

STRATEGIC PRIORITY PROPOSAL

Designing DePaul Strategic Plan

Fill out the template as appropriate for your subcommittee's initiatives. Please complete by January 19, 2026.

Initiative Title:	College of Education Pricing Strategy for Undergraduate Teaching Licensure Programs
Subcommittee:	Programs of National Interest Subcommittee
Date Submitted:	January 19, 2026

1. INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Key Institutional Challenges:

What are the key current or future institutional challenges that your committee is tasked with addressing?

Given the new regulations coming into play with the implementation of OBBB (wage test and loan limitations), students in several fields of study at DePaul will be at financial risk of not being able to complete their programs. This is particularly risky for students in fields of study that prepare professionals for a workforce that is socially critical and where the professional wages are lower, making the return on tuition investment low. The fields most at risk are: teaching, social work, arts, public health, nursing, and other human services (OT, SLP, Counseling). The initial work of this subcommittee will work on a plan to mitigate the "risk" - ie financial burden of those entering undergraduate teacher preparation (licensure) programs to expand the viability of these programs for those wishing to enter the teaching profession. The key institutional challenges that are the context for this project are:

- **Pipeline Issues:** Consistent declines in enrollment (approx. 30% over the last decade nationally) in teacher preparation/licensure programs, coupled with ongoing dramatic workforce shortages in Chicago Public Schools, statewide, and nationally.
- **Financial Burden of Preparation:** High financial burden of teacher preparation in comparison to other fields, given lack of paid internships that are required for licensure, lack of federal support for pipeline growth, costs of licensing fees, preparation costs and testing fees for skills and knowledge exams, etc.
- **Low ROI:** Low return on tuition investment for completers given lower starting salaries and career wages, and despite the critical need for high-quality professionals in the workforce. (critical social need) This is true across institution types, but particularly salient for private, tuition-driven universities.
- **Financial stability of student body:** A high proportion of education students are Pell eligible, MAP eligible, and they carry a higher debt load than students in other fields. (79.9% education bachelor degree students carry debt vs. 60% for all other majors). We serve high proportions of first-generation and non-traditional students compared to other colleges.

- **Challenged opportunity for program distinction:** Programs are commoditized in the enrollment market due to state licensing, accreditation, and high levels of compliance and regulation. This has the effect of standardizing programs across institutions.
- **Risks posed by OBBB:** Post-graduation wage testing and loan caps threaten both program and student access to federal financial aid. Students may not be able to borrow enough to complete their programs.

Initiative Description:

Describe this initiative and explain how it could potentially address the challenges described above.

We will begin by addressing undergraduate teacher preparation programming to mitigate the return on tuition investment for those pursuing the profession. We begin with education given the financial challenges faced by the student body at DePaul and by education students in general and given the disproportionate financial burden of educator preparation. Further, education fulfills a mission imperative of serving marginalized communities both in the student body to be recruited, and in those served in the profession.

We propose a tuition pricing model to reduce or eliminate tuition debt for students pursuing teacher preparation and licensing. Once a model is established, we will develop a marketing strategy that supports increased enrollment in these programs, with a goal of recruiting a first class of new-to-DePaul students entering in Fall of 2027.

Consideration of Alternative Financial Models

While tuition debt reduction is the preferred model, alternative approaches such as tuition guarantees, income-informed pricing, paid residency models, and employer-supported aid are also being evaluated. These options may be layered or piloted as appropriate to enhance sustainability and flexibility.

Location Advantage & Workforce Alignment

DePaul's Chicago location provides a strategic advantage for recruitment, placement, and employment outcomes through proximity to Chicago Public Schools and regional districts, strengthening both enrollment potential and graduate outcomes.

Marketing & Recruitment Considerations

A targeted marketing and recruitment strategy will be developed in coordination with Enrollment Management, emphasizing value-based messaging, district partnerships, and pipeline development. Marketing investments will be aligned with enrollment targets and adjusted based on application and yield performance.

With the potential for increased enrollment, we will analyze institutional resources necessary to ensure success of a diverse body of teacher candidates, with a variety of learning and program progress needs. We will also analyze the need for additional program resources to accommodate a larger student body. This should include consideration of available instructional resources, advising support, internship (field and student teaching) placements, supervision requirements, career counseling, and other student services.

If teacher candidates can pursue their vocation without disproportionate debt, and begin their careers on more solid financial footing, it could have the outcome of making the profession more

viable to a larger pool of students. This has the potential to strengthen the local workforce, to promote social mobility for under-resourced groups, and expand DePaul's positive social impact.

Once parameters are established for the undergraduate education programs, we will determine a set of criteria for other socially critical programs to be considered for ROTI, time to degree, and loan limitations solutions. We will also consider possibilities for graduate programming in these areas.

2. SCOPE

Objectives:

List 3-5 specific, measurable objectives for this initiative.

Objective 1: Create a financial model that that enables undergraduate students in College of Education teacher licensure programs to graduate without tuition debt while preserving or increasing overall net tuition revenue.

Objective 2: With the help of Financial Aid, develop or define processes to provide additional support to undergraduate students in College of Education teacher licensure programs to utilize every opportunity for scholarships, grants, and gifts.

Objective 3: Evaluate the specific opportunities for market share growth, that includes both an increase in market share, and an increase in the overall available candidate pool. Which markets are feasible? Can the market share growth serve to diversify and expand the current available pool from a mission perspective – a focus on multilingual students, specified under-represented racial/ethnic groups, first generation students, and PELL/MAP eligible students?

Objective 4: Analyze and report on the institutional cost necessary for increased enrollment in education programs, including resources necessary to support the success of a more diversified student body.

Objective 5: Analyze external partnership opportunities to further expand programming options and to support financial viability of programming – school district partnerships, community college pathways options, expansion of residency programming, expansion of apprenticeship-based programming.

Objective 6: Develop and set criteria for defining the “programs of national interest” at DePaul. This should include prioritization of criteria and data thresholds for inclusion. Include differentiation for inclusion of undergraduate vs graduate programs.

Deliverables:

What tangible outputs will this initiative produce?

1. A financial plan including revenue estimates, required enrollment increases, and overall expenses.
2. A marketing plan for recruitment for new-to-DePaul education students to begin programming in Fall 2027.
3. Plan for development of new articulation agreements, list of focused school district partnerships and pathways

4. Outline of institutional resources needed to develop programming and ensure student success.
5. Set of criteria to determine inclusion of other programs as programs of national interest at DePaul.

Ultimate Deliverable:

Increased enrollment and graduation in DePaul's undergraduate teacher licensure programs (and eventually other socially critical professions).

Out of Scope:

What is explicitly NOT included in this initiative?

Graduate Programs (including those that lead to teacher licensure)

Success Metrics:

How will success be measured? Include baseline data if available.

Success Metrics & Scaling Criteria

Success will be evaluated using a defined set of financial, enrollment, and outcome-based metrics to assess program viability, student outcomes, and readiness for scaling. Metrics include:

- **Enrollment & Pipeline Health:** Number of students enrolled in undergraduate teacher licensure programs, including application volume, yield, and continuation trends.
- **Financial Performance:** Total net tuition revenue and overall program profitability relative to baseline projections.
- **Student Financial Outcomes:** Average student debt at completion, with a goal of no tuition debt, and measurement of total debt carried by program completers.
- **Employment Outcomes:** Number and percentage of DePaul graduates hired into Chicagoland teaching positions, with job placement assessed within 6–12 months of graduation.
- **Capacity Indicators:** Availability of instructional, advising, supervision, and field placement capacity to support current and projected enrollment levels.

These metrics will be reviewed annually following each entering cohort. Formal decisions regarding continuation, modification, or scaling of the model will occur after evaluation of at least two entering cohorts.

3. SWOT ANALYSIS

Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of this initiative in terms of addressing the challenges described in Section 2. Discuss internal and external opportunities and threats that will increase or decrease the likelihood of achieving stated objectives.

Strengths:

What strengths does this initiative leverage? What advantages does it have?

- DePaul College of Education has brand recognition (especially in Chicago)
- Increased enrollment would solve some larger fiscal issues that have been an impediment in recruiting students into education
- We already have existing high quality accredited (with good reputation) education programs
- Directly advances DePaul's Vincentian mission by reducing financial barriers in a socially critical, high-need profession.

- Anticipates and mitigates risk from new federal wage-test and loan-cap regulations.
- Financial modeling indicates enrollment growth can offset increased institutional aid while maintaining or increasing total net tuition revenue.
- DePaul's Chicago location enables strong recruitment, placement, and employment pipelines with CPS and regional districts.
- Provides a structured model that can be evaluated, refined, and scaled to other programs of national interest.
- The College of Education offers a robust and diverse portfolio of licensure programs that directly align with and address well-documented regional and national educator workforce shortages
- Teacher licensure programs address a clear workforce shortage at the local, state, and national level, strengthening the case of institutional prioritization.

Weaknesses:

What weaknesses or limitations does this initiative face?

- Getting the model generated and in place may take more time than we have before we see a larger cascading effect on enrollment,
- Could disadvantage students from lower income backgrounds (depending on how the model utilizes banks)
- Requires increased institutional investment before enrollment growth is realized-- Enrollment growth will increase variable costs (faculty, supervision, advising, placements) that must be carefully managed.
- Financial projections rely on enrollment yield and continuation assumptions that may shift during early implementation.
- Sustained growth relies on recruitment, student persistence, and achievement
- Students are borrowing for more than just tuition, and this tuition-debt free promise might not actually be meaningful
- Current tuition dependent revenue model limits flexibility in reducing student debt without alternative stream
- Increased enrollment, especially among higher-need students, requires additional advising, academic support, coaching, and field placement coordination.
- Financial projections rely on enrollment yield and continuation assumptions that may shift during early implementation

Opportunities:

What internal and external opportunities will increase the likelihood of this initiative achieving its goals?

- Ability to capture market share from public and private competitors by equalizing net cost while preserving private-university value.
- Expansion of district partnerships, paid residencies, and pathway programs to support both enrollment and outcomes.
- Philanthropic and grant opportunities aligned with teacher preparation, access, and workforce development.
- Enhanced job placement and employer engagement to strengthen graduate earnings and regulatory compliance.
- Use of education programs as a controlled pilot before extending the model to additional programs.
- Position DePaul as a leader in Illinois addressing critical workforce development needs in education (and beyond).

Threats:

What internal and external threats will decrease the likelihood of this initiative achieving its goals?

- Failure to meet enrollment targets could delay financial break-even and reduce margins.

- Unmanaged growth could strain instructional capacity, placements, and student support services.
- Policy changes or competitive responses could affect long-term differentiation and viability.
- Other institutions may implement similar financial models, diluting the impact on DePaul's enrollment gains.
- Lower-cost public institutions and alternative licensure pathways compete aggressively for price-sensitive students.
- Rapid enrollment growth without proportional investments in support services risks student success, retention, and licensure outcomes particularly for high-need populations.
- Continue to spend more in institutional funding is a concern based on overall increases year over year reducing NTR.

Stakeholder Feedback:

Summarize feedback gathered from relevant internal and external stakeholders that informed this analysis.

Steering Committee feedback emphasized the need for clearer articulation of implementation timing, growth-related costs, scalability, and success metrics. These considerations are reflected in this analysis.

Information Needed:

What additional information, research, or data will need to be gathered to support this analysis?

- *Validation/Verification of enrollment scenarios (low/medium/high) with associated instructional and operational costs*
- *Validation/Verification of capacity analysis for faculty, placements, and student support*
- Analysis of cumulative effects of increased expenses with lower tuition
- Marketing and recruitment cost estimates aligned with enrollment targets, and specific marketing timelines
- Market share analysis of student population and “availability” (expansion of existing pool to include targeted populations and targeted locations)
- Analysis of potential cost reduction levers
- Job placement and earnings data to support outcome and compliance goals
- Assessment of philanthropic and external funding opportunities

4. TIMELINE

Fiscal Year 2026 (Current Year)

Phase / Milestone	Target Date	Key Activities
Financial & Scenario Refinement	Fall–Winter FY26	Refine low-, medium-, and high-enrollment scenarios; incorporate instructional, operational, and marketing cost assumptions; identify timing of early financial asks; establish financial sustainability thresholds.
Partnership & Capacity Planning	Winter–Spring FY26	Initiate discussions with CPS, regional districts, and potential pathway partners; scope staffing, coordination, advising, and supervision resources required for pathway

		development; identify anticipated pathway-related costs.
Implementation Readiness	Spring–Summer FY26	Finalize preferred pricing and aid approach; confirm success metrics and decision thresholds; align with Enrollment Management and Financial Aid on marketing strategy, operational readiness, and implementation requirements.

Fiscal Year 2027 (Planning Horizon)

Phase / Milestone	Target Date	Key Activities
Marketing & Recruitment Launch	Summer–Fall FY27	Deploy targeted marketing and recruitment strategy (primary early financial investment); launch value-based messaging emphasizing affordability and pathways; monitor application and yield trends to guide marketing spend.
Infrastructure & Support Alignment	Fall–Winter FY27	Finalize pathway agreements and operational workflows; align faculty, advising, placement, and supervision resources; prepare infrastructure to support increased enrollment through pathway entry points.
First Cohort Enrollment	Fall 2027	Enroll first new-to-DePaul cohort under revised pricing model; monitor early enrollment, yield, and continuation indicators.
Evaluation & Adjustment	Spring–Summer FY27	Review enrollment performance, early cost indicators, and operational capacity; adjust marketing investment, aid levels, or pacing as needed; prepare for second cohort recruitment.

Key Dependencies:

- Enrollment performance relative to modeled scenarios
- Availability of instructional and advising capacity
- Field placement and district partnership readiness
- Marketing effectiveness and yield trends
- Financial sustainability thresholds and budget alignment

5. PROJECTED EXPENSES & REVENUE

Describe projected expenses and potential revenue associated with the implementation of the initiative. Provide best-guess estimates on the likelihood of achieving the projected revenue.

Enrollment Growth & Cost Awareness

Enrollment growth will introduce variable instructional and operational costs that will be incorporated into final implementation planning. These costs may include additional full-time and part-time faculty, field supervision and placement coordination, advising and student success staffing, marketing and recruitment expenses, and compliance-related support. Cost assumptions will be evaluated alongside enrollment scenarios to ensure financial sustainability as programs scale.

Note: FY26 should only include expenses if any are required. We do not expect any revenue impact for FY26. Please work directly with Financial Affairs through the PMO to estimate any potential finances.

Projected Expenses

Cost Category	FY26	FY27	FY28
Please see the attached spreadsheet	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
TOTAL PROJECTED EXPENSES	\$	\$	\$

Potential Revenue & Savings (FY27-FY28)

Revenue/Savings	FY26	FY27	FY28
Current enrollment modeling			
Pending continued development of financial model		\$	\$
TOTAL POTENTIAL REVENUE/SAVINGS		\$	\$

Net Financial Impact Summary:

[Summarize overall financial picture: total investment needed, expected returns, timeline to break even or achieve positive ROI]

6. COLLABORATORS

Collaborating Units:

Which colleges, departments, or offices will need to be involved?

Unit	Nature of Collaboration
College of Education	<i>For conversations around capacity, cost, and student impact</i>
Enrollment and Marketing	<i>For decisions related to marketing, applications/admissions/ and institutional financial aid levers</i>
Academy Affairs	<i>For conversations around non-COE capacity and incremental costs</i>
IRMA	<i>For enrollment modeling, historical trends,</i>
Owners of other Programs of National Interest	<i>To continue the discussions of scaling</i>

External Partners (if applicable):

[Vendors, consultants, peer institutions, community partners, etc.]

