

# NCU: On the Move

2015-2018 strategic plan



# a letter from leadership

At Northcentral University, we enjoy a unique and powerful Mission: to educate professionals throughout the world, one-to-one, providing them unprecedented access and flexibility. To effectively pursue such a lofty goal, we require an equally powerful strategy – one that builds on the success of the past, while leveraging the challenges and opportunities of the future. Northcentral University’s strategic plan, created by the NCU community and endorsed by our Board of Trustees, serves as our roadmap for the future. We are confident that through pursuing these strategies, bolstered by our Values, we will effectively distinguish our University as a premier institution in the field of online graduate education.

*NCU: On the Move* is a reflection of Northcentral University today. Whether it’s moving our headquarters, enhancing our technology, supporting our students, or helping to fund faculty research, NCU is moving ahead. Our four strategies: Personalization, Student Completion, Diversification, and Graduate Culture, hold the promise of a bright future for our institution and its many constituents. We are excited to pursue these strategies with you, and look forward to great accomplishments in the years ahead.



**George Burnett**  
*President*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George A. Burnett".



**David Harpool**  
*Provost*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Harpool".



# NCU: on the move

Founded in 1996, Northcentral University is one of the first graduate-oriented online universities in the United States. NCU is committed to excellence in serving students around the world. Through educating nearly 10,000 active students and over 5,000 alumni, the University provides the next generation of educators, practitioners and scholars with access to rich, engaging, professionally-relevant, and academically rigorous online programs.

NCU is a unique place: The class size is one. NCU courses are taught one-to-one with one student and one faculty member in each course. With this model, the University combines time-honored principles of mentorship with contemporary applied experiential learning to ensure students receive individualized instruction in every course. Highly credentialed faculty utilize Internet-based technology to maximize student access and flexibility.

The 2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan builds on Northcentral University's past strategic initiatives – quality, student success, growth and community. The new plan represents an evolution of past strategies and in doing so reaffirms the University's commitment to its Mission, Vision and Values.

# mission, vision and values

Northcentral University's Mission, Vision and Values serve as the foundation for all current and future University initiatives. The strategies that emerged from the 2015 strategic planning process were created to ensure that the University achieves its Mission, fulfills its Vision and embodies its Values.

## *our mission*

Northcentral University educates professionals throughout the world and provides an accessible opportunity to earn a U.S. regionally accredited degree. Northcentral mentors students one-to-one with highly credentialed faculty via advanced delivery modalities. Northcentral commits to helping students achieve academically and become valuable contributors to their communities and within their professions.

## *our vision*

Northcentral University is a premier online graduate university and a global leader in providing unprecedented access to U.S. regionally accredited higher education.

## *our values*

*I.D.E.A.s Founded on INTEGRITY*

Northcentral University holds all members of its community to the highest ethical standards of professional and academic conduct and the rules and regulations of U.S. higher education.

# I.D.E.A.s

**Innovation:** Northcentral envisions new and innovative education delivery systems, and supports proven concepts of teaching and learning. NCU encourages its community to seek solutions to educational challenges that will improve the quality of its programs and services.

**Diversity:** Northcentral University values diversity of thought and action as a strength that allows its community to transcend organizational and geographical boundaries. The University expects members of the community to treat people with respect and dignity.

**Excellence:** Northcentral's community is committed to excellence in academics and service. NCU values leadership and strives for continuous improvement in everything it does. The University defines and measures outcomes and takes action to ensure that its community's passion for excellence is never compromised.

**Accountability:** Northcentral University is deeply committed to holding each member of the University responsible for scholarly and professional work. NCU expects financial responsibility in the actions of its students and University team.



# getting people involved

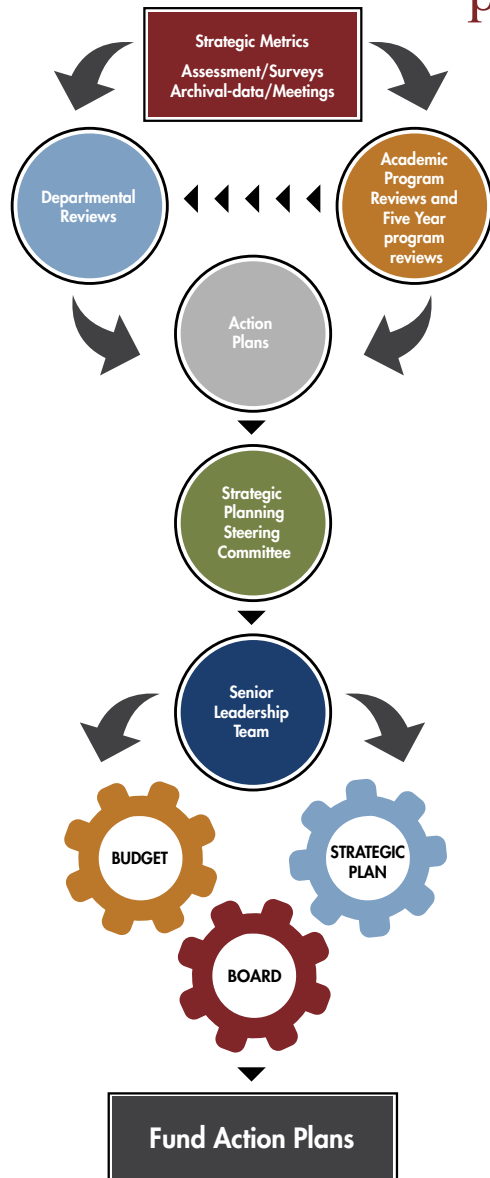
Northcentral University ensured alignment with the University's Mission, Vision and Values throughout the strategic planning process. The 2015 strategic planning process centered on a bottom-up engagement of all University faculty, team members, professional advisory committees, and others to help guide the creation of *NCU: On the Move*. By focusing on four high-level strategies with three to five underlying, measurable actions each, the University was able to carefully construct a plan that while looking forward, was built upon prior strategies.

NCU developed integrated processes to evaluate performance in academic programs, schools, and support departments. These processes informed the University's comprehensive strategic planning and resource allocation processes, which culminate in comprehensive action plans. The resulting action plans serve to further NCU's Vision, and align resources with needs to ensure the University meets its obligations to students and provides a great working environment for faculty and team members.





# strategic planning and resource allocation process



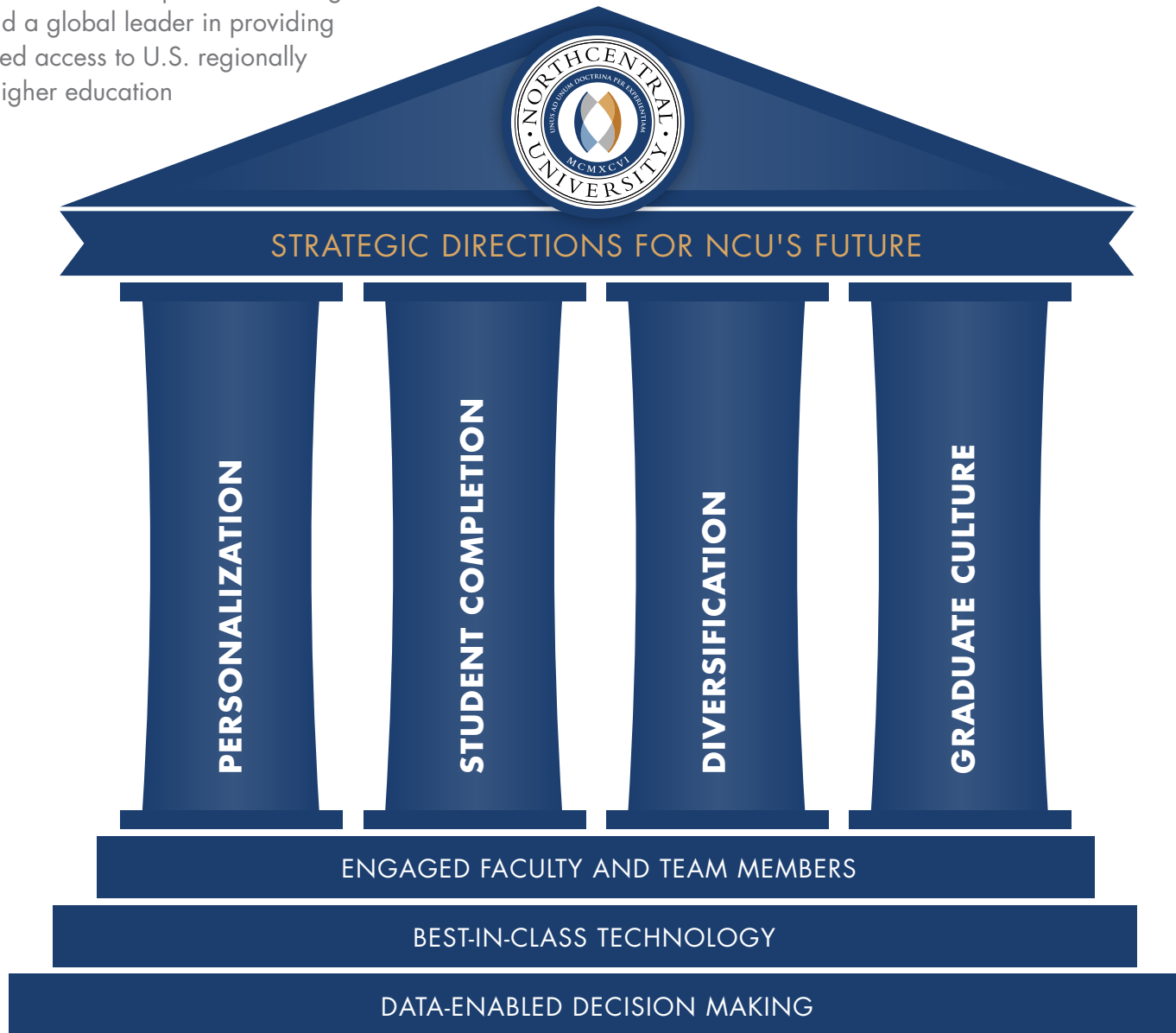
Data was collected from Academic Program Reviews, Department Program Reviews, and elsewhere to ensure a wide range of influence from all areas of the University.

**Academic Program Reviews (APR)** are completed annually with the goal of providing academic leadership with a clear picture of the status of every program.

**Departmental Reviews** are completed annually with the goal of providing leadership with a clear picture of the status of every department.

The 2014-2015 Northcentral University Institutional Assessment Handbook contains more detailed information about these reviews. In addition, five year program reviews are conducted by both internal and external stakeholders to provide a long-term, reflective perspective.

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# forming the strategy foundation and pillars

*The strategic planning process led to refined areas of focus for Northcentral University. Building on the University's strong foundation of engaged faculty, best-in-class technology, and data-enabled decision making, four strategic pillars emerged.*

## *personalization*

At Northcentral University, obtaining a graduate education is a personal journey. From taking the time to fully explore the motivation behind each student's pursuit of education during the admissions process, to enhancing the academic experience through personal, one-to-one interaction with faculty who serve as mentors, the University is committed to each individual student's success. Further, NCU is committed to learning through self-reflection and striving for the next level of personalization in graduate education.

Northcentral University intends to build upon its unique one-to-one teaching and learning model to create a truly personalized educational experience. The University is committed to continuously improving the level of personalization across all service groups, and further enhancement to its learning platform, the NCU Courseroom, to facilitate the one-to-one experience. In addition, exploring competency-based approaches to student and adaptive learning technologies will help NCU to further build the personalized education experience it is committed to providing.

## *student completion*

A true reflection of any institution's success is the success of its active students. Northcentral University serves as an advocate for the individual student's completion, which means providing the resources and support needed for each student to successfully complete her or his program.

Northcentral University is committed to placing a significant emphasis on student completion. This means identifying predictors for success, implementing or revising policies based on these predictors, and providing ongoing support for practices/resources that facilitate success. The University uses student outcome data such as alumni achievement, completion, persistence, satisfaction, and student learning outcome achievement to inform institutional and programmatic improvements.

## *diversification*

NCU's strategic planning process includes considering the needs of the entire institution, from faculty, students, staff and alumni as well as the long-term health of the institution. Our strategic plan includes planning for the future by evaluating the higher education landscape to ensure we remain a viable, sustainable organization.

One of our strategic pillars is Diversification – NCU believes long term sustainability revolves around having a diverse set of program offerings. To that end, NCU engages in environmental scanning, data collection and the development of an ever-evolving program roadmap to create this diverse set of programs and their associated specializations. NCU believes a diverse set of in-demand programs is one of the best ways to meet the ever more diverse needs of our future students, to identify areas of need to serve the larger academic community, to recognize underserved populations, and to provide long term financial sustainability.

## *graduate culture*

A graduate-oriented university's opportunity for impact relies upon the interaction between its capable faculty and engaged student body. At Northcentral University, both faculty and students are asked to commit to scholarship in an ethical manner, and engagement within the academic community is an expectation.

Building upon the culture in place, Northcentral University is committed to creating a collaborative graduate culture through encouraging and funding faculty scholarship, ensuring a faculty model that balances teaching, scholarship and service, and providing opportunities for students to engage in scholarship with faculty members. To facilitate this engagement, Northcentral's 100% doctoral faculty are committed to mentoring students and leading them through the transition from consumers of knowledge to creators of knowledge. Through self-reflection and examination of the resources for faculty support, Northcentral is committed to supporting the faculty role as a mentor.





# upholding the pillars

Northcentral University approaches the tactical implementation of its strategies by engaging team members across all departments to establish specific goals against each strategy. The progress toward achieving these goals will be examined on a regular basis and reported to the NCU Board of Trustees on a quarterly basis. Northcentral University's strategic pillars rest on a strong foundation made up of engaged faculty and team members, best-in-class technology, and data-enabled decision making.

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Northcentral University is regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (HLC) 230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500, Chicago, IL 60604, 1.800.621.7440, [www.ncahlc.org](http://www.ncahlc.org).