

KAY FLOYD CONSULTING GROUP

Resource planning and development solutions for higher education institutions and non-profit organizations

U.S. Department of Education Title III Strengthening Institutions Program

Success in the First Year and Beyond: Transforming Curriculum and Academic Support Systems

External Evaluation Report

Year 3: October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021

Prepared for: Northern Vermont University

By: Kay Floyd, Evaluator

November 4, 2021

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I. INTRODUCTION

a. Background

In October 2018, Northern Vermont University (formerly Johnson State College) was awarded a five-year, \$1,816,525 grant through the U.S. Department of Education's Title III, Part A Strengthening Institutions Program. The purpose of the Title III program is to help eligible institutions of higher education become self-sufficient and expand their capacity to serve low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability.

Figure 1: NVU Title III Strategies



Through this Title III project, NVU is addressing major problems which include: (1) a rural service area with high percentages of first-generation college students, many of whom are unprepared for college; (2) low retention and graduation rates compared to peer institutions in the state and nation; (3) too many students not passing gateway courses; (4) an advising system that is limited in scope and does not meet the needs or expectations of faculty or students; (5) inadequate institutional research support; (6) limited professional development for faculty and staff; and (7) an underfunded endowment. In response to these problems, NVU is implementing four strategies (Figure 1). Project goals include fostering early and ongoing student success through college-wide initiatives, systems, and processes, and strengthening NVU's financial future through an increased endowment.

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b. External Evaluator

Kay A. Floyd, President/Principal Consultant of Kay Floyd Consulting Group, served as the external evaluator for NVU's Title III grant in 2020-21. She is a member of the American Evaluation Association and has conducted numerous evaluations over the past decade for projects funded through the U.S. Department of Education, including the Title III Strengthening Institutions Program, Title III Predominantly Black Institutions Program, Title III Hispanic Serving Institutions STEM and Articulation Program, and Title V Developing Hispanic Serving Institutions Program. She was not involved with implementation of NVU's Title III project.

c. Evaluation Procedures

As guided by NVU's application, the external evaluator communicated periodically with project leadership to discuss progress throughout Year 3. A year-end virtual site visit occurred on September 14, 2021. Project staff and administrators met with included the following:

- Elaine Harvey, Title III Project Director
- Daniel Regan, Title III Project Advisor
- Nolan Atkins, NVU Provost
- Adam Johnson, Title III Research and Evaluation Specialist
- Brady Rainville, Academic & Study Away Advisor/Title III Committee
- Jae Basilière, Director, Center for Teaching and Learning
- Thomas Ware, Adjunct Professor, NVU Online
- Julie Theoret, Professor, Mathematics
- Greg Petrics, Professor, Mathematics
- Thomas Anderson, Associate Academic Dean
- Lisa Zinn, Assistant Professor, Environment and Health Sciences Dept.
- Hannah Miller, Assistant Professor, Education
- Leslie Johnson, Associate Professor, Behavioral Sciences
- Anna Kern, Part-time Faculty, Behavioral Sciences
- Les Kanat, Interim Academic Dean

The purpose of the visit was to:

1. Review and discuss objectives and data collection procedures to determine if objectives are measurable and suitable to ensure valid assessments of program success and impact;
2. Review progress on activities, results, and outcomes, including unintended outcomes;
3. Discuss management procedures and reporting procedures;
4. Compare the projected budget to actual expenditures;

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5. Discuss any problems or concerns related to the project;
6. Provide appropriate suggestions and recommendations for project implementation and management;
7. Examine key areas related to initial project implementation; and
8. Discuss plans for Year 4 implementation.

Before, during, and following the site visit, qualitative and quantitative information in the form of data, reports, and documents, as well as the original project proposal, budget reports, and details on achievements, were reviewed. This report contains the results of the year-end review and the evaluator's conclusions and recommendations for future project implementation and management.

II. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Measurable outcomes for Year 3 are highlighted in the table on the following page. Data and information for the eight objectives were provided by project staff and detailed in reports shared with the external evaluator. NVU exceeded targets for objectives designed to measure the six-year graduation rate, overall student satisfaction with advising, failure/withdrawal rates in gateway courses, and increases in endowment (Objectives 5-8). NVU missed meeting targets for objectives designed to measure fall-to-fall retention (Objectives 1-3) and completion rates for "near-completers" (Objective 4). (See recommendation section for more on Objective 4.)

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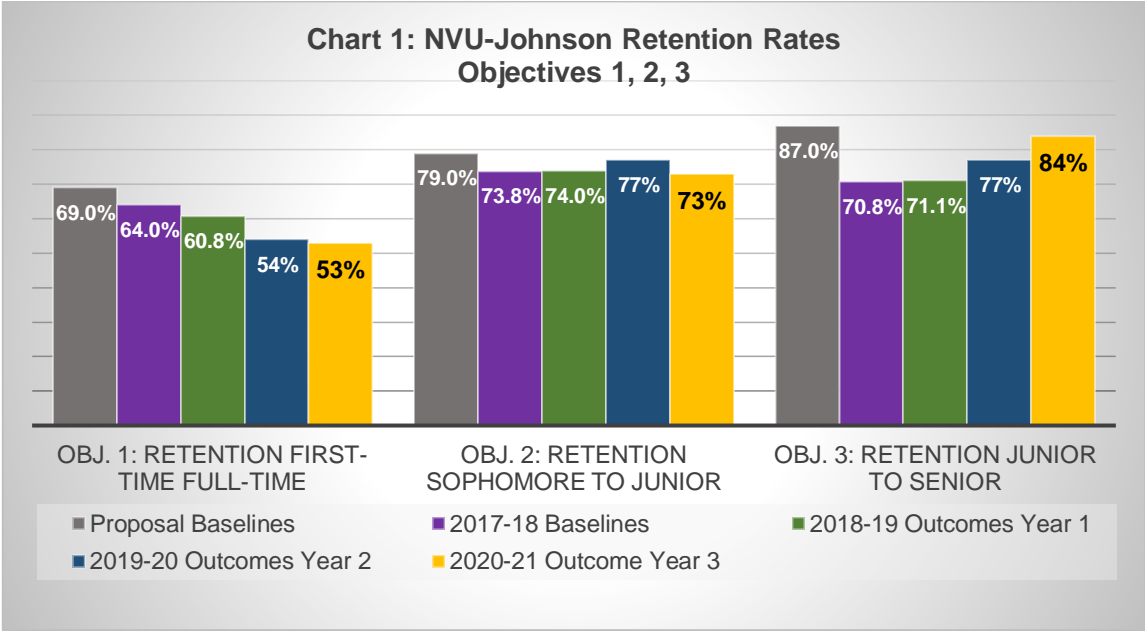
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Table 1: Key Overall Goal and Objectives Year 3 Measurable Outcomes			
Goals	Objectives in Measurable Terms	Year 3 Results	Status
Overall Academic Programs and Institutional Management Goal: Foster early and ongoing student success through implementation of college-wide initiatives, systems, and processes	Obj. 1: By September 30, 2021, increase fall-to-fall retention of first-time, full-time students to 72%. Original Baseline = 69% Updated Baseline = 64% 2017-18	53% (57/108)	Did Not Meet Target
	Obj. 2: By September 30, 2021, increase fall-to-fall retention of students from sophomore to junior year to 82%. Original Baseline = 79% Updated Baseline (as noted in Year 2 evaluation report) = 73.8%	73% (76/104)	Did Not Meet Target
	Obj. 3: By September 30, 2021, increase fall-to-fall retention of students from junior to senior year to 90%. Original Baseline = 87% Updated Baseline (as noted in Year 2 evaluation report) = 70.8%	84% (123/146)	Did Not Meet Target
	Obj. 4: By September 30, 2021, increase completion rate of “near-completers” to 60%. Baseline = established 2017	43% (104/237) (Note: This outcome measures progress related to a static list)	Did Not Meet Target
	Obj. 5: By September 30, 2021, increase six-year graduation rate to 37%. Original Baseline = 36%	40% (80/202)	Exceeded Target
	Obj. 6: By September 30, 2021, increase student overall satisfaction with advising to 60%. Baseline = 2017 survey	87.5%	Exceeded Target
	Obj. 7: By September 30, 2021, decrease failure/withdrawal rates in four gateway courses by 30%. Baseline= avg. 27.7% (25% Bio 1210; 28% MAT 1080; 30% ENG 1072)	17.6% avg. BIO 1210 =17.2% MAT 1080 = 15.6% ENG 1072 = 19.8%	Exceeded Target
Fiscal Stability Goal: Strengthen NVU's fiscal future	Obj. 8: By September 30, 2021, increase NVU's endowment by additional \$145,000. Baseline =\$3,742,523 (2016)	\$165,587 (\$93,087 non-federal funds raised to match \$72,500)	Exceeded Target

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Although several strategies were implemented during the first three years, retention rates remain below baselines presented in the original proposal (Chart 1). As noted in last year’s evaluation report, in addition to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, NVU believes a contributing factor to the decline in freshman retention rates was the result of a situation that occurred during Year 2 when the former system chancellor prematurely announced the closure of NVU campuses. The campuses remained open; however, it had a detrimental impact on freshman retention (see discussion in section IV. Challenges). NVU believes the three-year partnership with the Gardner Institute will enhance existing efforts to meet project goals and objectives.



III. PROJECT ACTIVITIES

This section highlights implementation activities related to the project’s goals and objectives for Year 3 (October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021). Sources of information on the activities, as detailed on pages 21-35 in the original proposal, were provided by project leaders and discussed during the site visit.

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Strategy 1: Centralize and Improve Advising and Student Success Services and Strategy 2: Increase Student Engagement and Experiential Learning

Aviso Student Success Software. NVU purchased Aviso, an AI student success software solution that will help NVU keep students engaged, increase retention, and optimize the chances of degree and certificate completion. Aviso does this in a holistic way, by combining proven coaching methodologies with supportive software tools and predictive analytics. NVU plans to integrate Aviso across both NVU campuses.

Advising Evaluation. Plans are underway for Northern Vermont University, Castleton University, and Vermont Technical College to unify and become one university—Vermont State University—by the end of the grant period (July 2023). As part of Title III activities, a system-wide NACADA evaluation is scheduled to occur in fall 2021. The focus was initially on NVU; however, given the implications of the transformation on advising, the evaluation will consider advising at the three institutions to inform the work of the transformation team and to ensure continued improvements in advising. Plans for Year 4 also include cross-campus team participation in the summer 2022 NACADA Institute.

Virtual Orientation. Title III supported a new virtual student orientation program through Swiftkick, which is designed to connect first-year students to the university mission, vision, and core values; build strong connections between first-year students; and provide specific strategies to excel within the first 90 days of school. Orientations are between 1 and 4 hours and are interactive with individual work and small group work in Zoom breakout rooms and large group sharing. Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning modalities are leveraged to create a highly engaging program for first-year students.

Advancing and Supporting Student Success. NVU is in the process of formalizing the creation of a modest fund for initiatives proposed by staff, faculty, and students to support creative ideas for advancing and supporting student success beyond the first year. Proposals will be reviewed and selected by Title III Committee members.

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High-Impact Classroom Experiences. Several activities were undertaken during Year 3 to increase student engagement and learning. (1) A virtual program, Mystery Feast, was brought to NVU to help increase student engagement around systemic racism. (2) Funding was provided for 20 students to virtually attend the International Symposium of Electronic Art with Associate Professor Sean Clute. (3) Copies of “X+Y A Mathematician’s Manifesto for Rethinking Gender” by Eugenia Chen were purchased as a supplemental text for pre-calculus students. The approach taken by the author allows students the opportunity to see how societal issues can be viewed through a mathematical lens, and how the mathematical thinking process can be used to seek the consistency of logic that allows calling foul on poor, inconsistent, presumptive-based analyses that are far too common.

Gardner Institute Initiatives. As reported in last year’s external evaluation report, Title III staff and NVU leadership engaged in multiple conversations with John Gardner from the Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education. This led to NVU’s participation in two Gardner Institute projects beginning in fall 2020—Gateways to Completion (G2C) and Retention Performance Management. Supported with Title III funds, the G2C project consists of three phases: First Year (2020-21)—Analyze and Plan; Second Year (2021-22)—Act and Monitor; and Third Year (2022-23)—Act and Refine. Teams of faculty and staff are working to redesign six gateway courses. Redesign efforts will prioritize pedagogy and university-wide policies that can inadvertently serve as barriers to access and course completion and delay on-time graduation. Phases of the G2C work are depicted in the figure below (NVU Title III High Impact Progress Report, Summer 2021). The two-year Retention Performance Management (RPM) project will use institutional data to identify evidence-based practices and prioritize them as part of an institution-wide retention plan. Both projects incorporate professional development for faculty.

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Figure 2: Gateway to Completion Phases

G2C PHASES

Year 1 Analyze & Plan	Year 2 Act & Monitor	Year 3 Act & Refine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Initial Steering Committee • "Complete" Gateway Course Analytics Inventory • Identify Course(s) based on GCAI evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Round Out Task Force • Administer SLG • Conduct Review of Principles & Key Performance Indicators • Create Initial Action Plan and Implementation Team • Begin and Attend Evidence in Pedagogy and Curriculum • Begin and Attend Teaching and Learning Academy • Attend G2C Community of Practice Meeting and Gateway Course Experience Conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Plan • Update GCAI • Re-administer SLG • Continue and Attend Evidence in Pedagogy and Curriculum • Continue and Attend Teaching and Learning Academy • Attend G2C Community of Practice Meeting • Attend Gateway Course Experience Conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine Implementation of Plan and Adjust Implementation Team • Update GCAI • Re-administer SLG • Continue and Attend Evidence in Pedagogy and Curriculum • Continue and Attend Teaching and Learning Academy • Plan to Address Other Courses and/or Continue Refinement with Other Courses • Disseminate Findings • Attend G2C Community of Practice Meeting and Gateway Course Experience Conference

Equity for Transfer Students. NVU is in the beginning stages of collecting data on the percentage of credits earned and presented for transfer that are accepted by NVU and the percentage of credits accepted that actually satisfy a requirement, either for general education and/or the major. Title III leaders reported that John Gardner has expressed interest in using this preliminary data and findings in a presentation on transfers that he is giving at the annual meeting of the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) in December 2021. Data collection and analysis will continue into Year 4. The Transfer Coordinator, Lori Adams, will finish collecting data for fall 2021, fall 2020, fall 2019, and spring 2020 semesters. The Title III Research and Evaluation Specialist, Adam Johnson, will then analyze and summarize the data. During this time, the Title III Advisor, Dan Regan, will undertake a qualitative scan of the university's web presence to see the extent to which transfers fit—explicitly or otherwise—within the NVU story. A report, including appropriate recommendations, will be made to the university administration.

Building a Data Culture. Adam Johnson, Title III Research and Evaluation Specialist, built a retention model in the Title III-funded VEERA program which acts as the foundation to

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help answer questions about what makes a student likely to exit and what makes a student likely to finish their degree at NVU. At the request of the Chief Academic Officer, “Case Studies in Building a Data Culture to Better Serve and Respond to Students” was presented at the system-wide academic retreat in May 2021. The goals of the presentation were to (1) highlight examples of how building data focused culture can positively impact students and why it’s worth the investment; (2) share strategies for implementing a holistic approach to data analysis on campuses; and (3) validate listening directly to student data—both quantitative and qualitative.

Career and Internship Focus. NVU is in the process of developing career and internship focused sophomore and capstone courses within majors. Eighty-five percent of NVU first-year students who responded to the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey noted that getting training for a specific career was “very important” to them. NVU identified the opportunity to shift “career readiness” from a student support model to one that is integrated into the classroom. Title III funds were used to support supplementing one-credit courses. Institutional Research developed an assessment with faculty to support evaluation at the course-level. Evaluation at the program level is in the planning stage.

Strategy 3: Establish a Center for Teaching Excellence

In Year 3, Dr. Jae Basilière was hired as the Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). With 15 years of teaching experience and 7 years of experience in faculty development, Dr. Basilière is committed to supporting faculty and staff in creating inclusive and accommodating classrooms and campus spaces.

Through the CTL and Title III funding, multiple resources are available to faculty to help them provide students with the best educational experience possible. Examples of services and resources include faculty professional development programming, faculty learning communities, weekly teaching tips, and individualized consulting. During Year 3, the CTL offered a series of webinars and discussions on equitable teaching practices and a wide-range of professional development opportunities on online teaching and learning. Through the 2021 NVU Summer

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Inclusive Pedagogy Institute, resources and a small stipend were provided for faculty to explore the following aspects of course and syllabus design: culturally responsive and antiracist pedagogies, course policies and syllabus front matter, universal design for learning, course accessibility, open-access resources, inclusive uses of technology, facilitating challenging conversations in the classroom, and strategies for encouraging student learning outside of a policing context.

Bradley Beth, Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science, noted, *“Nothing motivates the need for inclusive pedagogy more than examining cases where traditional pedagogical practices fail and why. The discussions in this course, representative of a variety of experiences from a diverse set of skills and backgrounds, made me think about my own approach to teaching—and my biases toward how students should be learning—in new ways.”*

Strategy 4: Build NVU Endowment

As discussed in previous reports, a High-Impact Endowment Fund was created in Year 1 as a repository for contributions to support student success and strengthen NVU’s fiscal future. The endowment will help fund students’ participation in transformative academic initiatives, such as internships, service learning, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, lecture and arts programs and programming, professional development, and more. It is designed to foster intellectual, creative, and personal growth. After a slow fundraising start during the first year, which resulted in a total of \$52,000 contributions and federal funds, the second year resulted in significant growth of an additional \$174,330 and in the third year, \$93,087 of non-federal funds were raised to match \$72,500 of federal funds for a total increase of \$165,587. As noted earlier in Table 1, NVU exceeded the Year 3 target of \$145,000.

IV. CHALLENGES

NVU encountered challenges in Year 2 which carried over into Year 3. These challenges and implications for the Title III project are discussed below.

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Continued Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic

NVU is still dealing with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It altered many of the Title III plans and activities, e.g., some professional development events were cancelled or rescheduled, participation in the NACADA Summer Institute and the advising evaluation were moved to Year 4. Many students left for COVID-related reasons (e.g., the need to stay home and be near family, disinterest in remote learning, financial setbacks, etc.), which impacted enrollment and retention rates. NVU-Johnson enrollment dropped from 1,555 in fall 2019 to 1,220 in fall 2020 to 722 in fall 2021.

Year 2 Announcement of NVU Closure

Compounding the COVID-19 situation, in April 2020, not long after NVU shifted to remote, the former Vermont State College System chancellor announced plans to close both NVU campuses. Although the University was given at least another year of bridge funding, many students exited after the spring 2020 semester, not willing to take the chance that NVU would close halfway through their college experience. This is likely reflected in the first-to-second year retention decline from 60.8% to 54% in Year 2 to 53% in Year 3, as well as the decreases in enrollment. During this time, many staff and faculty members left the institution, including staff instrumental in Title III initiatives, such as the First-Year Experience Office staff and the internship coordinator. The number of advisors was reduced from five to three. With fewer faculty and staff and the growing workload due to COVID, the capacity to undertake new initiatives decreased. Due to these challenges, hiring for some grant positions shifted to Year 3.

V. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The procedures to ensure efficient and effective project implementation, as described in the original proposal (pp. 39-41), continued to be followed in Year 3. As guided by the procedures outlined in the Title III proposal, a Title III Committee was formed in Year 1 and includes faculty, staff, and administrators. The committee meets regularly and is led by the Title III Project Director.

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A change in project directors occurred during Year 3. In July, Kathleen Brinegar accepted a position at another university and was replaced by Elaine Harvey, Title III Project Director/Director of Student Engagement and Persistence. She currently reports to Nolan Atkins, Provost, on matters related to Title III and is assisted by Dan Regan who serves as an advisor to the project and NVU leadership. At the time of the evaluation site visit, NVU was in the process of identifying an interim president. Once in place, the Title III Project Director will meet on a regular basis with the interim president to ensure progress and integration into the culture of NVU and for early identification of any issues and development of corrective actions to avoid potential barriers to successful project implementation.

VI. BUDGET

The Year 3 approved budget compared to actual expenditures is shown in the following table. Primarily due to delays in hiring personnel, almost 80% of the Title III budget was unspent at the end of Year 1, resulting in significant carryover funds into Years 2 and 3. NVU's plan for use of carryover funds for the remainder of the grant period includes support for a campus-wide three-year involvement in the Gardner Institute and the Gateways to Completion and Retention Performance Management initiatives.

Table 2: Title III Budget for Year 3 Projected vs. Expenditures (as of 08/21/2021)		
Grant Category	Budget Year 3 (Totals from Year 2 APR)	Expenditures Year 3
Personnel	\$ 139,446	\$ 157,385
Fringe	44,730	47,185
Travel	25,000	935
Supplies	4,000	957
Contractual	21,000	46,900
Other	56,500	9,568
Endowment	72,500	72,500
Total	\$363,176	\$335,430

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The five recommendations presented below were developed based on documents, reports, data, discussions, and observations by the evaluator and are offered to help strengthen the overall implementation of NVU's Title III project for the remaining years of the grant. The first two relate to project activities; the last three address project management.

Recommendation 1: Reassess Targets and Define Near-Completers to be Measured (Objective 4)

The original Title III proposal included a discussion of barriers faced by students who were close to graduation, yet chose not to complete. In a study conducted by then Johnson State College that spanned a ten-year period (2002-2011), JSC identified "near-completers" as a significant constituency for attrition. These are students who had applied for a degree, but whose graduation file was placed on hold. The Registrar's office had informed them of the work they needed to do to finish, but the students failed to complete the outstanding requirements. Because their reasons for non-completion were varied, JSC made the case that those within clear sight of graduation need individualized attention to complete their educational goals. This became a focus of the proposed Title III project that included implementation of evidence-based activities and an objective designed to measure changes in completion for this student population.

In the Year 2 Annual Performance Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Education, NVU described challenges impacting the related objective. For example, since the Title III proposal was written, NVU has expanded to serve two campuses without any increase in registrar staff. In spring 2020, the system chancellor announced plans to close NVU. Of the 115 outreaches around that time, there were 33 positive contacts—11 of those cited uncertainty and instability of the institution as a reason they were not interested in completing their degree. NVU noted that, "based upon these developments, as well as our reading of national efforts to re-engage near-completers, we may reassess our target for this objective during Year 3." In

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In addition to revising the target, project leaders suggest it may be reasonable to create an updated list of near completers, starting from the most recently completed academic year and counting back a set number of years. With each successive academic year, NVU would then add the current one and remove students from the first year of the list.

To provide for a more meaningful way to measure completion for near-completers going forward, the evaluator recommends two actions: (1) based on recent challenges, reassess the annual targets for Objective 4 for the last two years of the project period and (2) better define the cohorts to be measured. Since Year 4 is already underway, this should be decided by project leadership as soon as possible. See table below for an example.

Table 3: Obj. 4: By Sep. 2023, increase completion rate of “near-completers” to 75%					
Grant Year:	Year 1 Oct 2018- Sep 2019	Year 2 Oct 2019- Sep 2020	Year 3 Oct 2020- Sep 2021	Year 4 Oct 2021- Sep 2022	Year 5 Oct 2022- Sep 2023
Example Near Completers to Measure	AY: 2017-18 2016-17 2015-16 2014-15	AY: 2018-19 2017-18 2016-17 2015-16	AY: 2019-20 2018-19 2017-18 2016-17	AY: 2020-21 2019-20 2018-19 2017-18	AY: 2021-22 2020-21 2019-20 2018-19
Annual Targets from Proposal	50%	55%	60%	65%	75%
Revised Targets	--	--	--	XX%	XX%
Outcome: #	# of #	# of #	# of #	# of #	# of #
Outcome: %	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%

Recommendation 2: Monitor Unification

According to published information, over the next couple years, Northern Vermont University, Castleton University, and Vermont Technical College will unify and become one university under a common accreditation with campuses throughout the state. This transformation is designed to provide students with greater access to high-quality, comprehensive experiential education that prepares students for rewarding careers and active participation in their communities; a broader and deeper range of courses, faculty, and student activities; and an even larger alumni network to tap into for inspiration and career success. Although the unification will occur at the end of the grant period (July 2023), project leadership should remain vigilant to ensure Title III activities continue to be implemented as planned during

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the process and to strengthen the project through opportunities that may arise as NVU moves towards unification. Because it is possible the unification will have implications for institutionalization of Title III activities post grant, this situation should be closely monitored during the remaining years of the grant.

Recommendation 3: Prepare Quarterly Reports of Grant Activities

Some Title III projects find it useful to prepare quarterly (in some cases, monthly) reports of project activity. It is recommended that NVU consider preparing quarterly progress reports to capture details about the project, e.g., a list of activities conducted during the quarter, challenges encountered, accomplishments, areas in need of additional attention, etc. Content from the quarterly reports can also help inform other internal and external reporting and allow for timely project implementation adjustments.

Recommendation 4: Ensure Accuracy of Time and Effort Reporting

NVU has a time and effort process in place. According to the Title III Policies and Procedures manual, the Vermont State College System (VSCS) Grants Manager completes time and effort forms and sends them to the Project Director who checks the forms and obtains signatures from the employees. The signed forms are then returned by the Project Director to the VSCS grants manager. It is suggested that the Project Director periodically confirm that all Title III staff who work partially or fully on grant activities are completing the forms and that they match time and effort as outlined in the grant proposal and/or job descriptions. The additional oversight of this process will help to ensure NVU has accurate records in the event of a federal audit.

Recommendation 5: Ensure New Project Director is Recognized by the U.S. Department of Education

At the time of the site visit, NVU still had not heard from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) regarding approval of the change of project director from Kathleen Brinegar to Elaine Harvey. If this has not yet been resolved, the new Interim President or Provost should

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immediately contact ED to confirm her appointment. Without official acceptance and recognition, she will have difficulty accessing project information and submitting required reports and perhaps not receive timely notifications or important information from ED.

VIII. SUMMARY

There were no major areas or issues of concern discussed with or observed by the evaluator during the site visit. Although NVU faced several challenging situations that impacted some activities in the second and third years, NVU continues to implement its Title III project as intended. This is demonstrated by the progress made on key activities detailed in this report and measurable outcomes realized during the year. For example, the six-year graduation rate increased to 40% from a baseline of 36% and exceeded the Year 3 target of 37% (Objective 5). Student satisfaction with advising increased to 87.5%, exceeding the target of 60% (Objective 6). At 17.6%, NVU exceeded its target for reducing the average failure/withdrawal rate in gateway courses (Objective 7). NVU raised \$93,087 in non-federal dollars to match \$72,500 of federal funds for an additional \$165,587 added to the Title III endowment. This exceeded the target amount of \$145,000 (Objective 8). Another indicator of satisfactory progress includes spending grant funds at an acceptable rate. After initial carryover funds from the first year, NVU is now on track with expenses.

Data shows that NVU has struggled to meet retention targets; however, continued implementation of Title III activities, especially the partnership with the Gardner Institute, has the potential to impact retention and student success for the remainder of the grant period and beyond. Redesigning gateway courses that prioritize pedagogy and university-wide policies that can inadvertently serve as barriers to access, course completion, and on-time graduation will help NVU meet the goals and objectives of the Title III project. In addition, the Retention Performance Management project will enable NVU's use of institutional data to identify evidence-based practices and to prioritize them as part of an institution-wide retention plan.

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It is apparent to the evaluator that NVU's Title III project continues to be accepted and supported throughout the third year. It is clear from conversations with Nolan Atkins, Provost; Elaine Harvey, Title III Project Director/Director of Student Engagement and Persistence; Dan Regan, Title III Project Advisor; and project personnel that everyone associated with the project is knowledgeable about its scope and enthusiastic and appreciative of the available resources. It is the evaluator's opinion NVU is well positioned to successfully implement the fourth year of the project by fostering early and ongoing student success through college-wide initiatives, systems, and processes, and strengthening NVU's financial future through an increased endowment.