



# Northern Illinois University

## Center for P-20 Engagement

**NIU's Center for P-20 Engagement (P-20 Center)** coordinates and supports more than 30 multi-college initiatives, partnerships, and projects with external partners. Funded by the university's Great Journeys Strategic Planning and NIU Outreach, the Center is co-directed by Deputy Provost Gip Seaver and Vice-President of Outreach, Engagement, and Information Technologies, Anne Kaplan. In 2010-13, the P-20 Center engaged 1372 NIU students; 280 NIU faculty; 2763 P-12 teachers; 46,714 P-12 students; and 11,800 community members. External grants and contracts totaled \$182,708. The initiatives listed here represent a sampling of the work of the P-20 Center. For more information, see [www.niu.edu/p20](http://www.niu.edu/p20)

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**STEM Outreach**, established in 2006 and now the largest P-20 Center program, increases STEM literacy and enthusiasm through on-campus and off-campus activities. In 2012-13, STEM Outreach delivered 77 school programs to 10,111 K-12 students; led after-school clubs, summer camps, and Saturday Science sessions for 366 students; conducted workshops for 400 teachers; arranged campus visits for 200 high schoolers; attracted 721 community members to STEM Cafes and Summer Under the Stars; received grants for innovative projects; and provided hundreds of hands-on

activities at STEMfest 2012, which engaged 5,200 visitors assisted by 450 NIU volunteers. Altogether, STEM Outreach served almost 40,000 people this year. [www.niu.edu/stem](http://www.niu.edu/stem)

**Interdisciplinary Literacy Program** raises K-12 literacy through integration of arts and technology across the curriculum. From 2008-2013, 1210 K-12 students and teachers participated in learning activities that integrated arts into reading, science, and social studies led by 260 NIU students and faculty from four colleges. Evaluations indicate increased K-12 student motivation and literacy skills. In 2012-13, a vocabulary-building game using X-Box Kinect is being piloted, an online book club for sci-fi fans began operating [teenread.niu.edu](http://teenread.niu.edu), a Virtual Art Studio is being developed for the Virtual Lab School, and a culturally-sensitive reading and fine arts project finished the year with a strong evaluation.

**The Virtual Lab School (VLS)** is establishing virtual classrooms to provide academic and enrichment opportunities for high-needs learners and a digital lab environment for NIU teacher candidates and faculty. Ten online modules are in production this year. For teachers—Introduction to RtI and Technology in the Common Core Standards. For students—Virtual Sci-Fi Book Club, Virtual Art Studio, and a 7<sup>th</sup> grade science course prototype. For pre-service teachers—Online Tutoring course/practicum and clinical experiences in online classrooms. For parents – Using 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies to help students.



**IIRC, the Illinois Interactive Report Card**, provides Illinois school performance and school improvement information to an average of 110,000 visitors per month at <http://niu.edu>. IIRC director Harvey Smith serves on state committees and task forces on topics such as report card redesign, data analysis and data applications for decision-making, and innovative technologies for school improvement. The P-20 Center provides staffing and communications support for IIRC.

**STEM Learning Exchanges** are public-private partnerships that are developing curricular materials, internships and lab access opportunities for career academies in high schools across Illinois. The academies represent a new way of organizing high schools around college and career readiness in the STEM fields. NIU staff members are now actively participating in the steering committees and other work groups in STEM R&D, Health Sciences, and Energy. The P-20 Center coordinates NIU's participation in the STEM Learning Exchanges and supports career academies in three school districts.

**ISLE, the Illinois Shared Learning Environment**, is creating a cloud-based repository of teaching and learning materials integrated with student and school performance data. Kristin Brynteson, Assistant Director of the P-20 Center, is leading development of P-12 content that will allow design of individualized learning activities for students. ISLE is part of the national shared learning collaborative funded by the Gates Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation.



**College Readiness** initiatives were launched in 2010 with formation of the Higher Education Transitions Committee (HETC), which included NIU faculty in core subjects, community college representatives, and high school administrators in collaborative efforts to improve transitions, retention, and persistence to graduation. In March 2013, the Illinois Board of Higher Education awarded \$50,000 to the P-20 Center to expand college readiness activities. The P-20 Center also conducts an annual survey of transfer students and facilitated the start-up of a reverse articulation program with local community colleges.

**Office of Education System Innovation** was established in 2012. Director Jonathan Furr manages state-level initiatives such as the STEM Learning Exchanges and ISLE for the Illinois state education agencies. He brings connections to state initiatives, major corporations looking for partners, and external funding opportunities to NIU. Furr also implements innovative educational projects in several African countries and has engaged NIU educators working in Africa in new programs. [www.niu.edu/oesi](http://www.niu.edu/oesi)

**Professional Development Schools (PDS)** are providing outstanding experiences for teacher candidates and are much in demand by local superintendents, who say that PDS graduates make much better first-year teachers. Directed by the University Office of Teacher Certification and supported by the P-20 Center, PDS sites have grown from two in 2009 to twenty-five in 2013. [www.niu.edu/pds](http://www.niu.edu/pds)



**ENGAGE!** is a university-wide database of outreach and engagement activities. Launched in 2010, ENGAGE! is now being populated by NIU faculty, Volunteer Services, Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (OSEEL), and colleges posting service learning and capstone projects. [www.niu.edu/engage](http://www.niu.edu/engage)

**Broadband Network Development** will increase efficiency and effectiveness of education organizations through use of the new broadband network capacity. As part of NIU's larger initiative to develop applications, research, and innovations for the broadband network, the P-20 Center facilitates work groups that are developing broadband partnerships and projects in education, regional development, and the arts. A Broadband Users Conference is being planned for October 2013 in Rockford.

**Bright Futures** and **STEM Cafes** are new local activities that raise NIU's profile as well as increase the public's STEM literacy. Bright Futures is a grant-funded partnership with five local libraries that provides local programs, Snap Circuit kits, DVDs, and print materials that teach children and families about electricity and electrical engineering. Nearly 800 people have participated. STEM Cafes are informal meetings in local restaurants where an NIU expert speaks briefly on a hot topic and community members eat, drink, and discuss the issue du jour. So far in FY13, 535 people attended STEM cafes. [www.niu.edu/stem](http://www.niu.edu/stem)



**State Final Competitions** for Destination Imagination were located at NIU in 2012 and 2013 due to the state and national prominence of NIU's STEM Outreach program. University-level coordination of support for the 800 young innovators and their families drew praise for NIU. In 2014, the Illinois State Science Fair will be moved to NIU, bringing a large number of talented prospective students to campus.