NSHE SIS Optimization Roadmap

Beyond

Table of Contents

01
Executive Summary

The Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) is looking to the horizon of technology transformation with vision and anticipation. From student information system limitations to the anticipated rapid proliferation of AI across the system, there is an urgent need to design and deploy a multi-year plan for technology transformation to meet those needs.

The traditional approach would be to migrate to a cloud-based SIS like Workday with the promise of improving interface and workflows. After all, that's what others are doing. But institutions that have made this decision find themselves 8 to 9 figure investments in the hole, with no integration of data across hundreds of point systems, and no closer to an enterprise-wide AI future, or measurable change in student success, or institutional outcomes/KPIs.

This report will identify reasons NSHE should not follow the masses, but instead chart a course that positions the system and each institution for a future where traditional monolithic systems (like SIS) and point systems built on 10-20 year old SaaS technologies are obsolete.

This report is rooted in two foundations:

1. Insight gained from ThinkSpaces and interviews with technology and business leaders from participating NSHE institutions. (Appendix 2 and 3 include some of those findings)

2. 100+ years of Beyond's combined experience in higher education technology and strategy, and a point of view (POV) based on hands-on experience building and deploying enterprise-level AI.

Based on our study and POV, we recommend the following staged, multi-year approach that will make the NSHE system future-ready and nimble enough to adopt a new SIS if, and when necessary.

1. **Optimize the shared instance of PeopleSoft** to take advantage of delivered tools, while also customizing automations that will improve the student and staff experience. These "quick wins" can go a long way to improve outcomes schools are getting, while fostering trust and positioning them for future change. Again, UNLV and Reno can be offered the opportunity to take advantage of these optimizations if they are interested. During this phase, **conduct**

1. **system-wide data cleanup, normalization, and contextualization**—to prepare the system for an AI future.

2. **Adopt and deploy an AI Roadmap.** We'd recommend inviting UNLV and UNR to participate if they so choose, but we recommend that the shared instance institutions benefit from a combined effort led by NSHE. Beyond has included a copy of its AI Roadmap in Appendix A as a resource. During this phase, **Position SCS for Level 3 IT Maturity** and launch new programs and services that align with that. This ensures that SCS is not seen as a maintenance/break-fix/"gatekeeper of technology" organization, but more so an advisor, strategic guide, and enabler of platform-level innovation.

3. **Conduct Pre-Work toward a new student system.** At Johns Hopkins University, we are engaged in a 3-year journey involving 33 different workstreams ranging from creating divisional alignment and data standardization to workflow modernization in order for them to be ready to even shop for a new SIS. Hopkins operates 10 independently run colleges - each of which runs their own instance of SIS, and each with their own business processes, policies, and structures. Very much like NSHE, moving to a new student system without this multi-year pre-work would have cost them tens of millions of dollars during an implementation. By doing the work for a fraction of the cost now, they reduce risk, burnout, and costs while ensuring the best possible implementation outcomes. More importantly, they can go to market shopping for capability based on their modernized stance, rather than a lift-and-shift of legacy. We strongly recommend that NSHE engage in similar pre-work a minimum of 3-5 years before SIS vendor search.

Going through the above 3 phases (some that may overlap each other over a 3-5 year period) will yield a significant impact across the system - in areas ranging from student experience and success outcomes to staff's ability to provide better service to students. It will also prepare the system for a seamless transition to a new student system at some point in the future.

> **FOR NSHE, THIS MEANS THAT CONTINUING TO VIEW SIS CHANGE AS SYNONYMOUS WITH INNOVATION WOULD REPLICATE PAST PATTERNS. THE SYSTEM MUST INSTEAD DISTINGUISH BETWEEN TRANSACTIONAL STABILITY (PEOPLESOFT) AND TRANSFORMATIONAL CAPACITY (AI OVERLAYS, ORCHESTRATION, AND UNIFIED DATA).**

NSHE's position to extend PeopleSoft for the next 5+ years creates a clear mandate: optimize today's system while preparing for tomorrow's realities. To understand why waiting for a future SIS replacement is not a viable innovation strategy, we must examine the structural limits of the monolithic SIS model in an AI-first environment.

02

Why the Monolithic SIS Breaks in an AI-First Environment

For decades, the prevailing logic in higher education IT has been to consolidate as many core student processes as possible—admissions, registration, advising, financial aid, records—into one vendor's monolithic Student Information System (SIS). This approach made sense when integrations were expensive, change cycles were slow, and the SIS's main value was accurate record-keeping and compliance reporting.

While AI-first operating models—where intelligent agents, automation, and predictive analytics orchestrate outcomes in real time—are already common in sectors like logistics, manufacturing, and financial services, higher education is only beginning to experiment with them. A handful of institutions, such as ASU, Maryville University, and Georgia State, have demonstrated elements of this shift. The macro trend, however, is unmistakable: across industries, value has moved from executing transactions to optimizing and orchestrating outcomes across multiple systems and data sources.

Four Structural Weaknesses of the Monolithic Model

1. Data Gravity and Fragmentation

Generative AI, retrieval-augmented generation (RAG), and agentic systems require clean, unified, semantically rich data. In practice, the SIS holds only a subset of the student reality. Learning engagement sits in the LMS, recruitment history in the CRM, co-curricular activity in separate apps, and student well-being data in health systems.

Monolithic SIS vendors often act as data gatekeepers, limiting real-time extraction, controlling schema changes, and narrowing API availability. These barriers slow down or raise the cost of building AI pipelines. EDUCAUSE's 2024 AI Task Force found that data access barriers are the number one inhibitor to campus AI adoption, outranking even funding and governance concerns.

2. Pace of Change Mismatch

In AI-first industries, operating models evolve in weeks-to-months cycles. Institutions may

want to pilot a new model, deploy micro-interventions, and iterate continuously. By contrast, monolithic SIS vendors deliver major functional updates once or twice a year, often requiring multi-month QA cycles to avoid regression risk.

McKinsey's research on AI-first organizations shows they deploy 5–10x more changes annually than traditional enterprise applications can accommodate without modular, decoupled architectures. In higher education, this mismatch will force AI roadmaps to conform to SIS release schedules—slowing innovation at precisely the moment agility is most needed.

3. Workflow Rigidity

In an AI-first operating model, agents perform end-to-end orchestration: an advising agent could modify a course plan, book a peer study group, and trigger a financial aid review in one flow.

Monolithic systems enforce bounded workflows within their modules, making such cross-process orchestration difficult. Gartner's "Composable Architecture" framework stresses that AI enablement requires decoupled, event-driven workflows capable of spanning systems. Today, even modest multi-system automation in platforms like PeopleSoft or Workday often requires external RPA or iPaaS tools, adding cost and fragility.

4. Vendor Lock-in vs. Innovation Ecosystem

AI thrives in open ecosystems where best-of-breed tools—custom LLMs, cognitive search services, external orchestration platforms—can be integrated rapidly. Monolithic SIS vendors, however, often design licensing and product strategies to keep interactions inside their stack, discouraging deep integrations that

bypass native UIs or workflows.

Combining data from multiple systems yielded significantly better predictions of student academic performance than any single source alone."—Chango et al., Multi-source and multimodal data fusion for predicting academic performance in blended learning university courses (arXiv, 2024)

And Gartner warns that 60% of AI projects will fail by 2026 unless they are supported by "AI-ready" data—i.e., well-governed, accessible data foundations. Together, these insights affirm that cross-system data fusion, not centralized silos, is foundational for high-impact AI in student success.

Common Objections—and Why They Don't Hold

"Vendors are adding AI features into the SIS."

True, but these features are constrained by the vendor's own data model and release cycle. They rarely support institution-specific tuning or cross-system orchestration—the patterns proven in AI-first industries.

"A single vendor ensures better security and compliance."

Centralization can help, but modern IAM, API gateways, and policy-as-code allow multi-system overlays to meet or exceed monolithic security and compliance controls. Overlay architectures can also provide finer-grained agent permissions and audit trails.

"Multiple systems are more expensive to integrate."

That was true in the point-to-point integration era. Today, event-driven fabrics (Ellucian Ethos, Oracle OCI

Streaming, Azure Event Grid) and neutral iPaaS platforms make cross-system orchestration efficient and reusable.

"The SIS is the single source of truth."

It should remain the system of record for official data—but in an AI-first model, it is one of many authoritative sources feeding a campus knowledge graph. Its role shifts from sole orchestrator to service provider for the cognitive layer.

The structural weaknesses of monolithic systems—data gravity, slow pace of change, rigid workflows, and vendor lock-in—are not abstract risks. They already constrain NSHE's ability to pilot AI-driven advising, cross-institutional analytics, and student engagement tools. The path forward is not to abandon the SIS overnight, but to reposition it within a new architectural model.

The Architectural Shift

The Post-SIS Era does not mean eliminating the Student Information System overnight, but that it is a strategic reframing—a recognition that the static SIS paradigm of the last four decades must evolve to meet the realities of an AI-first environment. The term "Post-SIS" should not be taken literally at this stage, but as an acknowledgment that the SIS's role, architecture, and integration model must fundamentally change.

The Post-SIS Vendor Scan: How AI Reshapes System Choices

For four decades, SIS evaluations compared functional checklists, vendor stability, and implementation timelines. In the AI era, that logic is obsolete. The question is no longer "which SIS best fits our requirements," but:

- How well does each vendor support decoupling orchestration and intelligence from the SIS core?
- How much institutional lift is required to build the AI-ready overlay that truly enables transformation?

To answer this, Beyond Academics applies the Seven Levers Dual-Lens Framework, which evaluates vendors across both:

- Current-State Strength — how the platform performs in production today
- Future-State Readiness — how well it positions NSHE for an AI-first, Post-SIS architecture.

What follows is not a binary ranking of 'best SIS,' but a strategic map of vendor trade-offs in stability, innovation, and AI readiness.

> **PEOPLESOFT MAY REMAIN THE SYSTEM OF RECORD, BUT IT MUST NO LONGER DICTATE THE LIMITS OF STUDENT EXPERIENCE OR INSTITUTIONAL AGILITY.**

With this Post-SIS framing in mind, we can now assess how leading vendors—and NSHE's incumbent—position themselves for an AI-first future. The question is not simply functional coverage, but how each platform supports decoupling orchestration and intelligence from the SIS core. Using the Seven Levers Dual-Lens Framework, we evaluate current-state strengths and future-state readiness for Workday, Ellucian, Oracle Cloud, and PeopleSoft.

03

The Post-SIS Era Vendor Scan

1. Workday Student

2. Ellucian Banner (SaaS)

3. Oracle Student Cloud

4. Oracle PeopleSoft Campus Solutions (NSHE Incumbent)

Beyond 8

1. Workday Student

Overview

Workday Student is positioned as the modern SaaS–native SIS, with strong brand recognition in enterprise cloud delivery. Its appeal lies in a consumer-grade user interface, unified HR/Finance/Student ecosystem, and a continuous delivery model that resonates with institutions seeking modernization and staff–facing efficiencies.

For NSHE, Workday offers a compelling contrast to legacy systems: an intuitive interface, mobile–first engagement, and native cloud deployment. Adoption would position NSHE alongside other early-adopter systems and align with Workday's growing footprint in higher education.

However, Workday's relative youth in the SIS market—first launched in 2016—means its functional depth still lags mature systems like Banner or PeopleSoft. Institutions often report gaps in areas like financial aid complexity, degree audit, and regulatory nuances. While Workday is evolving quickly, it requires institutions to adapt processes to the platform's design rather than the reverse.

AI & Data Readiness

Workday's Prism Analytics and open data core provide significantly stronger foundations for AI readiness than Ellucian. The data model is more flexible and API-first, with a focus on real-time integration. Workday has announced partnerships and initiatives around AI copilots and embedded machine learning, leveraging both its internal data corpus and third-party integrations.

Still, Workday remains primarily a closed ecosystem. Extending beyond its suite often requires custom integration, and while Workday Prism offers advanced reporting, it is not a full-fledged, event-driven knowledge fabric. For NSHE, this means Workday can accelerate analytics but would still need augmentation for agentic orchestration across non-Workday systems (e.g., Canvas, CRM, health, aid portals).

Pace of Change

Workday operates on a continuous delivery cadence, with updates every few weeks. This agility is a strength: institutions benefit from frequent improvements without major disruptive upgrades. It positions Workday as closer to AI-first iteration models, compared to Ellucian's slower roadmap.

The trade-off is that institutions must adapt to Workday's release train. Updates are vendor-driven, sometimes requiring rapid change management. For NSHE, this could strain smaller institutions less equipped to absorb constant change.

Workflow Flexibility

Workday excels in workflow automation within its suite, offering configurable processes and embedded orchestration tools. However, its strength is largely intra-Workday. Cross-domain orchestration —spanning Canvas, advising CRMs, and financial aid systems—still requires external RPA or middleware.

Compared to Ellucian, Workday is more flexible, but it is not yet a fully composable, event-driven architecture. For NSHE, this means Workday can streamline internal operations but would not eliminate the need for a neutral orchestration overlay for AI-driven processes.

Ecosystem & Lock-in

Workday has built a strong ecosystem, particularly with Workday Extend, enabling custom applications within the Workday platform. This creates opportunities for innovation, but the innovation is anchored inside the Workday stack. Integrating best-of-breed AI services is more challenging than with Oracle's open OCI model.

Licensing and implementation costs are high, and institutions often find themselves adapting to Workday's "opinionated" processes rather than configuring deep customizations. For NSHE, this creates a balance between modernity and flexibility: Workday would deliver a polished experience, but at the cost of some institutional uniqueness.

Seven Levers Dual-Lens Evaluation for NSHE

1 Lever 1: User Experience & Engagement

Current-State Strength

Workday offers the most consumer-grade interface in the SIS market: mobile-first, intuitive, and unified across HR/Finance/Student. For NSHE students and staff, this would represent a major leap forward compared to PeopleSoft or Banner.

Future-State Readiness

Engagement is still form—and process-driven, not conversational or agent-driven. Workday has announced AI copilots, but they remain early-stage. NSHE would still need an external AI-first engagement layer for contextual nudging and student success interventions.

2 Lever 2: Data Model & Integration

Current-State Strength

Workday's data model is API-first, with Prism Analytics providing flexible reporting and real-time data sharing. This is a step-change improvement over legacy systems.

Future-State Readiness

Despite Prism, Workday is not a semantic, event-driven integration fabric. Data remains bound to the Workday ecosystem, limiting multimodal AI enablement unless NSHE builds an independent AI data layer.

3 Lever 3: Analytics & Decision Support

Current-State Strength

Workday Prism offers advanced analytics with real-time dashboards and embedded insights. This provides more transparency than Banner or PeopleSoft.

Future-State Readiness

Analytics are still largely vendor-defined. While Workday is piloting generative AI copilots, these are early and constrained to Workday's ecosystem. For NSHE, achieving custom AI analytics would require integration with external platforms.

4 Lever 4: Process Automation & Orchestration

Current-State Strength

Workday offers strong intra-suite workflow automation, configurable by administrators without heavy coding.

Future-State Readiness

Automation is not natively composable across external systems. For cross-domain orchestration (advising + LMS + aid), NSHE would still need external RPA/iPaaS layers.

5 Lever 5: Extensibility & Ecosystem

Current-State Strength

Workday Extend enables custom applications within the Workday ecosystem, fostering innovation.

Future-State Readiness

The ecosystem is Workday-centric, limiting openness to third-party AI or best-of-breed solutions. For NSHE, this creates a risk of vendor lock-in.

6 Lever 6: Vendor Viability & Strategy

Current-State Strength

Workday is financially strong and rapidly expanding in higher education. Its SaaS-native model resonates with modern IT strategies.

Future-State Readiness

Workday's roadmap emphasizes continuous delivery and UI modernization. AI strategy is developing, but not yet as open or robust as Oracle's OCI ecosystem. For NSHE, this means Workday would deliver modernization now, but AI extensibility later.

7 Lever 7: Implementation & Change Enablement

Current-State Strength

Workday implementations are complex but well-supported by a growing consulting ecosystem. Its modern UX reduces training burdens compared to Banner.

Future-State Readiness

Implementation remains a multi-year effort with high cost. Once complete, the system delivers usability improvements but only incremental gains in AI readiness unless paired with external investment in data and orchestration.

Dual-Lens Summary for NSHE

Current-State Strength

Workday offers the most modern UX and SaaS-native model of any SIS vendor. For NSHE, it would deliver visible modernization and improved staff/student satisfaction.

Future-State Readiness

Workday is more AI-ready than Ellucian but still bound by its ecosystem. Its roadmap is promising but not yet mature for agentic, cross-system orchestration.

Implication:

For NSHE, Workday is a modernization play. It would deliver immediate experience gains and align with SaaS trends, but would not, on its own enable AI-first transformation. To avoid lock-in and ensure future agility, NSHE would still need to invest in an independent AI-ready data and orchestration layer outside of Workday's ecosystem.

2. Ellucian Banner (SaaS)

Overview

Ellucian Banner remains the most widely deployed Student Information System (SIS) in U.S. higher education, especially among public regional universities and state systems. Its longevity reflects a proven ability to handle scale, regulatory compliance, and the transactional depth required by complex institutions.

For NSHE, Banner represents the archetypal "safe" SIS choice: mature, broadly supported, and backed by a deep ecosystem of consultants and functional experts. It would provide stability and continuity, particularly for compliance-heavy processes like financial aid and records.

Yet in the context of an AI-first, Post-SIS architecture, Banner's strengths are also its constraints. Originally designed in the 1980s as a transactional backbone, Banner has evolved incrementally, layering APIs, portals, and SaaS delivery onto a fundamentally monolithic core. While Ellucian markets Ethos as its integration and data fabric, most institutions experience Banner primarily as a tightly bound system of record with limited orchestration flexibility.

The core question for NSHE is not whether Banner can deliver reliability today — it can — but whether it positions the system for the next decade of AI-driven transformation.

AI & Data Readiness

Banner's architecture creates friction for AI enablement. Its database model is **transactional rather than semantic,** requiring heavy lifting to integrate with modern AI frameworks like knowledge graphs or Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG). While Ethos provides an API layer, institutions report latency, data freshness challenges, and difficulty extending Ethos into non-Ellucian ecosystems.

This matters because **high-value AI use cases—early warning systems, adaptive advising, personalized nudging—depend on real-time, multimodal data fusion.** As Gartner and EDUCAUSE note, monolithic SIS platforms cannot serve as the AI-ready data layer; they become one input among many. For NSHE, Banner would need to be reframed as a contributor to an **independent AI-ready integration fabric**, not the orchestrator of intelligence.

Pace of Change

Ellucian's release cycle remains **measured in years, not weeks**. Even in SaaS delivery, functional innovation lags compared to competitors like Workday. Upgrades are still disruptive, requiring regression testing and staff adaptation.

By contrast, AI-first industries deploy **5–10x more changes annually** to support experimentation and adaptive operating models. For NSHE, this means any AI innovation would need to be built *around* Banner, not within it.

Workflow Rigidity

Banner's workflows reflect decades of policy-driven standardization, but they are **not natively event-driven or composable**. Tools like Banner Workflow and Ellucian Workflow extend automation, and Ellucian has introduced Data Connect as a modern low-code iPaaS. These improvements matter, but they are **bounded solutions:** orchestration across Canvas, CRM, and financial aid still requires external RPA or middleware.

In practice, Ellucian workflows reduce some friction but **do not enable the kind of cross-domain, agentic orchestration required for AI-first student experiences.**

Ecosystem & Lock-in

Ellucian has built a sizable partner ecosystem and offers add-ons like Experience, Degree Works, and CRM Advise. For institutions that value continuity and vendor alignment, this creates a coherent package.

But the ecosystem is **Ellucian-centric**, and licensing models often discourage bypassing Ellucian middleware. Compared to Oracle's open OCI environment or Workday Extend, Ellucian's ecosystem is relatively closed. For NSHE, innovation speed would be slowed by vendor-controlled chokepoints.

Seven Levers Dual-Lens Evaluation for NSHE

1 Lever 1: User Experience & Engagement

Current-State Strength

Ellucian Experience provides a modernized portal that unifies student and staff interfaces. It simplifies navigation and improves usability compared to legacy Banner screens, offering a baseline of consumer-grade experience.

Future-State Readiness

Experience remains portal-driven, not agent-driven. Banner lacks contextual, AI-mediated interactions such as proactive nudges or conversational guidance. NSHE would need to **build an external intelligent engagement layer** to achieve parity with AI-first designs.

2 Lever 2: Data Model & Integration

Current-State Strength

Banner's data model is comprehensive and proven for compliance and transactional accuracy. Ethos provides APIs to exchange data across Ellucian products and some third-party tools.

Future-State Readiness

Banner is not event-driven. Schema changes are slow, APIs are uneven, and real-time multimodal fusion requires extensive transformation. For NSHE, building an **independent AI-ready data fabric** would be essential.

3 Lever 3: Analytics & Decision Support

Current-State Strength

Banner provides standard reporting plus Intelligent Insights, which apply ML to surface risks (e.g., retention, financial aid). These tools are valuable for incremental gains.

Future-State Readiness

Analytics are vendor-defined and limited. Banner lacks open pipelines for institution-specific AI tuning or LLM integration. Unlike Oracle or Workday, Ellucian offers no broad analytics platform. NSHE would need **external analytics and AI infrastructure.**

4 Lever 4: Process Automation & Orchestration

Current-State Strength

Banner reliably automates traditional SIS workflows (registration, grading, aid disbursement). Workflow tools extend automation within the Ellucian suite.

Future-State Readiness

Banner is **not natively composable or event-driven.** Cross-domain orchestration (e.g., advising + Canvas + aid) would still require middleware or RPA. For NSHE, Banner would be a **bottleneck for AI-first orchestration.**

5 Lever 5: Extensibility & Ecosystem

Current-State Strength

Add-ons (Experience, Degree Works, CRM Advise) extend Banner functionality, with a robust partner community for support.

Future-State Readiness

The ecosystem is inward-looking. Ethos mainly connects Ellucian products, limiting openness to best-of-breed AI services. For NSHE, this means **innovation would be constrained unless an independent layer is built.**

6 Lever 6: Vendor Viability & Strategy

Current-State Strength

Ellucian is stable, with a large installed base and deep public-system penetration. It understands compliance at scale.

Future-State Readiness

Strategy emphasizes SaaS migration and portals, not AI-native architectures. AI initiatives are modest compared to Oracle and Workday. Banner risks remaining primarily a compliance vendor, not an AI enabler.

7 Lever 7: Implementation & Change Enablement

Current-State Strength

Banner has a mature consulting ecosystem, and many NSHE staff are familiar with it, reducing training risks.

Future-State Readiness

A SaaS migration would be a **multi-year effort** with disruption and cost, yielding only **marginal capability improvements** over PeopleSoft. Without parallel AI investments, the return on effort would be limited.

Dual-Lens Summary for NSHE

Current-State Strength

Banner delivers stability, regulatory confidence, and mature functionality. For NSHE, it is the lowest-risk option for continuity.

Future-State Readiness

Banner is the least AI-ready of the major SIS vendors. Its architecture, data model, and ecosystem are too constrained to serve as the foundation for a Post-SIS strategy.

Implication:

If NSHE selects Banner, it must explicitly treat it as a system of record only, retaining it for compliance and transactions while building all AI-driven orchestration, analytics, and engagement outside Ellucian's ecosystem. Banner provides continuity but does not position NSHE for leadership in the AI era.

3. Oracle Student Cloud

Overview

Oracle Student Cloud (OSC) is Oracle's SaaS-native SIS offering, designed to integrate with its broader Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI) ecosystem. Its ambition is clear: to leverage Oracle's enterprise ERP strength, deep higher education domain expertise, and rapidly growing AI and data platform capabilities.

For NSHE, Oracle presents a strategic option with unique upside: alignment with a vendor whose roadmap is heavily AI- and data-centric. Unlike Ellucian (transactional depth) or Workday (experience-led modernization), Oracle's differentiator is its ability to pair the SIS with a best-in-class cloud and AI platform (OCI).

However, OSC adoption remains limited in higher education. Its functional maturity, particularly in complex domains like financial aid, trails legacy incumbents. Early adopters report challenges with implementation complexity and change management. In short, Oracle offers high strategic potential but higher delivery risk, especially for a large, fractured system like NSHE.

AI & Data Readiness

Oracle's core strength is **OCI:** a hyperscale cloud platform with native support for **LLMs, vector databases, RAG architectures, AI agents, and data science services**. This makes Oracle uniquely positioned to support **Post-SIS overlays** where intelligence is decoupled from the transactional core.

OSC itself provides transactional data, but when paired with OCI, NSHE could create a **true AI-ready data layer**, combining SIS, LMS, CRM, and other feeds into knowledge graphs and

semantic fabrics. Oracle also supports integration with **third-party AI enablement tools**, providing more openness than Workday or Ellucian.

The trade-off: realizing these benefits requires **parallel investment in OCI**, making Oracle less of a "turnkey" solution and more of a **strategic platform play**.

Pace of Change

Oracle is rapidly modernizing its higher ed offerings, but remains behind Workday in SaaS maturity. Its cadence is **faster than Ellucian,** with quarterly releases, but institutions report uneven delivery across modules. Some functions (advising, enrollment) are robust, while others (aid) are still maturing.

Compared to AI-first industries, Oracle's SIS roadmap is not yet at weekly iteration levels. However, OCI enables **faster AI experimentation outside the SIS**, which partially offsets SIS-level rigidity.

Workflow Flexibility

OSC's workflows are configurable and integrate with Oracle's **Fusion middleware**. Compared to Ellucian, OSC provides **better cross-suite orchestration** (HR, Finance, SIS). However, like Workday, workflows are primarily **intra-Oracle**.

The differentiator is OCI: event-driven architectures and API gateways allow NSHE to stitch together **agentic, cross-system workflows** in a way not possible with Banner or Workday alone. For NSHE, this means Oracle is uniquely suited if the goal is to build an **AI-first orchestration fabric across the enterprise.**

Ecosystem & Lock-in

Oracle offers the most **open ecosystem** of the three vendors. OCI integrates with third-party AI, ML, and data platforms, making it less closed than Workday. However, there is still vendor gravity: adopting OSC often implies broader adoption of **Oracle ERP + OCI.**

For NSHE, this presents both opportunity and risk: a **rich AI ecosystem** if NSHE embraces OCI fully, but also the possibility of **Oracle-driven lock-in** if strategy is not carefully managed.

Seven Levers Dual-Lens Evaluation for NSHE

1
Lever 1: User Experience & Engagement

Current-State Strength

Oracle Student Cloud has a modernized UI, but it is not yet as polished or intuitive as Workday. Usability varies by module, with some screens still reflecting enterprise ERP design language.

Future-State Readiness

Engagement is moving toward AI copilots via OCI. Oracle is investing in conversational AI and digital assistants that can integrate across HR, Finance, and Student, making this more future-proof than Ellucian, but less student-focused than Workday.

2
Lever 2: Data Model & Integration

Current-State Strength

OSC's data model is comprehensive but still transactional in orientation. APIs are improving but not yet seamless across higher ed systems.

Future-State Readiness

Oracle's differentiator is **OCI Data Platform:** vector DBs, GraphRAG, and event-driven integration are all supported. For NSHE, this provides the strongest path to building an **AI-ready, multimodal data layer.**

3
Lever 3: Analytics & Decision Support

Current-State Strength

Oracle delivers standard SIS analytics, plus access to **Oracle Analytics Cloud (OAC)**. These tools are robust but not tailored to higher ed AI use cases out of the box.

Future-State Readiness

OCI enables advanced AI analytics, LLM integration, and predictive modeling at enterprise scale. NSHE could build **custom AI pipelines** far more easily than with Ellucian or Workday, but this requires in-house capability or partner support.

4 Lever 4: Process Automation & Orchestration

Current-State Strength

OSC automates core SIS functions reliably, with better cross-suite workflows than Banner.

Future-State Readiness

OCI supports **event-driven, composable workflows**. For NSHE, this means Oracle is best positioned to enable agentic orchestration across domains—if paired with investment in OCI middleware and integration expertise.

5 Lever 5: Extensibility & Ecosystem

Current-State Strength

OSC integrates cleanly with Oracle ERP and OCI but less so with external higher ed solutions (e.g., LMS).

Future-State Readiness

OCI is highly extensible, supporting third-party AI and open APIs. This is the most **future-proof ecosystem** of the three vendors, but NSHE would need to actively architect it.

6 Lever 6: Vendor Viability & Strategy

Current-State Strength

Oracle is a global enterprise vendor with deep financial strength and long-term viability. OSC has a smaller installed base than Ellucian or Workday.

Future-State Readiness

Oracle's strategy is **AI- and cloud-first**, heavily investing in OCI as the core of its growth. This positions NSHE to align with a vendor whose long-term strategy matches the **AI-first Post-SIS trajectory**.

7 Lever 7: Implementation & Change Enablement

Current-State Strength

OSC implementations are complex and resource-intensive. Few U.S. institutions have fully deployed it, creating delivery risk.

Future-State Readiness

The change burden is high, but so is the potential payoff: OSC + OCI could leapfrog NSHE into a Post-SIS architecture. This makes Oracle the **highest-risk, highest-reward option.**

Dual-Lens Summary for NSHE

Current-State Strength

OSC is less mature in higher ed SIS functionality than Ellucian or Workday. Adoption would be disruptive and risky in the near term.

Future-State Readiness

Oracle is the most AI- and Post-SIS-ready vendor, due to OCI's AI ecosystem, extensibility, and open architecture.

Implication:

For NSHE, Oracle represents the strategic bet. Choosing Oracle would mean enduring short-term functional risk in exchange for long-term alignment with the AI-first, decoupled architecture of the Post-SIS Era. Unlike Ellucian or Workday, Oracle provides the infrastructure for cross-system AI orchestration — but requires NSHE to act as a co-architect rather than a turnkey adopter.

4. Oracle PeopleSoft Campus Solutions (NSHE Incumbent)

Overview

Oracle PeopleSoft Campus Solutions (CS) remains one of the most widely deployed SIS platforms in North America. For NSHE, PeopleSoft has been the backbone of student administration for years, providing deep transactional coverage across admissions, records, financial aid, and student financials.

However, its architecture reflects its origins: a client-server model retrofitted for web delivery, with functional depth but limited flexibility. Oracle continues to support Campus Solutions with regular updates, but the platform is no longer a centerpiece of Oracle's higher education strategy. Instead, Oracle's strategic focus has shifted to Oracle Student Cloud (OSC) and the broader OCI ecosystem.

For NSHE, the practical reality is that Campus Solutions will remain in place for the foreseeable future (8+ years). The question is therefore not whether to replace it, but how to optimize it, extend its life, and prepare the system to participate in an AI-first Post-SIS architecture. We should therefore apply the same vendor scan criteria to PeopleSoft to discover a roadmap of improvement and future state readiness.

AI & Data Readiness

Campus Solutions is **transactional at its core**. Its data model is highly normalized, built for accuracy and compliance rather than semantic or multimodal integration. Native APIs exist but are not designed for real-time, event-driven AI pipelines.

The opportunity lies in **overlay architectures**: building a **data integration fabric** that extracts from PeopleSoft, normalizes it, and fuses it with data from LMS, CRM, and

well-being systems into an AI-ready layer. This allows PeopleSoft to **remain the authoritative system of record** while shifting orchestration and intelligence to an external AI overlay.

For NSHE, this is critical: AI-readiness work done now will benefit PeopleSoft operations immediately (better reporting, cleaner data) while also laying the foundation for eventual migration to a Post-SIS architecture.

Pace of Change

Oracle continues to deliver **PUM Updates** to Campus Solutions, which include patches, compliance updates, and incremental enhancements. These occur quarterly but focus primarily on compliance (e.g., financial aid regulations) rather than innovation.

In contrast, AI-first operating models require **weekly-to-monthly iteration**. PeopleSoft's pace of change is fundamentally mismatched with NSHE's innovation needs. The solution is **not to expect innovation from PeopleSoft itself**, but to build agility outside of it through integration fabrics, APIs, and AI-driven overlays. Oracle itself expects that current PeopleSoft customers will (hopefully) implement Oracle Student Cloud.

Workflow Flexibility

Campus Solutions workflows are robust for **traditional SIS processes**—admissions, enrollment, aid—but they are rigid and bound to delivered modules. Configurable Rules Engine (CRE) and bolt-on workflow tools exist, but they are **not composable or event-driven** by modern AI standards.

To orchestrate cross-domain workflows (e.g., advising intervention + Canvas engagement + aid adjustment), NSHE could start **external orchestration layers** such as RPA, iPaaS, or ServiceNow process mining and automation.

Ecosystem & Lock-in

PeopleSoft has a large and experienced support ecosystem, with decades of functional and technical expertise. This makes it easier for NSHE to maintain stability and find skilled practitioners. However, its v**endor ecosystem is shrinking**, as Oracle shifts its investment away from Campus Solutions.

The implication: PeopleSoft can be maintained indefinitely, but **all true innovation will have to come from outside the platform**. As can be seen in other sections of this report, there are current PeopleSoft optimizations that should be implemented as well.

Seven Levers Dual-Lens Evaluation for NSHE

1 Lever 1: User Experience & Engagement

Current-State Strength

PeopleSoft Fluid UI improved usability compared to older interfaces, but overall UX still feels transactional and outdated compared to Workday or Oracle Cloud.

Future-State Readiness

PeopleSoft is not designed for agent-driven, conversational interfaces. NSHE will need to deploy an external engagement layer (portal, AI assistant, digital coach) that draws from PeopleSoft but is not dependent on it.

2 Lever 2: Data Model & Integration

Current-State Strength

PeopleSoft's data model is highly normalized and comprehensive, ensuring accuracy for compliance and audit needs. APIs and integration brokers exist, but require significant configuration.

Future-State Readiness

The platform is not event-driven and cannot support multimodal AI fusion on its own. NSHE will need to create a **data lake/knowledge graph overlay** that extracts from PeopleSoft and enables AI-first operations.

3 Lever 3: Analytics & Decision Support

Current-State Strength

PeopleSoft provides standard reporting and dashboards, often supplemented by Oracle BI Publisher or external reporting tools.

Future-State Readiness

Limited native support for predictive analytics or AI. For NSHE, advanced analytics will need to be built on top of a separate AI/BI stack, decoupled from PeopleSoft.

4 Lever 4: Process Automation & Orchestration

Current-State Strength

Strong automation for traditional SIS functions. Business Process Navigator and rules engines provide configurability but within module boundaries.

Future-State Readiness

Not composable, not event-driven. Cross-domain agentic workflows will require RPA, iPaaS, or orchestration fabrics. NSHE should consider ServiceNow or equivalent platforms for AI-first orchestration.

5 Lever 5: Extensibility & Ecosystem

Current-State Strength

Deeply entrenched in higher education, with a massive practitioner base and consulting ecosystem. Customizations and bolt-ons are common.

Future-State Readiness

PeopleSoft is a closed ecosystem compared to modern SaaS systems. Customizations add technical debt and constrain upgrades. NSHE should prioritize extensibility through external overlays, not inside PeopleSoft itself.

6 Lever 6: Vendor Viability & Strategy

Current-State Strength

Oracle continues to support Campus Solutions with regular compliance updates. It remains stable and reliable.

Future-State Readiness

Oracle's long-term strategy is focused on **Oracle Student Cloud + OCI**, not PeopleSoft. PeopleSoft will remain supported but will not be the focus of innovation.

7 Lever 7: Implementation & Change Enablement

Current-State Strength

PeopleSoft is already deployed at NSHE, with deep institutional knowledge and minimal training burden.

Future-State Readiness

Remaining on PeopleSoft avoids a disruptive SIS replacement in the short-to-medium term. However, the cost is that capability improvements will be marginal. NSHE must invest in parallel AI-readiness initiatives to avoid stagnation.

Dual-Lens Summary for NSHE

Current-State Strength

PeopleSoft remains stable, proven, and deeply entrenched. It delivers on compliance, functional breadth, and operational reliability.

Future-State Readiness

PeopleSoft is not designed for AI-first or Post-SIS models. It will remain a **system of record only**, requiring NSHE to build overlays for engagement, analytics, and orchestration.

Implication:

For NSHE, PeopleSoft is the default path for the next 8 years. This should not be seen as a deferral of innovation, but as a dual-track strategy:

1. **Optimize PeopleSoft for stability, compliance, and functional efficiency.**
2. **Invest in AI-readiness work now (data fabric, orchestration, engagement overlays) to both improve PeopleSoft today and prepare NSHE for a Post-SIS transition in the 2030s.**

Paradoxically, this makes PeopleSoft a viable short-term platform, provided NSHE treats it as a stable transactional core while shifting all innovation to AI-powered overlays and unified data strategies.

Comparative Analysis & Implications for NSHE

Ellucian Banner:

Stability and compliance strength, but least AI-ready. Would require heavy overlay investment.

Oracle Student Cloud:

Ambitious vision with deep AI potential, but roadmap risk and complexity for NSHE.

Workday Student:

Modern, student-facing engagement strength, but still maturing and not yet battle-tested at NSHE's scale.

PeopleSoft Campus Solutions:

NSHE's chosen incumbent. Reliable for the next 8 years, but not transformative. Must be supplemented by AI-ready overlays and orchestration layers.

05

What the Vendor Landscape Means for NSHE

Looking across the vendor scans, one conclusion becomes clear: moving from PeopleSoft to another transactional platform is not innovation by itself. Without an AI-ready architecture and unified data strategy, capability improvements will be marginal — the limitations of the monolithic model simply reappear under a different vendor's name.

06

NSHE Current Path: PeopleSoft for The Next 5+ Years

This decision reflects pragmatic realities of cost, disruption, and complexity. But it also raises a paradox: while NSHE remains on PeopleSoft, the institution cannot afford to pause innovation until after the next SIS decision. The good news is that AI-readiness work can — and should — begin now. Investments in unified data, process mining, and orchestration overlays will not only prepare NSHE for the Post-SIS era but also deliver immediate value by strengthening PeopleSoft operations today.

The vendor scans reveal a consistent pattern: no single platform delivers a turnkey AI-first future. Each has strengths—Ellucian in maturity, Oracle in cloud-native ecosystem, Workday in consumer-grade usability, PeopleSoft in current familiarity—but all but PeopleSoft require significant institutional lift to achieve true transformation. For NSHE, this means the strategy cannot be reduced to 'which SIS' alone. The system must act now to build the AI-ready foundations that will amplify whichever SIS remains in place.

THIS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT GIVEN NSHE'S CONFIRMED CURRENT COMMITMENT TO PEOPLESOFT. FAR FROM DEFERRING INNOVATION, THIS PERIOD MUST BE USED TO LAUNCH AI READINESS EFFORTS THAT STRENGTHEN PEOPLESOFT TODAY AND LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR A POST-SIS ARCHITECTURE TOMORROW.

07

Recommendations & Roadmap

Our recommendation assumes that NSHE will be able to run with two parallel tracks, given that the personnel involved in each are very different.

On one track, we recommend a series of PeopleSoft Optimizations for the shared instance institutions (with the single instance institutions invited to join in if they so choose). These optimizations would serve as "quick wins" that improve student and staff experience—and re-energize constituents on the "why" behind Campus Solutions.

On the parallel track, we recommend an AI Readiness workstream. We invite NSHE to use Beyond's AI Readiness Roadmap provided in Appendix A, or adapt one of its choosing.

TRACK 1: Optimize PeopleSoft

We recommend a series of six key optimizations to improve NSHE's current operational efficiency and service delivery:

1. Review Campus Solutions Shared Instance for Optimization Opportunities

2. Review Manual Processes And ID Candidates For Automation

3. Modernize Transfer Credit Processes Between NSHE Schools

4. Modernize and Align Governance Across Institutions

5. Limit and Resolve Duplicate EMPLIDs Across NSHE

6. Update and Resolve Sign-On Issues

Review Campus Solutions Shared Instances for Optimization Opportunities

Assessment:

The aim is to pinpoint the friction caused by policy, procedures, structures - and the system itself, that are causing unnecessary effort and delays, and find practical ways to fix them. Special attention will go to the shared instance so improvements can impact the largest number of schools while allowing the single instance institutions to copy/borrow what they see fit. This approach helps NSHE get more value from its current system while building a stronger base for any future SIS change.

Approach:

1. Review system documentation, configuration settings, and existing bolt-ons. Collect campus-level process maps and policies related to PeopleSoft usage. Inventory delivered: PeopleSoft features not currently in use.

2. Engage stakeholders. Conduct interviews and workshops with staff, faculty, and students. Capture examples of inefficiencies, workarounds, and recurring issues. Identify pain points that directly impact students.

3. Audit current configurations. Identify gaps between delivered capabilities and actual use. Review shared instance configurations for cross-institution alignment.

4. Identify needed changes to configurations, policies, and procedures. Flag unused delivered features for implementation where beneficial. Suggest potential bolt-ons or integrations to close gaps. Highlight changes that will have the broadest impact across the shared instance. Sequence recommendations into a roadmap for execution.

Outcome:

A sequenced, costed roadmap of high-impact changes to configurations, policies, procedures, and bolt-ons with an implementation priority matrix showing quick wins vs. long-term improvements.

2. Review Manual Processes To Find Candidates For Automation

Assessment:

Review manual processes taking place at institutions that can be provided with a uniform solution. This could include processes in place at SCS that are candidates for automation as well. Identify tasks that are time-consuming, repetitive, or error-prone and implement automations to replace them using delivered PeopleSoft

functionality, AI agents, and/or modernization of workflows or policies.

Approach:

Document workflows for targeted manual processes. Capture the steps, handoffs, and tools currently used. Benchmark current time, effort, and steps needed to execute the current manual process.

1. Identify steps that can be simplified, combined, or eliminated. Evaluate automation options, including RPA (robotic process automation) and AI Agents for data entry, routing, or analysis. Review policy or procedural changes that could remove unnecessary manual work.

2. Score potential improvements by impact, cost, and ease of implementation. Highlight quick wins and high-value changes for early adoption.

3. Develop an Implementation Roadmap to sequence solutions into near-term and longer-term initiatives. Identify tools, resources, and training needed—especially for AI adoption. Develop measurable targets to assess improvement and track benefits.

4. Implement updated workflows and automations. Measure the time, effort, steps, and resources required to execute the automated process and calculate the benefits from the change.

Outcomes:

Expanded staff capacity (more time), faster outcomes (such as student services), and reduced cost (by sunsetting old technology)

3. Transfer Credit Automation Between NSHE Schools

Assessment:

Gather baseline data from all NSHE institutions on current transfer equivalency rules and turnaround times. Assess Ai-native tools to automate or optimize the process.

Approach:

1. Review the current articulation rules and their configuration in PeopleSoft. Identify the tools that work best to support articulation. AI-based tools are evolving the fastest and are best able to prepare NSHE for the future.

2. Benchmark the current transfer articulation process, for how long it takes a student to learn what credits will transfer. Also, benchmark the steps, human and technical resources needed to articulate transfer credits. Focus on inconsistencies between NSHE schools in articulation credits from the same external institutions. Transfer credit art issues between NSHE schools. Assess 3rd party tools that can optimize the articulation processes.

3. Standardize articulation rules for high-volume feeder institutions. Enhance shared Transfer Credit Wizard tools. Implement Service Level Objectives (SLOs) for response times. Benchmark the updated articulation process and calculate the benefits realized by the updates.

Outcomes:

Faster turnaround for admissions and advising. Fewer mistakes, and hundreds of man-hours freed up for high-impact work.

4. Update and Align Governance

Assessment:

Review current intake, escalation, and communication structures between NSHE IT and NSHE schools. Use existing processes to strengthen the tDxS Project Governance Framework, guiding all major efforts—especially with Share Instance schools. It defines roles: sponsor to champion, steering committee for major decisions, project owner to guide work, and manager to coordinate tasks. Projects follow clear stages, with rules for handling new requests, prioritizing work, informing stakeholders, and using tools to track progress and manage risks.

Actions:

1. Define the governance structure. Appoint the Project Sponsor, Steering Committee, Project Owner, Project Manager, and Project Team, documenting each role's responsibilities and decision-making authority. Establish governance tools and templates—project charters, scope documents, risk registers, status reports, and change request forms—and set up tracking and reporting systems like Jira, ServiceNow, or Microsoft Project.

2. Review and revise the request process. Ensure the process addresses the purpose, benefits, risks, costs, and timelines for the request. Develop approval criteria for user value, strategic alignment, cost, and complexity. Provide concise training for stakeholders.

3. Then, pilot the process. Gather feedback, refine templates and workflows, and formally launch the process—announcing it to stakeholders, publishing documentation, and setting a clear start date.

4. Review governance effectiveness twice a year, updating templates, rules, and tools based on lessons learned. Keep stakeholder communication open to ensure the framework stays relevant, efficient, and aligned with strategic priorities.

Outcomes:

A flexible, resilient governance process, which can grow and change with the NSHE IT and NSHE schools, Increased communication of decisions and timely response to requests.

5. Limit and Resolve Duplicate EMPLIDs Across NSHE

This initiative aims to quantify duplicate EMPLIDs both within individual institutions and across NSHE. Measuring the scope and distribution of duplicates will clarify the problem's scale, its impact on students, and related operational challenges. The results will guide the implementation of processes designed to reduce the number of duplicate EMPLIDS and develop a process to resolve the duplicates that exist.

Approach:

Run system-wide queries to identify students with multiple IDs, both within individual schools and across the system. Analyze frequency, patterns, and causes—such as stop-outs, transfers, and name-entry errors—to establish a clear baseline for action.

1. Update Search/Match rules to improve accuracy when creating records. Refine matching criteria and ensure consistent use across institutions. Train staff to apply these rules during admissions, registration, and transfers to prevent new duplicates.

2. Standardize steps for identifying duplicates, selecting the EMPLID to keep, and merging data to preserve full academic histories. Maintain clear inter-campus communication to ensure timely resolution and avoid transcript or enrollment delays.

3. Explore AI tools that detect, flag, and reconcile duplicate records. Pair technology with updated procedures, staff training, and ongoing monitoring to maintain accurate, unified records.

Outcomes:

A significant reduction in new duplicate EMPLIDS and the time and effort it takes to resolve existing duplicate EMPLIDS. Elimination of transcript issues resulting from duplicate EMPLIDS. 100s of man-hours saved.

6. Update and Resolve Sign-On Issues

Assessment:

In recent interviews and workshops, SSO complexity was among the top concerns raised. Students, faculty, and staff often face multiple logins, inconsistent access, and confusion when navigating systems. Differences in platform setup and integration create inefficiencies that hinder smooth access to services. This initiative will review current single sign-on (SSO) platforms, focusing on Okta, GoCSN, and related solutions. The aim is to pinpoint fragmentation—such as inconsistent logins, overlapping credentials, and weak integrations—and identify opportunities to streamline authentication for a more unified, secure user experience.

Actions:

1. Map the current SSO landscape across NSHE institutions. Document platforms in use—Okta, GoCSN, and local solutions—along with configurations, integrations, and access points. Flag multiple-login cases, note authentication policy differences, and identify opportunities to standardize login/password rules across all services.

2. Analyze fragmentation issues by combining user feedback with technical data. Collect input on inconsistent screens, repeated credentials, and limited cross-platform access. Compare findings with system logs to locate integration gaps and assess where passwordless authentication pilots—FIDO2 keys or biometrics—could boost security and ease of use.

3. Evaluate standardization and consolidation options. Determine if SSO platforms can be aligned through shared settings, unified policies, and broader integrations. Include an assessment of upgrading or replacing GoCSN to serve as a modern, unified portal for seamless access to applications and resources.

4. Develop and test the improved SSO model. Pilot rationalized password rules, passwordless login, and portal upgrades with a small user group. Measure impacts on speed, reliability, and satisfaction, then refine before a system-wide rollout with clear training, documentation, and ongoing support.

Outcomes:

A unified, modern, consistent, user-friendly SSO experience across all NSHE institutions, reducing duplicate logins and simplifying access to services.

Summary

These six initiatives can serve as an initial short list of "quick win" optimizations that can set NSHE on a system-wide plan to modernize, improve service delivery, and drive student outcomes. They target both technology and process gaps—optimizing the shared Campus Solutions instance, automating repetitive tasks, and streamlining workflows between NSHE IT and schools. Key academic and administrative areas, such as transfer credit processing, governance alignment, and duplicate EMPLID resolution, are addressed with clear actions, measurable outcomes, and roadmaps for both quick wins and long-term gains.

Together, these efforts will strengthen NSHE's technology infrastructure, standardize policies, and deliver a seamless experience across institutions. By reducing fragmentation—such as inconsistent sign-on processes—and leveraging automation, integration tools, and improved governance, NSHE will boost efficiency, security, and data accuracy. It also allows the system to bring AI into the picture and demonstrate its power. The outcome will be faster service, lower costs, and a more consistent, student-centered experience, while positioning NSHE for future system upgrades.

TRACK 2: Launch AI Readiness Initiatives

Using the AI Roadmap provided in Appendix A, make the concerted effort now to prepare NSHE and individual institutions for an AI future. This includes work in data unification, engaging staff in innovation/automation pilots, and establishing orchestration overlays (AI Agent) to provide a "single pane of glass" experience for staff, students, and faculty. This entire end-to-end process can be done while on PeopleSoft - while delivering experiences and security that no cloud SIS in the market can offer.

Level 3 IT Maturity: Why It Matters

IT maturity models serve as frameworks to evaluate and improve how technology departments deliver value to their institutions. A four-level maturity model is often used to describe this progression:

IT MATURITY MODEL:

LEVEL 1
Transactional
Seen As: On-Demand Provider
Known For: Break/Fix/Provisioning
Measured On: Speed

LEVEL 2
Solution Provider
Seen As: Technical Experts
Known For: Fixing/Maintaining/Lights On
Measured On: Uptime

LEVEL 3
Strategic Guide
Seen As: Thought Leader
Known For: Strategic Advice
Measured On: ROI / Impact

LEVEL 4
True Partner
Seen As: Having Skin In the Game
Known For: Disruptive Innovation
Measured On: Institution's Ability To Scale

Each level builds on the foundation of the one before it. Progression requires not only technical excellence but also institutional willingness to invest in governance, innovation, and upskilling/introduction of new staff.

Beyond did not conduct a formal assessment of NSHE IT's current maturity level, but anecdotally gathered that institutions see you as a strong Level 1 / Level 2 organization—with some hints of Level 3.

Multiple stakeholders reported growing confidence in IT's ability to deliver technical solutions and support critical functions. Service catalog development, asset management tooling, and the move toward standardized governance suggest IT is not only solving problems but doing so with process discipline and repeatability seen in Level 2.

Why Moving To Level 3 Is Important, and Likely Urgent

Unless you are seen as a strategic advisor and guide to senior leaders at each institution, they will likely bypass you in key upcoming decisions related to AI. The proliferation of AI across a campus is bad enough; across a system, it could have outcomes ranging from concerning to catastrophic. We strongly recommend that you take advantage of the retirement-related turnover of staff at SCS as an opportunity to restructure operations to continue to excel at Level 1 and Level 2 services, while opening up Level 3 capabilities—fueled by innovation-minded technologists and strategists who can be deployed on behalf of the system to guide and drive innovation at each institution. When they see you as a thought partner, guide, and protector, the system as a whole will see the best long-term outcomes—especially with something as revolutionary as AI.

The Strategic Risks of Plateauing at Level 2

Remaining at Level 2 poses some real risks:

- Leadership/customer frustration due to perceived IT bottlenecks
- Loss of innovation talent seeking dynamic, growth-oriented environments
- Missed opportunities to influence system-wide priorities such as retention, student mobility, and student engagement.

TRACK 1: Start Pre-Work 3-5 Years Before RFP For A New Student System

If and when the time to move to a new Student System is nearing, Beyond strongly recommends a 3-5 year process of pre-work to:

- Modernize institutional workflows

- Reduce dependency on PeopleSoft customizations

- Conduct stakeholder education on what limitations a cloud SIS platform will call for (this includes them losing their favorite workarounds, reports, and business processes)

- Conduct early change management to engage stakeholders in what a new cloud SIS will mean for them in their specific roles

- Conduct a robust inventory of features and functionality (based on clearly defined outcomes) that you expect from your new SIS vendor

- Clean up data, duplicates, etc

- Build a strategy around non-credit programs and their system of record

- Build a common data dictionary

As mentioned in the executive summary, an institution like Johns Hopkins, of similar complexity, embarked on over 30 workstreams during a 36-month pre-work phase. It is estimated that they will save over $30 million during their implementation by having done this work prior to signing a contract with an SIS vendor.

In short, NSHE's choice is not between standing still and leaping into a new SIS. The real choice is whether to begin building the AI-first foundation now, so that when the next SIS decision arrives, the system is prepared to plug into a modern, Post-SIS architecture — rather than repeat the cycle of transactional replacement.

Timeline for Roadmap Execution

- PeopleSoft Optimization (12-24 months).

- AI Readiness (12-36 months - overlap with Optimizations)

- New SIS Readiness (30-42 months leading up to RFP)

This roadmap serves as a blueprint for immediate action. It is a direct call for NSHE leadership to foster system and institutional collaboration. By committing to the proposed phased approach, NSHE can address current operational issues and strategically prepare for the future. The time to act is now, ensuring that NSHE's eventual decision on a new SIS is not only informed and fiscally responsible, but also a collaborative choice that supports the long-term success of all campuses.

Appendices

Appendix 2:

Thinkspace Sessions

What We Learned

Introduction

Each ThinkSpace session lasted about 90 minutes and was designed to make space for honest input—and a few "finally someone said it" moments. We asked participants to name the biggest points of friction they see, to dream a little about what a better future would look like, and to help us spot the disconnects between their vision and the current reality.

What We Heard Across Institutions

Across all institutions and roles, a handful of themes kept coming up again and again. These weren't small complaints—they were foundational issues that impact nearly every part of the student journey and the staff experience.

Identity management was one such issue. Creating, updating, and syncing student and staff records takes way more time and effort than it should. Staff often have to double- or triple-handle student data, and resolving duplicates is a regular, time-consuming task.

The technology itself isn't always the problem —it's how the system is stitched together. Admissions, advising, and financial aid all operate on different timelines and systems, which makes it harder for staff to support students smoothly. Add to that unclear forms, slow approvals, and limited visibility into student progress, and the result is a lot of manual work and student confusion.

PeopleSoft is slow to patch or update. For shared-instance campuses, it's also really difficult to make local changes or test new workflows without going through SCS. Everyone agrees the shared setup makes sense financially, but it comes with serious trade-offs in terms of flexibility.

Training is also a challenge. When new staff come in, they're often left to figure things out through trial and error. There's no consistent onboarding or documentation, and some critical tools—like degree audit—aren't trusted or well used because of how they've been configured or communicated.

And then there's governance. While most folks appreciate the communication from

the system office, there's a shared feeling that it stops short of implementation support. The policies are there, but the capacity to carry them out often isn't.

Where Institutions Differ

While many themes showed up across the board, we also saw some important differences between institutions. For example, the shared-instance schools (like CSN, TMCC, and WNC) expressed frustration about how little room they have to act independently. Even small changes require approval or mediation from the system office, which slows everything down.

Standalone instances (like UNLV and UNR), on the other hand, have more freedom but also bear a heavier internal lift. They manage more of their own technical resources and governance processes—which allows for faster innovation in some areas but can create silos and capacity gaps in others.

Some campuses have already made progress in areas like CRM adoption, mobile tools, or data integration. Others are still early in that journey and could benefit from shared templates or systemwide support. There's a real appetite for collaboration, but also a need for flexibility— each school is in a different place.

What's Getting in the Way: The P3S2 Friction Points

What is P3S2?

The **P3S2 framework** is a practical tool used to identify what's causing friction in a process or experience—and more importantly, what can be done about it. The name stands for five core areas that typically drive inefficiencies or missed opportunities in an institution: **Policy, Procedure, People, System, and Structure.**

- **Policy** is the "why" behind a task or requirement—the rules or mandates that explain what must be done. But policies can sometimes be out of sync with institutional goals or real-world workflows.

- **Procedure** is the "how"—how a task is actually carried out. Even good policies can lead to frustration if the procedure is outdated, unclear, or unnecessarily complicated.

- **People** are the ones doing the work. This category looks at whether staff are trained, resourced, and empowered to succeed. It also considers culture and staffing levels— both of which can either support or block progress.

- **Systems** refers to the technology in place. Are the tools outdated, overly complex, or poorly integrated? Or are there features available that simply aren't being used?

- **Structure** looks at how roles, responsibilities, and teams are organized. Sometimes the right people aren't in the right roles, or key functions are missing altogether. In other cases, processes rely too heavily on one individual—creating risk when that person is unavailable.

By using P3S2, we look to pinpoint the root cause of a challenge and determine whether the solution lies in rethinking a rule, fixing a process, investing in training, improving the tech, or shifting how work is organized.

Policy

Some system-wide policies sound good in theory but are difficult to implement on the ground. For example, campuses are expected to meet student success or equity goals, but the current systems don't always give them the tools to get there. Meanwhile, newer areas like AI or digital identity aren't well covered by existing policies, creating hesitation around innovation.

Procedure

Processes like registration, holds, transcript evaluation, and program plan changes are often slow, overly complex, or entirely manual. There are too many handoffs between departments, and staff don't always have the visibility they need to complete a task from start to finish. This creates frustration — not just for students, but for the staff trying to help them.

System

PeopleSoft is showing its age in some key areas. Updates take too long, testing cycles are painful, and outages still happen during peak periods. Integration with other tools — like CRMs or mobile apps — is possible, but not seamless. Meanwhile, core functions like search/match, identity provisioning, and duplicate resolution are still way too manual.

People

Training and enablement are huge gaps. There's no consistent onboarding, and much of the institutional knowledge lives in a handful of people's heads. When someone leaves, they take critical process know-how with them. The people doing the work want to do it well, but often don't have the right tools or support.

Structure

Governance exists, but it doesn't always lead to action. Campuses want more than communication — they want support, funding, and coordination for implementing the changes that matter. There's also no consistent governance model across the different PeopleSoft environments, which leads to duplication and rework.