



*The Spelman & Johnson Group*

## **Position Specification**

**Northern Illinois University  
DeKalb, Illinois**

**Director of Student Financial Aid**

### **Institutional History**

Located in one of the most dynamic regions of the country, Northern Illinois University (NIU) is a comprehensive teaching and research institution with a diverse and international student body of more than 24,000. NIU opened in 1899 as the Northern Illinois State Normal School solely to prepare college-educated teachers. It became Northern Illinois State College on July 1, 1955, and Northern Illinois University on July 1, 1957.

The University has since grown into a world-class university that attracts students from around the globe while still serving the northern Illinois region, and yet two traditions established in 1899 remain paramount today—the University remains deeply committed to preparing teachers and providing an excellent and affordable higher education to Illinois families.

The Illinois General Assembly granted NIU its own governing board in 1996. The University also operates education centers in Hoffman Estates, Naperville and Rockford to offer many of NIU's programs at times and locations designed to accommodate the needs of its vital service region.

### **NIU's Strategic Long-Range Plan**

The Vision 2020 Initiative, chaired by NIU President John G. Peters, is charged with creating and implementing a new vision for NIU: becoming the most student-centered public research university in the Midwest and establishing strategic benchmark goals for the coming decade in areas of student, faculty, institutional enrollment, and facility excellence.

The Vision 2020 Steering Committee, composed of people representing all facets of the University, coordinates with seven working groups to set ambitious benchmark goals for such areas as graduation and student-retention rates; engaged learning opportunities; and external grants and contracts.

Further information about The Vision 2020 Initiative may be viewed at: <http://www.niu.edu/vision2020/>

### *2011 Tuition*

\$11,476	in-state
\$19,956	out-of-state
\$9,446	room and board (double occupancy)

## **Institutional Leadership**

### *The President*

John G. Peters assumed the presidency of Northern Illinois University on June 1, 2000. He is NIU's eleventh chief executive officer, and oversees a comprehensive University with seven colleges and nearly 25,000 students engaged in 120 areas of study.

A native of Strongsville, Ohio, Dr. Peters earned his bachelor's degree in political science at Cleveland's John Carroll University, and a master's in government from Ohio University in Athens. In 1974, he received his Ph.D. in political science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Prior to assuming the NIU presidency, Dr. Peters was provost and chief operating officer at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. His distinguished academic career also includes twenty years in teaching and administrative roles at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where he earned numerous awards for work in and out of the classroom.

Since assuming the presidency at NIU, Dr. Peters has brought new recognition and expanded resources to the University. Under his guidance, NIU was admitted to the nation's most prestigious public university association, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU, formerly known as NASULGC)--an honor reserved for the top five percent of universities nationwide. Under his watch, NIU ascended to the highest possible Carnegie ranking for research universities, and gained admittance to the elite Universities Research Association. In his first months at the helm, Dr. Peters also secured a \$20 million private gift to build a new College of Business, and obtained the University's largest-ever federal grant of \$4.2 million for particle accelerator research in NIU's Physics department.

A political scientist by training, Dr. Peters specializes in studies of public policy and Congress. He has published widely, including articles in the *Journal of Policy Studies*, *American Politics Quarterly*, *American Political Science Review*, and *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, and has co-edited two books on American politics. He is a Fellow of the Center for Great Plains Studies and has served as the associate editor of the *Great Plains Quarterly*.

### *Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management*

Dr. Brian O. Hemphill, Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management and Associate Professor, is responsible for all aspects of student life and enrollment management at Northern Illinois University. Dr. Hemphill has a strong background in student advocacy, advancing diversity and equity, and establishing a solid commitment to shared governance on campus.

Prior to joining NIU, he served as an Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean of Students at the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville, Associate Dean of Students at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington, Assistant Dean of Students at Cornell College, and Coordinator of Minority recruitment and Retention at Iowa State University.

Dr. Hemphill served as a member of the Board of Trustees for St. Augustine's College in North Carolina and is currently serving on the Advisory Board of the Greenlee School of Journalism at Iowa State University. Throughout his career, he has pioneered several initiatives to enhance living-learning communities, including multicultural awareness programs, student leadership curricula, and collaborative residential education. He has contributed to numerous journal articles and professional presentations in the areas of leadership, crisis management, ethics, and diversity. Most recently, Dr. Hemphill was the editor of the monograph, *Enough is Enough: A Student Affairs Perspective on Preparedness and Response to a Campus Shooting*. He has fulfilled various leadership roles within the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA), which named him a Pillar of the Profession in 2009.

Dr. Hemphill earned a doctorate in higher education administration from the University of Iowa, a master of science degree in journalism and mass communication from Iowa State University of Science and Technology, and a bachelor of arts degree in organizational communication from St. Augustine's College.

*Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management*

Katherine (Kitty) McCarthy joined Northern Illinois University in January of 2010 as Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management. She oversees Undergraduate Admissions, Student Financial Aid, Orientation & First-Year Experience, and the Scholarship Office. Since arriving at NIU, McCarthy has been engaged in the creation of a five-year enrollment management strategic plan, restructuring scholarship offerings, and developing new tools for tracking and reporting recruitment activity.

Prior to coming to NIU, McCarthy was the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Marketing for the State University of New York System Office in Albany, New York, a position she held for over eight years. In that role, she was responsible for the direction and administration of all undergraduate recruitment and outreach programs for the Office of Enrollment Management. Before joining SUNY in 2001, Kitty was Director of Admissions at Alfred University for five years and Siena College for two years. She began her career in admissions and recruitment at the University of Rochester.

McCarthy earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Alfred University and a master of business administration degree with a concentration in marketing from Syracuse University.

McCarthy has been active in several professional organizations including NYSACAC (New York State Association for College Admission Counseling), SUNYCAP (SUNY College Admissions Professionals), NACAC (National Association for College Admission Counseling), The College Board, and the American Marketing Association.

**The Undergraduate Student Body (Fall 2010)**

Total enrollment:	23,850
Full-time degree-seeking students:	18,102
Part-time degree-seeking students:	5,748
Non-degree-seeking students:	0.3%
Students 25 and older:	11%
Average age of all undergraduates:	21
Out-of-state students	2%
Region from which most U.S. students come:	Midwest
International students:	1.0%
Percent of male students:	49%

Percent of female students:	51%
One -year freshmen retention rate (2010 cohort):	75%
Four year graduation rate (2010 cohort):	28%
Six year graduation rate	56%

Diversity breakdown of NIU undergraduates:

- African American: 16%
- Asian American or Pacific Islander: 6%
- Hispanic: 9%
- Native American/Alaskan: <1%
- International: 1%

### The Academic Program

Through its seven degree-granting colleges NIU offers 63 undergraduate majors, 78 graduate programs, including 11 Ph.D. programs, doctoral degrees in education and the Juris Doctorate.

The five most popular majors:

Accounting	5%
Communication studies/speech communication and rhetoric:	7%
Marketing/marketing management	5%
Nursing/registered nurse training (R.N., A.S.N., B.S.N., M.S.N.)	4%
Psychology	6%

*The Faculty (2011)*

Total number of faculty: 1,137

Full-time:	897
Part-time:	240
Male full time faculty:	55%
Male part-time faculty:	47%
Women full time faculty:	44%
Women part-time:	59%
Minority full time faculty:	14%
Minority part-time faculty:	7%
International full time faculty:	1%
International part-time faculty:	0%

Percent of full-time instructional faculty who have earned a Ph.D. or other terminal degree: 83%

Student/faculty ratio:	17:1
Average class size is 28 students	
Classes with fewer than 20 students:	38%
Classes with 20-49 students:	38 %
Classes with 50 or more students:	24%

Percent of classes taught by graduate  
teaching assistants: 4%

### **Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management**

The departments that comprise the Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management provide services and programs that assist students as they pursue their academic and career goals at NIU. Division offices provide the basic resources and support that complement the academic experience.

#### *Vision Statement*

The Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management invites students to become active community members and inspires them to succeed in their individual pursuit of learning as they transform into dynamic leaders.

#### *Mission*

In alliance with the educational mission of Northern Illinois University, the Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management creates student learning opportunities and provides critical service beyond the classrooms that inspire and support intellectual, personal, and civic growth for leadership in a diverse and complex world.

#### *Core Values*

Student Affairs & Enrollment Management at Northern Illinois University will be a national leader in higher education through its commitment to:

- Student-centered service
- Partnerships focused on student learning
- Establishing an inclusive community
- Actively building collaborative relationships

Dr. Brian Hemphill, serving as the Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management, oversees the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management that includes the areas of:

Access-Ability Resources  
Admissions  
Asian American Center  
Campus Child Care  
Career Services  
Counseling & Student Development Center  
Financial Aid  
Health Enhancement  
Health Services  
Housing & Dining  
Latino Resource Center  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center  
Military Student Services / Office of Support & Advocacy  
Northern Star  
Off-Campus & Non-Traditional Student Services  
Office of Community Standards & Student Conduct  
Orientation & First-Year Experience  
Planning & Assessment  
Recreation Services

Scholarship Office  
Student Involvement & Leadership Development  
Students' Legal Assistance  
Women's Resource Center

The Director of Student Financial Aid reports to the Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, Kitty McCarthy. In addition to the Financial Aid office, McCarthy also oversees the offices of Orientation and First-Year Experience, Scholarship, and Admissions.

### **Office of Student Financial Aid**

The Office of Student Financial Aid operates with two associate directors, one for client services and one that oversees operations, one assistant director, seven financial aid counselors, and 10 staff in the operations area with a total staff of 23 for the department.

NIU has a long serving Director of Student Financial Aid, Kathleen Brunson, who is retiring at the end of the spring semester after 30 years at the University. In the last few years several challenges have impacted NIU enrollment including the active shooter incident of February 14, 2008, increasing competition in the state of Illinois, and, as is the case for many states, the number of high school seniors has been declining and it is not anticipated to level off for several years.

In response to these changes NIU has designed a strategic enrollment model which has included hiring Kitty McCarthy as the Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and introducing other enrollment initiatives such as building a more targeted recruitment process, changing the notification process for scholarships, increasing the money available for scholarships, and designing a more robust data collection and data analysis system. NIU has also developed and implemented a recruitment plan for the states of Iowa, Indiana, and Wisconsin and has designed a collaborative admit program for undergraduates with the School of Law.

As part of NIU's strategic plan, the University has established a goal to increase the number and quality of new undergraduates. The fall 2011 new student enrollment goal included 2,590 first year students and 2,134 new transfer students.

The Federal audit of the program occurred this past fall and the internal audit of the program is scheduled for spring of 2012.

#### *Fall 2010 Admissions Metrics:*

#### **Undergraduate Applications, Acceptances, & Enrollments**

Applicants:	25,698
Applicants admitted:	15,235
Freshman enrollment:	2,705
Transfer enrollment:	2,294
Early decision applicants:	N/A
Selectivity:	selective
Fall 2010 acceptance rate:	57%
Male freshman applicants:	8,486
Male freshman applicants admitted:	4,675
Male freshman enrollment:	1,344
Female freshman applicants:	10,539

Female freshman applicants admitted: 5,663  
Female freshman enrollment: 1,361

### High School Rank and GPA

Percent of first-year students submitting high school class standing: 85%  
Freshmen in top 10 percent of high school class: 9%  
Freshmen in top 25 percent of high school class (2008): 31%  
Percent of first-year students submitting high school GPA: 100%  
Average high school GPA: 3.1

### Freshmen ACT Scores

Percent of first-year students submitting ACT scores: 95%  
ACT Average Composite Score Enrolled Freshmen: 21

#### *Fall 2010 Financial Aid Metrics:*

**First-time, full-time freshmen (enrolled): 2663**  
Students who applied for need-based financial aid: 90%  
Students determined to have financial need: 87%  
Students whose need was fully met: 9.5%  
Average financial aid package: \$12,485  
Students who received need-based financial aid: 78%  
Average need-based scholarship or grant award (freshmen): \$8,221  
Students who received need-based scholarship or grant aid (freshmen): 62%  
Average need-based self-help aid award: \$5,339  
Students who received need-based self-help aid: 73%  
Average need-based loan (excluding PLUS, unsubsidized, or other private loans): \$3,291  
Average percent of need met: 66%  
Average non-need-based athletic scholarship or grant award (freshmen): \$19,369

**Full-time undergraduates: 15,850**  
Students who applied for need-based financial aid: 81%  
Students determined to have financial need: 88%  
Students whose need was fully met: 9%  
Average financial aid package: \$11,639  
Students who received need-based financial aid: 87%  
Average need-based scholarship or grant award (undergraduates): \$7,554  
Students who received need-based scholarship or grant aid: 60%  
Average need-based self-help aid award: \$6,149  
Students who received need-based self-help aid: 83%  
Average need-based loan (excluding PLUS, unsubsidized, or other private loans): \$4,281  
Average percent of need met: 64%  
Average non-need-based scholarship or grant award (undergraduates): 0  
Average non-need-based athletic scholarship or grant award (undergraduates): \$17,045  
Average total indebtedness of 2010 graduating class: \$20,921  
Percent of 2010 graduating class who have borrowed: 68%

Truth-In-Tuition is for Illinois residents enrolling for the first time at NIU as degree-seeking undergraduates. Students will be charged a fixed tuition rate for four continuous years beginning with their initial enrollment. Truth-In-Tuition is only available to in-state undergraduate students.

## **Responsibilities of the Director of Student Financial Aid**

The Director of Student Financial Aid will be responsible for working with admissions colleagues and other officers of the institution in overseeing the development and implementation of financial aid strategies necessary for the recruitment of first time, transfer, and graduate students, as well as developing financial aid literacy programs and resources for students and their families. Ensuring strict compliance with all federal and State of Illinois regulations, assuring timely disbursement of funds, strengthening customer service, and enhancing the use of technology are key priorities. The Director will manage and develop a staff of 23 professionals; provide support to students and their families; administer a \$225 million aid budget consisting of federal loans, institutional loans, and scholarships; and serve as a key member of the student affairs and enrollment management division dedicated to enhancing service and supporting student success. NIU's financial aid office uses Peoplesoft.

- Provides leadership to guide efficient and effective processes for all eligible students attending the University.
- Works with the Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and all departments within Enrollment Management in informing and applying new technologies and solutions, such as financial aid leveraging, to ensure the quality and diversity of the incoming class.
- Researches, plans, and directs changes in technology and systems to provide excellence in service to specific and general student populations, parents, and the general public.
- Directs and supervises staff, provides training and mentoring, shares expectations and goals, and gives performance feedback to create and enhance an environment of unity, purpose, and organizational efficiency.
- Provides administrative direction and oversight in matters of funds management, compliance, office policy and procedure, constituent relations, and departmental workflows.
- Provides counseling to students to ensure all prospective and current borrowers are aware of their rights and responsibilities as borrowers.
- Informs students when and how repayment of loans begins and what to do if hardships occur.
- Processes financial aid applications in accordance with federal, state and institutional regulations.
- Processes student loan applications to outside lenders and acts as a liaison with the lenders.
- Awards federal and institutional aid as governed by federal and institutional guidelines.
- Plans, develops, and directs the construction of goals and timetables, priorities, policies and procedures, awarding processes, and operational and personnel budgets.
- Directs administration of all Federal, State and institutional aid programs.
- Provides direction in the short-range and long-range development of policies and procedures to support student financial aid strategies.
- Understands the impact that financial aid has on access and admissions decisions and collaborates closely with the admissions office in promoting the University to prospective students and family members.
- Serve as the liaison from the Office of Student Financial Aid with a wide range of internal and external constituents including school counselors, parents, lenders, etc.
- Provides a secure and confidential environment for the maintenance and storage of appropriate records and financial aid information.
- Provides counseling to students to ensure all prospective and current borrowers are aware of their rights and responsibilities as borrowers.

### **Challenges and Opportunities for the New Director of Student Financial Aid**

- There has been a significant number of retirements from within the department and the financial aid counseling staff is almost entirely new;
- The recently created Enrollment Management Strategic Plan (FY12-FY16) provides overall direction for enrollment activities moving forward. NIU's new Director of Student Financial Aid will be an important contributor to the implementation of the plan and overall strategy;
- Organizationally the staff is not well cross-trained internally nor with other critical offices such as the bursar; and, technology is not used to its full potential to support the work of the staff or to provide support and information to students;
- As the processing of student financial aid has become more complex, the Office of Student Financial Aid continues to consider and implement new approaches to managing increasing volume and the rising expectations for services;
- The new Director will need to be an organizational change agent for the office and will need to conduct a thorough assessment of the department, including personnel, technology, and operations to determine where further refinements and process improvements may be needed.

### **Characteristics of the Successful Candidate**

As articulated by NIU stakeholders, the successful candidate will ideally possess the following qualities/attributes:

- A bachelor's degree is required (master's preferred);
- Progressive supervisory/leadership experience in a higher education environment demonstrating a knowledge of financial aid regulations, policies, and the effective administration of student financial aid;
- Comprehensive knowledge of compliance issues as well as federal, state, and institutional aid/scholarship programs along with demonstrated expertise in financial aid leveraging;
- A strong service orientation; superior interpersonal and communication abilities; evidence of strategic planning, analytical, and assessment skills; and the facility to build positive working relationships with individuals at all levels within an academic institution are important considerations in the selection of the next Director.
- Must have thorough knowledge of federal loans (e.g., Stafford subsidized and unsubsidized, Pell, and Perkins), graduate plus loans, and direct lending;
- Demonstrate a working knowledge of institutional scholarships and how they are leveraged in the financial aid award process;
- Possess a zest for learning and commitment to ongoing professional development, necessary for remaining current with changing regulations impacting financial aid administration, as well as staying up-to-date on national best practices;
- Couple financial aid subject matter expertise with the professional confidence and communication abilities needed to educate others and support best practices, as well as to make timely recommendations for process or policy improvement;
- Bring to the role the qualities of an effective administrator, manager, and leader—skilled at developing clear procedures and policies, able to access the ability and develop the talents of team members, and capable of setting a vision and strategic priorities;

- Possess significant experience using financial aid software systems and familiarity with implementation of new systems, upgrade migration, and evaluation of new technology products and their application;
- Be familiar with web-based delivery of services and information, as well as the use of social media and other communication strategies for enhancing financial aid literacy among students;
- Demonstrate flexibility and adaptability—comfortably move between broad strategic priorities and hands-on management/execution;
- Exhibit an approachable, collegial work style that is inviting for students and fosters collaboration among internal as well as other external stakeholders;
- Exhibit strong team-building skills and the ability to motivate and inspire staff to embrace a continuous improvement philosophy;
- Uphold the highest standard of professional ethics and integrity;
- Appreciate that student financial aid is a key component, but one of many, that comprise a comprehensive university-wide enrollment management strategy;
- Understand the dynamics of tuition-driven institutions;
- Serve as a strong advocate for student financial aid throughout the University.

### **Qualifications**

NIU seeks an experienced financial aid professional who will provide strong directional leadership to the Office of Student Financial Aid and who possesses a bachelor's degree (a master's degree is preferred) with at least five years of significant progressive responsibility in the area of student financial aid at an institution of higher education. Strong supervisory and budgetary skills, experience in leading and developing staff, and demonstrated success in leveraging student financial aid to meet strategic enrollment goals are important in the selection of the new Director. A demonstrated commitment to ethnic, gender and cultural diversity is strongly preferred as well as, a commitment to continuous quality improvement, an understanding of the tactical uses of technology in improving processes, and a desire to develop an exceptional customer service experience.

### **Measures of Success for the Position**

At an appropriate interval after joining NIU, the Director of Student Financial Aid will be expected to demonstrate success in the following areas:

- Staff reporting to the Director have confidently embraced this new leadership and strong and effective working relationships have been established within the office, as well as with other key offices and staff including Admissions Office, the Bursar, and the Scholarships Office;
- All office operations run smoothly and effectively and deadlines are met;
- Data is collected, distributed, and assessed in a timely manner;
- Staff are receiving support to build their skills and facilities in utilizing available technology and are working collaboratively and cooperatively to meet customer service goals, compliance regulations, and enrollment goals;
- Technology is being effectively employed in all areas of the Student Financial Aid Office to optimize efficiency, enhance student-centered service, and manage essential data necessary for planning and compliance;

- A strong working relationship has been developed with the Admissions Office and with the Scholarship Office in an effort to create a seamless enrollment management funnel that meets targeted enrollment goals and serves students efficiently.

## **Benefits Overview**

Northern Illinois offers a robust choice of health and welfare plans including medical, dental, vision, flexible spending, disability and life insurance plans. Benefits include the following:

- Health Insurance – available through the State of Illinois, Department of Central Management Services; choice of several options
- Dental Insurance
- Vision
- Life Insurance
- Short Term Disability
- Long Term Disability
- Retirement Plan— State Universities Retirement System (SURS). Self-managed plans are also available. Employee contribution is 8 percent
- Supplemental Retirement Plans
- Flexible Spending Accounts
- Domestic Partner Benefits
- Vacation and Holidays – two vacation days per month up to 56 days
- Other benefits include Adoption Assistance, Child Care Center, Discounts and Employee Assistance Programs

For more detailed information about Northern Illinois University benefits including eligibility, please visit: <http://www.hr.niu.edu/ServiceAreas/InsuranceAndBenefits/Index.cfm>

## **Application and Nomination**

A resume with an accompanying cover letter may be submitted via the SJG website at [http://www.spelmanandjohnson.com/jobs/directorofstudent\\_286](http://www.spelmanandjohnson.com/jobs/directorofstudent_286). Nominations for this position may be emailed to Ellen Heffernan at [eth@sjgsearch.com](mailto:eth@sjgsearch.com). If you are unable to submit materials electronically, please call SJG at 413-529-2895.

**SJG – The Spelman & Johnson Group**  
NIU - Director of Student Financial Aid  
Ellen Heffernan, Partner

**Please visit NIU's website at [www.niu.edu](http://www.niu.edu)**

This position is designated as security sensitive. In compliance with the Illinois Campus Security Act, before an offer of employment is made, the University will conduct a pre-employment background investigation, which includes a criminal background check.

Northern Illinois University is an affirmative action/equal employment opportunity institution and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, marital status, national origin, disability, or status as a disabled or Vietnam-era veteran. The Constitution and Bylaws of Northern Illinois University afford equal treatment regardless of political views or affiliation, and sexual orientation. NIU recognizes Dual Career issues.

SJG has prepared this document based on personal interviews and information copied, compiled or quoted in part from source documents obtained from our client institution, and as such, the contents of this document are believed to be reliable. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and factual situations govern, and the material presented here should be relied upon for informational purposes only.