Abstract:
Staff members in Off-Campus & Non-Traditional Student Services conducted a comprehensive, year-long process consisting of an internal and an external review in FY2010. The internal review included an on-campus team that reviewed the department’s programs and services using standards established by the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS).

The external review consisted of a site visit by a professional with expertise in areas related to the department. The consultant also conducted multiple interviews and document reviews before and during the site visit. This two-step review process, an internal and an external review, revealed the department’s strengths and areas for improvement.

Many of the recommendations identified through the review have already been implemented, while other recommendations are being investigated for future implementation. As a result of this review process, recommendations were presented pertaining to several departmental areas. Those related to off-campus student services are highlighted.

Recommendations from Review:
Off-Campus (Commuter and Apartment Student Services) Recommendations
• Create landlord advisory board and/or student advisory board
• Create apartment resource for students considering apartment options in DeKalb
• Establish collaborations with specific campus partners to reach out to larger student population
• Provide programs and services that help students to be more successful in their academic and out-of-classroom pursuits
• Evaluate hours of operation for services and be more flexible with schedule, as feasible

Implementation of the Recommendations:
Landlord Advisory Board: staff members continue to meet with local property managers to establish relationships and consider the possibility of an advisory board. Benchmarking was also conducted regarding advisory boards at similar institutions.

Apartment handout for good decision-making was created as a collaboration between OCNTSS, Health Enhancement, Office of Community Standards & Student Conduct, and Students’ Legal Assistance.

First year commuter students were invited to participate in MAP-Works, an assessment tool designed to measure first year student success. With the intent of providing personal outreach and student support, department staff members were assigned to small groups of commuter students who opted to participate in MAP-Works.

Staff members partnered with Housing & Dining (H&D) to create a budget worksheet designed for students who were considering their housing options for the following year. OCNTSS and H&D staff members also co-presented workshops in each of the residence halls to provide students with accurate information regarding their housing options.

OCNTSS staff members are providing additional hours of operation to better support students who commute to NIU after normal business hours. Staff members are available until 5:30 p.m. most days and the lounge is open until 6 p.m. during the week.