

COMMONS MODERNIZATION



University of
Northern Iowa

The University of Northern Iowa proposes to modernize the historic Commons building, transforming it into a dynamic hub for outreach and civic education. Since opening in 1933, the Commons has served as a central gathering place for civic and community engagement. Originally constructed as a campus dining center and union building, it has more recently housed the UNI Foundation and hosted significant community events, including meetings of the Board of Regents.

The renovated Commons will become home to the Charles and Barbara Grassley Center, the UNI Center for Civic Education, and the UNI Foundation—bringing together leadership, public service, and community engagement under one roof.

Charles and Barbara Grassley Center

Building upon the Grassley Papers—which document Senator Charles Grassley’s impactful legacy of more than 70 years in elected public service—the Charles and Barbara Grassley Center will become a vibrant, nationally recognized organization. The Center will promote leadership, public service, and active citizenship throughout Iowa, inspiring future generations to engage in civic life.

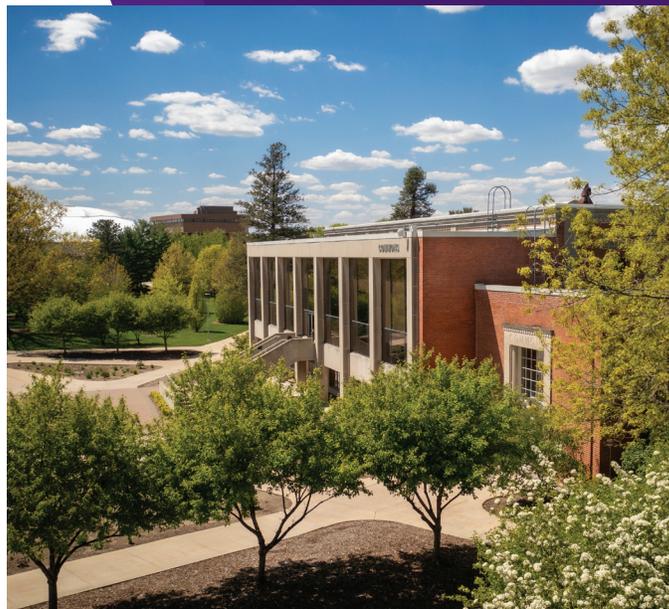
Center for Civic Education

The Center for Civic Education at the University of Northern Iowa enhances civic learning among university students, pre-K–12 students and teachers, and the broader public. Through research, development, and implementation of effective civic education strategies, the Center fosters respectful dialogue across differences. It promotes the values of free speech, civic leadership, public service, and active citizenship while providing educational resources to support these ideals.

UNI Foundation

The UNI Foundation strengthens the university by building meaningful relationships with students, alumni, and friends. These relationships cultivate philanthropic investment that supports UNI students, faculty, and campus initiatives.

The Foundation also positions UNI as a premier institution that delivers an affordable, engaged education—empowering students and alumni to lead locally and globally.



Building Improvements

The university will undertake a comprehensive modernization of the building. Plans include:

- Creating a new, more prominent main entrance
- Improving ADA accessibility and ensuring access to all levels
- Addressing deferred maintenance (approximately \$13.5M)
- Restoring and renewing the building’s role as a showpiece of the university

Through these updates, the Commons will continue its historic legacy as a gathering place while evolving to meet the civic and educational needs of future generations.

Proposed Project Funding

	Appropriations	Institutional Funds, Gifts &/or Grants	Total	Status
FY 2026	\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000	Funded
FY 2027	\$6,000,000		\$6,000,000	Requested
FY 2028	\$14,340,000	\$1,660,000	\$16,000,000	Requested
FY 2029	\$8,540,000	\$1,660,000	\$10,200,000	Requested
FY 2030				
FY 2031				
TOTAL	\$ 29,880,000	3,320,000	\$ 33,200,000	

Project Schedule

Planning & Design	14 months
Bidding	3 months
Construction	20 months
Occupancy	2 months
Total	39 months