technology, Research & Economic Development (TRED). The unit is comprised of three service areas: technical services, academic and administrative services. Technical services are responsible for IT infrastructure. The academic services unit specializes in web services (website, web application or support) and the administrative unit is responsible for the university's administrative computing applications—the student information system, human resource system and similar applications.

There are 24 positions in IT, three being vacant or unfunded, including the director of information systems. Another division within TRED, critical to the overall information technology enterprise, is Electronic & Continuing Education (ECE), which does the on-line/E-

learning systems support and development. There are 13 positions in the ECE; two, including the directorship, are vacant or unfunded. Six or seven of these positions could be considered IT job titles: web developer, systems support specialists, media development specialist.

Finally, TRED also oversees the IT services funded by the student technology fees. These fees support a myriad of operations including student computer labs across campus. The bifurcation of services between IT and Student Technology fees is confusing to faculty and staff. Department heads report that Faculty efficiency suffers when they have to wait for the "right" staff to arrive to fix their problem. Not being able to use student tech fee funded computers for any other purpose prevents some schools from offering professional development opportunities that might generate revenue. All colleges and universities impose student technology fees with restricted uses, yet functions are dramatically segregated at NSU.

Given NSU's emphasis on on-line learning, a robust information systems operation is critical. The on-line learning management system, an open source product called "Moodle," compressed video systems and Polycom video conferencing are used extensively. Having the infrastructure, personnel and financial resources to maintain these systems is fundamental to a successful IT operation. Moreover, IT is responsible for maintaining the University website, Help Desk support across the University, training faculty and staff and other service oriented functions.

There are many complaints about IT services. Deans and department heads report recurring problems with internet access, inadequate technology resources for the volume of on-line classes, inadequate computer resources for non-student technology fee funded operations, and outdated equipment. They complain that the unit is not service oriented and has a habit of servicing equipment—especially servers—at inopportune times. Staff also report that purchases for IT equipment have to go through Central IT even if departmental or grant funds are involved. This has proven to be a cumbersome and lengthy process taking up to six months to get quotes which has the potential to jeopardize grant funding.

Staff at the Shreveport Campus, the home to the University's nursing program, also report recurring connection problems to wireless internet, unreliable compressed video, and A/V and telecommunications issues. The sole technician for Shreveport handles all IT in four buildings maintains the software for simulation equipment and performs many "other duties as assigned." The Central Natchitoches IT office is responsible for IT services at all campuses. Leesville and Shreveport each have a full-time technician. The campus at Alexandria is serviced from Natchitoches. There is no question that IT Technicians are stretched to the limit. To better respond to clients, last year IT implemented an on-line work request tracking system. This system has the potential to be a useful management tool and help with service related issues.

There has been no lack of good intentions surrounding strategic planning for the IT enterprise. In May 2008, NSU developed a sophisticated and forward thinking five-year Technology Enrichment Plan. The Plan called for significant investment in the IT infrastructure so critical to the growth of on-line learning. Due to budgetary constraints, however, the Plan was never fully funded and many initiatives have stalled. A Technology Advisory Council which grew from the Plan has not met since March 2013. The Division itself initiated its own strategic plan (undated, but reported to be in 2012) which sets plans for improvement. The VP for TRED receives quarterly updates on plan objectives, but without a significant resource infusion—uncertain in these tight fiscal times—no significant progress has been made in enhancing and improving the technology enterprise.

TRED has written policies and procedures that are published and accessible on the University's website. These include Data Systems Policy and Standards (2006) and a Disaster Recovery Plan. The policy on Acceptable Use of Technology Policy is included in the student handbook.

Banner Implementation

In November 2007, NSU began discussions to undertake a major project to implement an integrated enterprise administrative system, known as "Banner." The system, purchased from SCT SunGard (succeeded in 2012 by Ellucian Inc.) comprises five modules that are implemented sequentially and involve major administrative processes: student information systems (SIS), finance, human resources, advancement and purchasing.

In addition to the product itself, NSU also purchased installation, a set number of consulting hours, as well as education and training in the software. According to Internal Audit documents, the initial contract was for 24 months at a projected cost of $2,338,837.60. With license fees of $1,009,440, the total anticipated project cost for all modules was $3,348,277.60, plus annual maintenance fees.

The contract was signed by the then university provost who had responsibility for information technology services. At about the same time, several other campuses in the ULS were also implementing the Banner administrative suite and NSU's anticipated contract costs were consistent with that of the other campuses.

NSU needed this new system. Its old administrative system, used by the University for decades—SunGard SCT Plus—had become obsolete and SunGard was no longer providing maintenance and support. In particular, the Financial Aid system which required annual updates to incorporate new federal financial aid data was in dire need of an overhaul.

The project launched in January 2008 with considerable optimism for its timely completion. An internal memo summarizing the project reported: "Buttressed by discussions with SunGard

staff in 2007 and 2008, the university administration felt confident that this implementation would go as smoothly as past upgrades and software migrations had gone. SunGard consultants assured the university many times that the new product's functionality would do everything SCT Plus did and more."

In December 2008, less than a year after embarking on the initiative, the University decided to suspend the implementation project due to concerns about project communication, costs and impending state budget cuts.

Talks to restart the project began in the summer of 2009 with contracts signed in November 2009. An internal memo details multiple communications with SunGard about NSU staffing limitations, SunGard's assurances of their ability to manage the project and NSU's disappointment in those dashed assurances. SunGard project managers and other technical and functional personnel came and went, and from 2010 to 2012 the project experienced many difficulties and derailed.

NSU's President intervened in early 2012, attempting to rehabilitate the project. Due to corporate reorganizations and restructurings, an NSU internal memo highlights various challenges with SunGard regarding implementation of the project.

In late 2013, as a result of an audit of the project by the University's Internal Auditor, ULS interceded in the project. An extensive review of the project was completed.

An Internal Audit review of all contracts and invoices paid for licenses, maintenance and contractual fees reveals that the SIS system implementation cost the university approximately $10 million, far exceeding the estimated project cost.

Various university documents point to a number of factors contributing to the project's derailment:

- A University memo, dated February 7, 2014, puts responsibility for cost overruns on the contactor due to inadequate staffing, inexperienced personnel and corporate restructurings.
- The Contract called for appointment of an NSU Project Director who would provide oversight for the institution. This person would be the principal point of contact for Contractor concerning contract performance, and work progress. The University did not assign anyone from the University to monitor the implementation.
- No one "owned" the project. According to an Internal Audit report, senior staff assumed someone else was monitoring the work progress and financial expenditures. Changes in leadership in Academic Affairs and in TRED brought in new players who had no history with the project.

- Modifications and customizations added to the cost. An accounts receivable customization involved a repackaging of a product built for a different university. Customization increases the contract costs for system upgrades and can impact the timing of upgrades.
- The University paid seven full-time Ellucian employees to run the project because they did not have the internal capacity.
- Invoices were processed through TRED and Business Affairs as a matter of routine without challenge or question.
- There was no oversight committee or group taking responsibility for the overall project implementation.

With ULS involvement, the project is now on track and implementation is progressing on the Human Resources and Finance modules. A project manager who represents the university and reports to the President has been hired to oversee the completion of SIS and planning for the next phases: Finance and HR. The Cabinet is serving as an Oversight Committee now receiving regular updates and project status reports. The University's CIO has been tasked with overall responsibility for Banner implementation.

XI. University Advancement and Alumni Affairs

The Office of Alumni and University Advancement is a small but committed group. There are eight employees. The head of the office is the Assistant Vice President of External Affairs for Advancement. He also serves as the head of recruiting, executive director of alumni affairs and executive director of the Foundation.

Rather than the traditional siloed approach to fundraising with separate divisions for planned giving, annual giving, major gifts, stewardship and advancement services, at NSU fundraisers multi-task. They employ "blended" fundraising techniques where a development officer presents a combination of options to donors. University Advancement focuses on raising money for scholarships, endowed professorships, and endowed chairs from any combination of options. Development officers also pursue support for athletics and report that the coordination of efforts has been successful. This demonstrates flexibility and a willingness to work based on the donor's desires, not the University's.

The other major effort of the division is alumni affairs. The division hosts alumni events, organized programs, conducts an annual fund drive and coordinates homecoming activities.

NSU has undertaken two major capital campaigns. Both exceeded their goals. The first was for 4-5 years ending in 2008-09 with a goal of $18.84 million; $32 million was raised. The second campaign, which ended in 2012, exceeded the campaign goal by $12 million and raised $32

million. These campaigns provided much needed funds for scholarships and professorships. Advancement staff mentioned that there is talk of another capital campaign and expressed concern about "donor fatigue."

Fundraising focuses on major gifts with an emphasis on endowed professorships. There are 58 endowed professorships in large part because a gift of $60,000 is matched by $40,000 from the Board of Regents Support Fund. The NSU Foundation, established in 1960, boasts a $14 million endowment.

Within the Foundation, there are two giving programs: the Excellence Team, for contributions less than $1,000, and the Founder's Circle which supports unrestricted contributions greater than $1,000. These programs are under an umbrella fund: The Columns Fund. The giving goal is to raise $200,000 annually in unrestricted dollars. Annual Fund contributions go to the Alumni Association which has a variety of giving levels from $25 to $2,500 and membership benefits, including membership in the alumni association for gifts of $25 or more.

NSU has a committed and dedicated group of alumni. While dedicated, they are not donors. The Alumni Affairs Office reports a database of approximately 45,000 alumni, but an alumni participation rate of 6-7%—the national average is closer to 30%.   Alumni interviewed during the community forum were positive about the Alumni Affairs Office and their experience with fundraising personnel.

One Reviewer completed an on-line gift and offers the following observations concerning the on-line giving experience:

- On-line giving is not the seamless, convenient and easy experience one hopes for.
- There is no Giving Link on the University's homepage.
- There is no instruction from the homepage on where to make an on-line gift.
- Reviewer first clicked on the "Alumni & Friends" link.   This takes a donor to an interior page that has no giving button. Clicking on "Alumni Association" has no giving information.
- Clicking on the Foundation link takes donor to a giving page. It takes six "clicks" to get to the actual donation page.
- The "Make a Gift" button on the Foundation page requires donor to pick from listed funds and assumes donor has prior knowledge of giving funds. Reviewer picked Excellence Team. This took Reviewer to a static form. It took two more clicks to get to an actual giving form.

- There is brand confusion on the giving pages. Donor clicks on the Foundation page, but the page header and other identification is branded for the Alumni Association.
- Once a donor makes a credit card gift, a pedestrian message is display: "Congratulations, [Name], your transaction has been processed successfully. We thank you very much for your continued support."
- The giving page has a nicely done thank you video appreciating donors for their support.
- From the Foundation page, Donors have two options to donate on-line that yield different experiences. By clicking the "Make a Gift" Link at the top of the page, Donor must follow a circuitous route to make a gift as noted above. By clicking a "Give Now" link under the Welcome column, donor is taken directly to a Giving Opportunities page. By clicking on "Click Here to Give Online Today," Donor is directed to the donation form in one click. The "Make a Gift" link should follow the same direct path as the "Click Here to Give Online Today" for easier giving.
- The Foundation should have its own distinct giving webpage, not commingled with the Alumni Association.

XII. Human Resources and EEO

According to fall 2013 IPEDs data, NSU employs 844 full- and part-time staff, including graduate assistants. Of this total, 713 are full-time; 131 part-time. The Budget Office reports that since 2009, 189 faculty and staff positions (93 faculty, 21 unclassified and 75 classified staff) and 24 contractual positions have been eliminated. An additional 46 positions—4 faculty, 19 unclassified and 23 classified staff—have been shifted from the general fund operating budget to auxiliary or restricted accounts. They report an overall loss of 213 positions.

Overall, faculty and staff alike report enormous pride in working at NSU. Many staff are alumni of the institution and feel grateful to be giving back to their alma mater. They see themselves as student focused and dedicated to giving students the best academic opportunities and support possible. One employee remarked proudly that students approach her in Walmart to share their thanks.

The 2005 NCHEMS team's observation that "throughout the institution, there are many highly qualified people doing the right things and doing them well" remains true today although there is no question that faculty and staff are overwhelmed and frustrated.

In interviews with University's officials, it is interesting to note that there have been few formal grievances or litigation filed by staff against the university. Staff members note that faculty has

a formal body to support issues of concern to them, i.e. faculty senate, but that staff has no such forum.

NSU has a diverse workforce. Of 683 employees reported in the 2013-14 Affirmative Action Plan, 60% are female and 15% minority. Moreover, due to the diversity of the surrounding community, the overall availability for females and minorities in all job groups is high.

Overall, NSU's record for diversity in hiring, recruitment and promotion is positive. A review of the University's Affirmative Action Plan for 2013-14 for recruitment and hiring, the latest available, reports two job categories where underutilization exists. The data presented in the AAP for 10/1/12 to 10/1/13 shows that of the 18 positions available in one of the categories, only two were filled with females and three with minorities. In all but two cases, the applicant pool had only 2-3 applicants. According to the Plan, the applicant pools are limited because the University only advertises positions when necessary because of limited funds. This policy runs counter to the University's goal of improving diversity in underutilized job groups.

XIII. Facilities and Capital Planning

At NSU, facilities and capital budgeting is part of the Division of University Affairs. This is a departure from the organizational structure at other universities where facilities is more typically combined with the business operations of the institution.

The Facilities unit is responsible for the physical plant, groundskeeping, and overall maintenance of the NSU campus as well as the satellite locations. Custodial services, however, is outsourced and the contract managed by Business Affairs.

While the campus is attractive and nicely maintained, there were many complaints about the condition and maintenance of the University's buildings at all meetings with faculty and staff. Throughout focus group meetings, faculty and staff complained bitterly about all aspects of the physical condition of both the Natchitoches and Shreveport campuses. In particular, Kyser Hall, the Library, the Public Safety Office and the Nursing School (including Warrington Hall) in Shreveport were repeatedly mentioned as inadequate, uncomfortable and in poor condition.

A tour of the Shreveport campus revealed a well-worn space with many occupants frustrated with the lack of attention to maintenance and repair issues. They report problems with the HVAC system, lighting, the availability of hot water, lighting in the parking lot, mildew, and poor upkeep. Inspection revealed multiple minor repair issues including broken movable dividing walls in classrooms held together with nylon rope. Occupants report having to paint their own offices and common areas. A part-time handyman cannot manage all that needs attention at the three buildings and aging Warrington Hall.

Lack of resources to appropriately maintain either the satellite locations or buildings on main campus appear to be the primary issue for this Division. Funds for facility maintenance and minor repairs as well as preventative maintenance of key systems (i.e. chillers, roofs) are generated by two Building Use Fee Funds. Declining revenues to support building maintenance and repairs prevent the Division from being able to adequately do all that needs to be done. According to those interviewed, in 2007, the ACT 426 Building Use Fund had a beginning fund balance of $1.3 million. For FY 2013-14, that balance was $0. This means that any funds for recurring and non-recurring maintenance projects must come from current Fund revenues which do not keep pace with the increasing list of facility needs. The second Building Use Fee Fund is also overextended with critical maintenance projects and average revenue of $223,864 are also inadequate to meet what would be considered fairly basic facility demands, i.e., boiler and chiller repairs, roof repairs, electrical and elevator repairs.

In an effort to fund critical maintenance projects, the University scrambles to find other funding sources for maintenance projects. In FY 2014-15, $377,740 of unbudgeted facilities expenditures for elevator, roof and air handler repairs were charged to other fund sources. Road repairs for a crumbling road infrastructure were funded from lease revenues and land sales.

Exacerbating the university's maintenance and repair problems are reductions in staffing in facilities due to budget reductions. The campus has no painter and no plumber. These services are contracted out resulting in a catch-22 since Facilities pays a higher price for these services by employing an outside vendor than it would if a full-time position could be approved for funding. Low salaries in hard to fill trades positions have added to an inability to use existing staff to do repairs with internal resources.

The campus has a projected deferred maintenance backlog for FY 2015-16 at almost $1 million. This estimate balloons to $5,213,738 in FY 2016.

Capital dollars for major renovations or new construction are funded through the state's Five Year Capital Outlay Plan. NSU has met with some success in getting new buildings funded in the past few years including a new administration, student services and recreation building. This year, several key construction projects have moved along the pipeline for bond funding, including replacement Kyser Hall. Of 12 requests for funding made this fiscal year, nine have received a positive response and have moved to the next stage. This is not, however, a sure commitment for funding.

XIV. Conclusion

Prolonged budget cuts have taken a toll on NSU's operations in all areas.

Academic programs, as well as faculty and staff positions, have been eliminated. Many strong long-standing programs are starting to suffer in enrollment and in quality. On-line course delivery, once heralded as one of NSU's greatest strengths and the answer to enrollment loss, is suffering. Both students and faculty report that these offerings are inferior to face-to-face classes due in large part to inadequate resources for equipment maintenance, faculty training and reliable internet connectivity.

Faculty and staff morale is low. They are working at their limits; they are tired and overwhelmed. There is an unhealthy distrust of the University administration and no opportunity for dialogue between the leadership of the University and faculty and staff on critical issues, such as resource allocation. This lack of communication has resulted in a thriving rumor mill.

While there are many areas of best practice around student success, enrollment management units are not well coordinated. The separation of Admissions and Recruiting, which are in two separate divisions, is not advantageous to strategic enrollment growth. With fewer staff, Academic and Student Services is serving a larger number of students.

Students have great affection for the University but are dissatisfied with student housing, food service, and the condition of classroom buildings. Administrative units are functioning under considerable fiscal constraints and seem unable to meet the needs and high expectations of faculty, other staff and students. Attractive and nicely maintained grounds belie deeper maintenance and repair issues. Facilities and infrastructure—roads, roofs, HVAC systems—are in need of appropriate maintenance and repair. The University has no painter or plumber on staff and resorts to paying higher prices for these services by using outside contractors. A multi-million dollar administrative systems implementation was poorly managed resulting in wasted resources.

The City of Natchitoches is supportive of the University and encourages its growth, yet many on campus do not believe this to be true. The University is the economic engine for the City and the need for recognition of interdependence is apparent.

Despite its many challenges, NSU has enormous potential and many recognized strengths, including good quality academic programs and strong community and alumni support. Its greatest strength, by far, is the pride and commitment of its dedicated faculty and staff. The project team was deeply impressed with the enthusiasm and devotion by a beleaguered workforce.

The new president will have many difficult choices to make about the University's future. Can NSU continue in its current state? With so many competing interests for diminishing resources, is it possible to "do it all," much less to "do it all" at the highest levels? The positive news is that the new president has a dedicated community eager to support him.

XV. Recommendations

Organization, Strategic Planning and Leadership

1. Re-evaluate the organizational structure of the University to determine whether a more consolidated and streamlined structure would reduce costs and enhance efficiency.
2. The new president needs to set a new tone and direction for the senior leadership team. This includes more transparent decision making on important policy and budget issues, and regular meetings with team input into the topics to be raised.
3. The new president needs to consider a more inclusive process for resource allocation decisions, particularly when budget reductions are needed. Some universities have Budget Review Committees with representation from key campus constituencies that evaluate options to reduce budgets as well as opportunities for revenue enhancement. These committees work with the Budget Office and provide recommendations to the President.
4. NSU needs a strategic roadmap—a realistic strategic plan—that guides policy and sets priorities for resource allocation. The Plan should be outcome driven and have a process for regular review, reporting and accountability. A strategic planning committee could guide its implementation and ensure that resource allocation is tied in with the University's strategic direction and that the community has buy-in. Once completed, all other planning documents need to be re-evaluated and either re-affirmed or retired and removed from public display.
5. NSU needs to work to build stronger ties with the business community in each city where a campus of the University is located.

Academic and Curricular Issues

6. Evaluate the quality of on-line courses and ensure that the technological capacity (i.e., compressed video) is sufficient to offer consistent and reliable programming.
7. Although academic programs seem to be at an optimal number and all are relatively strong in terms of accreditation and other factors, resources should be focused on perhaps a smaller number of stellar programs (e.g., Nursing) and use them to brand the University.

8. Focus on areas identified in the Workforce and Innovation for a Stronger Economy (WISE) Bill which creates an additional $40 million for investment in high job growth areas. Three degrees play a role in reducing the gap of over 2,700 graduates needed annually—Computer Information Systems, Accounting, and Business Administration.

9. Increase enrollment with 2 + 2 agreements with community colleges and Barksdale Air Force Base. Articulation agreements attract new students, especially those with business transfer credit opportunities with the Louisiana Technical Colleges.

10. Increase dual enrollment in communities representing all of NSU campuses (especially Leesville).

11. Seek out an opportunity to manage or co-manage the Military Education Center on Ft. Polk. NSU could offer to run the facility sharing costs of the library operations and director operations. This could result in providing enough funding for a new full-time director position for NSU that manages both facilities and grows the NSU enrollment.

Student Success

12. Create a division of strategic enrollment management with admissions and recruiting under one reporting line. Have "dotted line" reporting to marketing, financial aid, scholarships, and the transfer office to implement a seamless process for students.

13. Focus on increasing international students as a potential enrollment growth strategy with the ancillary benefits of increasing student diversity.

14. Combine student success areas (i.e., academic advising, career advising, retention, tutoring, mentoring, first-year programs) under one unit and analyze staffing in these crucial areas.

15. Create a three-hour FYE course to assist students in their academic, social, and cultural development.

16. Conduct a needs analysis of mental health counseling for students.

Communication

17. Communicate broadly on issues of critical importance to the university community using multiple channels. Faculty and staff need to be able to provide input on key issues. Create a communication plan for key campus constituencies. Have regular town hall meetings, open forum or on-line chats.

Budget and Finance

18. Communicate the decision-making around budget reductions and proposed strategies to curtail expenses in a collaborative, open manner with input from the campus community.

19. Look for ways to enhance revenues, not just cut or shift expenses. The funding reductions that NSU is experiencing represent a fundamental change in funding for public higher education.
20. Conduct a thorough analysis of the cost of athletics programming, its potential to generate revenue and the costs of Division I status.

Technology

21. With the University's emphasis on technology and on-line learning, the University must keep up with the latest systems and deliver the best support to faculty and staff on all campuses.
22. Explore options to integrate or enhance functioning between IT and the Student Technology Fee funded programs, improve IT's service philosophy and better coordinate maintenance activities with academic scheduling.
23. Continue oversight of the Banner Project to ensure on-time completion and implementation of the System.
24. In addition to an oversight committee that takes responsibility for the overall Banner project implementation, NSU needs a governance committee to review and approve changes in key aspects of the HR and Finance system. There is also typically a Taxonomy Committee comprised of system users to review and approve changes to the chart of accounts, organization and fund codes, among other things. Banner is an integrated system involving a common database. It will be important that all end users understand and buy in to changes that impact their units.

Advancement and Marketing

25. University Advancement needs a strategic fundraising plan with giving goals and targets for all fundraising categories. The on-line giving pages need to be revised to make on-line giving a seamless, easy and convenient process. The giving pages for the Foundation and the Alumni Association need to be appropriately branded.
26. University Advancement should be focused on fundraising and alumni affairs, not recruiting.
27. Given the need for alternative revenues, University Advancement needs to be prepared to launch another comprehensive capital campaign in the near future, ideally focused on the University's programmatic needs.
28. Create a brand and marketing strategy that captures the essence of the University and delivers direct marketing and advertising that is specific to Alexandria, Leesville-Fort Polk, and Marksville sites.
29. Upgrade the website to make it easily maneuverable so that it becomes a front door portal for the University brand.

Staffing

30. Advertise all open positions in job groups where there is recognized underutilization. Advertising costs be minimized by using free or low cost on-line sources.
31. Create a staff forum to enable discussion of issues that are important to staff members.
32. Assess the reality of staff concerns of unfairness and disparity in salary increases. Conduct a comprehensive salary assessment using CUPA standards and set a benchmark for salary competitiveness.

Appendix A. Biographical Information for Project Team

Aaron Thompson is the Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer for the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. He is also a Professor of Sociology in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Eastern Kentucky University. Thompson has a Ph.D. in Sociology in areas of Organizational Behavior and Race and Gender relations. Dr. Thompson has over 25 years of leadership experience in higher education and business. In addition, he has spent numerous years serving on non-profit boards in leadership roles. Thompson has researched, taught and/or consulted in areas of diversity, leadership, ethics, multicultural families, race and ethnic relations, student success, first-year students, retention, cultural competence and organizational design throughout his personal career. He has over 30 publications and numerous research and peer reviewed presentations. Thompson has travelled over the U.S. and has given more than 700 workshops, seminars and invited lectures in areas of race and gender diversity, living an unbiased life, overcoming obstacles to gain success, creating a school environment for academic success, cultural competence, workplace interaction, leadership, organizational goal setting, building relationships, the first-year seminar, and a variety of other topics. He has been or is a consultant to educational institutions (elementary, secondary and postsecondary), corporations, non-profit organizations, police departments, and other governmental agencies. His latest authored or co-authored books are*: Changing Student Culture from the Ground Up, The Sociological Outlook, Infusing Diversity and Cultural Competence into Teacher Education*, *Peer to* Peer *Leadership: Changing Student Culture from the Ground Up*. He also co-authored *Thriving in College and Beyond: Research-Based Strategies for Academic Success, Thriving in the Community College and Beyond: Research-Based Strategies for Academic Success and Personal Development*, D*iversity and the College Experience, Focus on Success* and *Black Men and Divorce.*

Meredith E. Gibbs, Principal at The Gibbs Group, has two decades of senior level leadership experience in higher education. Gibbs has extensive knowledge of the inner workings of colleges and universities. She has provided strategic leadership in all administrative areas including budget and finance, auxiliary services, information technology, facilities, human resources, development and public safety. Her focus on strategic planning and performance management has helped build accountability and achieve results. As the Chief Operating Officer at CUNY School of Law, she led operations in all administrative areas and a school-wide strategic planning process. Before joining CUNY, Gibbs was Vice President for Administration for the University of North Carolina Medical Foundation. There she led the Foundation's operations arm that boasted a $200 million endowment. As Provost for Operations at Miami Dade College, she managed administrative operations across 8 campuses and a $333 million operating budget. She led operations for 32,000 students and 6,000 employees as Executive Vice President/Chief of Staff at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. For three years, she served as the Interim Vice President for Development and President of the Wayne State University Foundation. $59 million was raised during her tenure. Before entering higher education, she was Assistant Secretary/Chief of Staff for the Maryland DLLR. She also served as the primary legal counsel for the Maryland Wetlands Protection Program. A graduate of Rice University, she studied law at Columbia University in New York. After clerking for Judge Francis Murnaghan on the U.S. Court of Appeals she practiced real estate law in Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

Appendix B. Web Links to NSU Peers

Austin Peay State University

http://www.apsu.edu/sites/apsu.edu/files/Web_posting_APSU_Organizational_Chart_July_Budget_2014-2015_May_2014.pdf

Murray State University

http://www.murraystate.edu/Libraries/Institutional_Research/orgcharts.sflb.ashx

Jacksonville State University

http://www.jsu.edu/president/pdf/Organizational_Chart.pdf

University of Central Arkansas

http://uca.edu/president/files/2013/10/orgchart.pdf?12345

Western Carolina University

http://www.wcu.edu/about-wcu/leadership/office-of-the-chancellor/chancellors-division/chancellors-executive-council.asp