

10/30/2020

Mitch Irwin [REDACTED]

To: info

Hello,

My submission (below) to [strategicplan@ibhe.org](mailto:strategicplan@ibhe.org) was kicked back, so I am re-sending here.

Could you please acknowledge if you are able to get this message to the relevant person? Thank you  
Mitch Irwin

Mitchell Irwin, PhD  
Associate Professor  
Dept. of Anthropology  
Northern Illinois University



Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Mitchell Irwin [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Feedback for Strategic Planning  
**Date:** October 30, 2020 at 3:49:25 PM CDT  
**To:** [strategicplan@ibhe.org](mailto:strategicplan@ibhe.org)

Hello,

In response to your call for feedback (<https://www.ibhe.org/IBHE-Strategic-Planning-meetings.html>), I wanted to offer my perspectives as a faculty member at NIU.

There is much to be proud of in the Sept 15 presentation, but I think two things seems to be overlooked.

First, the importance of the **primary research** undertaken at Illinois higher ed institutions isn't mentioned. Not all institutions have a well-developed research missions, but collectively it is a big part of the contributions of the institutions to society. There is a tendency to see research and teaching/training as separate silos, which I think is not fair at all. First, students learn best in specialized fields when taught by innovators in those fields, and when they themselves take part in research and development of new ideas. Second, separately from the teaching crossover, research drives innovation and

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economic development for the state and has positive impacts on the state and the world more broadly - and thus deserves to be a big part of the IBHE's strategic plan.

Second, the importance of **tenured and tenure-track faculty** should be recognized. There is a real danger in emphasizing just the delivery of the right course content at the right time to the right audience - this can lead to cost-cutting through stocking universities with instructors on temporary contracts. This degrades the research mission as well as the teaching mission in the long run. For this reason I think the strategic vision really must emphasize tenured and tenure-track faculty as a way to ensure our institutions are staffed by the very best people.

Thank you  
Mitch Irwin

Mitchell Irwin, PhD  
Associate Professor  
Dept. of Anthropology  
Northern Illinois University

11/3/2020

Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro [REDACTED]

To: Ginger Ostro

To Whom It May Concern,

The Latino Policy Forum greatly appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback to the Illinois Board of Higher Education's strategic planning processes. The work is greatly important and will impact the future of Illinois. We are strong supporters of your vision for equity and alternative ways of delivering quality education. The Forum would like to continue to engage with IBHE and serve as thought partners.

We are crafting this feedback based on the fact that we do not consider ourselves to be higher education experts. Rather, we envision ourselves as part of the general public looking at the documents as a possible consumer or supporter.

- As someone for the general public not as familiar with this process, we think its important to state upfront: who you are, what you are about, how you plan to reach your vision. The more concise you can be, the more likely you are to draw in diverse stakeholders. It would also be good to state upfront who your audience is for this document (e.g. academics, potential students, decisionmakers, etc.)
- In this vein, might you consider moving Slide 22 first? It would be important to graphically show the relationship between the vision and the key principles that follow. If this could be captured in a graphic together it would be beneficial. Currently, the principles are on separate slides and its important to show how they are integrated with the vision.
- Might you also consider moving the vision, which appears on slide 18, in the beginning of the document? It is really important that the public understand what IBHE is shooting for—more than your rationale and process.
- The strategies need to immediately follow the vision and the key principles.
- All other slides can be grouped as either: rationale for the vision or the inclusive process that you are employing.
- Would it be beneficial to have a slide that indicates how different stakeholders can get involved with your effort(s)?
- We want to commend your extensive process. It is very thorough!
- Perhaps this is in there and we missed it, but the survey results strongly show that the main worry for folks is the rising cost of higher education. It's not clear to us how your vision and core principles will address this concern. Consider how Chicago's Start Student program for community college students incentivized young people of color to attend post-secondary in the city. Key features of the program included low-cost for those who had a 3.0 GPA in high school. It should also be noticed that this served as a key pathway for undocumented

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students. Mayor Emmanuel achieved equity by directly addressing cost. This might be one of his biggest accomplishments. Could your plan go bold: **What does Illinois Higher Education need in order to make the first two years of college practically free for its students?**

We want to thank you again for soliciting feedback to your process. Like the nation at large, Illinois is in an important window of opportunity to make a strong case for supporting Institutions of Higher Education. Now is the time for citizens of Illinois to come together to build a strong system that you all envision.

Sincerely,  
Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro



Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro, PhD | DIRECTOR OF Education Policy & Research  
[LATINO POLICY FORUM](#) : [REDACTED]

11/3/2020

Carr, Amy [REDACTED]

To: Ginger Ostro

Dear IBHE Staff -

After Ginger shared four questions with the Faculty Advisory Council, some of us took those questions back to our faculty members. At WIU, they were distributed by the Faculty Senate president to all faculty members, and those interested sent their responses to me. I've collected them in the attached document.

While not many faculty members responded, those who did provided thoughtful comments. Somewhat more comments came from the College of Arts & Sciences than anywhere else, but there are responses from colleges across the university.

Amy

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Dr. Amy Carr  
Professor of Religious Studies, Department of Liberal Arts & Sciences  
Coordinator, Master of Liberal Arts & Sciences (MLAS) Program  
Western Illinois University

## WIU Responses to Four Questions

1. Why is having a Strategic Plan for higher education in Illinois important to you? What do you hope it accomplishes?

Not having a plan is a recipe for dysfunction. I hope it sets an agenda and goals that the institutions of higher education in Illinois can work towards, and that it gives the legislature incentive to invest in infrastructure and students.

The strategic plan needs to make policies that will convince more Illinois students to stay in college in Illinois.

Greater stability in funding for higher education over a ten-year period would be greatly appreciated, rather than waiting to see what we might get, or not get, each and every single budget year.

Unlike many other important things, I hope a strategic plan has political implications. I hope that it may influence funding to higher education that is NOT simply focused on educating for specific careers, but rather on educating our citizens more broadly. I hope that a plan would emphasize and clearly communicate the value of a liberal arts education and the importance of learning for its own sake. I hope funding would be increased for areas such as history, philosophy, religious studies, literature, composition, and other areas that have been decimated by budget cuts, eliminations of majors, and faculty reductions.

On 1a: If it involves getting more funding for higher education—then it is of interest to me. If it does not involve getting more funding for higher education but instead involves consolidation and cutting, then I have no interest in it. (Free tuition for the first two years of college would be a great way to increase funding.) My interest in the plan is pretty low anyway as it will like be nothing but a bunch of meaningless blather about “transformative educational experiences” ala the Lumina Foundation. If the Lumina Foundation is in anyway involved with this plan, then my interest in the plan is nil.

On 1b: If it involves getting more funding for higher education—then it is of interest to me. If it does not involve getting more funding for higher education but instead involves consolidation and cutting, then I have no interest in it. (Free tuition for the first two years of college would be a great way to increase funding.) My interest in the plan is pretty low anyway as it will like be nothing but a bunch of meaningless blather about “transformative educational experiences” ala the Lumina Foundation. If the Lumina Foundation is in anyway involved with this plan, then my interest in the plan is nil.

I hope any strategic plan for the state maintains the model of regional comprehensive universities. An institution like WIU offers, of course in my partisan view, a superior undergrad education to institutions whose first priority for faculty is research and scholarship. Students get more classroom exposure to and interaction with PhD credentialed instructors at WIU than they can expect at institutions in Champaign, Chicago, Normal, Dekalb, and Carbondale.

STRATEGIC PLAN CONNECTS VISION OF THE FUTURE TO IMPLEMENTATION (TIME, RESOURCES, RESPONSIBILITY). IT STEMS FROM A CLEAR STRATEGY WHICH IS THE PATTERN OF DECISIONS IN MAKING CHOICES ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INTO THE FUTURE. . . . THERE ARE MULTIPLE OPTIONS OF THE FUTURE (DEPEND ON EXTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS, INCLUDING PANDEMIC, POLITICS, TECHNOLOGY) THAT ARE BEYOND CONTROL OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESOURCES ON HAND. HENCE, THE CHOICE OF THE FUTURE IS THE DECISION THAT STATE AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS HAVE TO MAKE. . . . ACCORDING TO HARVARD RESEARCH, Only 5% of the workforce understand strategy; Only 15% executives spend > 1 hr/month discussing strategy; Only 25% managers have incentives linked to overall strategy; Only 40% link budgets to strategy. NO STRATEGY - NO DIRECTION TO THE FUTURE.

My fear is that any IBHE Strategic Plan would continue to do the work of marginalizing and decimating the humanities and fine arts in our state. Thus, I propose that the strategic plan be the place to affirm the value of a liberal arts education available to every student who is willing and ready to engage in it. I oppose narrow STEM or "applied" initiatives. While there is a place for vocational training at the post-secondary school level, it is no replacement for free inquiry and the liberal arts.

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Having a strategic plan with regards to education in Illinois is important to ensure equity and quality. Certain business-world ideologies are corrupting and diminishing our educational system. In Higher Ed, for example, a Strategic Plan should prevent the consolidation of majors so that certain institutions have regional monopolies. In many cases such consolidation schemes target the humanities. The result will be that public universities in certain regions will not be able to offer their students the full suite of disciplines required for general education, much less a broad choice of majors. Likely the targeted universities will be those, considered less prestigious, that serve first-generation students. It is unlikely that our flagship institution, for example, will suddenly be without philosophy or foreign language departments. . . . The two-tiered system that this will produce replicates the egregious injustices of segregation. Students who are from less prosperous backgrounds—and many times they are so because they are from groups historically discriminated against—will be offered lesser choices and opportunities. A strategic plan must resist channeling less privileged students into training in what are often erroneously considered more practical career choices at local institutions to which they are more likely to have greater access. This model hurts everyone, because the dearth of diverse practitioners in the humanities and arts is an obstacle to diverse views being represented in mainstream cultural production, and this also perpetuates inequities.

The strategic plan should provide institutions with a vision for how to provide accessible, innovative, and affordable postsecondary education opportunities for Illinois residents. There should also be a connection between the plan and the goals of the state to improve the quality of life for all residents.

## 2. What questions do you think the Strategic Plan needs to answer?

The most important issue I see is capacity. There is far more capacity for students at community colleges and universities than there are college-bound students graduating from Illinois high schools. The shift to more dual-credit courses, and the declining birthrate, are both going to exacerbate the gap between enrollments and capacity. I don't see any easy answer. Consolidation and/or closures will be highly disruptive to communities. Shifting 4 year programs to extended skills-based job training currently housed in community colleges to universities will face many hurdles. Perhaps the easiest approach is to try to cut costs and poach students from surrounding states, but Illinois Universities often pay better than their peer institutions in neighboring states so that would require heavy investment from the legislature to maintain faculty salaries. Attracting international students and making their tuition more affordable may be a decent option, if political conditions permit it.

The second most important issue I see is student preparedness. How do we make dual-credit courses truly equivalent to college courses?

The third most important issue is affordability.

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Given the pivot to STEM and professional programs, how will IBHE recognize the importance of the humanities in a college education and in our state and our democracy? How will the strategic plan protect and defend the humanities in an era of declining numbers of majors in History, Foreign Languages, English, Philosophy, etc.

I think that it needs to answer some of the questions about metrics that have been used to shut down departments in the past, and recognize that the one-size metric being used does not fit all departments. Nationwide trends need to be incorporated that makes a metric or goal for each department to achieve that is discipline-specific. Unfortunately, our faculty union has pushed for one-size fits all metrics, and those have destroyed some good departments.

Significant increases in funding. If it is about anything else, I am not interested in whether it succeeds or fails.

To my knowledge my institution (WIU) never consults the current statewide strategic plan when making its future plans—and why should they?

If there is a relationship between the research and regional teaching universities; and if there is a relationship between the community colleges and 4-year institutions. The latter relationship's benefit to places like WIU should be defined and documented by the IBHE. Currently, and anecdotally, many students transferring to WIU humanities and social sciences departments from community colleges do not seem prepared. Articulation agreements should entail what community courses should require of students to gain transfer credit for WIU general education courses. Currently, no platform for conversation between our department and supplying community college departments or schools exists.

#### CHOICE OF THE FUTURE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES TIED TO THE CHOSEN FUTURE RESOURCES LINKED TO OBJECTIVES BY ACTION PLANS TIME + RESPONSIBILITIES

In five years, Illinois should have made its higher education affordable to all students who wish to attend its public universities. Those universities will be universities, including the regional ones, that offer the widest possible range of learning possibilities. They will be able to offer such a range of possibilities because state funding levels will have returned twentieth-century levels.

- What is the role of the state's public regional institutions in increasing access and providing affordable education opportunities throughout the state?
- How can Illinois create innovative pathways to degree or certification completion for a diverse student population? For example, how can institutions increase flexible pathways through distance learning, prior learning assessments, and open courses?

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- How can Illinois institutions increase degree completion among Black college students? Specifically, the University of Illinois, Urbana - Champaign's, the state's flagship institution, enrollment of Black students is not representative of the population of Black high school graduates within the state.
- How can institutions leverage community and private partnerships to increase economic development and growth within the state?

### 3. What does success in the higher education system look like 5 years from now (2025)? 10 years from now (2030)?

A higher percentage of Illinois students pursuing higher education (either 2-year technical training or baccalaureate degrees), a higher percentage of students graduating, and a lower debt load for graduating students.

Stronger enrollments of Illinois students in Illinois institutions. Better funding for more access for more students. More commitment to protecting the humanities as so many resources go to STEM and professional programs.

I think it looks like faculty and students coming together on campus still for the best learning systems, not from online vendors, etc. Students still want hands-on participation and discussion and learning and training. And I don't see that changing any time soon.

If we continue to focus on workforce preparations and credentialing, then success will look like a multitude of credentials of all kinds to certify that person A is able to meet workforce needs V, Q, R. 10 years from now (2030)? Even more credentials. . . . I'd like to say that success will be an increase in beautiful things, wisdom, knowledge of all kinds, and the creation of a place wherein all the questions we don't, or can't, ask elsewhere get asked, thought about, perhaps even answered. I'd like to say that, but, really, it will probably be a profusion of micro credentials and macro credentials.  
 - Maintenance of regional campuses and of face-to-face courses and degrees, but increased student access to online libraries; possibility that the U of I in Champaign and/or Chicago be strictly for graduate and research programs

**SUCCESS DEPENDS ON THE RIGHT CHOICE; AND STRATEGY IS A CHOICE PROBLEM.**

**SUCCESS CAN BE EVALUATED ON WHETHER AND TO WHAT EXTENT THE GOALS HAVE BEEN MET. . . . 10-YEARS HORIZON OUTLOOK SHOULD BE SCENARIO-BASED IN RESPONSE TO MEGATRENDS EFFECTS (TECHNOLOGY, DEMOGRAPHICS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBALIZATION VS. ECONOMIC NATIONALISM) THAT RESHAPE THE WORLD OF EDUCATION.**

To help close equity gaps, we need programs like Temple University's Summer Bridge program offering underprivileged students, who do not quite meet our admissions

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requirements, the chance to catch up and enter the university. The Summer Bridge program, at least as it existed when I taught in it, consisted of three summer courses: composition, math, and study skills. A student who passed all three was admitted to Temple.

Our Strategic Plan should not be linked to the immediate needs of current employers and short-term occupational outlooks. Rather, it should incorporate ways to optimize our students' wellbeing and academic potential. They should be educated to be agile, critical thinkers whose education prepares them to face the uncertainties, unexpected changes, and unpredictable challenges of the future. Since multiple studies testify to the effectiveness of the humanities and arts in achieving just this, our Strategic Plan should follow the science and put its faith in the humanities and arts. If we doubled our funding for innovative, interdisciplinary humanities, arts, and STEAM initiatives, we could distinguish ourselves from other states and attract rather than shed students as we are currently doing.

5 years from now, institutions will have reviewed their pathways to degree completion and have identified ways to provide flexible paths

There is an increase in need-based (vs merit-based financial aid) options for students.

a 50% increase in Black and Latino/a/x tenure-track faculty

10 years from now there is a 75% increase in Black students enrolled at UI-UC

#### 4. What would it take to close equity gaps in higher education attainment?

Professional academic advisors at all institutions. Greater expectation of faculty-mentoring students. Funding (scholarships) targeted to support under-represented demographics. More focused recruiting, especially of Latino populations. Greater emphasis on Latino success in the K-12 system. Social programs that promote more stable families with 2 parents in the home.

Fix the gaps in funding (MAPP, etc), and reduce tuition. Increase support for students to study without the stress of financial strains. Support the humanities as an investment in democratic citizenship! Public higher education should have modest tuition and should be broadly supported by the state!

That is a non-issue. Those who want to go to higher education can do so in Illinois, and those who aren't really qualified shouldn't go on anyway.

A tremendous amount of money over a long period of time in Pre-K to Ph.D. education. I'm not sure to which "equity gap" the question refers, but more institutional collaboration, and incentives for it, between faculty at research and teaching institutions is perhaps a start (unless the ibhe indeed wants to make the institutions in the five

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locations noted above more exclusively research oriented, and leave excellent teaching more to regional schools).

#### LEADERSHIP

We should stop cutting programs that assist in making the university a diverse environment, such as African-American studies.

As previously mentioned, there needs to be an examination of the overreliance on merit-based vs need-based financial aid.

Increase flexible pathways to degree completion such as distance learning, assessment for prior experience/learning, and open courses

Examination of the under-enrollment of Black students at UI-UC

11/5/2020

Carr, Amy [REDACTED]

To: Ginger Ostro

Please see attached a statement made regarding the strategic plan by Western Illinois University's Council on General Education.

Amy

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Dr. Amy Carr  
Professor of Religious Studies, Department of Liberal Arts & Sciences  
Coordinator, Master of Liberal Arts & Sciences (MLAS) Program  
Western Illinois University

11/5/2020

Please consider the following recommendations from the Western Illinois University (WIU) Council on General Education (CGE) regarding the IBHE Strategic Plan:

We urge that the IBHE Strategic Plan reinforce the importance of General Education curricula in providing the skills needed for successful careers. A university education should both enable students to meet the qualifications needed to land the desired entry-level position upon graduation and prepare them with the communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills that will aid in career advancement and position them for continued success in a job market, 10 or 15 years into the future, that we can't fully imagine today.

General Education is the key to producing agile, interdisciplinary thinkers who can thrive in a diverse and changing world. It is crucial that the IBHE strategic plan protect and enhance General Education in the State of Illinois. Specifically, it should limit dual credit classes because students in these programs do not have the same access to expert teacher-researchers who provide unique insights and opportunities. It should promote access to a broad range of disciplines throughout Illinois rather than eliminating programs and opportunities in the name of short-sighted budget considerations. Regional universities are vital to fulfilling the mission of higher education—especially in providing access, encouraging diversity, and serving first-generation and non-traditional students. Regional universities should be equipped to provide the full complement of majors offered by our flagship institutions.

The cultural, economic, and overall quality of life for Illinois' citizens, residents and guests is improved by the robust and well-rounded education of future generations of African American studies scholars, anthropologists, archaeologists, art historians, English and foreign language scholars, geographers, gender studies scholars, geologists, historians, mathematicians, philosophers, physicists, political scientists, sociologists, and scholars in other fields that seek to more deeply understand the human condition and the world we share. This will equitably promote the strategic advantage of all regions of the State of Illinois in increasingly competitive national and global economies.

In supporting and strengthening General Education, the IBHE Strategic plan should encourage and maximize the growth, talents, and potential of all Illinois citizens.

Sincerely,  
The Fall 2020 Members of the  
WIU Council on General Education

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**From:** Jensen, Sean N. [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 10, 2020 12:18 PM  
**To:** Bernoteit, Stephanie <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** [External] Strategic Plan recommendation

Hello Stephanie,

I took a note to reflect on items to recommend for inclusion in the strategic plan you referenced today. In addition to continue to address access, I am also interested to see if there is a way to better categorize transfer success. Reverse Transfer is a positive step, but it appeared today that implementation at 4-year schools varies and student opt-in was quite low. We see many students start at our institution that need to transfer prior to earning an Associate's degree to ensure they remain on a 4-year graduation path by accessing courses required for their BA/BS degree that may not be offered at the community college level.

The other item I was interested in is how Dual Credit (high school to community college) students will be tracked. Presently our 4-year partners view these students as newly enrolled college-students, which is based on when the students graduate high school. My hope is there is an areas in the strategic plan to identify the role community colleges play in the college completion with this population.

I appreciate you sharing the question,

**Sean Jensen**  
Director of Transfer Services  
Elgin Community College