

Contact: John Nash

REGISTER OF UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS

Actions Requested: Consider recommending to the Board approval of:

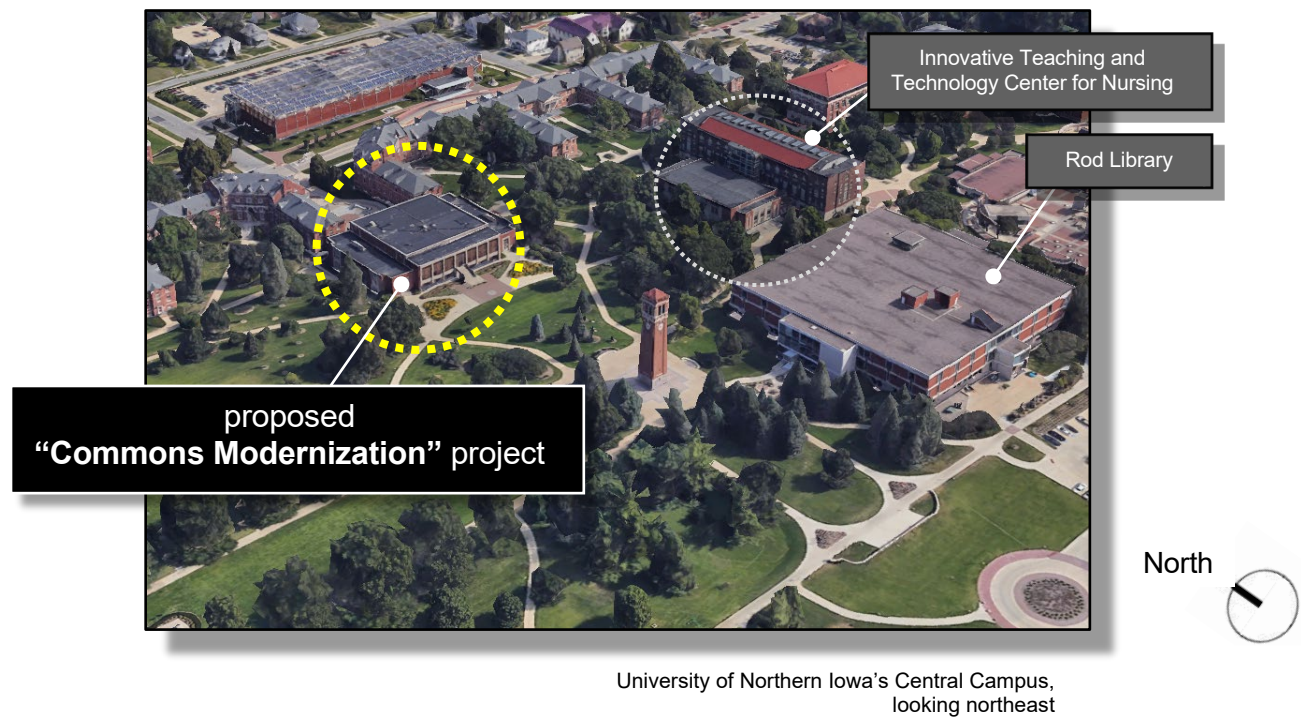
1. Permission to Proceed with Project Planning for the:
 - **Commons Modernization** project.

UI project #1 of 1
Commons Modernization

Executive Summary: The University of Northern Iowa requests Board approval of Permission to Proceed with Project Planning to modernize the Commons. The estimated project budget of \$30 million to \$35 million would be funded by State Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure (RIIF) Appropriations, General Education Renewal Funds and Treasurer’s Temporary Investment Income.

- During the 2025 Legislative Session through HF 1039, \$1 million in RIIF funds were appropriated to this project starting in FY 2026.

Background: The University of Northern Iowa proposes to renovate the Commons into a public service hub for outreach and civic education. The Commons has long been used as a center point for civic and community building, first serving as a campus dining center and union building and more recently as a home for the UNI Foundation and a meeting place for community events such as the Iowa Board of Regents meetings. UNI would build upon this tradition by adding a new Center for Civic Education to the Commons that would educate the next generation of leaders for Iowa.



University of Northern Iowa's Central Campus,
 looking northeast

The Center for Civic Education would serve as a nationally recognized leader in research, teaching, and public outreach in free speech and civic education. It is established in response to directive 9 by the Iowa Board of Regents “to explore a proposal, including cost, to establish a widespread initiative that includes opportunities for education and research on free speech and civic education.”

The Center would enhance civic education among university students, pre-K-12 students and teachers, and the broader public by developing and implementing effective civic learning strategies, encouraging respectful dialogue across differences, and offering educational resources on free

speech and civic knowledge. It would serve the state of Iowa by centering civic education and free speech in its activities, and would promote the values of free speech, civic leadership, public service, and citizenship.

The University would accomplish this by completely renovating the building. A new, more prominent entrance would be created. ADA access would be improved and provided to all levels of the building. Deferred maintenance identified in a 2023 building assessment including code compliance items, exterior envelope, interior finishes, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and technology system upgrades, would be addressed and that would renew the building's role as a showpiece of the University.



University of Northern Iowa's Commons, looking northeast

Built in 1932, the Commons building on the University of Northern Iowa campus had an addition and renovation in 1965. Since 1965, only minor renovations have occurred.

The building site is next to the historic Campanile, making it one of the most prominent buildings on campus. There are significant deferred maintenance issues that would be corrected through this project and are identified in a 2023 building assessment. Those deferred maintenance issues would include HVAC, electrical, plumbing and technology systems which accumulated in the facility and now need to be addressed.

The University of Northern Iowa proposes to renovate the Commons into a public service hub for outreach and civic education. The Commons has long been used as a center point for civic and community building, first serving as a campus dining center and union building and more recently as a home for the UNI Foundation and a meeting place for community events such as the Iowa Board of Regents meetings. UNI would build upon this tradition by adding a new Center for Civic Education to the Commons that would educate the next generation of leaders for Iowa.