

BSU-NTC 2023-2025 Strategic Direction

Preliminary¹ Final Report

Introduction

At the beginning of his presidency in July 2022, Dr. John Hoffman shared his intent to develop an inaugural joint strategic plan for Bemidji State University (BSU) and NTC, Bemidji's Technical College grounded in the cornerstone values of advancing holistic student learning and success and diversity, equity, and inclusion. At the time, BSU and NTC were concluding separate 2018-2023 strategic plans, although each of these plans had been substantially disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Given significant enrollment losses and financial challenges facing BSU and NTC, President Hoffman pivoted to a joint two-year strategic direction plan to respond to immediate needs while launching growth-oriented strategies and initiatives to lay the groundwork for a long-term strategic planning process.

As the work of this plan concludes and we transition to longer-term strategic plan, we are proud to report that we achieved nearly all the stated outcomes in the 2023-2025 Strategic Direction plan. Importantly, we have accomplished a historic turnaround that establishes a foundation for a bold, transformational vision for BSU and NTC's future. We are grateful for the substantial and, at times, difficult work of BSU and NTC students, faculty, and staff to put the 2023-2025 Strategic Direction plan into action and achieve its goals. As we transition from the 2023-2025 Strategic Direction plan, we are prepared to engage in a future-facing vision of the work that has guided NTC for 60 years and BSU for more than 100 years.

Outcomes

Table 1 below summarizes the status of BSU and NTC before and after the work of the 2023-2025 Strategic Direction plan. Achievements and outcomes tied to specific strategic direction plan goals are included in the section that follows. These institutional performance metrics demonstrate a remarkable transformation, with improvements for nearly every indicator and continued growth in FY26.

¹ Final data for employee Nisidotaading training will be reported after the conclusion of the 2025-2026 academic year.

Table 1. Institutional Performance Metrics tied to the Strategic Direction Transformation

	Status Prior to the Plan		Current Status	
Budget Performance	BSU FY23 Operating Deficit:	\$11.2M	BSU FY25 Operating Deficit:	\$191,591
	BSU FY23 CFI:	-0.2	BSU FY25 CFI:	0.78
	NTC FY23 Operating Deficit:	\$1.6M	NTC FY25 Operating Deficit:	\$162,162
	NTC FY23 CFI:	3.09	NTC FY25 CFI:	4.09
Enrollment Growth	BSU FY23 FYE Enrollment:	3,234	BSU FY25 FYE Enrollment:	3,322
	BSU FY23 FYE New Students:	849	BSU FYE New Students:	1,013
	NTC FY23 FYE Enrollment:	505	NTC FY25 FYE Enrollment:	727
	NTC FY23 New Students:	82	NTC FY25 New Students:	130
Student Success	BSU Retention Rate:	71.0%	BSU Retention Rate:	77.1%
	NTC Course Success Rate:	82.9%	NTC Course Success Rate:	83.4%
Closing Equity Gaps	BSU (Retention Gap)		BSU (Retention Gap)	
	- Students of Color:	-19.5%	- Students of Color:	-4.7%
	- First-Generation Students:	-9.8%	- First-Generation Students:	-7.1%
	NTC (Course Success)		NTC (Course Success)	
	- Students of Color:	-12.8%	- Students of Color:	-8.9%
	- First-Generation Students:	-7.1%	- First-Generation Students:	-7.6%
Annual Fundraising	BSU (FY17-FY22 Average):	\$3.2M	BSU (FY23-FY25 Average):	\$8.3M
	NTC (FY17-FY22 Average):	\$52,270	NTC (FY23-FY25 Average):	\$198,569

Strategic Priority Outcomes

The joint BSU-NTC Strategic Direction Plan for 2023-2025 had four strategic priorities: (a) Student Success, (b) Nisidotaading (Ojibwe for “mutual understanding”), (c) Northern Distinction, and (d) Telling our Story. For each priority, there were several goals paired with Leadership Action Teams (LATs), Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and an indication of future direction. Early on, BSU and NTC shifted away from LATs to work within existing institutional structures to achieve KPIs. This change reflected the significant burden of reduced employee numbers due to layoffs, retrenchments, early retirements, and held or eliminated positions. The goal was to free time for employees to focus efforts on the redesign of work within departments while enabling BSU and NTC to be more agile and aggressive with implementation timelines. Work tied to several goals and KPIs also pivoted to respond to environmental needs. Reporting centers on the KPIs for each goal and follows the initial color coding with green indicating achieved outcomes, yellow indicating ongoing work, and red indicating non-achieved outcomes.

Student Success

Goal 1: Advance high-quality in-person and online instruction and educational programs to prepare students for valuable careers, economic and social mobility, and contributions to the public good.

At the heart of student success is positioning faculty to provide high-quality instruction. At BSU, this required significant structural and organizational change to maintain quality while re-achieving healthy and sustainable ratios for the cost of instruction.

Key Performance Indicators

BSU: Design and implement a new organizational structure during the 2023-2024 school year that reduces overhead expenses, facilitates multidisciplinary collaboration, and showcases academic offerings.

- BSU achieved this goal by reorganizing from three colleges to two and achieving a \$1 million reduction in operational costs.

NTC: Consolidate the current six “core abilities” to three and map to all academic programs.

- NTC achieved this goal, identifying three Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs): (a) Communication – effectively communicate ideas through written, spoken, or visual formats appropriate for a target audience, social, or professional context; (b) Critical Thinking – apply critical thinking, mathematical reasoning, and technology skills to implement solutions; and (c) Citizenship – demonstrate citizenship, equity, inclusion, and environmental sustainability through ethical and responsible behavior across personal, academic, professional, social, and society contexts. These ILOs contributed to NTC successfully securing reaffirmation of accreditation by HLC.

Goal 2: Utilize strategic enrollment management planning and guided learning pathways to enhance college and university access to students throughout Northern Minnesota and to increase student enrollment.

Key Performance Indicators

The initial KPIs were broken down into segments for first-time full-time students, transfer and online populations, and demographic groups including students of color, first-generation college students, and low-income students. Components included new student enrollment, retention (BSU), and course success (NTC).

BSU Outcomes (FY23-FY25):

- New student enrollment (FYE):
 - +17.5% for undergraduates, +120.3% for graduate students
 - +7.2% for first-time full-time students, +24.6% for transfers, +25.7% for PSEO/CIS
 - +12.1% for traditional age students, +46.7% for adult learners
 - +15.0% for first-generation college students, +16.9% for continuing generation students
 - +10.8% for American Indian students, +22.9% for students of color
- Fall-to-Fall Retention (New Students):
 - From 71.0% to 77.1% overall, from 71.5% to 74.4% for first-time full-time students, from 70.0% to 80.9% for transfers
 - From 55.2% to 73.3% for students of color, from 65.5% to 73.4% for first-generation college students
- Equity Gaps for Retention:
 - From 19.5% to 4.7% for students of color
 - From 9.8% to 7.1% for first-generation college students

NTC Outcomes (FY23-25):

- Student enrollment (FYE)²:
 - +58.8% for all students
 - +13.4% for traditional age students, +55.9% for adult learners
 - +46.8% for first-generation college students, +3.4% for continuing generation students
 - +110.7% for American Indian students, +137.8% for students of color (+642.6% for Black students, from 5.4 to 40.1)
- Course Success Rates:
 - From 82.9% to 83.4%
- Equity Gaps for Course Success:
 - From 12.8% to 8.9% for students of color
 - From 7.1% to 7.6% for first-generation college students

Nisidotaading (Mutual Understanding)

Goal 1: Through the implementation of institutional, employee, and student Nisidotaading initiatives, employees and students will gain knowledge and understanding of American Indian culture, contributions, and ways of knowing.

Nisidotaading—an Ojibwe work that means “mutual understanding”—lies as the heart of BSU’s and NTC’s broader diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Key Performance Indicators

- Students: Implement the Nisidotaading course requirement in Fall 2024.
 - This outcome was successfully achieved.
- Employees: Establish targets for the proportion of employees at BSU and at NTC to complete a Nisidotaading professional development course.
 - BSU and NTC set goals for all employees to complete Nisidotaading professional development experiences by the end of the 2025-2026 school year (thus extending one semester beyond the duration of the 2023-2025 Strategic Direction plan). As of the June 30, 2026 deadline, 90% of employees at NTC completed the training. At BSU, 57% of faculty completed the training with another 12% in progress; 77% of non-faculty employees completed the training.
- Institute: Achieve deliverables from the institute proposal related to (a) network hub development (development and curation of open educational resources, professional development offerings, community of practice implementation, and network formation), (b) financial capacity building for the institute, and (c) financial support for American Indian students.
 - BSU was able to expand the AIRC to have a location at NTC, thus creating the foundation for a broader network hub within the Minnesota State system. Minnesota State has specifically requested that this hub include online Nisidotaading professional development modules that can be added to the employee learning management (ELM) system.
 - Financial capacity building is an ongoing process, but the AIRC and Nisidotaading Institute have secured funding for FY26-FY27.

² Because of the short-term nature of many programs at NTC, we report overall student numbers.

- BSU Alumni and Foundation have expanded financial support for American Indian students through multiple newly endowed scholarships, which is also part of an ongoing effort.

Goal 2. Attain measured growth in campus climate to enhance mutually beneficial engagement, sense of belonging, and attainment of learning outcomes.

BSU and NTC each administered the HEDS Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey in Spring 2023 and will re-administer the survey in Spring 2026.

Key Performance Indicators

- Analyze climate survey results to prioritize items/areas, generate campus-based action strategies, and establish metrics for ongoing performance monitoring.
 - The Diversity Committee made recommendations to (a) modify the climate survey and reporting mechanisms to secure disaggregated data for American Indian students (b) consolidate and improve reporting mechanism for student and employees, and (c) increase the number of campus-wide social events.
 - The HEDS campus climate survey will be readministered in Spring 2026. The new administration of the survey will include disaggregated data for American Indian students and will serve as data to assess overall progress.
 - New reporting webpages (bemidjistate.edu/report and ntcmn.edu/report) now consolidate all campus reporting information and tools to simplify and streamline reporting.
 - BSU launched “Unity Uplifts” sponsored by the Office of the President and implemented out of the Office of the Vice President for American Indian Student Success and Campus Diversity Officer. Unity Uplifts are tied to state-recognized identity-based history and heritage months and provide social opportunities for campus tied to mutuality, equity, and inclusion. Future implementation of “Beaver Time³” may help with accessibility and attendance for the events.

Northern Distinction

Goal 1. Implement the joint BSU-NTC master academic plan (MAP) map leading to new program business plan guidelines, enhanced program review processes, formal training and educational partnerships, and focused, community-engaged learning and scholarship.

BSU and NTC pivoted from the “MAP Map” concept to a more direct focus on building new partnerships with regional two-year public and Tribal colleges, businesses and industries, schools, and communities. While a valuable concept, the MAP Map database proved to be a barrier to the more immediate need to build working partnerships. Reporting below focuses on new partnerships with business and industry and new articulated pathways with two-year colleges.

Key Performance Indicators

- New Partnerships
 - Formal business and industry partnerships have been established and/or enhanced with Altru Health System, ANI Pharmaceuticals, the Bemidji Fire Department, Polaris, Sanford Medical, Wells Technology; additional formal partnerships are underway with Marvin Windows and Northrock Financial, among others

³ This initiative was initiated by the BSU Student Senate with the goal of creating time blocks within the weekly schedule when there are no classes, thus reducing conflicts for campus-wide activities.

- Newly Articulated Pathway Agreements
 - New articulation agreements have been signed with Red Lake Nation College; additional agreements are underway with White Earth Community and Tribal College and Leech Lake College
 - Project Lead agreements for Nursing have been established with Fond du lac Tribal and Community College, Minnesota North College, Northland Community and Technical College, and Pine Technical College.
 - A new 2+2 forestry degree program is being offered at BSU in partnership with Minnesota North College; additional program offerings are being explored for social work and teacher education. These programs are being supported by a new “transfer navigator” position—a BSU employee located at Minnesota North who provides advising for students interested in transferring to BSU.
 - Additional transfer initiatives will be folded into the new strategic plan.

Goal 2. Enhance BSU and NTC engagement, interactions, and vibrancy with the Bemidji community and Northern Minnesota communities.

Key Performance Indicators

- Generate metrics related to forms of student, employee, and/or alumni internships, volunteerism, service learning, work, volunteerism, civic engagement, attendance at community events, etc.
 - BSU and NTC established regional fundraising metrics for this KPI. While these are not as comprehensive as originally envisioned, local fundraising is an indicator of institutional engagement with alumni and the community.
 - BSU established fundraising from within 25 miles of campus as the KPI for this goal. The fundraising total from within 25 miles of campus increased from \$849,000 for FY17-FY21 to \$3.59M for FY22-25.
 - Since most of NTC’s fundraising comes from within 25 miles, NTC’s metric is overall fundraising, which increased from an average of \$52,270 for FY17-FY22 to \$198,569 for FY23-FY25.

Telling Our Story

Goal 1. Generate a comprehensive dynamic marketing plan including shared identity, brand guidelines, and the launch of a promotional campaign.

The “Telling Our Story” strategic priority is an area for continued work, which is reflected in the new strategic plan. Some of the context is multiple changes in leadership for the Office of Communications and Marketing.

Key Performance Indicators

- Generate metrics related to brand identity, the generation of user-friendly brand guidelines, website hits, media hits, and other metrics related to the launch of a marketing campaign.
 - In terms of successes, BSU and NTC launched digital media campaigns focused on recruitment during the 2024-2025 school year. BSU has also secured philanthropic funding for a new website and has secured a vendor to assist with the completion of the new website. Monthly reports from the Executive Director for Marketing and Communications include distribution of project work by unit, social media metrics, and summaries of media spotlights.
 - BSU and NTC did not achieve work tied to brand identity and the generation of user-friendly brand guidelines. This work is being incorporated into the next strategic plan.

Goal 2. Generate an internal communication strategy to enhance shared governance and an external communication strategy that bolsters visibility for BSU and NTC.

As with the first goal for this strategic priority, changes in OCM leadership have affected outcomes.

Key Performance Indicators

- Generate metrics related to an internal and external communications plan.
 - BSU and NTC have expanded monthly reports from all executive cabinet members and from the Executive Director for Marketing and Communication, making reports available to all members of the community.
 - An initial draft communications plan for internal and external proved too complex for implementation, especially with leadership changes over the course of the Strategic Direction plan. This work is being incorporated into the next strategic plan, with significant focus on building an effective, scaled communications and marketing infrastructure that can support strategic priorities for BSU and NTC.

Core Institutional KPIs

The 2023-2025 Strategic Direction plan included six “BEAVER” metrics intended to serve as long-term measures of institutional success. Some of the data reported here is redundant with data reported for the strategic priorities and goals above.

1. Budget Sustainability Core KPIs

- Net earnings and fund balances
 - BSU: From -\$11.2M in FY23 to -\$191,591 in FY25 (substantial progress, but still net negative)
 - NTC: From -\$1.6M in FY23 to -\$162,162 in FY25 (substantial progress, but still net negative)
- Instructional cost study performance⁴
 - BSU: From 1.05 in FY22 to 1.06 in FY23 (slight increase, though above 1.0)
 - NTC: From 1.17 in FY22 to 1.08 in FY23 (substantial progress, but still above 1.0)

2. Enrollment Growth KPIs

- Total enrollment⁵
 - BSU: +2.7% (FY23 to FY25)
 - NTC: +33.3% (FY23 to FY25)
- First-year retention (BSU) and course success (NTC) rates⁶
 - BSU: From 71.0% to 77.1% first-year retention (FY23 to FY25)
 - NTC: From 82.9% to 83.4% course success (FY23 to FY25)

⁴ The Minnesota State Instructional Cost Study has a significant effect on the percentage of total legislative appropriation allocated to BSU and NTC. The measure is a ratio of actual to expected value of the fully-allocated instructional expenditures per full-year equivalent (FYE) students. The minimum target baseline is a ratio < 1.0, though the impact of the cost study on allocations depends on performance of peer institutions as well (lower values drive increased allocations). Because of the Workday transition, ratio values for FY24 and FY25 are not yet available.

⁵ Goal 2 for the Student Success priority focused on new student enrollment; overall enrollment will change more slowly for BSU, in particular, because small incoming class numbers during the pandemic currently drives small upper-division numbers.

⁶ Complete KPI data are presented for Goal 2 under Student Success on pp. 3-4

3. Alignment KPIs

- Quantitative and qualitative measures of joint BSU-NTC projects and partnerships, particularly connected to customized training and workforce development
 - BSU and NTC did not establish these quantitative and qualitative measures for 2023-2025

4. Value KPIs⁷

- [Postsecondary Value Commission's Equitable Value Explorer](#) - Value Over Threshold⁸
 - BSU: From \$9,544 in 2024 to \$10,067 in 2025
 - NTC: From \$4,514 in 2024 to \$4,305 in 2025
- Third Way [Price-to-Earnings Premium for All Students](#)⁹
 - BSU: From 4.79 years in 2023 to 4.66 years in 2024
 - NTC: N/A¹⁰
- Third Way [Price-to-Earnings Premium for Low-Income Students](#)
 - BSU: From 6.56 years in 2023 to 6.11 years in 2024
 - NTC: N/A

5. Equity 2030

- Disaggregated enrollment, first-year retention, and completion data
 - BSU:
 - Total Enrollment (Headcount; Fall 2023 to Fall 2025)
 - 20.1% to 22.0% students of color
 - 47.3% to 47.6% first-generation
 - 34.4% to 41.9% Pell-eligible
 - Retention (FY23 to FY25)
 - From 55.2% to 73.3% for students of color
 - From 65.5% to 73.4% for first-generation college students
 - Completion (6-Year, Fall 2016 to Fall 2018 cohorts)
 - 56.8% to 54.5% overall
 - 46.5% to 47.9% for students of color
 - 49.5% to 43.6% for first-generation students
 - 48.0% to 48.6% for Pell-eligible students

⁷ Comparisons with other institutions using these data should be treated with caution because income data for Beltrami County and Tribal Nations as compared to Minnesota in the aggregate

⁸ Calculated as the median income of graduates 10 years after completion minus the total of the average income of high school graduates plus the average net cost of attendance amortized over 10 years

⁹ Calculated as the average net cost of attendance divided by difference between the average income of college/university graduates compared to average high school graduate income; thus, this is measure of how long it takes in years to use the additional earnings of a college graduate to pay for the average cost of college. Because the Department of Education has not updated the College Scorecard with new earnings data, Price-to-Earnings values are not available for 2025.

¹⁰ Third Way is no longer reporting Price-to-Earnings Premium data for two-year institutions.

- NTC:
 - Total Enrollment (Headcount, Fall 2023 to Fall 2025)
 - 33.7% to 32.7% students of color
 - 71.8% to 60.4% first-generation college students
 - 47.3% to 43.0% Pell-eligible
 - Course Success (FY23 to FY25)
 - From 12.8% to 8.9% for students of color
 - From 7.1% to 7.6% for first-generation college students
 - Completion (3-Year, Fall 2019 to Fall 2021)
 - 57.5% to 61.3% overall
 - 39.3% to 46.3% students of color
 - 51.2% to 57.5% first-generation students
 - 50.0% to 55.3% Pell-eligible students

6. Raised Funds

- Annual total funds raised through philanthropic giving
 - BSU: From \$3.2M per year (FY17-FY22) to \$8.3M per year (FY23-25)
 - NTC: From \$52,270 per year (FY17-FY22) to \$198,569 per year (FY23-25)

7. Sustainability

- Energy consumption (reduce by 30%; BSU 2027 Target = 63.77 kBtu/SF; NTC 2027 Target = 48.18 kBtu/SF)
 - BSU: From 91.19 kBtu/SF in 2017 to 109.90 kBtu/SF in 2024
 - NTC: From 68.93 kBtu/SF in 2027 to 73.42 kBtu/SF in 2024
- Solid waste diversion rate (Target = achieve 75% diversion rate by 2030)
 - BSU: Solid waste diversion rate increased from 7.00% (2022) to 10.35% (2024)
 - NTC: Solid waste diversion rate increased from .00% (2022) to 5.82% (2024)

Closing

While not every goal was attained, the outcomes above demonstrate high achievement leading to a substantial transformation for BSU and NTC. This is especially true for the KPIs tied to the goals for the four strategic priorities in the plan. The BEAVER metrics assess a longer-term trajectory, typically that extends to work beyond the two years of the plan. These metrics are also quite positive while they also reflect work that needs further attention through a long-term strategic plan for BSU and NTC.

The goals and initiatives identified in the 2023-2025 Strategic Direction plan focused on growth and building a foundation for the future. At the same time, BSU and NTC enacted substantial budgetary reductions, including layoffs and retrenchments. In the context of difficult work, it is remarkable that BSU and NTC faculty, student affairs educators, professional staff, and students achieved these outcomes.