Vision, Mission, and Values and Core Principles

**VISION**

IIT will be internationally recognized in distinctive areas of education and research, using as its platform the global city of Chicago, driven by a professional and technology-oriented focus, and based on a culture of innovation and excellence.

**The Key Words**

- Internationally Recognized in Distinctive Areas

Research themes and educational programs must be interdisciplinary to achieve national/international distinction. We have no academic unit that is large enough or prominent enough to carry the university’s research and educational reputation on its own. We need premier, highly recognized positions in a few interdisciplinary areas to raise the visibility of IIT. Resource allocations will be influenced by our goal of international recognition, and we will build on existing strengths that offer us comparative advantages.

- Education and Research

Innovation in education and research at both the undergraduate and graduate levels is required to capture the public’s attention, to attract a broader spectrum of high-quality students, and to differentiate IIT from similar technology-oriented institutions. Students will select IIT because they gain an educational experience that is not replicated at other universities and is valued by our graduates, and because IIT prepares them for success throughout their careers. Leadership, entrepreneurial and creative activity, an understanding of the process of design, global awareness, and an appreciation of diversity and excellence will all become hallmarks of an IIT education, in addition to discipline-specific mastery taught by outstanding scholars.

Scholarship and research excellence in our faculty and students will be valued at IIT. Ph.D. education will be stressed, as doctoral students often go on to occupy leadership positions in industry, government, and academe, thereby bringing distinction to the university. The interplay between education and research can be understood by remembering the following: *Research is the intellectual marketing of a university, but education is the core activity*. If done properly, the synergy between research and education leads to improvements in both. We will become excellent in both research and education.

**Summary**

What began more than a year ago as an effort to involve the “many voices” of the IIT community in a strategic planning process has concluded with a resounding declaration: We are Many Voices, One University! Achievement of the goals set forth in this plan will transform IIT and place it among the elite private universities that focus on technology and the professions.

To help shape the plan, three groups representing the IIT community submitted reports: the University Steering Committee, the academic deans, and students. The Board of Trustees, alumni, all academic units, student government, and staff of the university provided feedback on various drafts of the strategic plan.

Illinois Institute of Technology traces its legacy back to a nationally preeminent stature in engineering, science, and technology, and to the spirit of innovation the Bauhaus brought to Chicago and IIT in the 1930s by László Moholy-Nagy and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. In this spirit, our goal is to produce graduates who have discipline-specific expertise and who are also known for their values and their ability to create, innovate, initiate, and lead. Our vision and mission call for

- Renewed commitment to innovation and the nurturing of excellence
- Vigorous partnership with the great city of Chicago
- Relevant education of our students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds
- International collaborations
- Cross-disciplinary research and education that build on our strengths in the professions and technology

We challenge ourselves to reduce the boundaries between our academic units in order to bring greater recognition to IIT through collaboration, an emphasis on excellence, a commitment to diversity, and a respectful work environment.

Five university-wide priorities have been identified:

- Distinctively define the IIT graduate
- Increase the impact of IIT’s research by focusing on interdisciplinary themes
- Promote innovation and excellence throughout the university
- Elevate engineering’s reputation to international stature
- Improve the financial strength of the university

Each of these priorities is linked to specific goals with measurable five-year milestones. While ambitious, these goals are achievable and essential for IIT to achieve its vision.
Chicago

IIT’s presence in Chicago serves the university in two ways: it supports IIT’s international recruiting efforts through Chicago’s growing reputation as an international destination city; and it provides real opportunities to shape IIT’s educational and research initiatives. IIT’s growing program in math and science education, focused on Chicago Public Schools, provides a key example of the way IIT is working with the city. IIT will become a positive influence for change by applying our innovations initially for the benefit of Chicago.

Professional and Technology-Oriented

IIT made its reputation as a strong engineering school with additional strengths in science, architecture, and design. The title of the university reinforces this image. The future of the university rests on regaining a national/international reputation in engineering and science in a way that connects to and elevates the entire university. The stature of our design school and the reputation of law, psychology, business, and architecture now present an opportunity to leverage our assets between the technical and professional disciplines.

Innovation and Excellence

Midway through the twentieth century, IIT inherited the extraordinary legacy in innovation of the German Bauhaus. (Founded in 1919, the Bauhaus was the European center for architecture and design until the mid-1930s.) Both the Institute of Design and the College of Architecture stemmed from the Bauhaus’s path-breaking creativity that led to modern design and architecture. IIT should embrace this legacy by seeking transformational events to make a step change in quality and recognition. Such events occur in an environment, like that of the Bauhaus, that nurtures new ideas. New ideas must be protected from the dominance of status quo.

The university must become an experimental studio to test new ideas, free from constraints imposed by rigid organizational structures. We will also encourage innovation that leads to enterprise by allowing students, faculty, and staff to have access to our Incubator and University Technology Park to follow their innovation from concept to enterprise.

A commitment to excellence must be adopted by both academic and non-academic units of the university. We must challenge ourselves to reduce the boundaries between our academic units in order to bring greater recognition to IIT through collaboration, an emphasis on excellence, and a commitment to diversity and a respectful work environment. We must improve our administrative processes to properly serve our students and their parents, and to support our faculty and staff. Continuous improvement of our educational and research programs will lift the university in quality, prestige, and financial resources. We must strive for improvement and achieve excellence in all activities throughout the university.

MISSION

To provide distinctive and relevant education in an environment of scientific, technological, and professional knowledge creation and innovation.

This mission statement, proposed by IIT’s academic deans, captures explicitly the character of the new education paradigm being created by the collective contributions of IIT’s academic units in both education and research. The key word in the mission statement is “relevant,” embracing the faculty’s commitment to education that focuses on preparing our students for fulfilled lives after graduation and careers that contribute to solving important problems facing humanity.

VALUES AND CORE PRINCIPLES

The culture of a university is a shared system of values, beliefs, and attitudes that shapes and influences behavior. The culture is determined through the organization from top to bottom and from generation to generation. We must live our values in order to continuously improve. We define our culture by seven core operating principles that guide us through our planning. While these principles do not in themselves define a strategy, a successful plan requires adhering to them.

Focus on Students: Our primary mission is not only to educate students in their chosen disciplines, but also to inspire them to become innovators, leaders, and positive contributors to society.

Strengthen Faculty and Staff: The faculty inspire and direct all we do academically, from basic education to discovery and the creation of new concepts, systems, and products. The staff deliver our administrative services and partner with the faculty to ensure an excellent student experience.

Foster Leadership and Ethical Decision-Making: Leadership and ethical decision-making are essential for growth of the person and the organization. Leadership development is an important component of education for all segments of the university—faculty, students, and staff. Succession planning is required to continuously promote excellence.
Commit to Diversity and Excellence: If we are to both remain relevant and attract the highest caliber of students, faculty, and staff, we must ensure that our community is inclusive and open to all viewpoints. A culture of excellence must pervade the university in both academic and non-academic areas.

Focus on Resource Management: The financial well-being of the institution is critical for our success. We will embrace responsibility-centered management to achieve financial strength and expect that all members of the IIT community, including alumni, are responsible for enhancing our resources.

Heighten Reputation: All units of the university will benefit from the international recognition of any one of them; we must continuously work at gaining recognition as a university. Preeminence in several academic areas must be achieved for us to gain the international reputation we desire.

Engage Alumni: Our greatest legacy is our alumni and their many contributions to business and society. We will celebrate their many achievements as a foundation of the IIT story. We will engage our alumni in planning for the future of IIT and rely upon our alumni for their involvement and philanthropic support in the execution of this plan.

Strategic Priorities

In order to achieve our vision, we have identified five major strategic priorities for the university. Each is aligned with our mission. The goals outlined later are based on these priorities.

Distinctively define the IIT graduate

We must differentiate our education from that offered at similar technology-oriented universities in order to give students a compelling reason to attend IIT. In addition to discipline-specific expertise that is equivalent to or better than that of the best private technological universities, we must add unique value for our graduates to be successful after graduation. We must include knowledge from business, psychology, design, and law in our general education. Our students must practice creative thought and learn to innovate, understand entrepreneurial activity and the development of enterprise, and become excellent communicators and leaders who are internationally sophisticated and globally aware. As a private university, our goal must be to deliver an education that prepares our graduates for a successful life—to contribute in their field the first day after graduation and 20 years later, and to obtain leadership positions.

Currently, we have a broad range of advanced professional degrees in law, psychology, business, and design. We must emphasize and build upon our strengths and develop a unique collaboration between these professional disciplines and our traditional majors. We must also capitalize on the strengths of the Center for Professional Development (CPD) as we advance our educational agenda.

Both the core and non-core aspects of each curriculum will be examined, and university-wide educational themes—for example, a redefined Interprofessional Projects (IPRO) program, a focus on leadership and entrepreneurial activity, an international minor, and/or the implementation of a program to allow “design across the curriculum”—will be developed. (Each academic unit will be required to present a convincing argument for the uniqueness of the educational requirements for its majors relative to programs at other universities.) Such an argument will also be required at the university level as co-terminal bachelor’s/master’s degrees are developed in all undergraduate majors to promote depth and breadth in education.

Our focus will be to produce graduates who have discipline-specific expertise and who are also known for their ability to create, innovate, initiate, and lead. In this strategy we will partner with the city of Chicago and become a positive influence for change by applying our innovations to the benefit of our community.

Increase the impact of IIT’s research by focusing on interdisciplinary themes

Universities are defined by research excellence. To be nationally and internationally recognized, we must choose interdisciplinary research themes that will distinctively define IIT’s research position to the world. Challenges of international importance that match the current and future strengths of our seven academic colleges will be identified as potential interdisciplinary themes and nurtured through internal investments and philanthropy.

While the primary focus of the investments will be research oriented, the themes will also provide platforms for educational innovations. The themes must be forward-looking, relate to needs of the global society, be of such importance that funding opportunities are envisioned over the next one or two decades, and lend themselves to growth and continuous evolution. They must also connect to comparative advantages we already possess and have the potential to bring positive international attention to the university.
The first two themes already exist: (1) Energy and Sustainability, and (2) Improving the Quality of Life. The first theme is anchored by two research entities: the Wanger Institute for Sustainable Energy Research (WISER) and our Perfect Power initiative. The second theme is also supported by two major research entities: the Pritzker Institute of Biomedical Science and Engineering and the National Center for Food Safety and Technology. At least two other themes will be identified and developed. Potential themes that were developed by the deans are Humanizing Technology, Sustainable Innovation, Healthy Environments and Urban Habitats, Computation and Decision-Making, and Policy and Technology. Again, the city of Chicago provides many opportunities for collaboration in addressing the issues raised by these themes.

Promote innovation and excellence throughout the university

The concept of a university studio, which builds on the Bauhaus tradition brought to IIT, is embodied in the Innovation Sandbox, which will be established to promote the initiation and development of new ideas. The sandbox represents a shift in culture to recognize that advancement by IIT into the status of elite private universities depends on our ability to be creative, entrepreneurial, and innovative. Resources must be dedicated to promote this cultural shift and encourage faculty and students to think “outside the box.”

A culture of innovation and excellence requires diversity of thought, derived from a community of various backgrounds. Thus the promotion of innovation and excellence across the university will require a more diverse body of faculty members, staff, and students, and a commitment on the part of the university’s leadership to achieve it.

Excellence is achieved by recruiting top-quality individuals and by raising the expectations of performance in all areas of the university. These expectations must be explicit, measurable, and rewarded. Peer influence is also very important in achieving excellence. Targets for improvement include administrative processes, student services, and campus operations, in addition to the traditional academic measures of productivity and recognition.

Elevate engineering’s reputation to international stature

As a technology-focused university, IIT must have programs in engineering and science that are excellent and internationally recognized. We must become recognized as an innovative and creative leader in both research and education. Research programs must be clustered around our previously discussed university themes; indeed, engineering should be the obvious leader of at least two of the interdisciplinary themes, Energy and Sustainability being one example. The efforts to substantially increase our research programs in engineering will not detract from our goals for a distinctive IIT education at the undergraduate or graduate level; in fact, growth in research will enhance our educational programs.

Our investment in engineering is justified by three factors. First, an “Institute of Technology” should be preeminent in engineering. The second factor is the reach of engineering majors throughout IIT: 46% of our undergraduate majors and 32% of our graduate students are in engineering. More than 50% of the credit hours taken by an engineering undergraduate student are in other colleges, primarily the College of Science and Letters. We must increase our undergraduate enrollment; this will happen in the next five years only if the stature of Armour College increases. Third, our goal of increased research funding can be achieved only by a larger and more research-oriented Armour College.

Elevation of engineering will require: (1) an increased faculty size with a defined focus on interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research, (2) dedication of the faculty to both research and education, (3) a greater partnering between engineering faculty and faculty from other parts of the university, and (4) investment in research facilities. Future hiring will be based upon our need to elevate the reputation of engineering through outstanding research and innovative education.

Improve the financial strength of the university

The financial strength of the university is directly related to stabilization followed by growth of the endowment. To stabilize and grow the endowment at this time will require aggressive development to put new money into the endowment each year, sound investment, and a reduction in our annual draw from the endowment.

Increased endowment must occur to support programs that ensure university improvement and advancement. This will require a capital campaign to be initiated with goals to: (1) increase the number and amount of funded undergraduate and graduate scholarships, (2) increase the number of endowed professorships in order to attract and retain outstanding faculty, (3) renovate existing space and build new space for programs in both research and education, and (4) initiate and nurture innovation and excellence across the university.
Conclusion

This document addresses not only the priorities but also the implementation process aimed at achieving the goals within the priorities. Implementation requires the ideas and commitment of the faculty and staff, and continuous input from students. The following actions are essential in achieving the success of the implementation process:

- The Board of Trustees will hold senior administration accountable for execution of the plan and achievement of the milestones.
- All constituents of the university will contribute to improving the financial strength of the university, which is our number one priority.
- The president and provost will allocate resources in a strategic manner to ensure that staff and faculty will have the resources necessary to implement the plan.
- The faculty and academic leadership will be responsible for development of the distinctive educational experience for IIT students as well as the identification and advancement of the interdisciplinary themes that will raise the research profile of IIT.
- The faculty and the staff will be responsible for establishing a culture of innovation and excellence, and committing to diversity and a respectful work environment as core values of our institution.
- Armour College of Engineering will vigorously pursue collaborative partnerships with other academic units to elevate the international stature of our engineering programs.
- Our alumni will be engaged in the plan and become advocates for the university, working with our students and providing volunteer and philanthropic support.

The execution of the plan depends not only on the implementation process put in place but also on timely assessment of progress. Thus the metrics found in the report must be used to determine progress and help guide revision of the plan as circumstances change. An assessment advisory board, which will consist of faculty, students, and staff, will play an important role in providing objective determinations of our achievement of the goals and milestones. The Board of Trustees will require periodic reports on the goals and justification for any deviation from the plan. The implementation process and assessment of progress are as important as the plan itself.

Our strategic plan is replete with ambition, optimism, and confidence in an institution that is prepared to take the next great step forward. The plan is dedicated to continuous improvement and quality, and belongs to everyone who supports and believes in IIT. We will achieve our goals and reach our vision.