Introduction
American higher education is experiencing a period of unprecedented challenge. Shifting student demographics, increasing ubiquity of technology, changing workforce needs, rising student loan debt—these and a whole host of issues have caused politicians and the general public to question the value of a college education and demand accountability. These demands, particularly in the light of the continued need for access to education, have created urgency for change that the Institutional Strategy Steering Commission (Commission) at Notre Dame de Namur University (NDNU) took very seriously. The Commission worked to address such challenges in a proactive, forward-thinking attitude.

“Institutions lacking clear differentiation, a demonstrable value proposition, organizational flexibility and a strong balance sheet will face severe difficulties. Those stuck in traditions characterized by procedural inertia, inward focus and market insensitivity will be compromised—targets for consolidation or closure. This is not speculation.” (University of Denver report on higher education, page 27)

The Commission found the conclusion of the quote plausible enough and the applicability of the conditions listed essential enough to decide to act clearly in order to assure a healthy and thriving future for the University and its students. The Commission grounded its hopeful orientation to ensure the academic excellence and fiscal sustainability for the future on the history and mission of the University.

Differentiation: Building on its mission to serve those typically underserved in higher education, as exemplified in its status as both a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) and recognizing the rapidly changing demographics of higher education, NDNU serves students from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences in an atmosphere of inclusive excellence.

Value proposition: Building on its heritage from the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Catholic social teaching, and the Catholic intellectual tradition, NDNU’s programs incorporate social justice and community engagement, to educate students for life and work and service. “Teach them what they need to know for life.” –St. Julie Billiart

Flexibility: Building on its vision of educating students through an innovative synthesis of liberal arts learning, professionally-oriented learning, and core values and recognizing the dramatically changing landscape of higher education, NDNU supports student learning through professional development of faculty to infuse high impact practices and appropriate technology
throughout the curriculum. “We adapt to the changing needs of students and society.” –Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

**Strong balance sheet:** Building on the enrollment growth and prudent fiscal management of the last several years and recognizing the inability of its current heavily tuition-driven financial model to accommodate the many demands for resources and sensitive to limits to its capacity, NDNU ensures its viability and fiscal sustainability by continued enrollment growth and prudent management, by retaining students through its excellent programs and support services, and by exploring a range of external partnerships to identify viable alternative funding opportunities, including focus on fundraising.

Based on this rationale, NDNU will undertake the following three initiatives:

**Strategic Initiative I: Supporting Student Success**
NDNU will support the success of each student through a network of programs that enhance student preparation, support student learning outcomes, promote personal identity and career development, provide tuition relief when possible, and improve retention rates.

1. Revitalize the academic experience of first year students.
2. Realign faculty development priorities and resources, beginning with support for first-year students.
3. Identify and implement instructional technology applications for all courses that best meet the needs of the various student populations.
4. Leverage corporate partnerships for experiential learning, especially internships.
5. Align and streamline student support services for all students.

**Strategic Initiative II: Sustaining Institutional and Fiscal Health**
NDNU will ensure its fiscal stability through enrollment growth and fundraising to enhance on-site facilities necessary for such growth.

6. Invest in new academic programs that are a good fit for the students served and that generate net revenue growth.
7. Expand current program offerings at off-site locations.
8. Continue to implement the Credo campus space plan, funded primarily through enhanced fundraising.

**Strategic Initiative III: Pursuing New Models**
NDNU will pursue new models for higher education for the future via the University’s presence in Tracy, California, with focus on strong learning outcomes for all students, personal identity and career development, and corporate and community partnerships.

9. Open a satellite campus in Tracy, California in cooperation with City officials, the Tracy Consortium for Higher Education, local businesses, and the broader regional community.
10. Evaluate the feasibility and future potential of expansion of existing programs and possible new programs; develop a plan based on the results of the feasibility study.

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