**Commitments from Northern Illinois University and the Regional P-20 Network for the
Second White House Summit on College Access**

In Summer 2014, more than 20 northern Illinois institutions formed the Regional P-20 Network to improve college and career readiness through regional collaboration. The growing Network now includes Northern Illinois University (leader), eight community colleges, ten school districts, and eight Illinois state education agencies and organizations. The CEOs of partner institutions met twice in 2014 and created a shared agenda and four work groups.

Since June, the Network partners have been working quietly, forming an effective organization without a public announcement. With their initial agenda and four priority areas established, they are ready to announce the Network's commitments developed in response to the Second White House Summit on College Access.

Priority: Coordinate student support systems across institutions in the region to ease transitions and increase student college readiness and success.			
White House Goal	**Commitment**	**Strategy**	**Goal**
✓ **FAFSA**	1. Build a comprehensive menu of financial literacy activities for P-20 students and families, including workshops to aid completion of FAFSAs.	Econ Illinois, Network partner and the state affiliate of the National Council on Economic Education, is compiling a complete menu of face-to-face, print, and online financial literacy activities available in our region. They will customize the list for distribution across the region and will identify gaps requiring new programming. We already know that one such gap is the lack of FAFSA workshops in high schools, where the FAFSA-related research findings are not widely-known; e.g., that admitted students are 50% more likely to enroll in college if they complete the FAFSA.	Every one of the more than 60 high schools in the region will offer at least one FAFSA completion workshop for seniors and their families in 2015. NIU and the community colleges will collaborate in offering workshop materials and assistance.
✓ **Apply to 2+ colleges** ✓ **Increase enrollment in college** ✓ **Reduce remediation**	2. Assess available student support services to determine community gaps; build a comprehensive, coordinated, regional system; and increase targeted programs such as early interventions, better advising, and summer bridge programs.	During November 2014, the Student Support Services network is surveying key services of NIU and all colleges and high schools in the region (over 70 institutions). Present survey findings in February 2015 and initiate the creation of new programs to fill the gaps identified with counselors and advisors in at least 10 high schools, 2 community colleges, and at NIU.	Create regionally-focused programming to improve student readiness for higher education. Anticipated programming includes early interventions, better advising, and summer bridge programs, among others. With time, these new programs could reach more than 20,000 high school and post-secondary students across the region.
✓ **Apply to 2+ colleges** ✓ **Increase enrollment in college**	3. Organize a regional network of peer mentors, who receive training and support to assist students in preparing for and succeeding in college.	Propose connections in February 2015 between NIU's new peer mentoring program with pilot programs at Waubonsee and other colleges; convene a summer conference to support the region's peer mentors, share best practices, and determine what could work better.	Pilot a regional peer-mentoring project that pairs 400 high-need pre-college and freshmen students with 80 trained peer mentors to improve college preparation and application rates.

Priority: Align standards so that 100% of students graduate from high school with 12-15 college credits and/or a professional certificate.			
White House Goal	**Commitment**	**Strategy**	**Goal**
✓ **Reduce remediation** ✓ **Increase college enrollment**	1. Align high school and college curricula (1) to improve remedial courses and (2) to develop core competency courses for college credit at high school or college level.	The work group is researching models for alignment of curricula at all levels with the new Illinois Learning Standards and will use the alignment process to improve remedial courses and develop aligned core competency courses. The new courses will reduce the need for remediation, which is essential since only 28% of students who enroll in remedial courses ever graduate from college. The core competency courses will earn college credit for high school students.	Present the models in February 2015 and request that the Network's CEOs form faculty teams with membership across high school, community college, and university levels to develop new courses in quantitative literacy and communications. The remedial math and ELA courses will be piloted in 5 high schools. The standards-aligned core competency courses in quantitative literacy and core communications will be delivered for dual credit in 5 high schools and for regular credit in at least 2 community colleges and at NIU.
✓ **Apply to 2+ colleges** ✓ **Increase enrollment in college**	2. Analyze economic development and workforce metadata to identify current workplace shortages and emerging career needs for college districts and for the region.	The Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) at NIU, a repository for state and federal data on workforce, higher education, and P-12 data, is analyzing regional economic development and workforce metadata reports prepared from multiple state and national sources in 2014. From these many sources, CGS will identify the top 25 current and emerging workforce needs for each community college district and the region. Students are more likely to enroll in programs where certification and degree programs are directly related to well-documented job vacancies.	Present the workforce needs reports in February 2015 with identification of gaps where at least 5 new professional certification and degree programs are needed. Collaborate across the Network to align professional certification and degree programs with workforce needs.

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White House Goal	White House Goal	White House Goal	White House Goal
✓ **Increase enrollment in college** ✓ **Reduce remediation**	3. Collect and analyze baseline data on the number/percentage of students who graduate from high school with college credits and/or professional certification; number/percentage of students completing bachelor's degrees, associate's degrees, or post-secondary credentials within a reasonable time. Local, state, and national data sources will be used, and both methodology and results will be shared nationally.	An NIU data team is working with institutional research offices and other data managers in the Network's eight community colleges to collect this data, which comes from IPEDS reports, National Student Clearinghouse, as well as local and state data collection. This will help us understand the educational pipeline from high school to college as well as provide baseline data for the 60% x 2025 goal. We anticipate these data and methodology forming the foundation for regional decision-making and new programming across the Network to improve student preparedness for college and increase college enrollment.	Present the baseline data and analysis in February 2015 to the Network's CEOs for discussion; set numeric goals in spring 2015.

Priority: Reduce academic barriers that complicate transitions across education levels.			
White House Goal	**Commitment**	**Strategy**	**Goal**
✓ **Apply to 2+ colleges** ✓ **Increase enrollment in college** ✓ **Reduce remediation**	1. Increase the number of bachelor degree completion programs by 20% and increase reverse transfer programs by 25%.	Faculty teams from NIU and community colleges will use the current and emerging workforce needs analysis being completed by CGS to identify new programs with clear pathways from high school to community college to university and will initiate program development.	(1) Recommend specific programs for development in February 2015 and launch development teams; (2) Reverse transfer programs have already increased by 25% since September 2014; five more reverse transfer agreements will be completed by September 2015.
✓ **Reduce remediation**	2. Engage 20 more university faculty and 30 more community college faculty in implementation of new K-12 standards and large-scale assessments designed to increase readiness for college coursework.	A regional collaboration to address the challenges presented by the new large scale assessment (PARCC in Illinois) will begin meeting in winter 2015 as soon as results from the 2014 pilots are available. NIU and each college have appointed PARCC teams. The use of PARCC data by post-secondary institutions will make alignment of curriculum to the new standards and performance on the PARCC not just relevant but also important to high schools.	In September 2015, the PARCC teams will present recommendations to the Network's CEOs based on national and regional validity testing and the use of PARCC results for placement. At least 50 college and university faculty members will increase their knowledge of the new standards and the PARCC and see the relevance to their own courses, thereby strengthening the system.
✓ **Increase enrollment in college**	3. Advise policy makers on simplifying transfer of credit procedures and reduce redundancy of courses required, so students can complete degrees and certificates faster.	Develop a policy paper recommending that Illinois use demonstrated competencies instead of the current requirements for syllabi, textbooks, and seat-time for making articulation decisions; i.e., deciding which community college courses will be accepted for credit by universities. A fairer and more effective transfer of credit process is a top priority for all members of the Network. With more courses accepted for transfer credit and fewer redundant courses, which require students to retake a course at the higher level and with additional expense, fewer students will drop out and more will graduate.	Present a policy paper ready for state agency review to the Network's CEOs in September 2015.

Priority: Increase higher education enrollment of adult learners			
White House Goal	Commitment	Strategy	Goal
✓ **Apply to 2+ colleges** ✓ **Increase enrollment in college**	Increase definition of career pathways leading to bachelor degree completion programs for adult learners with associate degrees and/or professional certifications.	Clear pathways enable students to take the right courses in high school and in community college, thereby avoiding the expense and time of taking courses that do not "count" toward their goals, shortening time to degree completion and increasing graduation rates.	Career pathways across high school, community college, and university levels will be completed for 10 programs and presented to the Network's CEOs in September 2015.
✓ **Apply to 2+ colleges** ✓ **Increase enrollment in college**	Document best practices with prior learning assessments for implementation at the region's institutions.	Identify the most successful prior learning assessment tools and national best practices, which will accelerate degree completion and reduce redundant coursework. Working across the region to provide credit toward a college degree for prior learning can encourage adult learners to apply to multiple institutions and to enroll.	Recommend prior learning assessment tools to the Network's CEOs in September 2015 for adoption by at least 5 institutions across the region.
✓ **Apply to 2+ colleges** ✓ **Increase enrollment in college**	Share successful innovations for attracting and retaining adult learners through Network collaboration. At least 100,000 adults who have earned some college credit live in the Network's region and could be candidates for professional certification and college degrees.	Survey institutions in the region and national best practices for adult learners.	Recommend new practices to the Network's CEOs in September 2015 for attracting and retaining this important population. The Network has capacity to enroll at least 20% (20,000) of the adult learners in our region who need innovative approaches because most of them are employed full-time and have family responsibilities.

The collaborative processes, policy recommendations, student services innovations, data collection, and upgraded courses will provide a foundation for establishing even more specific numerical goals and other college readiness, enrollment and graduation metrics starting in 2015.