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NEIU State of the University Address October 24, 2023 Katrina E. Bell-Jordan

Interim President I. Welcome Good afternoon! I extend a warm welcome to all of our NEIU faculty, staff, students, alumni and guests joining us today and/or watching remotely. It is an honor and privilege to serve in the role of Interim President this year, and I thank Faculty Senate Chair, Nikolaus [Ho-el] and the Faculty Senate membership for the invitation to deliver this year’s State of the University Address. II. Acknowledgments Since taking on the position of Interim President, and throughout my 26 years at NEIU, I have been gratified to work alongside a campus community that cares deeply about NEIU and that is invested in securing a strong future for the University. I see the role of the University President as essential to leading this charge, along with an “ensemble cast” of faculty, staff, academic and adminirol`ԠԀҀU儀刀ꕠӀհӀԠԐMԠҐðԐMԠ؉␏ခ�䐀䜀倀䁐ҀM΂ѠрՐ�ĀԀ�ᜣㅘ‰հM̐ʀˀ΀PMҐԠՐMհҰҀM΀ԐӀ֐ҀՐՠӀհ׀ĐMˀMՠҀҀ

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As you look around campus this semester, you can’t help but notice the facilities and space improvements underway on the campus grounds – from sidewalks, parking lots and accessibility ramps, to Science lab renovations and Media/Theatre lab technology upgrades. We have also installed a new sign at El Centro and have new campus signage soon-to-be installed on the Main Campus as well. It is also SO good to see the NEIU Spirit Store open this semester, thanks to the efforts of many folks at the University, and I am pleased that the store will be staffed primarily by student employees. So keep shopping! Finally, we are closing in on a groundbreaking date for our new Education Building, which is slated to become a state-of-the-art facility that offers teaching, learning and conferencing spaces for the entire campus community. We have also been working to implement a number of technology upgrades, including Workday, Chrome River and the ESM Procurement system. We have experienced many challenges in rolling out these new technologies, and a cross-section of University teams are working tirelessly to implement the upgrades, to support user needs, and to resolve issues so that we can benefit from the efficiencies we gain from these systems. Please keep an eye out for Workday Adoption Project Updates now being posted each Wednesday. NEIU Programming We also began the academic year with several signature events and programs. There are too many to name, but some highlights include: ● Another successful NEIU Faculty Institute, with this year’s theme being Cultivating our Humanity in Times of Transition. and ● A successful series of NEIU Weekend, HSI Week and Hispanic Heritage Month programs. For example, just last Tuesday, I was thrilled to welcome back to NEIU, double Alumna and 17th Ward Alderperson Jesse Fuentes, who gave the keynote address at the Pedroso Center’s Homecoming event. V. FY 24 Updates Recruitment, Admissions & Enrollment In the area of recruitment, admissions and enrollment, let me begin by thanking NEIU’s Enrollment Management Team for their work in building out our Fall 2023 class; for their work on Spring 2024 enrollment; and for the work already underway to grow our Fall 2024 class. It has been gratifying to see the collaborations among the Enrollment Management team, Department leaders, faculty and staff from various areas in these efforts. Enrollment by the Numbers

66 ● First, this October we are relaunching NEIU’s Undergraduate Retention and Intervention Team (URIT) and the NEIUStar Functional Group ● Second: We are making progress on our institutional-level student success initiatives and career readiness initiatives ● Next: We are making improvements to our onboarding and Orientation processes, with more cohesive and consistent planning and messaging for enrollment events at our El Centro and Carruthers Center locations. ● And, we continue to secure financial support for new freshmen through the NEIU For You scholarship Budget Breakdown On September 21, the NEIU Board of Trustees approved a FY24 Final Operating Budget of $85.3 million dollars. The FY24 budget represents an increase of 1.6 percent over the budget for FY2023, and a reversal of the decline in budget levels seen over the past several years. The stabilization of the operating budget is thanks to: 1) our recruitment and retention efforts; 2) a 7.0 percent increase in our State appropriation; 3) strong investment returns; and 4) the Board’s decision to support the operating budget for FY2024 with reserves of up to $2.5 million. This budget incorporated meaningful investments in the University’s future, including new agreements across Collective Bargaining units, expanded funding for recruitment and retention efforts, funding for a new Nursing Program, scholarship support for Living Learning Communities, and marketing for International Programs. Looking at future fiscal years, we need these investments to begin paying off. The special allocation from reserves was intended as one-time support, and the reality is that this funding will need to be replaced by new revenues and/or expense reductions going forward. Northeastern Student Financial Aid In terms of financial support for our students, 81% of NEIU’s student population applies for financial assistance – including FAFSA, RISE Act, and other scholarships. However, overall Federal Student Loan borrowing by NEIU students has decreased from last year. Here are some data points to explain further: ● The number of FAFSAs filed as a whole increased by 13% (for undergraduates the increase is 18.78%) ● The number of financial aid packages increased by 13% (for undergraduates the increase is 15.92%) ● The number of Pell Grant recipients increased by 8.71% ● Direct loan borrowers decreased by 3%

So why are fewer students borrowing? ● NEIU provides more in tuition discounts than other four-year public universities, including tuition waivers (e.g., for international and undocumented students); expanded eligibility for AIM HIGH and Golden Opportunity recipients; special circumstance funding; and the NEIU For You scholarship.

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Looking at Students Holistically For example, we are increasing our students’ access to mental health resources. In addition to NEIU’s Student Counseling Services offering in-person and online support, we have now launched TimelyCare, which offers 24/7 mental health services. This is a critical resource to our students, who can now access this Care via smartphone, tablet or computer, and who can speak to a crisis counselor immediately or schedule an appointment. The Peer Wellness Program now includes a diverse group of coaches who offer one-on-one mentoring and coaching sessions for NEIU students, and the program also offers support groups and spaces for spa therapy and art therapy, women’s wellness, men’s mental health, and support for veterans and our students with children. Student Affairs has also worked to enhance operations and services offered by the Student Pantry and to work with students seeking to apply for SNAP benefits (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). NEIU’s Power Closet continues to provide free business attire to students preparing for job interviews, and we look forward to showcasing a remodeled Power Closet space in preparation for next month’s Career & Internship Fair, for which we are expecting 80 employers to participate and 400 students and alumni to attend. NEIU’s Living Learning Communities (LLCs) enrolled 101 students across 7 LLC offerings this year – from the Social Justice and Future Teachers LLC, to the STEM and new College of Business and Technology LLC. We are also fortunate to have strong faculty and staff leadership guiding and supporting our students in navigating their living-learning experiences. The Nest and Student Support This Fall 2023, occupancy in the Nest has reached over 94%, compared to 87.4% in Fall 2022. This higher occupancy rate is made possible because of the University’s financial investment in Living Learning Communities through LLC scholarships and housing awards, including Hope Scholars and the Afghan Refugee Transition Program. In terms of student support, since the beginning of the school year, the Nest has held a series of successful programs focusing on academic success, physical wellness, mental health and substance awareness. These programs have been well attended, and students indicate that the programming is making a difference in their sense of belonging and connection to NEIU. Student Emergnse-౑]☀刱䐁፹㖔㡹悔ᄷ鍙䮿所က԰ՐԠҠՐрԀԗIฅ�-m� 샠啰Ԡ"pðMअ!쀄毵▐-m�ĉꀅ瀅怀〳r!恑ing Comm瓅ငɠԣᑀᄷ鍙䎇锠ՐM֐

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students to have faculty and staff supporters at commencement to show how proud we are of their accomplishments, and to celebrate this momentous occasion with them. I also truly appreciate that semester grades are due the next day and that end-of-semester tasks will come due that week. So I thank all of you who can participate, and ask that you please notify our University Events colleagues as soon as possible if you will attend. With that said, I appreciate your attendance at today’s State of the University Address. And as always, I thank you for your ongoing commitment and support for NEIU.